

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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Special Edition The Church — Live Issues Old and New

History of the Present Digression

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This special issue on "The Church—Live Issues Old and New" is one of the most significant studies of this generation. It is a recycle of history and involves the same three important attitudes that created the issues and divisions 150 years ago. These are: 1) The loose attitude toward the verbally inspired Word of God; 2) The attitude toward the nature and function of the church; and 3) The attitude toward fellowship with error.

The competent editor of *Searching The Scriptures* assigned to me the subject which heads this article with the request that for the sake of continuity I simply state some historical facts leading to the present digression without pausing to argue the point, and leave it to the other writers in this special issue to present the case.

The characteristics of the digression among the churches of Christ go back to the days of the apostles when "the mystery of iniquity doth already work . . ." (2 Thess. 2:7) and predictions were made of departures from the faith (I Tim. 4: 1-3). Through the centuries that followed the completion of the New Testament one "issue" followed another, stemming from attitudes toward divine authority, the nature

and work of the church, and the matter of fellowship, and resulted in one division after another.

In preparation for this article I have read from a number of sources which give a rather vivid description of the developing storm clouds and the cyclonic destruction among churches of Christ of the middle nineteenth century. I shall try to briefly state some of these historical facts in their proper relationship to the breach in fellowship among the disciples of Christ. The reader will please understand that this article does not purport to be a detailed and complete accounting of the history from 1830 to 1978. We are only interested in giving a sketch of the historical divisions resulting from the issues of the past.

Cooperation And The Missionary Society

During the 1840's an element among the churches of Christ demanded greater missionary zeal, and some of the foremost leaders in this movement set about to create some "COOPERATION" machinery for pooling the resources of many churches into one fund to preach the gospel. From 1840 to 1850 benevolent activity began by women who arranged themselves into "sewing societies" for the purpose of making and providing garments and food for needy people. This was highly commended by influential men who were striving to affect and organize such an arrangement for preaching the gospel.

In 1847, Walter Scott and W. K. Pendleton campaigned for funds to be sent to the needy disciples in the United Kingdom. (*Quest For A Christian American*, Edwin Harrell, Jr., P. 75). The collection was made under the sponsorship of the church in Bethany, Virginia. This was the first brotherhood benevolent campaign and the beginning of the church-supported institutional benevolent societies

which were to flourish later as a "Social Gospel" function.

But Barton W. Stone said of benevolent societies: "These benevolent schemes are Bible societies, Tract societies, Rag societies, Cent societies, Theological societies, Sunday School societies, Educational societies . . . I would simply ask, What have the divine writers of the New Testament said respecting these societies? They are all silent as the grave . . ." [*Quest For A Christian America*, P. 76.)

The organization of the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849 produced the division between Disciples of Christ and churches of Christ and they were first listed separately in the U.S. Census in 1906. This divisive, unscriptural organization was the result of the constant demand for cooperation of churches on local, state and national levels. As this organization developed, two opposing philosophies became predominantly active: Liberal and Conservative. Unique from 1840 to 1906 was the fact that leaders who advocated or opposed the innovations abhorred division and tried hard to avoid a fracture in fellowship but the demand for the unscriptural organization was more important than the fellowship of the disciples of the Lord. They slowly drifted

toward a complete cleavage.

Cooperation among churches was the most important issue of the 1830-1850 period. The convention of the American Christian Missionary Society met in Cincinnati, Ohio, October 24-28, 1849. In his absence because of illness, Alexander Campbell was elected the first president and D. S. Burnett was elected first vice-president. John T. Johnson of Kentucky made a resolution which passed "That the 'Missionary Society', as a means to concentrate and dispense the wealth and benevolence of the brethren of this restoration in an effort to convert the world, is both scriptural and expedient." A committee of seven was to be appointed to prepare a constitution for the society. Nothing in the constitution resembled anything authorized in the New Testament. (*Attitudes and Consequences*, Homer Hailey, P. 152).

Benjamin Franklin, who first favored the Missionary Society, but later became an opponent, together with J. W. McGarvey said the Missionary Society ought to die. W. K. Pendleton, Moses E. Lard, and Isaac Errett held the opposite view of the usefulness of the Missionary Society. The *Gospel Advocate* began publication again in January, 1866 after four years of silence during the Civil War. David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning were editors and they strongly opposed the Missionary Society and the instrument of music in worship.

Instrumental Music Controversy

The controversy over the use of Instrumental Music in worship to God became acute about 1860. Prior to this time there had been some efforts to introduce it but with no real success. Most historians give the credit to L. L. Pinkerton of Lexington, Kentucky for introducing the first instrument of music in the church at Midway, Kentucky in 1859. A melodeon was used with the worship on this occasion.

Homer Hailey in *Attitudes and Consequences*, P.

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197, quotes Errett Gates regarding the music controversy: "The organ controversy was the missionary controversy in a new form, for both grew out of the opposition to human innovations in the work and worship of the church . . ."

From 1863 to 1875 the controversy over the use of the instrument of music in worship was very heated and bitter and the division was complete. There was a three-way split, two carried the instrument: the Christian Church and the more liberal Disciples of Christ, and the other was the churches of Christ who did not use the instrument.

The general attitude of those who used the instrument as opposed to those who did not use it was described by the terms 'progressives' (Christian Church) and the "non-progressives" (churches of Christ). The "progressives" continued from the Missionary Society and instrumental music in worship to open membership and other radical departures.

Various Controversial Issues

There were numerous other issues that arose as a

result of the attitudes earlier mentioned. During and after the Civil War years the manufacture and use of "spirits" became a heated question. There was the controversy about the war and civil government. This issue continued after the Civil War. Slavery also became an issue which separated many brethren. Some contended that the immersed into Christ could have fellowship with "other denominations" in meetings and general activities.

Among the issues of the 1850's to 1900's was that of the divorce and remarriage problem. "Although divorce was uncommon, such sins as 'adultery', 'desertion', and common law marriages, caused frontier church leaders considerable concern." (*Quest For A Christian America*, Edwin Harrell, Jr., P. 196).

There were problems of Christians marrying non-Christians, and in some cases they were compelled to confess their sin.

"If most Disciple leaders believed that compliance with the 'laws of the land' was all that was demanded for a scriptural marriage, they were not so liberal on the question of divorce. The generally accepted standard was: 'There is no release then to husband or wife from the marriage contract unless the other party has been guilty of fornication.' A few church leaders were liberal enough to concede that 'desertion', a practice not uncommon on the frontier, was a just cause for divorce and remarriage, but they were exceptions." (ibid, P. 197).

The Sunday School question, the no-women teachers, and the no-literature classes became issues which still remain. The College and Orphan Home controversy which Daniel Sommer strongly opposed in the *American Christian Review* as being unscriptural agents through which the church was trying to function became a heated issue. The "pastor system" was said to have developed through the college system.

Premillennialism was promoted by R. H. Boll. At one time he was the front page writer for the *Gospel Advocate* but started his own paper called *Word and Work* to promote his theories. In the 1930's the *Gospel Advocate* under the editorship of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. made a strong attack against Premillennialism. This led to his debates with Charles M. Neal which broke the back of Premillennialism in the church.

The College Issue

There is no question but that the role of the colleges owned and operated by Christians played a predominate role in the controversies that brought about divisions since the days of Alexander Campbell at Bethany College. Those colleges that are now owned and operated by "Churches of Christ" have denied from the beginning their solicitation of funds from churches, but most of them have admitted taking contributions from churches when sent to them. At the present time most of them are openly soliciting and accepting funds from churches for various purposes.

From *W. W. Otey, Contender For The Faith*, pages 287-291, the following information was ob-

tained which I believe to be pertinent to my purpose in this article.

On Wednesday night in February, 1938, during the lectureship at Abilene Christian College, G. C. Brewer was asked to make a few remarks to encourage the audience to contribute to the college. Brewer suggested that if all churches in Texas would contribute to the support of the school, such requests from individuals would be unnecessary. Some who were present understood Brewer to say that churches who did not have Abilene Christian College in their budget had the wrong preacher.

Brewer took the position that it was scriptural for churches to support the college. W. W. Otey wrote Brewer a letter about his statement and received a reply dated March 2, 1938 in which he said, "As to my statement at the college, you did not misunderstand me, but you left off a part of the statement that I think should be included. I said that I had argued for the practice of putting the Colleges and Orphan Homes in the congregational budgets, and I would be willing to argue for it again, if argument were necessary ..." Brewer said he had understood this to have been the practice since Bethany College was founded in 1840.

Brother Otey wrote the presidents of several of the colleges asking for their convictions and comments on G. C. Brewer's statement.

On June 7, 1938 George S. Benson, president of Harding College wrote W. W. Otey that Harding College did not solicit funds from the church treasury but "that it would not be wrong for a congregation to make a gift to a Bible school from the regular treasury of the church."

On March 4, 1938, James F. Cox, president of Abilene Christian College wrote to Brother Otey that he had never raised money through churches, nor had he authorized any one else to do so. He stated that he had received some contributions from churches who wanted to do it that way and that he had not sent it back. He also stated that G. C. Brewer had not been authorized to make the statement he made and he regretted it had been done.

In June 30, 1938, E. H. Ijams, president of David Lipscomb College wrote Otey that during his connection with the college, and as far as he knew, no solicitation from churches had ever been made, although a few donations from churches had been received for needy and deserving students. He stated his convictions that church and school were separate institutions, with school a supplement to the home and not an adjunct to the church.

N. B. Hardeman, president of Freed-Hardeman College wrote to Otey: "I am truly sorry that we can not get settled on matters relating to our schools and the churches. I certainly do not endorse Brother Brewer's statements and would oppose any congregation's putting Freed-Hardeman College in their budget."

Sponsoring Church And Herald Of Truth

It was a short distance from the Missionary Society of the Christian Church to the "Sponsoring

Church" and "Diocesan Elders" in foreign fields after World War II and the Korean War. It became so popular among foreign missionaries that it was utilized at home.

The Herald of Truth Radio and TV programs of the Highland Church in Abilene, Texas was the "brainchild of James W. Nichols and James Willeford, according to one of the elders at Highland when those elders "assumed" the oversight of the Herald of Truth in February, 1952.

Bible colleges became the spring board from which the institutional, sponsoring church, centralized control and oversight, orphan home, socialized gospel, and "fellowship everything", issues have developed. Adding to these are the normal fallout results of immorality and further departures from the truth.

The articles that follow will deal specifically with these departures that now divide the people of God.

Tracts on These Vital Issues

The Bible and Congregational Cooperation
- Cecil Willis

Bible Authority—How Established? How Applied? - Roy E. Cogdill

The Church and Organizations - James W. Adams

Is the Herald of Truth Expedient? - Cecil Willis

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Division over the work, nature and organization of the church is a reality. It did not come about suddenly but it did come throughout this land and has spread to other nations beyond the seas. Every right thinking child of God wishes this tragedy had been averted and longs for unity based upon the word of God. The Psalmist praised the pleasantness of unity among brethren (Psa. 133:1). Jesus prayed for the oneness of all believers in him (Jno. 17:17-21). Paul outlined the disposition which endeavours to "keep the unity of the Spirit" and gave seven foundation stones upon which such unity is to be built and maintained (Eph. 4:1-16).

Yet, the word of God warned that some would not be content to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 Jno. 9-11). Paul said "some shall depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1). He told the Ephesian elders that some would "speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Those who would pervert the gospel of Christ are "accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9). It is possible to "wrest the scriptures" to the destruction of those so employed (2 Pet. 3:16).

Worse Than Division

While division among the people of God is deplorable, there is one thing worse than division and that is unity in error. When departures from the faith come we could all be united in the departure and all be lost together. Followers of truth cannot long remain in unison with followers of error. The New Testament is clear that promoters of error are to be marked and opposed (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:9-11; Titus 1:9-11). Unity in error compromises the truth of God and leads to everlasting ruin. Every saint is a trustee of the faith "once delivered" and is charged to "contend" for that sacred body of teaching (Jude 8-4).

When Issues Arise

What are godly people to do when issues arise which threaten to divide brethren? Shall the issue be ignored in the hope that it will somehow go away? That will not work. It never has. Shall we wait to see how many will stand on one side or the other and then cast our lot with the majority? Shall we make our decision based on what great and good men think about it? Shall we support a position on the ground that "we have always done it this way?" Surely, these are false standards. We suggest some simple but basic rules to help us in such times:

(1) Respect the authority of the scriptures. "Thy word is truth" (Jno. 17:17). "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"

(Col. 3:17). "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Let no man be honored "above that which is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). We must also respect the silence of God, Where God did not speak, we have no authority to act.

(2) Believe that scripture can be understood. The Lord addressed his word to our understanding. We are challenged to understand "what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). We are to "read" the "words" written by an inspired man that we might "understand" (Eph. 3:2-4).

(3) Handle aright the word of truth. The word of God must be studied in context. We have preached this over and over to the denominational world for years, and rightly so. But the instruction of 2 Timothy 2:15 falls with equal weight upon us all. We must consider all that the Bible says on a subject. If more than one passage deals with a matter, then honest study requires that we regard the sum total of all God said about it before reaching a conclusion.

(4) Resolve to follow whatever course truth demands. What is the benefit of finding truth on any given subject unless we are determined to accept it, regardless of the cost. We must be as the man who found the pearl of great price and sold all he had in order to obtain it (Mt. 13:45-46).

(5) Stand for truth without bitterness. We do not have to hate a brother who has not as yet seen what we have seen in the word of God. If brethren become enemies because of our stand for truth, then we are challenged by the Lord to love our enemies and do good to those who despitefully use us (Mt. 5:43-36).

