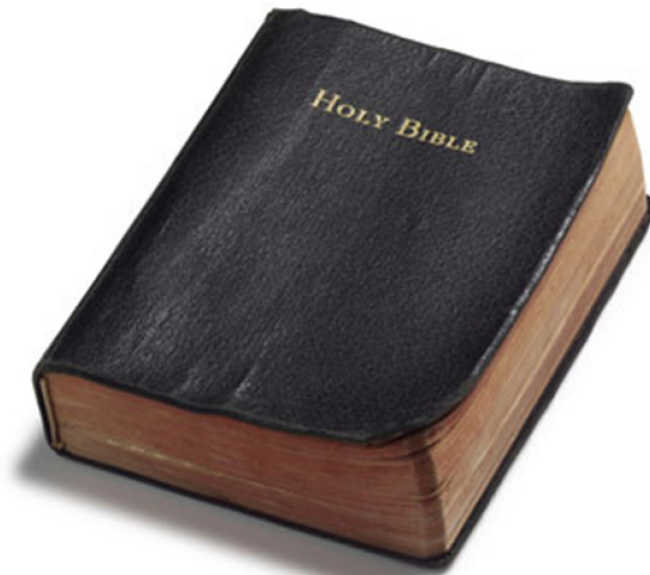


**“there’s only one difference”**



An honest look at the difference between the

**Liberal**  
and  
**Conservative**

**church of Christ**

**Richard Thetford**  
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# Liberalism

## Introduction to the Series

**T**here are many thousands of good, loving Christians that are associating themselves with the liberal or institutional churches of Christ in this country. Jesus said, *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). To the Thessalonian brethren, the apostle Paul wrote: *"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie"* (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11). Before we can be made free, we must first know the truth and the only way that we are really going to know the truth is to develop a genuine love of the truth. In other words, to know what we must do in order to be pleasing to God must be our first priority in life (2 Timothy 2:15; Mark 12:30). Knowing that Jesus' words, His truth, will judge us in the last day (John 12:48), and because of our sincere love of Christ we must determine to obey His commandments (John 14:15). Therefore, as we study these issues that have and continue to divide the churches of Christ, we must study with the attitude that "I want to learn what is right and acceptable in the sight of God," and once we know that, to then put it into practice.

I was raised in the liberal church of Christ where money was spent from the church treasury to support things such as the Herald of Truth radio program, different orphanages, colleges, missionary works, recreation and social events, etc. I had no idea that these things were being done without Bible authority. Why? Because I simply did not sit down and engage in an honest study to find out if what was being done was scriptural. Years later when I was in the Air Force, I was fortunate enough to meet a brother in Christ who studied with me concerning these very issues that divide churches of Christ today. During my study I soon realized that there was only one difference between liberal thinking brethren and conservative thinking brethren and that is that conservative brethren could provide book, chapter, and verse for all that is done in the name of religion while the liberal thinking brethren could not. In the course of time I have talked with many Christians in the liberal church that had no clue that things being done in the church where they were attending were unscriptural. They, like me, had never studied to **know the truth**. I also have found that in the conservative churches today that many adults and young people have not heard much teaching in the recent years concerning these issues so as to understand the differences and to study these things for themselves. That is what motivated me to put together this series entitled **"there's only one difference."**

It is my hope and prayer that you will have the kind of heart that the Bereans did back in the first century when it was said of them that *"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). We must ensure that all we do is in accordance with the gospel of Christ. A series of sermons dealing with some of these issues have been presented at various churches of Christ where I have preached over that past 20 years. As with all issues, we must first understand Bible authority. Therefore, the second two sermons deal with Bible authority and the last three with some of the issues that divide churches of Christ. I want to encourage you to read and study the articles written by gospel preachers that are included in the back of this booklet. These articles are very valuable tools to help one truly understand the difference between the liberal and conservative churches of Christ.

During your study please pray to God, that He will help you know and understand the truth so that you can be made free. This booklet is being made available to you in a spirit of love and concern for your soul. Please consider the sermons and articles with the spirit in which they are intended and that is to help you understand, by the use of scripture, why liberalism in the church is wrong (2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19). May God bless you and be with you in your study as you strive to do His will.

In Brotherly love,

Richard Thetford

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**Sermons**  
with  
**PowerPoint**  
**Charts**

# The Difference Between churches of Christ

## Introduction

### James 1:21-27

One might ask “What is the difference between churches of Christ.” or “Why are there differences in churches of Christ?”

- A. This is a very good question and one that deserves an honest, sincere answer.
- 1. There really is only ONE difference between churches of Christ. So the root of the answer is a simple one and that is:
  - A. Some strive diligently to stick to the mission given to the church and the authority of Christ, while others do not.
    - 1) Jesus said:

Matthew 16:18....I will build My church....

- 2) When Jesus told Peter that He was going to build His church He also gave His church a mission.
- 3) What was that mission?