The Danger of the Closed Mind

When one has closed his mind to any alternative other than the one he has chosen, then it is very easy for him to see and yet not see, to hear and yet not hear. In the time of Ezekiel, "certain of the elders of Israel" came before him. The Lord told Ezekiel that they had "set up their idols in their heart" and then warned that when men come to seek God's will with such idols in the heart that "I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols" (Ezek. 14:1-5). Jesus warned of those whose hearts were "dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed" (Mt. 13:15). The church at Laodicea was blind to its faults and needed "eye-salve" that it might see (Rev. 3:18). Perhaps the most sobering warning of all was stated by Paul to the Thessalonians when he said "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Anything less than a sincere love for the truth opens the door of the heart to deception and delusion leading to everlasting destruction.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus said "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). In the study before us in this special issue, we appeal to brethren

with honest and good hearts to consider what is presented. "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

Since the division of the 1950's and 1960's over the work, nature and organization of the church, most brethren on either side of the division have had little communication with each other. While prejudices and old bitternesses linger in the hearts of some, there is a new generation on the scene today which might be able to look at these issues more objectively and with less danger of rancor than was true of some in the past. Whether you consider yourself a "liberal", "conservative", "middle-of-the-roader" or scorn all such labels, we simply ask you to give this material fair and honest consideration. Through all these years, during and after the division, we have not personally stopped reading what brethren on the other side have had to say. We receive bulletins and periodicals from those who are now estranged from us and we read them. We have never written them angry notes demanding to be removed from their mailing lists, nor removed one of them from ours just because they reviewed something we had to say. We have always been willing to study both publicly and privately with those of the contrary persuasion. Our personal files are full of correspondence with many brethren over these years which bear evidence to the truth of that statement. We have met with one or more preachers with whom we differed for frank but reasonable discussions. We have never slammed the door on such discussions, not even public debates, when they were conducted under fair and equal arrangements. That remains our disposition to the present hour.

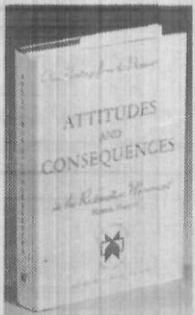
It is from the conviction that there are good and honest hearts who will study in the light of what the Bible teaches that the writers of the articles in this special issue have worked in preparing their material. We ask all into whose hands this may fall to read carefully, prayerfully and honestly what you find here. Compare it with what your Bible teaches and then accept or reject it accordingly. The contributors of this material have worked hard and without monetary compensation. We take this means of publicly thanking them. If you appreciate their efforts, then write them and tell them so. It is our earnest prayer that this material will shed light rather than simply generate heat. We plead for honest study.

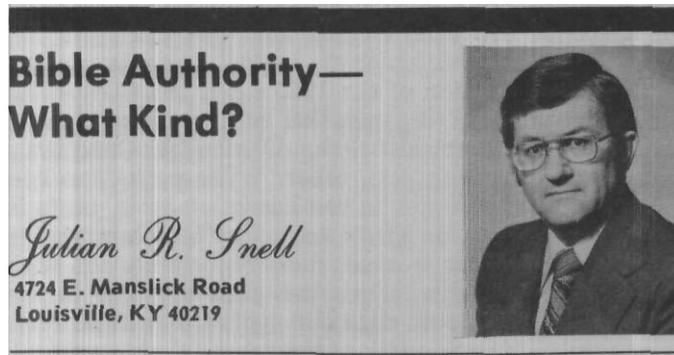
**Attitudes and Consequences
in the Restoration Movement**

By Homer Hailey. The aim of this work has been to trace the development of two attitudes toward the Scripture authority in the Restoration Movement: that of the early spirits in the movement, and another which grew up within it, leading ultimately to division.

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Lack of respect for scriptural authority is at the root of every problem of major proportion to face God's people. Authority is the right to command or direct, to authorize a thing is to direct by authority. In spiritual matters all authority inheres in God.

Authority, legislative, executive and judicial, all, has been given into the hands of Christ. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18). Christ is "head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:22-23). The church, the spiritual body of Christ, as well as the Christian individual, can act to the glory of God only by the authority of Christ. He is the head who controls, the king who reigns by the law which he has legislated.

Christ gave binding and loosing authority only to his apostles. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:19), is specifically addressed to Peter. However, a more general statement of the same dimensions is applicable to all the disciples in Matthew 18:18. That which the apostles bound and loosed by the word of the Spirit had already been bound in heaven. The finality of this is accepted when we realize that every obligation and privilege associated with being a Christian is circumscribed by apostolic teaching. There can be no going beyond their word in either direction. Proper respect for the authority of Christ is shown only by submission to apostolic teaching.

The authority of Christ vested in the apostles is exercised completely in the New Testament. This furnishes the apostolic pattern which is to be followed today. Being perfect and complete, the scriptures admit no change or revision. Acceptance of this basic principle begets perfection within those who follow the scriptures and insures unity among them. The admonition, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. 3:16), which was followed successfully in New Testament times continues to be the divine formula in matters of dispute today and where followed will produce the same meeting of minds and unity of practice as it did then. Significantly, questions and problems during the days of the apostles were settled by an appeal to them. Acts 15 is a classic illustration of the effectiveness of this and authorizes no course but this in our own time.

New Testament authority is established in one of

three ways. Command or precept involves a direct statement of instruction or direction. Approved example involves the practice in the New Testament under guidance of the apostles as they had received of the Lord. Necessary inference relates to that which though neither expressly stated nor specifically exemplified, yet is necessarily implied by the language.

Having made these initial observations we turn our attention to the assignment of this article "kinds of authority." We immediately take note that there are two kinds of authority which must be recognized even after establishing scriptural authority. These are generic and specific which we propose to consider in that order by defining and illustrating. Generic means, "general, opposite to specific." Specific means, "precisely formulated or restricted; specifying or explicit." Recognition of these two kinds of authority is vital to proper application of scriptural authority.

Generic or general authority includes anything, method, or means of execution, that comes within the class or order of the precept, example or necessary inference. It includes all within the scope and class of the command necessary to the carrying out of that command. God gives the authority but the choice as to the how of doing is left open to man. The action is set out but the how is not spelled out.

Specific authority excludes every thing not particularly specified. God has made choice and man is left no option. Mark it! General authority includes; specific authority excludes. As we attempt to illustrate we trust it will become readily apparent that these distinctions are not as technical as they may seem.

Jesus commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt. 28:19). The command "go" is generic, the choice of how to go must be made. A number of options might be considered. A man might walk, ride, fly or take a ship as he goes forth preaching the gospel. God did not specify the how of going, choice of the options is man's to make.

Within the same context (Mt. 28:19-20) we have the command to "teach." What is to be taught is certainly specified, the gospel. This excludes everything else. However, the command to teach is generic and one may teach in a number of ways. God did not tell how, the choice is with man respecting the options open to him. We may teach publicly or privately, use a one on one approach or the class method. Since God did not specify which, no man has the right to bind a specific method. Some make the mistake here of trying to make the generic command "teach", specific and forbid classes. This is a binding where God has not bound.

The command to assemble is generic. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25), necessitates a place. Where are we to assemble? Several options are open from which a choice must be made. Is the place to be in a home, a rented facility or a meeting house bought and paid for by those who are to utilize the facility? Which is

it to be? Again, God did not specify. He left it to man's judgement to select the most expedient of the options open to him. Some have argued there is no authority for the meeting house. Such fails to recognize the validity of general authority which includes the means or method necessary to the carrying out of the command. The underlying failure in the assertion seems to admit only those things specifically authorized. Such reasoning usually includes water coolers, bathrooms, and the like, as being accepted facilities but without authority. I conclude that any facility essential to the command to assemble is authorized. However, since the assembling is for the purpose of worship and spiritual edification, only those facilities conducive to this are authorized. Recreational facilities, fellowship halls and all such are precluded, along with the use of any existing facilities for such purposes, because only that which is expedient to the furtherance of the gospel is so authorized.

We now turn our efforts to specific authority in an attempt to illustrate and exemplify how specific authority excludes every thing not particularly specified. The command to Noah to build an ark out of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14) continues to aptly illustrate. When God specified the kind of wood, gopher, this excluded every other wood. No circumstance, no amount of rationalizing on the part of Noah could have justified the use of pine, walnut, oak, or any other wood. All except gopher was excluded! When God specified the kind of wood no man had the right to add or substitute another or in any wise change.

The command to sing, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19), excludes every other "kind" of music. Instrumental music is excluded by the fact God specified "sing." Had God said make music, the generic, man would have been at liberty to choose the kind, whether instrumental or vocal. However, God specified vocal music, singing, and no man has the right to grant a liberty which God's authority excludes. The command to sing does include whatever is necessary to carry out the order: words, whether in book or from memory, tuning fork or pitch pipe, leader and the like.

The elements of the Lord's Supper are specified by precept, example and necessary inference (Mt. 26:17, 29; 1 Cor. 11:23-28; Acts 20:7). Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine excludes every other element. The first day of the week implies every first day and at the same time excludes every other day of the week. Yeast bread, milk, meat, ice cream, or any other element would be without authority, therefore sinful. The method of distributing the elements of the Lord's Supper is not specified. Whether one container or one hundred is used in distributing the fruit of the vine among the worshippers does not change the element or in any way alter the observance of the communion. The container is of no significance, it symbolizes and portrays nothing. The word "cup" is used figuratively in Matthew 26:28 and stands for the content.

God has specified the congregation, local church,

(Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1), as the only organic entity through which collective work and responsibility is to be accomplished. The specific here excludes any other organization in doing the work God has assigned the church. There is nothing larger or smaller than the local congregation by way of organization in the New Testament. There is nothing else. Any failure to accept God's arrangement is rebellion against divine authority. This is precisely what has occurred with respect to the church support of human institutions in the work of benevolence. There is absolutely no authority for the benevolent society, orphan home, through which the church presumes to work. No more so in fact than there was authority for the missionary society of more than a century ago. In the one we have envisioned the doing of the work of benevolence, in the other the work of evangelism, preaching the gospel, and in the both an organization, an arrangement, outside the realm of that specified. Obviously the support and endorsement of such is rebellion against the authority of God.

In the examples of New Testament cooperation the lesson is specific. Funds were never sent through another congregation but always to (Acts 11:27-30). Those in need had not by design set up some sort of brotherhood agency and then called for help. In evangelism, funds were sent to the preacher in need directly (1 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15-16). The application of this example today eliminates the sponsoring church arrangement, any shape or form of the missionary society, and any plan which does not give expression to the same New Testament practice.

Elders in every church is clearly authorized and required (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). God has specified their jurisdiction as "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof (1 Pet. 5:2). Whenever elders become overseers of anything else but the work of the flock "which is among you" or the "flock over which the Holy Ghost made them overseers" they are without authority from God and stand condemned. This very principle clearly indicts every eldership which has assumed the oversight of a "brotherhood" project such as Herald of Truth, World Radio, and any number of schemes and arrangements which presume to activate the church at large through common administration.

With respect to kinds of authority there are two extremes which must be recognized and guarded against. One extreme is represented in the anti-class group of brethren who contend that in order for a thing to be scriptural it must be specifically authorized. Upon this basis they reject the class system of teaching failing to recognize that such is but means and method within the general authority and command to teach. When one means or method inherent in a general instruction is bound to the exclusion of all others the result is an extremist or crank. The other extreme is represented by those sometimes referred to as "digressives," among the Christian Church who contend that in order for a thing to be wrong it must be specifically condemned. This number seems to continue to grow even among us.

In summary we emphasize that for a thing to be authorized there must be either precept, approved

example or necessary inference in the New Testament. When the authority is general then anything included within the scope of the thing authorized is permissible. General authority then includes any means or method required to carry out the command. But if God specified the kind of method of executing his will then there is no substitute, no addition is allowed but everything of the same class or order is excluded. Thus specific authority excludes.

May the Lord help us to recognize the need for abiding in the authority of the Scriptures and give us the wisdom and courage to apply such authority to all we teach and practice.



In Revelation 11:1, John was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God." Before one can measure something there must exist some standard of measurement. We are unfamiliar with many of the categories of weights and measurements that are mentioned in the Bible. There are different opinions, for example, as to exactly how long a cubic was. One thing is certain, however. They knew. When a piece of cloth three cubics long was purchased, they knew how much material they were getting.

If there were no commonly recognized standards of measurement, mass confusion would result among merchants and their customers. When a lady orders a piece of fabric five yards long, she assumes that the store's yardstick conforms to the standard.

In like manner, standards of authority are accepted in every realm and relationship. Courts are necessary for the maintenance of law and order and the preservation of human rights. Decisions of courts may not always be popular. They may sometimes be appealed to a higher court. But finally the court decision must be accepted and conformed to. The courts, in turn, must rest decisions on existing laws. Such are their standard.

Confusion persists in religion over this simple and elementary fact. A common standard of authority is not recognized and adhered to. Roman Catholicism accepts three standards of authority: the Bible, the Pope, and traditions of the "Church Fathers." Various denominations accept different and differing creeds, manuals, and catechisms as sources of religious authority. Some people base their religious convictions upon their consciences, feelings, what their parents taught them, or what a certain preacher says.

In Amos 3:3, the ancient prophet asked, "Can

two walk together, except they be agreed?" Obviously, the answer is no. But in order to agree, they must have something to agree upon. I might draw a line and say, "It's 12 inches long." You may say in disagreement, "That line is not a fraction over 10 inches." There's only one way to settle the dispute. Find a ruler. If we both agree to accept it as a standard of measurement, then we can be united on that simple matter.

Well, God has provided man with a standard by which he may measure things in religion. When Jesus was questioned about the greatest commandment. He asked, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). Such is the standard God has given.

Matt. 18:18 reveals that the apostles were given binding and loosing authority in what they taught. We must strive to continue in the apostles' doctrine. John 12:48 declares that the words of Jesus will serve as the standard of judgment in the last day. Those words are the standard of authority in our time.

The main question we are raising in this article is "How does the Bible teach?" Brethren have generally agreed, at least until recently, that we may establish Divine authority in three ways: 1) by command or statement from God's word; 2) by a divinely approved example; and 3) by an inference which is necessarily implied in the Bible.

Let us now look at these one by one and see if this is truly the case.

The Bible Teaches By Command Or Statement

There are many examples in the Old and New Testaments of God giving direct commands to men. In Genesis 2:17, the Lord said, "... thou shalt not eat of it," referring to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was a direct command. Then He added, "... for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." That was a simple statement of fact.

Such direct statements and commands are hard to misunderstand. When the serpent came tempting the woman, he didn't try to twist the words of the command. He did not try to convince the mother of all living that the words did not actually convey the message she had assumed. That would have been hard to do, though, perhaps, not impossible. But rather, he questioned God's motives, and then accused Him of lying: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4,5).

God's command and statement of Genesis 2:17 is not a bit clearer than His direct command of Acts 2:38: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." I heard a preacher say not long ago: "Baptism won't save you. If you think it will help save you, you're hell-bound." But God plainly declared that baptism is a necessary condition of remission of sins. The Bible teaches this by means of plain statements and commands.

Some other matters which are taught by direct

commands or statements are: faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17); one must have faith to be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6); confession of Christ is necessary to salvation (Rom. 10:9, 10); one who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God's approval (2 John 9); we are to break the bread and partake of the cup in remembrance of Jesus until He comes again (1 Cor. 11:24, 25); we are to sing and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord (Eph. 5:18, 19); we are to give unto the work of the church upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2); we are to study to show ourselves approved (2 Tim. 2:15); we are to mortify (put to death) such things as fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness (Col. 3:5).

There are many such examples of direct commands or plain statements in the Bible. We can easily see that the Bible teaches in this manner.

The Bible Teaches By Example

If it can be shown that the Bible teaches by example, then we must be concerned about studying the examples and being instructed by them. Some want to just toss the apostolic examples aside because of difficulties in deciding which are circumstantial and which are essential. Remember, however, there are difficulties involved in learning God's will by His commands. Questions like: "to whom was this command given?" and "under what circumstances was it given?" must be raised. God told Naaman, through the prophet, to dip seven times in the Jordan. Jesus commanded the rich young ruler to sell all that he had and give it to the poor.

We cannot toss every command aside simply because they do not all apply to us. The same is true of examples. We must give diligence to study and employ the teaching of Bible examples.

The New Testament clearly shows the validity of teaching by examples. In Phil. 4:9, Paul commanded the saints to do what they had seen in him as well as what they had heard from him. Again, in 1 Cor. 4:16, 17, the Christians were told to imitate, or follow the example of Paul.

To illustrate one legitimate use of Bible examples, in Jude 3, we are taught by direct command to contend for the faith. As we study God's word, we find many examples of how this was done by Jesus and His apostles.

In regard to the eldership, we learn in Acts 14:23 that Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders in every city" where they had established a church. Many will say that we do not have to be concerned about doing that today. But one thing for sure: We have New Testament authority for that. We know that it was done. It was done by an apostle who represented the Lord in his teaching (2 Cor. 5:20). We do not have authority for any other form of congregational organization.

Again, in Acts 20:7, we find an example of the church partaking of the Lord's supper upon the first day of the week. An apostle was with them, and showed his approval by partaking with them. Many maintain that such is not binding today. But one thing I know. Assembling upon the first day of the

week to break bread is approved by God. I can prove that. I cannot prove by God's word that any other day is so approved.

The Bible Teaches By Necessary Implication

Some say that God does not imply His will . . . that this is just an invention by a group of literalists to justify their legalistic practices. But I believe it can be clearly demonstrated that the Bible teaches not only by direct statement and example, but also by implication.

Everything that is ever said is said either implicitly or explicitly. To say something explicitly is to say it plainly in so many words. To say something implicitly is to say it by implication.

If I show you a square, and inform you that side A-B is 12 inches, I have told you two things explicitly: 1. the figure is a square; and 2. side A-B is 12 inches. But in telling you that, I am also telling you implicitly that the perimeter of this figure is 48 inches; that the area is 144 square inches; and that the other three sides are also 12 inches.

Many people may not be aware that I have said all that, but I have said it, nevertheless. To understand the first two points is simply a matter of understanding language. But the other points are necessarily inferred by logic.

If the Bible does not teach by implication, we might just as well forget about it. There is not a statement in the Bible that is made specifically and explicitly to me or to you. "Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized . . ." (Acts 22:16) was said to Saul, not to Ken Green. I must reason that since I live under the same law, and since God is no respecter of persons, I must also obey that. Acts 17:30 says that God demands all men everywhere to repent. Even here I must apply logic. Since I am a man somewhere, I must repent.

This is so simple, we do not realize it, but we have inferred that conclusion from a necessary implication.

A good example of the Bible teaching by necessary implication is found in Matt. 22:23-33. The Sadducees did not believe that the dead were conscious. Jesus did not use a direct statement to refute them. He quoted Exodus 3:6, 16: "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." When God spoke these words to Moses, the three patriarchs named had been dead for some four-hundred years. Yet He said, "I Am" their God. Jesus added, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

The necessary implication is: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive as spirits, though physically dead. This is the implicit conclusion.

Acts 15, A Classic Illustration

In the fifteenth chapter of Acts we find a classic example of God revealing His will in the three ways we have named. According to verse 1, the proposition under discussion was: "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Some were affirming that proposition. Paul, Barnabas, and others were denying it. There were likely some who had not taken a definite stand one way or another.

Now notice how they arrived at the truth. God did

not tell them directly the answer to this issue. He had already revealed enough for them to know the answer.

First, Peter made reference to the direct command God had given him: "Men and brethren, ye know how a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (v. 7). This direct command from God is recorded in Acts 10:20: "Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them."

Now, to whom was Peter commanded to go? To uncircumcised Gentiles. Therefore this incident was highly germane to the proposition under study.

Next, some examples were set forth. In verse 8, Peter continued his words and showed that God had demonstrated His acceptance of these uncircumcised Gentiles by "giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us." Then, in verse 12, Barnabas and Paul declared the miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Surely then, they had not been wrong in preaching the same gospel to them that they had preached to the Jews.

Finally, they reached a conclusion that was the only logical inference from the evidence. James said: "Wherefore, my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God" (v. 19).

Respect For God's Silence

Another important matter which is illustrated in Acts 15 is respect for God's silence. When the letter was composed which was to be sent out to Gentile congregations, it spoke of certain ones who had gone out with the doctrine that one "must be circumcised, and keep the law." The inspired letter commented: "to whom we gave no such commandment" (v. 24).

Let us never imagine that we have outgrown the penetrating question: Where is the book, chapter, and verse that authorizes this activity? If we cannot find authorization by either direct statement, approved example, or necessary implication, let us be still and respect His silence.

The Search for the Ancient Order

By Earl Irvin West

This two-volume work on the search for the landmarks of primitive Christianity covers the Restoration Movement from 1849 — 1906. Volume I traces the history from the early beginnings through the movements of Stone, Campbell, the early pioneer preachers, Lard, McGarvey and others. Volume II, carries on from the Civil War to "Horizons of Destiny."

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The church of our Lord was conceived, designed, purposed, and ordained of God from eternity (Eph. 3:10, 11). It is a spiritual institution, equipped with spiritual means, for the saving of the spirits of men for that great spirit world beyond (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28-32; Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 1-4). While secular institutions are established, maintained, and fulfill their mission by carnal motivation, economic enterprise, and with a view to material gain and earthly rewards, the church of our Lord is established, maintained, and fulfills its mission by spiritual motivation, eleemosynary enterprise, and with an ultimate view to eternal rewards. Indeed, the church is spiritual in nature.

This article concerns itself with the nature of the organizational structure and function of this institution. Other articles in this special issue deal with other aspects of the spiritual nature of the church.

A failure to understand the nature of the organization and function of the church has resulted in two extremes. On the one hand we have approval given to institutions which supplant and reflect on the all-sufficiency of the church. On the other hand we have opposition to some institutions that have a rightful and legitimate place among men. Missionary, benevolent, and edification societies wholly eleemosynary in nature exemplify the former, and some publishing companies of religious literature, Bible colleges, and foundations exemplify the latter. Concerning the latter, it should be observed that while exceptions may be found involving abuses or a prostitution from the legitimate basis, such does not mean that all such institutions are guilty. This article should make clear when and under what conditions such violations are found. The real issue in either instance is the all-sufficiency of the church.

The principle of all-sufficiency in relation to both the Bible and the church has been misunderstood. Consequently, confusion and division result. In the past (more than now) some opposed religious literature (quarterlies in classes, tracts, books of sermons, papers, etc.) on the grounds of the all-sufficiency of the Bible. On the other hand some see no harm in creeds, manuals, catechisms, etc., as standards in religion. However, a more careful study of this issue shows that the all-sufficiency of the Bible precludes the latter. This is true because such is made the same in nature and use as the Bible, namely, a standard of authority. This same principle, however, allows the former because such is not the same in nature and use as the Bible. Of course, if

such were used as a standard, it would reflect upon the all-sufficiency of the Bible as readily as the other.

Some see no harm in a missionary society or in benevolent and edification societies which are the same in nature as the missionary societies. On the other hand some oppose publishing companies of religious literature, Bible colleges, and foundations upon the grounds of the all-sufficiency of the church. However, a more careful study of this issue shows that the all-sufficiency of the church precludes the former. This is true because such is the same in nature as the church, namely, an eleemosynary missionary, benevolent, and edification society. Aside from their mission, the distinguishing and identifying mark is found in being eleemosynary in organization and function. However, this same principle allows the latter because such is not the same in nature as the church. Of course, if such were to become eleemosynary in nature, it would reflect upon the all-sufficiency of the church as readily as the other.

Webster defines the word "eleemosynary" to mean: "1. Relating or devoted to charity or alms. 2. Given in charity or alms. 3. Supported by charity." When identifying the nature of the church this word must be understood in a twofold sense. It is both supported by and devoted to charity. This means that it is supported by contributions and in turn makes free distribution of its product or service. While the word may apply in other instances to other organizations partially eleemosynary in nature, it is this twofold view that identifies the true nature of the church.

I remember that when the "sponsoring church" arrangement became a live issue among brethren that the expression "centralized control and oversight" was thought by some to be too cumbersome and arbitrary. However, time and common use have shown it to be most accurate and effective in identifying the kind of cooperation opposed. Perhaps the same thing may appear concerning the word "eleemosynary," but in the light of the whole of revelation on the true nature of the church, it most accurately and effectively identifies that nature.

The church and the missionary society parallel each other in mission and nature. Both are dependent upon contributions for their existence, and both make free distribution of the gospel at their own discretion and under their own oversight. Publishing companies, Bible colleges, and foundations do not (if so, they are excluded from consideration at this point). These make available gospel lessons (either written or oral for either individuals or churches) not on an eleemosynary basis, but rather on the basis of economic enterprise. They are service organizations—SELLING their products or services. They are not the same in nature as the church and, therefore, do not reflect upon its all-sufficiency.

Now let me clarify some points that may be confusing to some. What about contributions made to such organizations? Donations to such an organization would not change its nature. It would not use the contribution to make free distribution of the gospel at its own discretion and under its own oversight. Rather, it would be used to keep itself in business. In this highly competitive world this is often

necessary in order for some businesses (of worth to Christians) to exist. The distribution of the gospel would still be made by the purchaser of the product or service—not the seller. Upon this basis, such an organization does not parallel the church in nature. It is not wholly dependent upon contributions nor does it make free distribution of the gospel as does the church—it is not eleemosynary in nature, in the twofold sense of that term.

What about such an institution giving away some of its products or services? It must be conceded that such could change the nature of the institution. It would depend upon a few things. If such were done with a view to promoting the business (as all business enterprises do) commensurate with advertising principles, such would not change its nature. The basis of operation would still be the same—a service organization selling its products or services.

Another point confusing to some involves the Bible college and publishing companies. Some see a significant difference between tracts of a publishing company and teaching done in the college. However, more careful consideration shows them to be parallel. The writer of the tract teaches whoever reads it. The publishing company makes available this teaching for the purchaser who in turn uses it to enlighten himself or someone else. The teacher in the college teaches whoever hears the lesson. The college makes available this teaching for the purchaser (whoever pays the tuition) who in turn uses it to enlighten himself or someone else. One learns from a written lesson through the eye. The other learns from an oral lesson through the ear. Both learn from a lesson purchased from a service organization which is not the same in nature as the church. Therefore such organizations do not reflect upon the all-sufficiency of the church as does the missionary society which is wholly eleemosynary in nature. Such organizations no more reflect upon the all-sufficiency of the church than do quarterlies, used in Bible classes, reflect upon the all-sufficiency of the Bible.

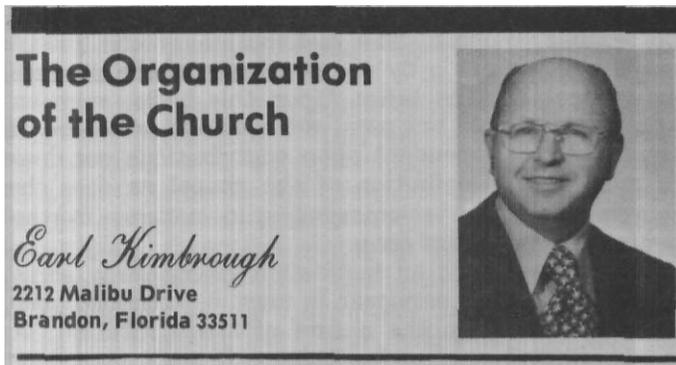
Brethren, the all-sufficiency of the church is a very basic and fundamental Bible principle. It cannot be ignored without digression and apostasy. However, we must exercise the greatest caution to avoid any extreme that would put us in the class of the Pharisees of old, namely, making laws of our own. This would make us guilty of following the "traditions of men" (Mk. 7:7-9).