Matthew 18:11 "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

1 Timothy 3:15 ....I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**

### Jesus said:

John 14:6....."I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

**3. But how is the church to accomplish this task of performing its mission to seek and save the lost?**

**A. In accordance with how Jesus and the inspired writers told us how to accomplish it. ---- By Christ's authority- not man's.**

**1) The authority of Christ is very important to grasp!**

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Colossians 3:17 **And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

**4. The mission of the church is spelled out in the Bible. But some confuse the mission of the church with the mission of individuals, often times making them one in the same.**

**A. Some will say that God has given man leniency on how to bring souls to Christ. Yet, the Bible is clear on how to bring souls to Christ.**

**1) Beginning with this morning's lesson, I will be preaching 5 other lessons dealing with the issues that have and continue to divide churches of Christ.**

- **Bible Authority**
- **Expediency**
- **Fellowship Halls and Entertainment**
- **Church Benevolence**
- **Church Co-operation**

## The Bible Teaches

1. In every Biblical reference in the church's work to help the needy, help was **ONLY** given to the saints.
  - A. The challenge to every individual, to every Christian, is to give just one passage of scripture that shows where the New Testament church gave funds or helped non-saints?
    - 1) Yet today many, many churches of Christ are guilty of going beyond the Bible (Christ's authority), to give out of its treasury to help assist non-saints.
  - B. The world claims it is the church's mission to help everyone.
    - 1) As a result, even churches of Christ are bowing to the pleas of the world --- the very ones who do not read the Bible, do not know God, nor practice godliness!
      - a) Remember, churches are only as strong and right as the individuals who come to it.
      - b) Before being added to the church, most people have the idea that the church's work is to help everyone.
    - 2) **NOTE: Compare the mission of church in relationship to the American Heart Association and a man with an ankle problem.**
  - A. If a person comes needing secular employment, - what can the church do out of its treasury? No more than the American Heart Association can do for ankle problems.



**2. Will the church stand before God at the judgment or will each and every individual?**

**A. The answer is an obvious one - we will stand individually.**

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that **each one may receive the things done in the body**, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

**B. Many churches will help with orphan homes, widows, or homes for unwed mothers (James 1:27), but these are not the only ones who qualify for help. Look what Jesus said: **Matthew 25:31-46****

**1) Yet many churches think it is their responsibility to provide for orphans - probably because they lack a guardian or breadwinner.**

**C. It is the individual that is being talked to in James 1:27. Not a church of people, but rather – you and me personally.**

**1) A review of James 1 and 2 will show that James is pointing out the difference between real and counterfeit, genuine faith and pretense, the one that hears and does versus the one who hears and does not. (Individual - not church).**

**3. Galatians 6:10 in context:**

**Galatians 6:10**

**A. Many churches of Christ use this passage of scripture to justify doing “good” to all men (Saints and non-Saints).**

**1) We know that a good work must be something that has been approved of by God.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that **the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

**B. The very context of Galatians 6 is talking to individuals, not the church collectively.**

**Galatians 6:1-10**

## Know the Truth, Practice Truth

### 1. Jesus said:

John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

#### A. We can only gain freedom in the truth of Jesus's word.

- 1) Therefore, you and I must act according to what Jesus taught to be right, **not what man teaches to be acceptable!**

### 2. Solomon wrote:

Proverbs 23:23 Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.

## Conclusion

### 1. It is my hope that you truly understand that there are differences between churches of Christ.

#### A. Again, we will discuss this in detail over the next four weeks.

### 2. It is also my hope that through this understanding that you have the wisdom to know the difference **and by knowing**, will strive to serve Christ in all purity.

### 3. Man will always continue to dream up new ways to serve God, more things to do and place it in the category of "it's a good work."

### 4. God has always and always will determine what a good work is. Listen to God and set your heart on pleasing Him, no matter what the cost.

**Matthew 10:34-37**

# Bible Authority and Truth

## Introduction

1. There has always been a need for authority since the creation of man and we can see authority expressed in various ways in our day to day life:
  - A. Street signs - stop, handicapped parking, speed limits.
  - B. “Stop in the name of the law.”
2. Most problems in religion are the result of a lack of Bible Authority and Truth.
  - A. Can we really do what **SEEMS** right to us?
  - B. Can we write our own message or change God’s Word and call it God’s Word?
  - C. Many individuals **SHOP** for a religion that fits their personal preferences. They are practicing a “Salad Bar Religion.”
3. We must understand that the whole conclusion of the matter is not to serve God as we please, but rather **“fear God and keep His commandments”** (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
4. In our dealings with modern religious denominations and all matters religious, we must prove that divine authority is established by the scriptures and by the scriptures only.
  - A. This also applies to churches of Christ. There are differences in churches of Christ **(Liberal or Institutional and Conservative)**
5. So, What Do the Scriptures Teach about Authority and Truth?
  - A. Matthew 28:18-20; John 8:32; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

## Bible Authority and Truth

1. We first must understand that **God is the author** of the Bible  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

## Respect for Bible Authority

1. We must further know and understand that every writer of the Bible was guided in what they wrote by the Holy Spirit.  
**2 Peter 1:20-21**
  - A. No scripture that we have in our Bible came by man, but rather by God -- That **WE MUST BELIEVE** and **ACCEPT!**
2. Therefore, since the Bible is the Word of God, any attitude that we have toward the Bible IS the attitude that we have toward God.
  - A. **Respect God - then we respect His Word, the Bible.**
  - B. **Disrespect the Bible - then we disrespect God who gave it!**
3. **ILLUSTRATION:** House with a new fence put around it. Fence to be inside of heat pump, 5 foot gate in the back, and a gate on each side. All instructions were followed exactly except the fence was put outside of the heat pump. (Children could get hands caught in it).
  - A. **He did not do exactly as was commanded. Changed it to suit himself - "it looked better."**
  - B. **Whether we change one thing or ten things from the Bible to please ourselves or our fellow man, we have disrespected God's Word.**

James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

- 1) The same **attitude** that will allow us to break one law of God will allow us to break EVERY law of God.