Congregational Cooperation of the Churches of Christ

by H. E. Winkler

A well arranged and documented book of 158 pages dealing with church sponsorships, centralized power and control, orphan homes and Herald of Truth. Diagrams and charts help emphasize the truth.

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The Lord designed the church according to his own will and circumscribed it with certain distinguishing marks which are clearly set forth in the Scriptures. No one of these essential features of the church is more important than any other. "All things" must be "according to the pattern" (Heb. 8:1-5; 1 Pet. 4:11). But history shows that no part of the divine plan for the church has been abused with greater destructive consequences to the whole than what is generally called the organization of the church. This was the initial error that paved the road to Papal Rome and the most significant failure of the Protestant Reformation. It was also the opening wedge that divided the churches of the Restoration movement and led the larger portion of them into denominationalism. The Lord's design for the organization of his church, therefore, must remain a major concern of those who desire to "speak where the Bible speaks" and to "be silent where the Bible is silent."

The Scope of Church Organization

The organization of the church cannot be understood without recognizing that the word "church" is used in two different senses in the Scriptures. The universal church is the spiritual body of Christ composed of all the redeemed souls over whom Christ reigns as head (Eph. 5:23-27; 1:22-23). However, the universal church has no organization on earth. Each member of the body is united with Christ, but this union is affected and maintained by individual submission to his will. The apostles were set in the church as special representatives of Christ with authority to make known the Lord's will for the present age, but their concurrent reign with Christ is through the New Testament (Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 3:17-18). A careful search of the Scriptures reveals no trace of any earthly head or hierarchy over the church. Neither is there evidence of any organization within the body of Christ on a national or regional basis.

However, the New Testament does show the organization of Christians on a very limited and clearly defined level to carry out certain collective responsibilities. This is the local church made up of the disciples at a particular place who meet, work and worship together according to the will of Christ. This use of the word "church" pertains to separate local congregations, such as, "the church that was at Antioch" and "the church of the Thessalonians" (Acts 13:1; 1 Thes. 1:1). The independence and autonomy of the local church is exemplified in the New Testament. Each congregation had its own local

membership. For instance, "the church of God which is at Corinth" consisted only of the saints in that city (1 Cor. 1:2). Each congregation maintained control of its local fellowship. It received faithful brethren into its number, retained spiritual oversight of its members (through its elders), and expelled those who refused to walk uprightly according to the truth (Acts 9:26-28; 11:26; 1 Cor. 5:13; Rev. 2:14-16). Each congregation also performed its own divinely assigned mission.

The Divine Order in the Local Church

"All things" pertaining to the church were subject to Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). This, naturally, embraces everything that concerns the local church, as well as everything that concerns the universal church. The apostles' teaching was bound on all congregations equally. Paul reminded the Corinthians of his ways in Christ which, as an apostle, he taught "everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). His instructions to one church were ordained "in all the churches" (1 Cor. 7:17; cf. 14:31-34). Thus, there was uniformity in all the churches. The apostolic order established in one congregation is necessarily the order established in all others. This was not only true in the first century, it is also true now, for what the apostles bound on the church then is still bound (Matt. 18:18).

The organization the Lord designed for the local church is very simple. Each congregation is self-governed under the spiritual care of men divinely chosen to oversee its membership. These men are known as "elders" or "presbyters" (Acts 20:17; 1 Tim. 4:14). The word indicates that those to whom the Holy Spirit applies it are mature Christians, experienced in the faith. But other descriptive terms are also used to designate the elders of a local church. They are called "bishops" or "overseers" to show the nature of their work (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-7). They are also called "pastors" or "shepherds" indicating the manner of their oversight (Eph. 4:11). Their service as shepherds is further seen in the pastoral word rendered "tend" or "feed" —"tend the flock of God" (1 Peter 5:2). It means "to act as a shepherd." (W.E. Vine.)

Soon after Barnabas and Paul established the churches of south-central Asia Minor, they "ordained (appointed for) them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23). Four important facts are stated or implied in this action. (1) Each church had its own elders. (2) The elders of each church were plural in number. (3) The elders within each church were equal in authority. (4) The eldership of each church was independent of and on an equality with the elders of all other churches. These facts are in harmony with and are underscored by all else the Scriptures teach concerning elders. No congregation that respects these facts will have any problem in regard to the organization of the church, provided the men chosen to serve as elders are qualified for the work.

Elders who function as the Lord intends will be on guard for the spiritual welfare of the flock over which they have responsibility (Acts 20:28). They will "take care of the church of God" (1 Tim. 3:5). They will "rule well" and "keep watch over" the souls entrusted to them (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17). They will

uphold and defend the word of God, keeping the church in the way of truth and protecting it from false teaching (Titus 1:9; Acts 20:29-31). Moreover, they will perform their duties without "lording it over" those allotted to them, but will prove to be "examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3). The qualifications for elders make it certain that those who serve as shepherds of the Lord's people are willing and able to do the work to which they are appointed (Cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

The elders' oversight begins and ends with the local church. It is limited to the members, work and resources of the congregation in which they serve. The Ephesian elders were shepherds of the flock of God at Ephesus, but they had no responsibility over the flock at Smyrna, nor any other church in Asia or the world (Acts 20:28). Peter's exhortation to elders also limits their oversight to "the flock of God among you" (1 Peter 5:1-4). What more could be said to more clearly ascribe the bounds of elders' authority?

In addition to elders, the Lord provides for deacons in the local church to assist the elders. Paul's letter to the Philippians shows that deacons were an established order in the congregation with the elders. It is addressed to all the saints at Philippi "with (including) the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). Evangelists in the church are charged with preaching and teaching the word of God (2 Tim. 4:1-5; Acts 8:5; 11:26; 20:20; 21:8). But evangelists are not in charge of the church. Like deacons, teachers and other members of the congregation, they serve under the oversight of the elders.

The Sufficiency of the Lord's Plan

The congregational organization the Lord gave for his church is fully sufficient for all governmental details of its work. This sufficiency is obvious from the fact that the organization is exclusive (Cf. 2 Peter 1:3). If more were needed, more would have been given. No other order can exist by apostolic authority. Nothing else is "according to the pattern." Nothing more may be set up "in the name of Christ" (Col. 3:17). Anything added to the Lord's plan for congregational independence carries us beyond the teaching of Christ and into that realm where there is no fellowship with God (2 John 9-10).

The Lord's exclusive plan necessarily eliminates any means for the function of the universal church, whether by a confederation of churches or an intermediate agency to act for the churches. The Lord's church needs no outside organizations or inter-congregational arrangements through which to work in evangelism, edification, benevolence, discipline, or anything else that concerns its mission. Conscientious elders who understand Paul's instructions to their Ephesian counterparts in Acts 20 will not delegate any part of their work to any other elders or institution on earth.

The first century churches operated only in their separate congregational capacity. The local church "sounded forth" the word of the Lord in its own and adjacent regions (1 Thes. 1:8). It supported preachers at home and abroad, sending directly to their need (1 Cor. 9:14; Acts 11:22; Phil. 4:15-16). It provided relief for its indigent members and when sister

churches were destitute it sent directly to their necessity (Acts 4:32-35; 11:27-30). It was also fully sufficient in edification (Acts 20:28). Nothing—no board, ecclesiastical order, or intermediate eldership—stood between the church and its work. None was needed; none was allowed.

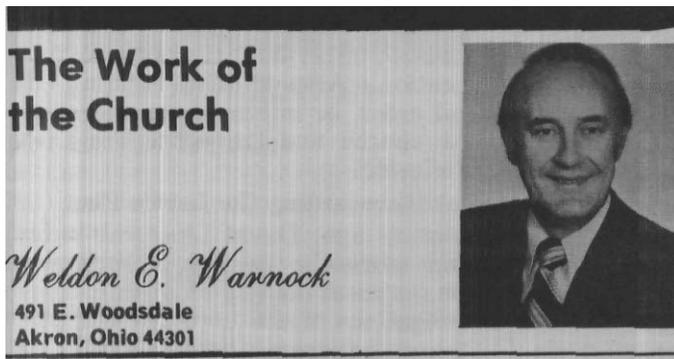
The Danger of Disregarding the Lord's Plan

More than a century ago, David Lipscomb wrote, "We sincerely and earnestly believe all organized bodies for religious purposes outside of, within, above or below the congregations of the Lord are sinful and treasonable." (*Gospel Advocate*, Jan. 18, 1870, pp. 27-28.) Sin is the violation of God's law and treason, specifically, is a betrayal of trust or a breach of faith. Disregard for the independence and autonomy of the local church, whether by overt institutionalism or weakly camouflaged under a "sponsoring church," violates God's law and is a breach of faith. This is exactly what institutionalists are guilty of and Lipscomb used well-chosen words when he labeled their practice "sinful and treasonable."

There is other danger also inherent in institutionalism. Once brethren overstep the bounds of divine authority to work through organizations outside their own congregation, they open the floodgate to further apostasy. It is only a matter of time until such churches lose their New Testament distinctiveness and blend smoothly into the denominational landscape. Those who try to justify institutionalism will pervert the word of God to achieve their purpose. This is seen in the futile attempt to find a missionary society in the Great Commission, a "sponsoring church" in Acts 11:27-30, and a benevolent board in James 1:27. Another real, though less apparent, danger is found in the difficulty men have in ever returning to the simplicity of the apostolic order once they have tasted the intoxicating power and glory of institutionalism.

"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). This is the only organization the Lord gave for his church. Each congregation is an independent body with its own elders, deacons and other members. Each does its own work under its own elders. There are five good reasons why this plan should be explicitly followed by every church of Christ on earth. (1) It is authorized by Christ. (2) It is simple and practical. (3) It is all-sufficient for what is needed by way of organization. (4) It is a strong force in holding the disciples of Christ to the right course in all matters of teaching, faith and practice. (5) Disregarding it will end in spiritual ruin. As the lamented James M. Pickens expressed it so long ago, "If the door is set ajar for innovations, how shall we determine where it shall stand or that it should not stand wide open, and that continually?" (*The Christian Monthly*, Aug., 1870, p. 233.)

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God designed the church (Eph. 3:10-11), established it on earth (Mt. 16:18), and gave it a work to do. This work is a divine work because the church is a divine institution. This work is the greatest work because the church is the greatest institution. This work is a glorious work because the church is a glorious institution.

The parable of the vineyard depicts the church as a working institution. Jesus said, "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard" (Mt. 20:1). A vineyard is a place of work and the church, being likened unto it, shows that it, too, is a place of work.

The work assigned the church is three-fold: (1) evangelism, (2) edification, and (3) benevolence. We will be referring to the work of the local church as we proceed to address ourselves to the work of the church in particular. There is a work that the church in the distributive sense (all individual Christians) is to do that runs parallel to the work of the local church, but we are not concerned in this article with that specific matter. Let us notice the work given to the local congregation in the order stated above.

Work of Evangelism

Mankind is lost in sin (Rom. 3:23). The gospel is the only power to save (Rom. 1:16). Consequently, God wants the gospel preached (Mk. 16:15; I Cor. 1:21), and has given the obligation to the church.

The church's marching orders to evangelize are given in Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15. Jesus said to go preach the gospel to every creature. In the parable of the sower, Jesus showed that the church is the sowing agency (Mt. 13:3-9). The church is to hold forth the words of life (Phil. 2:16).

First century churches sent preachers out into the world to preach the gospel. The church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:1-3).

Paul reminded the Thessalonian church how they had sounded out the gospel. "For from you sounded out the words of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything" (I Thess. 1:8).

While Paul preached at Corinth, his financial

support was supplied by churches of Macedonia. He took wages of other churches to do a service at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8). Congregations in Macedonia helped spread the gospel through Paul.

The church at Philippi assisted Paul financially in preaching the gospel, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity (Phil. 4:15-16).

Friends, churches of the first century were missionary minded. In a period of about 30 years, the whole world had an opportunity to hear the gospel (Col. 1:23). Twentieth-century churches need to exemplify their interest in the lost and put forth every effort to take the gospel to the world.

Work of Edification

In addition to evangelizing the world, the church is to develop its own spiritual strength by edification (Eph. 4:16). In God's divine arrangement, he set offices in the church for the equipping or perfecting of the saints.

Referring to offices or functions in the church, Paul said that the Lord "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

The apostles and prophets revealed the truth (Eph. 3:5), the evangelists are to proclaim the truth (2 Tim. 4:2), and the pastors (elders) are to see to it that the truth is taught in the church (Acts 20:28-31). By faithful teaching of the truth the saints will be perfected to do the work of the ministry (service) and the building up (evangelizing) of the body of Christ.

Members of the church are to be mature, coming to the "unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:13-14). It is the business of the church to ground and stabilize itself to prevent false doctrine from leading it astray (Col. 2:6-7).

Paul instructed the Corinthians that "forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (I Cor. 14:12). In verse 26 of this same chapter, Paul stated that when the Corinthians came together to exercise spiritual gifts, "Let all things be done unto edifying."

May each church be committed to developing itself to the extent that its members can teach others (Heb. 5:12), have love, knowledge and discernment (Phil. 1:9), growing faith and an abounding love toward each other (2 Thess. 1:3), and can resist the Devil in all of his devices (Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:9; 2 Cor. 2:11).

Work of Benevolence

Along with evangelism and edification is the work of benevolence. This work is limited, however, in its scope as the Scriptures plainly teach. Some have a misconception that church benevolence should be

general, helping all humanity. But this would be an impossible task, exhausting all of its supplies with no resources left to do any other work God gave the church to perform.

God even limits the saints whom the church may help. Listen to Paul: "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (I Tim. 5:16). God says we are to take care of our own, and not burden the church, so that the church can relieve those saints who have no one to care for them. If we do not provide for our own, we are worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8).

The church at Jerusalem relieved the needs of its destitute members who remained in Jerusalem after their conversion to the Lord (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). The needs of widows were supplied by the liberality of the saints (Acts 6:1-6).

When a great dearth came throughout the world and affected the saints in Judea, the church at Antioch sent relief unto the brethren in Judea, sending it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:27-30).

At another time, when the saints of the Jerusalem church became destitute and in want, churches in Macedonia, Achaia and Galatia sent money to alleviate the need at Jerusalem. We read, "For it pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:26). "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye And when I come whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem" (I Cor. 16:1, 3).

We can clearly see that when a NEED arose among the people of God, the church rallied to their aid. Brethren were concerned for one another and they demonstrated their love by giving to help their physical wants. May we reflect the same interest for each other.

Brethren, the foregoing things constitute the work of the church. Let us be satisfied with the mission that God gave the church and not prostitute its work into unauthorized activities.

Things Not the Church's Work

When the church ventures into unauthorized areas, it is treading on ground that is without divine sanction. None of the following things is a work of the church, although some churches have become involved in them.

(1) **Social reform.** The church is not a "social institution." The gospel it preaches is not a "social gospel." Although the gospel will bring about social reform, it does so by changing the inner man as to his thinking and conduct. The first century church did not initiate a campaign of social reform and equality.

Paul said, "...as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk.... Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it: but if thou mayest by made free, use it rather" (I Cor. 7:17, 20-21). Christianity

was to make a better man out of a person, regardless of his social position. Any inequities would eventually be eradicated by changing man's heart.

(2) **Recreational activities.** For the church to be involved in recreation for the young or old, is foreign to the purpose for which the church was established.

(3) **Business ventures.** The church is not in the money making business. Money for the church is to be raised by the members giving as prospered upon the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:1-2). There is no scriptural provisions for the church to be competing with the business world in merchandising, farming, manufacturing or any other form of economic endeavor.

(4) **Secular education.** The church is to teach the Bible, not secular subjects, such as math, English, science, literature, etc. The church is not to be in the secular school business. For the church to operate secular schools, such as kindergartens, is a perversion of the church's energies and resources. Brethren need to get the church out of the secular school business, both in participation and in contributions from the treasury.

(5) **Domestic relations.** Though the Word of God is to be preached in dealing with all problems, the church is not a center for counselling on marital problems, mental and emotional disturbances, economical hardships, parent-child problems, etc. If preachers are bent on being counselors, let them qualify with the State, set up their private office, and keep the work of domestic relations out of the church. This is not the function of the church, and neither is counselling in these areas the work of a gospel preacher.

In conclusion, let's respect the divine pattern for the work of the church that is revealed in the Bible, and let's energetically get involved in the work God has assigned the church to do. Doing nothing is no better than doing the wrong thing. While we point out the danger of unlawful works the church might get into, let's not be guilty of the sin of do-nothing. (Some of the points borrowed from *Walking By Faith* by Roy Cogdill.)

W. W. Otey:
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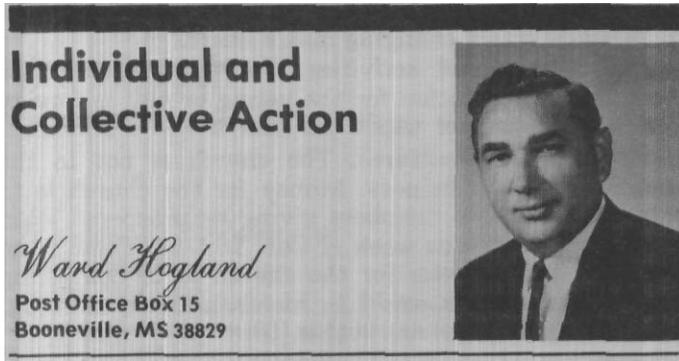
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When I began preaching, I never heard of anyone failing to differentiate between the work of the church and the individual. However, with the coming of the institutional craze, many vain and foolish arguments made their appearance on the record of human transactions. Some might ask, why would one argue the church may do what the individual does? The answer is obvious. Liberal brethren desired to broaden the base of church activity. That is, use money from church treasuries for which the bible gives no authority. Then someone came up with the incredible idea that the church is made up of individuals; therefore, the church as a unit may do what the individual does. Some leave out the word "may" and argue what the individual does what the church does.

The word church is a collective noun like flock, herd, or band. One might say about a flock of geese, "The flock have bands around their necks". Certainly we know they are in a group, but the bands are individual. One might say "The church sings." Certainly we understand the singing takes place in an assembly but we do it as individuals. We also could say "The church prays" or "The church observes the Lord's Supper." It is understood we pray and observe the Lord's Supper when assembled but do it individually and not as a unit. It shouldn't be necessary to explicate further on such simple matters. In order to illustrate the point let us take a couple of passages. First, a passage where the word church is used in a distributive sense. That is, the individuals functioning as individuals and not as a unit. In Acts 12:5 Luke says, "Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Please note the "Church" prayed. Did they do this as a unit or individually? In the first place prayer is an individual matter and no one can do it for you. I am not even sure they were assembled when they did the praying! The bible does not say. Even if they were like the flock, it must be done individually. Now for a passage where the church acted as a unit. In 1 Tim. 5:16 Paul said, "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed." Gentle reader, you will note in this verse you have unit or collective action. The word church here means taking it out of the church treasury. I have asked many opponents in forensic frays if the word "CHURCH" in this text means taking it out of the church

treasury and I have never received a negative answer. All freely admit Paul meant, "Do not take it out of the church treasury." As a matter of fact, I do not know of a single way the church may act as a UNIT except in the spending of its funds. Do you? If so, what is it and where is the passage? It (the church) acts as a UNIT when it spends its money. When Paul said, "He robbed other churches taking his salary or wages" (2 Cor. 11:13), did they do this as individuals or as a unit? The word "wages" from "opsonion" means a stipulated salary such as the soldier receives. It is obvious the churches acted as units in supporting this great evangelist.

Plain grammar can help in the study of this important question. In the Plain English Handbook by Walsh (revised addition) which is used by many public schools we have this information on page 27. "A pronoun which refers to a collective noun is singular if the group acts as a unit; but the pronoun is plural if the individuals of the group act as individuals". Mr. Walsh gives us an example of both. For the singular (unit action) he gives, "The band has won fame because of its leader". Please notice the singular pronoun "its" which means UNIT action! Now, let us take a controversial passage and make the application. I shall underline the pronoun and its antecedent (the noun) for emphasis. "Let not the church (noun) be charged; that it (Singular pronoun) may relieve them that are widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:16). This proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the word church in this text refers to UNIT or COLLECTIVE action. Mr. Walsh in his grammar gives us a second example demonstrating individual action. He says, "The band has ordered their new instruments." Please note the plural pronoun "Their" which means they acted as INDIVIDUALS in ordering their instruments. Now, let us take a second controversial passage. Please remember, we are now looking for a plural pronoun. Our passage for study is Gal. 6:10. Some argue the "We" and "Us" of Gal. 6:10 refer to Unit or Collective action and thus seek to justify supporting sinners out of the church treasury. The real antecedent of "We" and "Us" is obviously "Brethren" of verse two, Chapter one. However, some argue the antecedent is "Churches" of the same verse. Let us for arguments sake say the antecedent is "Churches." With the rule in mind let us read, "As we (churches) have therefore opportunity let us (churches) do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." I have again underlined the pronoun with its antecedent, the noun, for emphasis. Our rule, according to Mr. Walsh is that if the pronoun is plural, we have individual action. Would anyone be so naive as to argue that "We" and "Us" are not plural? I doubt it. When brethren go to Gal. 6:10 and argue unit, church action, not only are they in trouble with the text but plain grammar boomerangs on them! Remember our cliché? Some of us feel like old Jeremiah, the weeping prophet who said, "Oh that my head was waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

Back in 1960 Reuel Lemmons, editor of the Firm Foundation, Austin, Texas wrote a fine article on this very subject. Brother Lemmons and I differ on many things but I appreciate his unstinting stand on this important subject. The article is so good I want to quote a part of it. Incidentally, this article appeared in the May 3rd, 1960 issue of his paper. Here is what Reuel says:

"It seems to us that the one and only real principle underlying all the 'issues' of our present time is that of church action versus individual action.

We believe that if this one principle could be resolved the 'issues'—all of them would disappear. We repeatedly hear the slogan voiced that 'Anything the individual can do the church can do.' We do not believe it. We believe that there are certain things an individual can do, and an obligation to do, that the church cannot do. The very fact that the Lord provided for an organism called the church is proof positive that it has some functions peculiar to itself. If there were no functions peculiar to the church it would be non-essential. There would be no need for it if other capacities could provide all the functions of which it is capable.

Here are some things the individual can do that the church cannot do, all from a single chapter (1 Tim. 5).

- (1) Show piety at home, and to requite their parents.
- (2) Provide for his own, and especially those of his own house.
- (3) Marry, bear children, guide the house.
- (4) Relieve one's own widows, and 'let not the church be charged.'
- (5) Lay hands suddenly upon no man.
- (6) Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake.

There are others in this same chapter. Here are some things that the church can do that the individual cannot do from the same chapter:

- (1) "Take into the number" a widow with certain qualifications.
- (2) Refuse "young widows" with certain disqualifications.
- (3) Be "charged" with caring for certain types of people.

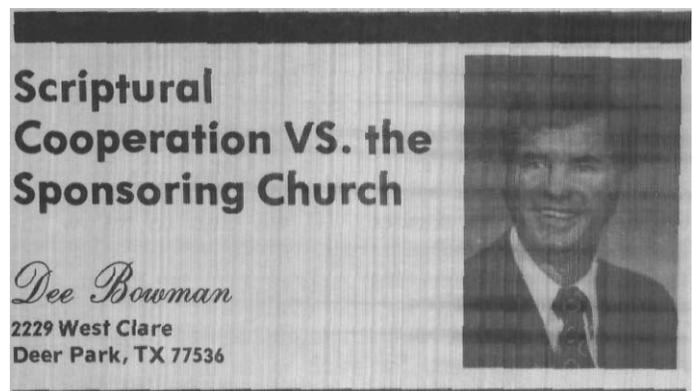
There are some others in this chapter that seem to be church responsibilities.

These examples from a single chapter will convince any thinking person that there are plenty of instances in the Bible of things that an individual can do that a church cannot do, and vice versa.

It is true that the church is made up of individuals, and that the only way the church can function is through its members (individuals) but let it never be said that all individual work is church work."

When one argues the church does what the individual does, the end is catastrophic. Let us note some of the problems. In 1 Cor. 5, the church at Corinth was told to withdraw from the fornicator. If

the church does what the individual does then the church committed fornication and then had to withdraw from itself! Who could believe it? Paul said, "Demas hath forsaken me" (II Tim. 4:10). If the above doctrine be true, the church forsook Paul! In Matt. 18:17 Jesus said the sinning brother's case was to be taken before the church. If the above doctrine is true then the church had to go before the church. Or if you prefer the wayward brother could be taken before himself for correction. Paul said Peter was leading about a wife, (I Cor. 9:5) if the above is true the entire church was leading about a wife! Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying, if the above doctrine is true the church was killed in Acts five. Actually friend, I feel somewhat ingenious in dealing with such reasoning. May God hasten the day when all brethren will return to the ancient landmarks of Bible authority.



The introduction of human institutions and centralized control among churches of Christ has been a divisive problem at least twice in recent history. Both times its tornadic destruction has cut an irreparable swath across the Lord's church, leaving in its path broken families, shattered hopes, bleeding hearts, and in some instances, bitterness which defies description. Its tenacious advocates have caused the church in many places to be almost totally ineffective in her fight against the forces of denominationalism and Catholicism simply because she was completely embroiled in her own internal difficulties.

After the great controversies of the 60's and 60's and the accompanying quarantines, the lines of demarcation became clear and we actually ceased the warfare, though the "cold war" continues to some extent today. We must now fight off the tendency to relax. And we must show a new generation the evils of institutionalism and how she can again raise her ugly head if we do not maintain our vigilance and our intimate relationship with the Word of God.

What Is Cooperation?

The word "cooperation" suggests a working together. It is comprised of "operation," a working, and "co," which carries the force of together. So, when we speak of congregational cooperation, we simply mean congregations working together. There are two kinds of cooperation. There is joint cooperation where there is an actual pooling of resources, an agreement toward a form of management, and the employment of both to achieve

a common and mutual goal. There is also cooperation which is carried out by autonomous congregations acting independently but concurrently, performing such actions as will result in the achieving of a mutual goal without any mutual funds or common organization.

To deny that churches in New Testament times cooperated would be foolish indeed since Inspiration affirms such. The pattern for such cooperation is as clear as is the pattern for proper worship in song or as to who is a fit candidate for baptism. Churches cooperated in both benevolence and evangelism. However, it must be carefully observed at the outset that such cooperation was not of the sort where there was an intermediate institution, nor a pooling of resources between the local church and the work to be done, nor is there any instance in the New Testament of several churches sending to one church which had assumed to do a work to which all shared equal obligation.

The pattern for cooperation in evangelism is clear. Churches cooperated by sending funds to a preacher in order to aid him in his commitment to preach the gospel. In Phil. 4:14-16, we notice how Paul received funds from the Philippians. In II Cor. 11:8, he states that he "robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service." If we plan to follow the New Testament pattern as to how churches cooperated in supporting a preacher, we must send the money directly to the evangelist, not through some agency and not through some "sponsoring" church! The pattern for such is as clearly stated as the one for what day we observe the Lord's Supper and how often (Acts 20:7).