## Let's Walk by Faith

### 1. The Bible speaks to us concerning walking by FAITH.

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Romans 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

#### A. The only way we can know what the right thing to do is by Faith. How do we acquire faith?

**Romans 10:17**

### 2. Too often men do not do things today because the Word of God authorizes them, they do things because they want to and then when asked for book, chapter, and verse in the Word of God ---- They try to see if they can justify their practices!

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

### 3. Through faith we can learn that **EVERYTHING** that we do must be done in the name of the Lord ---- Meaning by His Authority.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

#### A. A policeman might shout **"halt in the name of the law!"** He says this by the authority of the law. He has been given the right to enforce the law.

4. **Men must learn respect for God's Word today - more than ever.**
  - A. **Immoral people disrespect God and His authority.**  
**Galatians 5:19-21**
  - B. **Unfaithful people disrespect God and His authority.**  
**1 Corinthians 15:58**  
**Hebrews 10:25**
  - C. **Those that DO THINGS without Bible Authority disrespect God and His Authority.**

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

5. **How can we tell if one disrespects the Word of God and His authority?**
  - A. **When one responds with "I believe, or I think" without using the Bible to show why, they are showing a disrespect for God's word.**
  - B. **Many religious practices think that SILENCE of scripture authorizes a practice being done.**
    - 1) **They may say "Where does the Bible say not to?"**  
**(Have a piano in worship, have a pope, have the Lord's Supper twice a year, sprinkle babies, have church sponsored socials, etc.) WHERE DOES IT SAY NOT TO!**

**2) The faithful Christian and the Lord's church responds with "Where is scriptural authority, God's blessing, for such things?"**

1 Corinthians 4:6 ....that you may learn in us **not to think beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

Revelation 22:18-19 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds to these things**, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and **if anyone takes away** from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

2 John 9 Whoever transgresses and **does not abide in the doctrine of Christ** does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

**C. ILLUSTRATION:**

**Sent child to the store with \$5.00 and a note which said: "Please send me one gallon of milk you advertised for \$2.00 and also the change."**

**The child asked for some candy - Doesn't say anything about candy - sure!**

**Sent note back with child saying "note did not say "not to have some candy"!"**

**Would you be pleased with what the grocer did on his own?**



**D. Suppose you sent the same note paraphrasing a few scriptures:**

**1) “And don’t go beyond what this note authorizes.”**

**2) “Don’t add to or take away from what is written in this note.”**

**3) “Don’t transgress my note.”**

- **Then the grocer did the very same thing --- what would you think?**

**E. The silence of the note authorizes nothing – and so does the Bible’s silence!**

**6. If we do not have Bible authority for EVERYTHING that we do, why have Bible authority for anything?**

## **Divine Authority Established**

**1. Divine Bible Authority is established in the scriptures and understood by direct command, approved apostolic example, and necessary inference.**

**A. **Command:** Direct statement or a positive command.**

### **All must repent:**

Acts 17:30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

### **Disciples are to contribute**

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

### **Saints are to assemble**

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together

### **It is wrong to lie**

Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to one another

**B. **Approved apostolic example:** The action of an individual or a collectivity of individuals (the local church) under the guidance of inspired apostles in the first century.**

### **Breaking of bread on the first day of the week**

Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,...

### **Churches sending to the relief of others in benevolence**

Acts 11:29-30 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

- C. **Necessary Inference:** That which though neither expressly stated nor specifically exemplified, is necessarily implied by the clear import and meaning of the language used.

### **Lot went down into Egypt with Abram**

Genesis 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

Genesis 13:1 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.

### **Before he was baptized Jesus went down into the water.**

Matthew 3:16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water...

## **All Activity in Serving God must be God Authorized**

1. We can see from the Old Testament an example showing the necessity of Divine Authority.
  - A. Notice what God told Moses in Numbers 20:8.  
**Numbers 20:8**
  - B. To get the water out of the rock Moses was Divinely authorized to speak to the rock. But what happened?  
**Numbers 20:11-12**
    - 1) What did God authorize? - to “speak to the rock”
    - 2) What did Moses do? “struck the rock”
      - a) Despite the fact that God did not say “Thou shalt NOT strike the rock”, the act, in serving God, was wrong because what Moses did was not authorized by God.
      - b) This simple act of disobedience caused Moses and Aaron not to be allowed to enter the promised land.
2. The New Testament teaches us the Necessity of Authority.