Cooperation in benevolence is also clearly demonstrated in the New Testament. When a church became financially unable to perform as it should because of some great need, other congregations sent to help relieve that need. For instance, in Acts 11:27-30, there is shown the process of one church aiding several needy churches. Antioch sent funds to the needy saints in Judea, "and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." Some would have us believe that the funds were sent to Jerusalem where distribution was made. There is no such indication in the context. In fact, the passage says plainly that the funds were sent "to the elders" and where "they determined to send relief and "in Judea'." There is no way to read into this passage any sponsoring church arrangement, except one wrest the Scriptures!

In Rom. 15:25-27, I Cor. 16:1-3, II Cor. 8:6-7, and 9:3-5 we see the pattern for several churches relieving the needs of one church. When churches in Corinth, Antioch, Galatia, Thessalonica, Philippi, sent funds to aid in the care of needy saints in Jerusalem, there was a common concern, a common goal, but there is no indication at all of a common fund, or a common organization to manage such a fund. For instance, the funds were not sent to Antioch or Corinth as "sponsor" of the work to be done. In fact, every church had its own fund (I Cor. 16:1-2), as well as its own messengers (I Cor. 16:3-4, II Cor. 8:23) and not even an inspired apostle was allowed to choose the

men who carried the funds to Jerusalem [Cf II Cor. 8:20-21).

This is how the New Testament churches cooperated, both in benevolence and in the preaching of the gospel. As such it constitutes the pattern approved by God for cooperation today and when such a pattern is violated, it is just as serious as is the violation of the pattern concerning the worship and organization of the church.

What Is A Sponsoring Church? The sponsoring church is a local congregation which assumes to do a work for other churches because it considers itself especially qualified to oversee that particular endeavor. The sponsoring church assumes, in every instance with which I am acquainted, to do a work which it is financially unable to accomplish alone and so, at the outset of the project, intends that funds from other churches will be solicited. For example, when the Highland church in Abilene, Texas, assumed the oversight of the Herald of Truth radio program, it did so realizing full well that a cooperative effort of deriving funds would be necessary to sustain the project. The Broadway church, when forming the Lubbock Children's Home in Lubbock, Texas, understood from the beginning that she was undertaking a work which she had not the wherewithal to accomplish without soliciting funds from other congregations. So, we see that the very foundation for the sponsoring church is seen in its assuming a work larger than her capability to accomplish and in the solicitation of "brotherhood" funds in order to realize the project.

What Is Wrong With the Sponsoring Church?

In New Testament times each local church was autonomous, each with its own elders, deacons, and members (Phil. 1:1). It functioned with Christ as its head (Col. 1:18), being fed by its pastors, and served by its deacons. In no instance is there even the slightest indication that one eldership was superintendent over more than its own flock. In fact, in I Pet. 5:2, the elders are told to, "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof . . ." Not one time in all the New Testament is there a case cited or a reference made where one group of overseers are either charged with or allowed to oversee the work or members of another flock! Nor is there ever a situation cited where one congregation's elders ever came to assume for their flock a "sponsoring" role by which to care for or superintend a work on a brotherhood level. The New Testament speaks of no organization larger than the local church by which any work assigned or authorized is to be accomplished. Since the sponsoring church arrangement is an obvious deviation from the New Testament pattern of local autonomy, it is wrong.

The sponsoring church assumes a work for which it has no obligation. The assuming of a work with prior knowledge that such a work is without the means of accomplishment, is both illogical and unscriptural. Nowhere in Scripture is there an obligation enjoined on any local church which is larger than the ability to perform it. In fact, the word "responsibility" is

comprised of "response" and "ability." Ability is the limiting factor in any work assigned to the Lord's church. To assume a work knowing there is not the ability to accomplish it necessarily means that more than one congregation must be involved in it; and if such can be lawfully assumed, that ALL congregations can be involved in it! Such an arrangement FORCES (obviously, by pre-intention!) the elderships of other churches to surrender the control of both funds and oversight to a sponsoring church or be slanderously described as being "anti-cooperation!" The process is more than cooperation, it is coercion! Subtle coercion, but coercion nonetheless!

Unscriptural cooperation such as is seen in the sponsoring church arrangement, whether in benevolence or evangelism, not only causes supporting churches to surrender autonomy, but the sponsoring church as well. For instance, the institution called the Lubbock Children's Home functions not as the benevolent arm of the Broadway church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas, but on behalf of all the churches who contribute to it. The same is true of the Herald of Truth; it is not the evangelistic method employed by the Highland church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, but belongs to ALL churches who contribute to it. Funds for the Lubbock Children's Home are not generally sent to the Broadway church, but to the home itself, or even if sent to Broadway, they are earmarked for the institution, not the church's treasury. So, who is it that oversees the funds at Broadway or Highland? For years, the sign in front of the Lubbock Children's Home has read "LUBBOCK CHILDREN'S HOME, CHURCHES OF CHRIST," an open admission that it belongs to a cooperating "brotherhood," not to Broadway. The Children's home is NOT Broadway at work, it is the contributors who fund it at work." The same is true of Herald of Truth. To deny such is to deny the obvious. Both projects are brotherhood ventures not local churches at work! Such cooperation as we are seeing in the sponsoring church arrangement today surrenders the oversight of both the "sponsoring" eldership and the "cooperating" eldership to the institution formed, a clear violation of New Testament precedent.

In New Testament times, the basis for any cooperation was need. When the need no longer existed neither did the cooperation. The sponsoring church creates a permanent need. In doing so, it violates the New Testament order. Furthermore, none of the New Testament examples show any church giving anything to another church for accomplishing a work to which all churches were equally related. The command to evangelize the world is the work of every church and there is NO example in the New Testament of one church contributing funds to help another church evangelize the world, for all churches are equally obligatory to such an assignment.

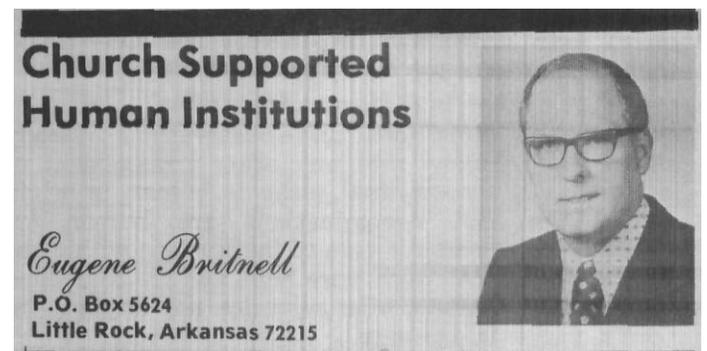
Let Us Return To God's Order

God's way has always demanded the following of the approved pattern (Gen. 6:14-ff, Ex. 25:9-40, I Chron. 28:11). He has always made the pattern and the assignment inseparable (I Cor. 10:11, Heb. 9:23,

Heb. 10:1, etc.). The actions performed by the New Testament churches as recorded in the Scriptures form the pattern for church action today. Anything it illustrated as binding then is binding today and anything we cannot establish by its approved actions or by some apostolic precedent or implication is disallowable and sinful (Cf Isa. 55:8-9, II Jno. 9, I Pet. 4:11, Rev. 22:18-19)!

If we can call for a return to the New Testament pattern regarding instrumental music, certainly it is in order to call for a return to the New Testament pattern regarding local autonomy. If we can call for such a return regarding church support of missionary societies, surely it is not out of order to call for the pattern regarding scripture-approved cooperation. And if we can call for a return to the New Testament pattern regulating the time for the observance of the Lord's Supper, surely we can do so with regard to one group of elders overseeing a "brotherhood" work.

Brethren, we cannot ignore the oracles of God in one place and apply it in another. Either His word is the authority or it is not! If it is (and it is!), let us follow it explicitly and demand a passage for all that we teach, believe, or practice (I Cor. 4:6). And if we cannot find the authority for what we do, let us desist from it and refrain from its use, no matter the consequences (Gal. 1:6-10).



God has warned against and expressed His disapproval of any entangling alliance between the divine and human, sacred and secular, safe and sinful. *"Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean. . ."* (Eze. 22:26). *"O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled. . ."* (Psalm 79:1). *"It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a of thieves."* (Matt. 21:13).

What Is The Church?

When the "fulness of time" had come (Gal. 4:4) and the proper foundation had been laid—a recognition of His deity—Jesus said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:18). His church came into existence on the Pentecost day of Acts chapter two when the obedient on that day, as now, were added by the Lord (Acts 2:38-47). It is His spiritual body, kingdom, holy temple, royal priesthood, house or family, vineyard of spiritual labor, the saved.

The Lord's church is not just a church among

churches, or another institution. It is unique in every way. It bears no organic relationship to any institution on earth, nor is it dependent upon any human arrangement for its existence, growth and ultimate redemption.

What Is An Institution?

To "institute" is "to set up or establish." The word "institution" as we shall use it in this study means: "An organization or establishment instituted for some public, educational, or charitable purpose."—Webster. Whether an institution is divine or human depends upon whether it was established by God or man.

God's Institutions

It has been stated many times that God has ordained or authorized three institutions—the home, the civil government, and the church. While the church may sometimes support people who live in a home, it does not work through a home. (More on this later.) Other than to comply with its laws and accept its protection, the church has no relationship to civil government. The proper place and work of the third divine arrangement—the church—is what we are discussing in this study.

The church is truly a divine institution. It was planned by God from eternity (Eph. 3:10, 11), built by and purchased with the blood of His Son (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28) and revealed by the Holy Spirit upon the pages of the New Testament.

What Is A Human Institution?

From the definitions and observations already given, it is obvious that any other arrangement or institution in the spiritual realm is human in origin and design. All denominations are human institutions. The same is true of institutions within the body of Christ. All such were built and are controlled by men. They cannot offer salvation nor displace the Lord's church in any way.

How Is The Church Organized?

The organization of the church is simple and sufficient, not complex and dependent. Others will discuss this, but we must establish some points and principles as they are directly related to our subject and a proper understanding of it.

In the universal or distributive sense, the church has no earthly organization. It cannot be scripturally activated and has no work. On the local or congregational level, the church is organized with each autonomous body consisting of elders, deacons and saints (Phil. 1:1). The congregation is the only divinely authorized arrangement for the collective action of Christians in the spiritual realm.

Is God's Arrangement Sufficient?

To an informed believer in God and His word, that is a foolish question. One may as well ask if the sun is sufficient to light the earth, or the Son to save mankind, or the Holy Spirit to reveal God's mind, or the New Testament to guide Christianity.

The basic needs in the Lord's work are: (1) supervision, (2) administration, and (3) supplies or means. These we have in God's arrangement where the elders supervise, the deacons serve, and the

saints contribute of their time, talents and resources. This is a practical and sufficient arrangement in all of the work which God has authorized the church to do, namely, preach the gospel, edify itself, and care for its worthy needy (Eph. 4:12 and related passages).

What Relation Does The Church Have to Human Institutions?

The simple answer is: No relation at all! Why is this true? Because of what we have already observed about the church, its organization and work. The arrangement which we diagram below will illustrate and prove our point.

WORK	ORGANIZATION	NEEDS
1. Evangelism	Church or Missionary Society	1. Place 2. Personnel 3. Supplies
2. Edification	Church or College	1. Place 2. Personnel 3. Supplies
3. Benevolence	Church or Benevolent Society	1. Place 2. Personnel 3. Supplies

If So, How Many?

If the church is related to and may work through human institutions, then how many may it use in its work? Can it do all of its work through human institutions? If it may do part of it that way, why not all? Where and why could we draw the line?

In the Harding College Lectures of 1952, Jack G. Dunn made an observation which is pertinent to what we are discussing. Having observed that Harding College was a human institution and should never be tied to the church, brother Dunn said:

"Some of my brothers evidently think that the church can function through a human institution. This is the old 'missionary society' issue revived. And this idea, carried to its logical extreme, would reduce the church to a money-raising body, and turn all of the church's functions over to human institutions. Let the human institutions do the teaching, the works of benevolence, and let the church support them, some say. Well, if the human institutions can supplant the church in these functions, then surely they can supplant the church in money-raising also. The church, then, would have no reason whatsoever for existing!"

Good thinking! Churches which contribute to and work through any human institutions should consider the ultimate and inevitable end of such action.

Are All Human Institutions Parallel?

Is it consistent to argue that the church may do its benevolent work through human institutions but cannot preach and edify through such institutions? We think not, yet some hold to such untenable positions. Two interesting quotations are in order at this point in our study:

"Some three or four years ago we expressed the opinion on this page that certain brethren would

allow 'the issue' of church support of a private enterprise to be fought out on the orphan home level, where highly emotional values can be brought to bear, and where they can, and do, overshadow reason; and that later, when these brethren thought the time was ripe, the pitch would be made to put the college in the budget upon the basis that 'church support of a private enterprise has already been proven.' The low rumblings of the gathering storm have been heard for some time now, and more recently there have been flashes of lightning!" (Reuel Lemmons, *Firm Foundation*, May 2, 1961.)

"Some who are agreed that the church can contribute to an orphans' home are not convinced that the church can contribute to a Christian school. It is difficult to see a significant difference so far as principle is concerned. The orphans' home and the Christian school must stand or fall together." (Batsell Barret Baxter, *Question and Issues of The Day*, page 29.)

Yes, if the church may work through one human institution it may work through any of them, for there is no difference "so far as principle is concerned."

Supplying A Missing Link

Those who feel that the church is related to and must work through human institutions are trying to supply a "missing link" in God's plan. Any Bible student should know that there is no organization or arrangement in the New Testament by which churches are tied together or which can activate the church on a county, state, regional, national or universal level. So men have built such organizations and declared that without them churches, at least many of them, cannot work effectively. In his debate with brother W. W. Otey in 1908, J. B. Briney defended the missionary society by saying:

"Now, is there any objection to those small congregations co-operating with each other? I ask my friend how small congregations that are not able to send a missionary each are to co-operate? How are they to take part in this work? Now, the society provides for that." (Otey-Briney Debate, page 199.)