**A. Jesus says the following:**

**Matthew 7:21-23**

**1) Notice these things in this passage of scripture:**

**a) Jesus did not deny that they were religious or sincere.**

**b) He did not contradict their statement relative to having done good works. But He DID SAY:**

*“depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”*

**2) Lawlessness is a condition of one without law ---- either because of ignorance or violation.**

**B. We must insure that we serve God based on His divine law.**

## **Conclusion**

- 1. Friends and brethren, we must consider seriously what we have learned about Bible Authority and Truth.**
- 2. If your efforts to serve God in a pleasing manner are not according to the teaching of God's Word, then be THANKFUL that, in God's providence, you have been given the opportunity to remedy this.**
- 3. The faithful church of Christ here is eager to study with you concerning things that you may be doing without Divine Bible Authority.**
- 4. Remember, that each one of us must make sure that all we do is in the name of the Lord, based solely upon His written inspired Word because:**

John 12:48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

- A. Before one can progress spiritually in doing God's will, one must first accept His authority and love His truth!**

### **1) EXAMPLES OF AUTHORITY**

# Expediency

## Introduction

1. In the religious realm, men have sought to justify a multitude of things by saying “they can be practiced as expediencies.”
  - A. **Expediency:** “suitability for a given purpose; appropriateness to the conditions; useful for effecting a desired result; suited to the circumstances or the occasion; advantageous; convenient.” (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition)
    - 1) **The common concept:** The end justifies the means, so anything that will accomplish what we think to be good, whether authorized or not, is permissible.
      - a. It is important to note that: “**results accomplished**” does not authorize anything.
2. In order for a thing to be a **scriptural expedient** it must facilitate in the accomplishment of God’s will and must be in harmony with His word.
3. Expediency in human wisdom involves the right of a choice within the realm of those things included in what God has authorized. Therefore:

## **For A Thing To Be Expedient It Must Be Lawful**

**1. All scriptural expedients are lawful**

**A. They come within the realm of things authorized.**

**1) As we talked about last week, authority may be established by a direct command, an approved example, or a necessary inference.**

**B. That which is not authorized is unlawful - that is, it is prohibited by divine authority, thus it is sinful.**

2 John 9-11 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ **does not have God**. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

**1) This involves going beyond what is written (2 John 9-11)**

**2) This involves going beyond the realm of faith.**

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Romans 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

**C. **The point is this:** We have no assurance that a thing is pleasing unto God unless it is authorized in the scripture.**

**1) Therefore, an expedient must first be lawful.**

2. Unlawful things cannot be expedients even if **WE THINK** they facilitate the accomplishment of the Lord's will.

A. Remember: What men say (preachers, elders, or creeds) are not the source of authority. Neither do the desires of the church authorize anything.

B. Examples:

1) Women preachers

1 Timothy 2:12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

a. Some think that women can convert more than men – and they may be right. However, this does not make such a practice right in the sight of God. To have a woman preach because she might be able to do more good is not lawful according to God's Word.

2) No doubt David thought the ox cart would make the job of moving the ark of the covenant easier, but this did not make it right.

**1 Chronicles 13:7-10;**

**1 Chronicles 15:2**

(Lesson learned well by David when bringing it to Jerusalem later on)



## **For A Thing To Be An Expedient It Cannot Be Specified**

1. **When God specifies, then the only choice for man to do is obey His specific command or disobey the command.**
  - A. **In matters specified faith demands obedience to the Lord. Examples:**
    - 1) **God specified “gopher wood” for the ark (Gen 6:14). By faith Noah did all that God commanded (v22; Heb 11:7).**
    - 2) **God specified a “male lamb of the first year, without blemish,” as a sacrifice (Exod 12:5). The Israelites chose to obey God’s command.**
  - B. **Expediency in human wisdom involves the right of choice within the realm of those things included in what God has authorized.**
    - 1) **Noah could choose which gopher wood to use, whether a large or small log, etc. but he must use gopher wood to obey God.**
    - 2) **The Israelites could choose which male lamb of the first year, that was without blemish to be offered, but they must offer such an animal in order to obey God.**
2. **To go beyond that which is specified or authorized is to add to God’s word, not to aid in obedience to His word.**
  - A. **God commands “singing”**

Ephesians 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing and making melody in your heart** to the Lord,

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing with grace in your hearts** to the Lord.

- 1) **Instrumental music is not an aid in “singing” but is an addition” to God’s commandment.**
  - a. **It is not included in the scope of the command to sing and therefore mechanical instruments cannot be used as an expedient.**

**B. God commands to dip, submerge, bury in baptism.**

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were **buried with Him through baptism** into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

- 1) **Since God has not specified the place to baptize, a baptistry may be used in the accomplishment of His will, thus a baptistry is an expedient.**
- 2) **Sprinkling for baptism is not an expedient because it is not lawful. It does not aid the accomplishment of God’s will. It is a substitution for that which God commanded, thus it is unlawful and sinful.**

**C. God specified that the oversight and function of elders be restricted to the local church.**

Acts 14:23 So when they had **appointed elders in every church**, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, **among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

**1 Peter 5:1-3**

- 1) **For the elders of one church to oversee the members, monies, or work of another church, is not a matter of expediency. Such is not lawful. It does not come within the realm of that which the Lord has authorized elders to do, thus it is unlawful and sinful.**

**D. The church is the organization God authorized for preaching the gospel.**

1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to **conduct yourself in the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

**Ephesians 4:11-13**

- 1) **A Missionary Society is not an aid because it is not within the scope of that which is authorized.**
- 2) **The Missionary Society is an addition to the organization which God established – it accepts money from local churches . It is an organization which men have built to do the work God gave the church to do. It is unlawful and sinful.**

## **For A Thing To Be Expedient It Must Edify**

### **1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 31**

#### **1. All things are to be done unto edification**

1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification.**

- A. If a thing is a matter of choice or expediency, falling into the realm of human wisdom or judgment, and its practice causes division in the body of Christ, it is sinful and wrong.**
- B. When God commands something, then it must be done in spite of consequences, even if it divides people. If doing the will of God requires it, then men have no choice but to obey.**

#### **1) Example: Preaching the word.**

Acts 4:18-20 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. **For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.**"

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: **"We ought to obey God rather than men.**

- C. But if it is non-essential - meaning that God has left the choice up to human wisdom, and then we demand or enforce that practice on others that will destroy the unity and peace of God's children, then we sin.**

## **For A Thing To Be Expedient: It Must Not Offend the Conscience of A Brother**

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

- 1. This rule governs only in matters of expediency.**
  - A. In matters specified we have no choice but to obey or disobey.**
  - B. Where the liberty of a choice by human wisdom has been permitted by the divine will, we must not force “our way” to the offending of a brother, by causing him to violate his conscience in partaking in that which he believes to be wrong.**

### **Conclusion**

- 1. An expedient must first be lawful.**
  - A. Every addition or substitution is unlawful. It is relying upon human wisdom for God’s word.**
    - 1) Such is not a matter of expediency, but is a transgression of God’s will.**

**SEE CHART**

### **Things Lawful:**

2. These are things authorized in God's word.
  - A. Authority may be established in one of three ways:
    - 1) Direct statement or command, Approved Example, Necessary Inference.
  - B. Authority may be either generic or specific.
    - 1) Generic authority makes everything in that realm lawful.
    - 2) Specific authority makes the thing specified lawful and all other things in that general realm are unlawful.
  - C. In the realm of things lawful, some things will be specified and other things will be expedients.
    - 1) Remember, if there is no authority for them, they are unlawful, and cannot be properly labeled as expediencies.

### **Things Unlawful:**

3. These are things which are not authorized in God's word.
  - A. These are things in which there is no generic or specific authority.
4. These things are "sinful" regardless of what we think of them, or how much we may think they facilitate the work of the Lord.
  - A. If there is no authority for them, they are unlawful, and cannot be properly labeled as expediencies.
5. Remember, expediency involves the right of choice within the realm of that which is authorized in the New Testament, and is not a course of authority within itself.



# Fellowship Halls and Entertainment

## Introduction

1. We are going to address some problems within the Lord's church that have helped to split the unity that Jesus called for: **John 17:21-22**
2. We'll look at the area of Fellowship Halls and Entertainment that have come into the Lord's church in the name of "a good work" but without Bible Authority.
3. Let's first define some words that we must know the meaning of to be able to better understand.
  - A. **LIBERAL**: "not restricted; not restricted to the literal meaning: as, a liberal interpretation of the law; **broad-minded; favoring reform or progress, as in religion; not conservative.**"
  - B. **CONSERVATIVE**: "tending to preserve established institutions and methods and to resist or oppose any changes in these; **prudent, safe.**"
  - C. **INSTITUTIONAL**: "having the nature of an institution; in advertising - intended primarily to gain prestige rather than to increase immediate sales."
    - 1) Social get togethers by "the church" seem to take precedence over souls.
  - D. **ANTI**: "a person opposed to some policy, proposal, etc.; opposed; against."
  - E. **FELLOWSHIP**: (Social) "a mutual sharing, as of activity, etc." (Meals, Sports) – (Spiritual) "Walking in the light"  
**1 John 1:7**
  - F. **ENTERTAINMENT**: "interesting, diverting, or amusing thing, as a show or performance."



## Liberalism

1. Liberalism is NOT adhering to sound principles, FOR changes, NOT bound by established forms.
  - A. Do you see right now why one who is of a liberal persuasion is dangerous to the Lord's church. We see an attitude **reflected within the heart** of a person.
2. Liberalism is trying to justify something or anything without an appeal to the Bible.
  - A. Some have a "conservative" attitude toward the Bible but are just wrong on some things. But there are others who don't make an appeal to the scriptures and as long as it seems to be a "good work" in their eyes, there is no need to. These are LIBERAL.
3. One of the main arguments to liberalism is that the end justifies the means. For example:
  - A. **It gets people here - therefore it's a good work (Bible?)**
  - B. **It will help keep the young people off the street (Bible?)**
  - C. **The community will look up to the church (Bible?)**
  - D. **The denominations will do it if we don't (Bible?)**
4. I was raised in a liberal thinking church.
  - A. **Lots of socials (at the building)**
  - B. **Youth rallies (more emphasis on fun, games, boys, girls)**
  - C. **More togetherness emphasized, little to no Bible**
  - D. **Most members did not miss a "supper" but often missed Sunday and Wednesday nights. (Bible not the emphasis of belonging)**

## Conservative

1. Bible believing people who understand the scriptures have a different attitude toward divine authority. Notice what God says:

**Revelation 22:18-19**

**Galatians 1:6-8**

1 Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us **not to think beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for **every good work**.