If God had wanted congregations of His people tied together He would have arranged for such and given instructions for such organizations and the qualifications for the board members. He has given the qualifications for every other work or position in the church.

Inconsistent Claims Our brethren

who defend church supported human institutions say that they believe in the all-sufficiency of the church (the congregation) in doing God's will on earth. They have declared such even while debating the right of churches to work through human institutions! We know of people who say they believe in the all-sufficiency of the scriptures. We know they must, for their human creeds say so. Get it? Their human creeds say so, and we could give numerous quotations from creeds and manuals declaring that the Bible is all that we need as a guide. People who really believe that will neither

publish nor follow human creeds, and those who truly believe in the all-sufficiency of the church will not defend or support human institutions in the work which God has commanded of His people.

Making the Divine Human

As we have already noted, the New Testament authorizes a plurality of elders in every church. But as surely as elders can err and men apostatize, the divinely-authorized and otherwise good arrangement can get out of place and the work authorized and circumscribed in the New Testament and thereby become a human arrangement.

"A great apostasy, maybe, is being planned unawares in the various things the local churches are doing under the elders. Institutionalism is dangerous because it is a departure from the apostolic way. Human societies to do missionary work is wrong, but no more so than human organizations to take care of the orphans or old people or even the young folks. Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. Why not take care of all the work of the Lord as in the New Testament times? Do you say times have changed? Then the church is not sufficient, eh? Look out for a great fall." (*Life and Times of C.M. Pullias*, Gospel Advocate Co., page 577.)

"I submit this proposition: Any individual Christian, or group of individuals, smaller than a local congregation; or any group of individuals or churches larger than a local church; or any individual church itself that begins thinking in terms of what the whole brotherhood should do, and goes or sends somebody to the churches to see that they do it, and acts as an agent or agency through which the brotherhood does it, thereby constitutes itself a full-grown, blown-in-the-bottle, fourteen karat missionary society of the deepest dye! There is no way on earth to whitewash it. There is no city of refuge where he may hide from God's displeasure. To call it something else, or to leave it unnamed, is a mere technical dodge. It is not condemned because it is similar to a missionary society, but because it violates the same fundamental principle the society violates—namely, the initiative and autonomy of the local congregation." (W.E. Brightwell, *Gospel Advocate*, Dec. 20, 1934, page 1223.)

An eldership out of its God-ordained place becomes a human arrangement. When brother David Lipscomb voiced opposition to the sponsoring church type of co-operation, he said that such would "make a society out of the elders of the church."

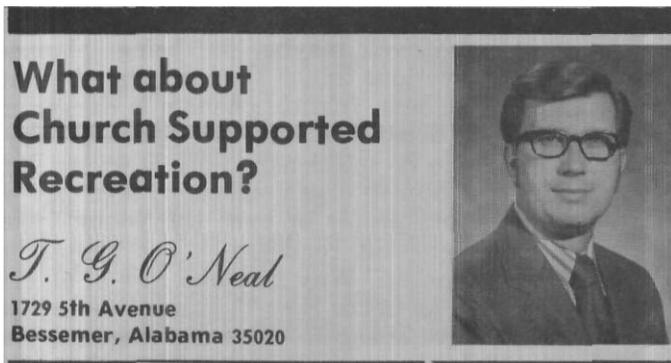
Others Have Said The Same

Through the years, many brethren have defended the all-sufficiency of the church as the only divinely authorized institution for the work of Christians, and expressed opposition to church related and supported societies of any and every kind. If space permitted, we could give such quotations (mostly from the pages of the *Gospel Advocate*) from Foy E. Wallace, Jr., H. Leo Boles, F.B. Srygley, James A. Allen, A.B. Barret, J.D. Tant, John T. Hinds, Tolbert Fanning, M.C. Kurfees, E.A. Elam, J.L. Hines, R.L. Whiteside, C.E.W. Dorris, F.B.

Shepherd, C.R. Nichol, David Lipscomb, Roy H. Lanier, Sr., Reuel Lemmons, George DeHoff and Guy N. Woods.

Conclusion

May we plead that the church be the church and do the work of the church by the simple and sufficient operation of the arrangement God has given—the congregation. There is no authority in the scriptures for the church contribution to or working through human institutions.



In my autographed copy of *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons* (Nov. 1-8, 1942), volume 5, page 50, brother N. B. Hardeman said in the sermon "The Mission and Work of the Church" delivered in Nashville, Tennessee, "Again, I say to you, with caution and thought, that it is not the work of the church to furnish entertainment for the members and yet many churches have drifted into such an effort. They enlarge their basements, put in all kinds of gymnastic apparatus, and make every sort of an appeal to the young people of the congregation. I have never read anything in the Bible that indicated to me that such was a part of the work of the church. I am wholly ignorant of any Scripture that even points in that direction." That was commonly understood and preached in those days, because as Hardeman said on page 52, brethren understood "The work of the church can be stated under three heads: (1) the building up of every member in it; (2) the work of benevolence; (3) the preaching of the gospel to sinful humanity."

Brethren understood the work of the church was primarily spiritual in nature. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

Each of the writers in this special issue of *Searching The Scriptures* has in some way made his contribution to opposing these unscriptural practices and several of us have debated these issues when we could get liberal minded brethren to do so. In an effort to defend these unscriptural practices, our liberal brethren began to play down the importance of having Scriptural authority for all we did. The idea that scriptural authority was established by precept, approved example and necessary inference was looked upon lightly—very lightly. Liberal brethren began to reap shortly the consequences of their liberal attitude and many of them without realizing what was happening began to see church sponsored recreation

come to be an accepted reality. As Bible teaching found its way to the back seat, church sponsored recreation came to the front. Now it is the feature attraction with many liberal churches. Not all liberal churches and preachers feature this as a part of their work, yet they associate with those churches that feature such. It is not uncommon for a liberal preacher that does not go along with church sponsored recreation but that goes along with the 'sponsoring church' and church support of orphan homes to be invited to some church with much recreational equipment, buildings and activity and say not one word about it while he preaches for them a week.

Entertainment and recreation sponsored by some churches of Christ are not just somebody's imagination but are a reality. Look at a few of many examples that could be given.

(1) In a paid advertisement of the East Walker Church, just out of Jasper, Ala., in *The Community News*, Wed., April 7, 1976, page 1-B there appeared an invitation to "come ride the bus to the East Walker Church of Christ" and "after worship join the World's Largest Easter Egg Hunt." The "special guest" was 'Big Bird' and "Bert, Earnie, Oscar and Cookie Monster will be in Childrens Bible Hour." There also in this ad appears "Big Bird" standing in the meeting house door. While I understand the preacher, Flavil Nichols, did not approve, there were those in the congregation that were lacking in Bible knowledge and placed the ad.

(2) The Memphis, Tenn. *Commercial Appeal*, July 17, 1976, tells about the "\$250,000 multipurpose building which will include a full-sized gymnasium" including "regulation basketball courts" of the East Frayser Church. "It will be the first gymnasium built by a Church of Christ in Memphis." It will have "a fellowship hall to accommodate 150 persons" and "a kitchen." "The objectives for the building will be Bible instruction and community service through fellowship and recreation."

(3) From the Memphis Tenn. Getwell Church's bulletin, *The Getwell Reminder*, Feb. 23, 1978, page 4, "The East Hill Minstrels, an excellent singing group sponsored by York College of York, Nebraska, will present a program of popular music at the Wooddale Church of Christ, February 28 at 7:30 p.m. The program is designed to appeal to young people but all are invited. No charge."

(4) In the March 13, 1977 *Broadway Bulletin*, of Lubbock, Texas the schedule of "The New Beginnings" which is the "Broadway Youthreach singing group" is given on page 1. "They will present concerts for congregations in New Mexico, Arizona, California and Nevada." "Their objective is not merely to entertain, but to tell in a fresh way how their lives are different because they know the Lord." Concerts for the purpose of entertainment are presented for churches of Christ. The April 10, 1977 bulletin shows this group in the pulpit at Broadway.

From Broadway's Feb. 27, 1972 bulletin, they tell about their "youthreach" program which is "geared to attract youth outside the church." On "March 5-I

Can't Believe I Ate the Whole Thing', Activities—The World's Largest Sundaes—Who Can Get the Most Grapes in their Mouth—Peach Shaving Contest Food — Alka Seltzer and water." Then on "March 19 — "Beep—Beep—Zoom!!! Activity — 27 minutes of Roadrunner. Devotional — Peanuts slide presentation of friends. Food — Fried Chicken and coke (Bring your own dime)." Then on "April 16 — 'My Frog Jumps Higher Than Your Frog.' Activities — Frog Jump — Cricket Circle — Turtle Race. Devotional — Peanuts slide presentation on family relations. Food — Pizza and coke (bring your 10c)." In this same bulletin I read "One of our most important youth meetings of the year is this Sunday evening. We'll be outlining our outreach and view a film "Charlie Churchman and the Clowns." . . ."We need to then, You need to be there. And for the sake of the souls of your friends, God wants you there." Such blasphemy!

Broadway's Jan. 15, 1978, bulletin tells that "the National Training Institute" which is "a professional training ministry developed for churches of Christ" "will present an area—wide teacher and supervisory training series at the Greenlawn Church of Christ." The cost of this "is \$20.00 per teacher." Who would have ever thought the day would come that a church of Christ would be having something it cost \$20 to attend?

Their Dec. 18, 1977 bulletin gives some "dates to remember" and some of them are "December 18 Senior High Christmas Dinner, Youthreach Center," "January 1, Harding College Chorale to Sing In Teen—Age Class, 9:15 a.m.," "January 6—9, College age student Center Advance, Gold Pan Ski Lodge, Eagle Nest, N.M." and "January 26—28, Senior High Ski Retreat, Colorado." The Jan. 22, 1978 bulletin says, "over 130 college and university students attended the Annual College Ski Retreat in Eagle Nest, N.M." "Not only was the weekend full of fun in skiing and fellowship, but ten people responded to the Lord's message and requested prayers. Two young ladies . . . were baptized into Christ." Their Aug. 7, 1977 bulletin says "Summer 'Son' Shine Seminar" will be Aug. 13 and among other things will include "classes in career planning" which will include "banking, insurance, sales and business, nursing, skilled labor, teaching, government and minister." And the April 2, 1972 bulletin says "Five hundred water balloons — all gone! The senior high had quite a battle. It was lots of fun. . . . made . . .'s evening. He didn't even see that stupid water balloon coming. Then there was the balloon stomp and balloon sit. While the fellowship was great the devotional time together with God was even better."

(5) From Union Ave. Church in Memphis bulletin, April 2, 1978, page 2, "Fellowship Weekend we appreciate the Fellowship Committee doing "double duty" this weekend. On Saturday morning at 7, . . . and will personally cook breakfast for the men and boys of the congregation, then on Sunday following the 10 a.m. service, they will supervise the setting up and the cleaning up after a fellowship luncheon. Beverages, dishes and eating utensils are

furnished but all members who eat are asked to bring enough meat, salad, vegetables and desserts for their own families, plus one. Visitors are invited to stay as our guests." Union's April 9, 1978 bulletin tells of a "retreat" they are having and the "regular registration form" gives the "registration fee" as "\$8.50" and one is told to make "check payable to Union Avenue Church of Christ."

(6) From a promotional brochure of the Madison, Tenn. church, reproduced in the *Eastland News*, Sept. 13, 1976, Ira L. North says they are going to have a "Sunday School Spectacular." This includes an "all—night singing," "dinner on the ground," "a memento of this historic day will be given to each adult attending" and "special entertainment by Kitty Wells and Johnny Wright and their group."

(7) From the June 25, 1972 bulletin of the Okolona Church of Louisville, KY. by a picture of cake, cup cakes, cookies and coffee under the word "fellowship" I read "There will be a fellowship Sunday night, July 2nd, after the services. Every family is asked to bring a cake, pie, cookies or sandwiches. Drinks will be furnished. All are welcome — please come and stay for this fellowship."

(8) In an undated Bemis, Tenn. bulletin preacher Royce L. Dickinson says "Skating Party—Big Success, One hundred twenty seven were present for the young people's skating party last Thursday night." In contrast their "personal work program" had only 9. This is a good indication of the interest in most churches of carnal and spiritual things. Nine with spiritual interest in teaching the gospel and 127 with carnal interest went skating.

(9) Several years ago Olan Hicks (not the former *Christian Chronicle* editor) affirmed in a written discussion with me that "The Scriptures teach that the church is at liberty to sponsor and use such things as recreational activities as facilities to its mission."

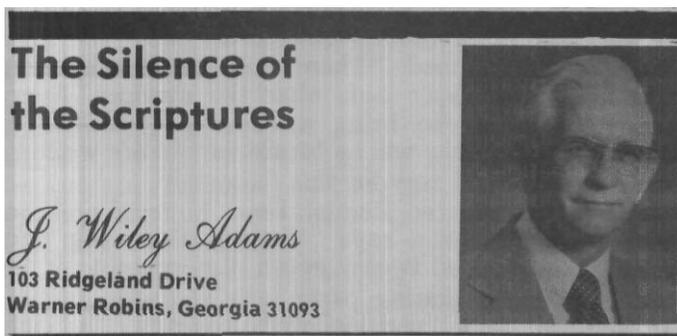
(10) Brother Albert Hill signed to affirm with brother Carrol Sutton "It is scriptural for a church to permit use of her building for Bible-centered schools and kindergartens, fellowships, meals and social gatherings" and to deny "It is not scriptural for churches of Christ to offer contests, picnics, parties and free gifts to all bus riders as incentives to encourage attendance at services." These propositions were signed about four years but Albert and the Athens, Ala. West Hobbs St. church have not had the courage to have the debate; however, the propositions represent their position.