John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

**A. These verses describe the mind set, the attitude of those who truly desire to only practice what Jesus has authorized for His established church to do!**

- 1) **Book, chapter, and verse is required for all that we do. We must strive to grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, not in the social needs of man. A cancer is a growth. Not all growth is healthy!**
- 2) **It has never been the Lord's desire that men be reached into His church with anything other than truth (Romans 1:16).**
- 3) **True conversion is NOT finding out what people like and giving it to them to get them to come to "church." TRUE CONVERSION IS letting people be drawn by the gospel of Christ so that their lives are totally changed to be like Christ as he lived on earth.**

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

## **Fellowship Halls and Entertainment**

- 1. Invitations to come hear the gospel are being replaced today with invitations to “come help eat the world’s largest hot dog.”**
  - A. When we leave the Bible then ALL things are possible!**
- 2. In the early 80's a church of Christ in Little Rock Arkansas built a new auditorium and renovated its old auditorium to include the following:**
  - A. Vegetable preparation table, six-burner stove with a double oven, a grill, two fryers with a vent hood, an ice maker, stainless steel work table, commercialized refrigerator and freezer, two hot-food holders, two dish washers, three sinks, a steam table (hot foods), and a table for coffee and tea.**
- 3. Churches of Christ have gone to extremes to accommodate the social needs of their members.**
  - A. A church in San Antonio has removed its pews and replaced them with folding chairs so they can be removed in order to have the whole auditorium available for suppers, skits, and games.**
  - B. Pulpits have been removed so that goal posts could be set in place. A church in Tennessee listed among its evangelistic activities as softball, volleyball, ping pong, ladies slimnastics, bowling, a CPR class, jogging (with a joggers prayer), golf, events for the “Golden agers”, Halloween party, Christmas crafts, and a Valentine party.**
    - 1) If you think that these are activities belonging to the work of the church of Christ bought with his blood, you and I have been reading two different books!**
  - C. Churches of Christ have tried desperately to “keep up with the Jones’” or denominations of the world!**

**1) I want to read to you an article that appeared in the Time Daily, August 27, 1996, in Woodburn, Mass:**

“In what could be one of the year’s more dubious recruitment tactics, irate parents in Massachusetts are charging that a Baptist church lured hundreds of children with promises of pizza and basketball games only to baptize them instead. It’s not yet clear how many children were baptized, and whether some parents had signed permission slips, police said. The Middlesex District Attorney is currently reviewing allegations to determine whether any laws were broken. If nothing else, at least truth in advertising was violated. “They did not tell us about Mass or anything,” said Rosa Vazquez, a Catholic who attended with a friend but wouldn’t go through the baptism. **“They just told us about the good stuff.”**”

**NOTE:** A new family in town once asked a local preacher “what does this church offer the young people?” I would ask **“what does the young person offer the church?”**

**D. Once the demand for Bible Authority is set aside, or compromised, the only limit placed upon the church is the desire of the people and the imagination of their leaders!**

**4. Where is the Bible authority to build, and or maintain a fellowship hall? Where is the Bible command, example, or necessary inference for the church to furnish entertainment?**

**A. The biggest argument is that it is a “good work.” The old stand by is to justify it as being expedient.**

**1) But in order for something to be expedient, it must first be shown to be lawful, something that has previously been approved of by scripture.**

**B. Our “good works” must be something we do based on Bible Authority. The work of the church is to “seek and save the lost.”**

**1) How is that done? Through the Gospel of Christ. Romans 1:16-17**

- a. American Heart Association**
- b. American Cancer Society**

5. The Bible authorizes the church to meet for worship, to preach the gospel to the lost, to edify the saints and to relieve the needy within certain limitations (*we'll talk about this next week*).
  - A. Any houses or facilities that are necessary to the church doing these four things, comes within the authority of the command to do them.
    - 1) But nowhere can you find in God's Book authority for the church to have parties and banquets! Remember, **we can't exercise an expedient if we don't have a command or example in the first place!**
6. As a banker teaches the teller to tell the difference between a real dollar bill and a counterfeit dollar bill by studying the real one, we must know the truth of God's Word.
  - A. Once we know the truth, anything else supposedly done in the name of religion is counterfeit. Church Fellowship Halls and church sponsored entertainment is counterfeit to God's truth.
7. **Here are some key points to consider:**
  - A. Entertainment focuses upon what is agreeable to the person, while worship channels one's attention to what is deserving of God.
  - B. In entertainment man is absorbed with his "likes." In true worship, man is absorbed with his "God."
  - C. Creating dramatic effects through skits, instead of the actual Word of God, might make a skit intriguing, but to whom?
  - D. True conversion is when man is drawn to Christ by the Father, not drawn by food or games  
**John 6:44-45**

## Conclusion

1. **Again, we plead for peace and unity, but not at the cost of prostituting the church for which our Lord shed His blood.**

A. **Jesus' blood was shed to purchase the church, a spiritual house with a spiritual mission.**

**Ephesians 5:25-27**

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God** through Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, **which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.

2. **Wholesome, social activities are important in the life of each Christian; but God made a distinction between the responsibility of the home and the responsibility of the church.**

1 Corinthians 11:22 What! **Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?** Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

Romans 14:17 for **the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking**, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

3. **Churches need to specialize in being churches and encourage parents to specialize in building good homes.**

A. **The church was not established to promote aerobic classes and softball teams and "bodily exercise" which profits little, but rather "godliness" which "is profitable for all things; having a promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come."**

**(2 Timothy 4:8).**

B. **May we strive to keep the church exactly as what the Lord planned for it to be and not what man is changing it to be.**

**A "soul center" rather than a "social center."**



# Benevolence

## Introduction

1. There is no better way to teach the plan of salvation than examining the cases of conversion in the book of Acts.
  - A. Examples such as: the Jews on Pentecost, the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch, Saul, Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, the Corinthians clearly reveal what one must do to be saved.
2. Similarly, the New Testament cases of local churches engaged in the work of Benevolence show us **who did the relieving and who were relieved.**
3. Before we begin our study this morning, let's first define a few words:
  - A. **Benevolence:** "an inclination to do good; charitable."
  - B. **Alien:** "a foreigner; One not born of the water and spirit and therefore is not a child of God."
  - C. **Saint:** "One born of the water and spirit and therefore is a child of God, in the kingdom of God."

### Local Church

### Sponsoring Church

4. Every Christian should want and strive to do **"good unto all men"** and therefore we should do good to everyone that we can. But the question before us is not whether a Christian should do good, but rather how has God allowed **His church to function** in the caring for the needy.



5. What is the work of the church in the area of Benevolence?
  - A. Does the church operate in the field of Limited Benevolence (just take care of certain ones), or:
  - B. Does the church operate in the field of Unlimited Benevolence (care for all the world's needy)?
  
6. **Some argue: "whatever the church can do the individual can do and whatever the individual can do the church can do."**
  - A. This is faulty reasoning. Individuals pay taxes - but the church does not. In 1 Timothy 5 Individuals must care for the widows except under certain circumstances as stipulated in the text, "the church is not to be charged".

## Majority of Benevolent Work is to Be Done by Individuals

1. **We must understand that God restricted the work of benevolence.**

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

- A. **This is strong language. Laziness is a sin that must not be tolerated.**

- 1) **Those that aid individuals that won't work due to laziness becomes a partaker of their sin.**
- 2) **God has always expected each individual to stand on his own two feet and do for himself as he is able and has opportunity. This leads to another restriction:**

2. **Each one is to be responsible for his own family as he is able. This includes aged parents and other relatives. The Bible teaches:**

**1 Timothy 5:4,8,16**

- A. **Notice also that the care of widows is restricted.**

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

- 1) **This passage of scripture teaches that this work belongs to INDIVIDUALS, and not the CHURCH.**

3. **If these guidelines were followed today, welfare rolls would be drastically reduced, and the church would not be burdened.**

## **Benevolence is Not a Tool to Bring People into Christ**

1. **Benevolence has never been intended to be a tool to bring others into Christ, or to keep them faithful.**
  - A. **We have the Power of the Gospel - the Word of God to do that.**
  
2. **Don't you think that there were poor people in Asia and Southeastern Europe when the apostle Paul was on his preaching tours?**
  - A. **We do not read about where Paul ever used clothes, food or money to entice people to obey the gospel. True discipleship cannot be bought with material goods.**

Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for **it is the power of God to salvation** for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith.

John 6:44-45 No one can come to Me **unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore **everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.**

- B. **Benevolent tactics were used after WW II. Baptisms came easy, the building overflowed, but when the "loaves and fishes" ran out, so did the "CONVERTS." (Weren't really converted, were they?)**

## New Testament Teaching on Benevolence

1. There are nine groups of Bible passages of scripture in the New Testament on benevolence that is the responsibility of the local church.

### SEE CHART: "The Benevolent Work of the Church"

2. Let's look at each one of these passages and then determine:

A. **who administered the relief** (local church, sponsoring church, benevolent society)

B. **Who were relieved** (Saint, Alien, Orphan).

1) Jerusalem

a) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**Acts 2:44-45** *"all who believed"*

b) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**Acts 4:32-35** *"those who believed"*

c) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**Acts 6:1-6** *"disciples were multiplying"*

1. It is worthy to note that the congregation at Jerusalem took care of its needy without establishing and maintaining an organization under a board of directors. The local church attended to its own work.

2) Antioch

a) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**Acts 11:27-30** *"the disciples; to the brethren"*

**Brother R.L. Whiteside wrote:** “Here again we see a manifestation of the benevolent spirit of the early Christians, a demonstration of what a church can do in helping the needy. The gospel of Christ puts that sort of spirit into all who come under its influence. Every church of God is therefore a benevolent society, and Christians need no other society in which to do such work.”

**3) Macedonia and Achaia.**

- a) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**Romans 15:25-32** “for the poor among the saints”
- b) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**1 Corinthians 16:1-3** “for the saints”
- c) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**2 Corinthians 8:1-4** “of the ministering to the saints”
- d) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints  
**2 Corinthians 9:1, 12** “ministering to the saints; needs of the saints”

**4) Widows Indeed:**

- a) Administered: Local Church; Who: Saints

1 Timothy 5:16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, **that it may relieve those who are really widows.**

## **New Testament Benevolence**

**Unquestionably right!**

3. From the foregoing cases we conclude that the church can help **any saint**, or **group of saints**, that has a genuine need. **Widows indeed** are permanent charges of the church.
  - A. Nothing in these cases suggest that a congregation should go into all the world looking for needy people and support as many as possible.
  - B. The church has a higher function than the social and temporal betterment of humanity.
  - C. The church is not a glorified Rescue Mission for the world's indigent or a Red Cross kind of organization.
  - D. To keep the benevolent work of the church in its proper perspective we need to study and **follow the New Testament**, not what other religious bodies are doing!