(11) The June 19, 1968, *East Memphis Shopper's News* had an ad for "Camp Haiyaka" "sponsored by Jackson Avenue Church of Christ" and consisted of "swimming, hiking, softball, tennis, basketball, crafts, cookouts, archery, nature study, horseback riding, boating" and Jackson Avenue charged "\$40.00 for two weeks" (*East Florence Contender*, Sept. 1968, page 3).

(12) The *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, March 23, 1963 says "A major new encampment site for the churches of Christ is being readied for its first campers. It comprises 167 acres . . . a lodge is nearing com-

pletion . . . a swimming pool is planned . . . a lake will be developed . . . to provide fishing . . . the \$18,000 lodge . . . has a large recreation hall and dining area to accommodate 250." The church bought the "land for \$35,000." It was financed by "Jackson Avenue Church of Christ."

Let me close this article with this quote from a New York Jew who said, "There is nothing to offend me in the modern church. The minister gives a sermon on juvenile delinquency one week, reviews a movie the next week, then everyone goes downstairs and plays bingo. The first part of a church they build nowadays is the kitchen. Five hundred years from now people will dig up these churches, find steam tables and wonder what kind of sacrifices were performed" (as quoted in *East Florence Contender*, April, 1969, from *Life*, Oct. 6, 1958).



The silence of God is as sacred as His revealed Will. We dare not encroach upon either one. That which God has revealed in His Word is for man. That which has not been revealed belongs to God. This is clearly set forth in Deuteronomy 29:29. Let us notice this passage. *"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."*

God caused Moses to say this to Israel in the long ago. The principle set forth is as true today under the New Testament as it was under the Old. This we shall endeavor to prove by the Scriptures.

Two Basic Approaches

There are two basic approaches to the question of what constitutes Bible authority. The first is that (1) whatever God has revealed in His Word constitutes authorization, and the second (2) whatever God in His word has not expressly and specifically forbidden gives freedom to act. The former seeks a "thus saith the Lord" and latter says "God did not say not to." The first is in harmony with the scriptures but the second is not. We address this article to the second approach as a refutation.

Some Bible Examples

We are familiar with the case of Cain and Abel in Gen. 4:1-7. Cain sought to operate on the silence of God. Since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17) and Abel, in Hebrews 11:4 was said to have offered by faith we conclude that God had told him what to offer. Unless God is a respecter of persons, which Peter said he was not (Acts 10:34), then God had also told Cain what to offer. Abel

based his action on what God had said while Cain appealed to the silence of God. He sinned for God told him he had not done well and that *"sin lieth at the door."*

Nadab and Abihu presumptuously offered "strange fire", that is, fire which the Lord had commanded them not (Lev. 10:1,2). They let the incense on their censers, not with the perpetual fire of the altar (Lev. 6:13) but from some other source'. Their appeal to the silence of God was answered by His wrath. They both died as punishment.

King Saul's attempt to justify his rebellion (I Sam. 15) in not utterly destroying the Amalekites as God had said, caused God to reject him as king of Israel. His appeal to what God had not said was unacceptable.

In Hebrews 7:13,14. relative to the priesthood of Christ under a different order, namely, that of Melchisedec, the writer said, *"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."* Here is a strong argument. Not even the Son of God could be a priest under conditions that would violate God's expressed will. Therefore, if Christ was to become a priest it would have to be under another arrangement than that of the Old Law. Obviously, Moses "spake nothing" because God "spake nothing." Thus it is evident that Christ could not be a priest according to the law of Moses because He was not of the tribe of Levi. When God speaks nothing at any time under any law, this silence must be honored by man. Man dare not say "I think it will be all right with God" when God has not spoken on that particular thing. Who has the right to desecrate the sanctity of God's silence?

Abiding In The Doctrine

In 2 John 9-11 we learn that God's express spoken will prohibits the idea of "going onward" (ASV) rather than allowing it. The King James version renders it "whosoever transgresseth." John says, *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."* Clearly, we are limited to what God has said in the doctrine of Christ. We transgress when we go onward into the realm of God's silence.

The Practice of Many

From generation to generation the advocates of error, in and out of the church, have made their appeal time and time again, not to a "thus saith the Lord" but to the silence of the scriptures. The apostle Peter said, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..."* (I Pet. 4:11a). This passage has served as the scriptural basis for the expression of the restorationists in this country which was *"We speak where the Bible speaks, we are silent where the Bible is silent."* Some have objected to this expression in more recent times but it is high time in many quarters that they give consideration to its appeal which many have abandoned. This writer made reference to this slogan several years ago in a lesson on authority in a northern W. Va. city. Some staunch "Gospel Advocate" supporters took issue

with him at the door. They thought we should quit using the expression. The truth is that those of that persuasion have quit practicing it long ago. In view of this perhaps it is the consistent thing to quit saying it when it is obviously not true in our practice.

In the mid-1800's some brethren thought they could introduce a mechanical instrument of music into the worship of God. They said "the scriptures do not forbid it." Prior to this brethren had no trouble in recognizing that singing in worship was "abiding in the doctrine of Christ." (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Then some decide to "go onward" and added melodians, pianos, organs, etc. while maintaining that the "New Testament doesn't say not to."

When some paralleled this to putting ice cream on the Lord's table, they said it was ridiculous. Though unwilling to put ice cream on the Lord's table in addition to the bread and fruit of the vine, they were willing to transgress in the matter of instrumental music. This they did over the protests of brethren to continue to abide in the doctrine of Christ. Later on guess who got the blame for division! It was not the instrumental brethren!

In the period of controversy over instrumental music in worship, there arose another error in the realm of organization. While all agreed on local church autonomy or independence, some "went onward" to form a missionary society to preach the gospel to the world. Brethren were urged to send their money to the society which would in turn decide on the field, select and pay the preacher and oversee him in the field. They called it the American Christian Missionary Society. It began at Cincinnati, Ohio and Alexander Campbell was the first president of it. He could see clearly on the matter of the music question but he did not see it on the matter of the society. The society operated on the silence of the scriptures. The autonomy of the local church was clearly taught in the scriptures. Elders were overseers of local flocks (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:1-4). Their oversight was limited to the congregation where they were overseers. The society was defended on the grounds of expediency in spite of Paul's clear statement in I Cor. 6:12 that "expedient" things must first be "lawful".

In the one case there was a corruption of worship and in the other case organizational corruption. Is it any wonder that some have taken the liberty of "going onward" in other matters such as the work of the church? All of these work on the same principle—the silence of the scriptures. In addition to evangelism, edification and helping the needy saints brethren introduced fellowship halls, gymnasiums, church operated camps, schools and colleges. Space will not allow the listing of all the innovations that have been brought in on the principle of the silence of the scriptures. Some have preached sermons and written tracts and articles on "Where There Is No Pattern". This is nothing but a defense of the silence of the scriptures as authority to act. Nor can these things be defended as expedients since they are not even lawful.

Surely we can see that all this trouble in the church has been caused by those who wished to go onward and not abide in the doctrine of Christ. Once the top rail is removed there is nothing to prevent tearing down the whole fence. Some have already done this and a few are out now digging up the fence posts to get away from all limitations of the scriptures.

These rebellious brethren, claiming authority from God's silence, have bombarded the church with one unscriptural practice after the other such as the present-day parallel to the missionary society called now the sponsoring church arrangement for preaching the gospel to the world, the attachment of human institutions such as benevolent homes and hospitals to the Lord's treasury, the promotion of the social gospel, the elevation of a clergy class among us, the introduction of silly, stupid gimmicks to lure people to services purportedly under the banner of Jesus, etc., ad infinitum.

The Answer

When will these things cease? With some they will not cease. They are too far gone. Some, hopefully, may yet be recovered. The answer to all this is a return to a thus saith the Lord and abiding in the doctrine of Christ. It may sound simple but that is because it is simple. Let us leave the silence of the scriptures alone. Let us be governed by what God has revealed to us in His Word. Whatever God has authorized in His word also excludes all else. The scriptures are both inclusive and exclusive.

A Plea

Since the controversy over institutionalism, the sponsoring church and related issues first arose in the late 40's and early 50's there has arisen a whole new generation among sound brethren. This generation grew up with these issues but may have concluded that the fight is over now. Many, no doubt, whose parents suffered much pain and anguish as they took their stand on what God has authorized, may not even know the arguments pro and con on these matters. The problem is not past. If there is any change it is only in the form of new and continuing errors.

Young men and women, it is the responsibility of each generation to examine the evidence for themselves in the light of God's Word and to continue the fight which no doubt has shortened the lives of some of your parents and brethren. The issues are real. They never were imagined. The answers are in the revealed Will of God and not locked up in His silence. Brethren, do not speculate on what the Lord would have us to do. *"If man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God . . ."* (I Pet. 4:11a).

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Listening to arguments by different brethren who are close personal friends and not studying a position through for yourself, is far different from having to either affirm or defend said position for yourself. This is what I discovered in the early years of my preaching. Although I have been preaching for over 25 years, one of the hardest lessons that I had to learn was that one should not take a position simply because some friend or loved one, whom you consider to be a good Bible student, tells you it is right.

Institutionalism was probably one of the most difficult studies that I have ever had to "wade" through. There are a number of reasons why this is true. First of all, it was true because there were (and are) men of outstanding ability and Bible knowledge on both sides of the issue. Secondly, it is an issue, for the most part, where one is prone to allow his heart to rule his thinking instead of allowing his position to be based on the Bible teaching. And third, many of us worry and fret about some "label" that our friends and loved ones are going to place on us if we oppose church support to orphan homes, hospitals, a sponsoring church (Herald of Truth World Radio) type of cooperation by churches.

Before finally taking a stand against the above mentioned institutions and cooperative arrangements, I had vacillated from one position to another—according to the preacher friend with which I was talking. And like so many others, I didn't want that terrible "Anti" brand put on me. Finally, however, I had an opportunity to attend a debate on the subject in Louisville, Kentucky, between brethren Guy N. Woods and A. C. Grider. And though I had never met brother Woods, I knew of his reputation as a Bible scholar and an experienced debater. Of course I had known brother Grider most of my life, as we were reared within just a few miles of each other; and I just knew he would never be able to stand up under the powerful Guy N. Woods. But, to my amazement, not only did he stand, but how brightly the truth shone, especially on the Herald of Truth, sponsoring church arrangement. And it may have shined just as brightly on the Orphan Home question—except for the fact that as thousands of others I had "heart trouble" in being able to see the truth for those "poor little orphans" that brother Woods kept bringing up.

After the debate, I confronted brother Grider myself and told him that I wanted to meet with him later and discuss the matter especially of the orphan home. After many hours of study I thought I had some questions he could not answer. I remember well

that day I made an appointment to go to his home in Louisville. With questions in hand, I confronted him and Jim Cope (who was in a meeting at Preston Highway in Louisville) with my questions and took the worst "whipping" I have probably taken on any religious issue before or since. They, in turn, gave me some questions to answer. They said, "if you can find scriptural answers to these questions, we will concede your position is right."

Since that time until this day, I have read and listened to every discussion I could on these issues, as well as confronting preachers privately and engaging in public debates on these very issues. And, until this day, no one has given any Scriptures, that to my satisfaction, answered the questions that were asked of me that day. I repeat these questions for you here.

1. Where in the Bible did one church ever send money to **another** church to preach the gospel?
2. Where is the scriptural authority for a church **making a donation** to any kind of human institution?
3. Where is Bible authority for elders **overseeing any work except that "which is among them"** (I Pet. 5:2)?
4. Where is the authority for the church engaging in providing suppers, parties, or entertainment for anyone?

Now in view of the fact that I could find no scriptural authority in answer to these questions, what was I to do? You know the answer to that as well as I. When we find that the position we hold **won't stand the Bible test**, there is only one thing to do — CHANGE YOUR POSITION. And that is exactly what I did.

But, for those of you who have come to the conclusion that there are no Bible answers to the above questions, but have not taken your stand for truth because of pressures brought to bear, I know your problem and can sympathize with you. For when I took my stand for truth. I immediately became "an orphan hater," one of those dreadful "Antis", was fired from the congregation where I was preaching, and was told by one of my dearest preacher friends, "I hope you quit preaching." But you know I realized, as you must on this and every other Bible subject, that I must take my stand for truth and right regardless of what anyone may say to me or about me. For, regardless of what men may say, GOD IS RIGHT. And Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). **THAT IS WHY I CHANGED—JESUS SAID I MUST!** "And a man's foes shall be those of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:36-38). In light of these passages of Scripture, we cannot allow anyone to stand between us and truth.

All of you who read this article, or who have read my writings in the past, know that I am still trying to obtain the answers to the questions that are stated in this article. It would be a happy day in my life if I could write or call those who are so bitterly opposed to me, and join hands and hearts with them again. Yes, with all the pleas I have made for Bible

authority on these issues, few have even TRIED to give me Scriptural authority for these things— and those who have tried gave Scriptures that have nothing to do with the questions we have asked. Therefore, I will have to continue to speak out against institutionalism and those who espouse it, as much as I dislike being in opposition to my brethren. But Paul said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Thus, I must do this to be pleasing to God. If I preach anything that was not received from God, His curses will rest upon me (Gal. 1:6-9). And if I do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, I cannot have God (2 John 9).

So, as you can well see, I can sympathize with your situation, and feel sorry for you. I know it will be hard, but you too MUST take your stand against institutionalism and against anything for which you cannot find Bible authority. I BEG OF YOU—PLEASE stand up against these innovations. or else give me Scriptural Authority for your practices SO THAT I MAY STAND WITH YOU!

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	485
RESTORATIONS	118

(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)

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