## **Conclusion**

1. The Christian life is a training school for eternity.
  - A. We must learn kindness, piety, compassion, gentleness, tenderness and love.
2. God wants His people to become personally involved in service, not the mere giving of money through some agency.
  - A. We should strive to do whatever we can do as individuals.
  - B. But let the church do only what it is authorized to do based on New Testament example.
3. Let the church be occupied with the seeking and saving of the lost soul **through the gospel of Jesus Christ**.



# Church Cooperation

## Introduction

1. Able and sincere brethren in Christ differ on the work the churches should do, and on how they should do it.
2. Some say that it is right for churches to do every kind of work that is right for Christians to do.
  - A. Others say that individual Christians may do certain kinds of work which the churches have no scriptural right to undertake.
3. It is admitted generally that preaching and teaching the word to the whole world and ministering in the material needs of life's unfortunates are duties assigned by the Lord to the church.
  - A. How then, did the churches cooperate in these two classes of work, when under the direction of inspired men?

## Teaching God's Word Is a Work of the Church

1. The church is said to be "the pillar and ground of the truth"  
**1 Timothy 3:15**
  - A. The inspired apostle Paul wrote:  
**Ephesians 3:8-11**
  - B. The church of the Thessalonians with apostolic approval "sounded forth the word of the Lord" (**1 Thessalonians 1:8**).



2. **The church at Philippi preached the gospel in Thessalonica and increased fruit to their own account by sending contributions directly to Paul while he actually did the work.**

**Philippians 4:15-17**

- A. **These contributions were for Paul to preach the gospel, not for Paul's tent making business.**

- 1) **Making tents for profit, though a "good work" for Christians like Paul, Aquila and Priscilla, is not a "good work" for the church to do.**

- B. **Churches cooperated in preaching the gospel in distant places.**

- 1) **While Paul preached in Corinth, "other churches" cooperated with one another and with Paul by sending wages to him.**

2 Corinthians 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.

3. **Bible church cooperation comes down to this:**

- A. **We see through the scriptures that each individual congregation (local church) sent funds for the purpose of evangelism or benevolence directly to the individual or to the church that had need.**

- 1) **As we discussed last week, the individual supported had to be a saint.**
  - a) **Paul as a preacher could receive funds directly from a cooperating church (local church)**
  - b) **An individual saint in need could receive benevolent help from a cooperating church (local church).**

## **Ways in Which New Testament Churches Did Not Cooperate in the Work of Preaching the Gospel**

1. Do you read anywhere in the Bible where one church (local church) appointed itself or received an anointment from any other church or individual to be **“the sponsoring church?”**
  - A. Were there sponsoring churches that announced “send us your money. We will select and appoint the messengers and preachers and missionaries and all workers for this preaching program.”
    - 1) We will fix their wages and decide where they will go.
      - a) Have “fellowship with us in our good work!”
      - b) What does this mean? “Send us your money?”
        1. Do you think they want “fellowship” in the oversight and control of the program?  
**Meaning:**
        2. “Send us the money and we will do the rest!”
2. This kind of cooperation is being advocated and practiced today by the “sponsoring church” promoters in churches of Christ across the country.
  - A. Why is this kind of cooperation wrong?
    - 1) It destroys the autonomy, independence, and self-respect of the cooperating churches — and of course there is — **NO Bible Authority.**
3. The New Testament church cooperated in the work of preaching the gospel - this is a fact.
  - A. However there is nowhere that one can go to find that they cooperated after the pattern of a society or sponsoring church.

## **Churches Cooperated in Benevolent Work**

1. **As we discussed last week, churches cooperated by sending contributions to the churches in Judea for the relief of poor saints. (Acts 11:27-30; 12:25; Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 9:1-15; Acts 24:17)**
2. **They also cooperated in the appointment of messengers to travel among the churches and to teach other churches to give for the relief of the poor saints.  
**2 Corinthians 8:18-24****
3. **They also cooperated in the use of the same agents to transport funds to the churches in the disaster area. (Acts 11:29-30; 12:25; 2 Corinthians 8:20-21; Acts 24:17).**
  - A. **These are Bible facts! This is the truth because we can show Bible authority, proof text that this was done and is therefore authorized today.**

## **Ways Churches**

### **Did Not Cooperate in Supplying the Needs to the Poor Saint**

1. **They did not send funds to any church where the saints in the receiving church were in no greater need.**
2. **When the famine or need was over, then there was no longer a need to continue to support them. It was only done during the time of need.**
3. **When famine strikes upon a church anywhere, then churches everywhere should cooperate by sending contributions by whatever means available and honorable.**

2 Corinthians 8:21 providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

**4. Cecil B. Douthitt, a gospel preacher that passed away in 1971 wrote the following concerning this subject:**

If some church, for example, the church in Ephesus, had begun to reason with apostolic approval after this fashion: "Widows, orphans and old people always will need help. Famine, pestilence and earthquakes are sure to strike somewhere sometime. We are strategically located between the East and West, and our elders are men of vision, integrity and ability. Let us put on a brotherhood campaign of collecting funds for charity from churches all over the world. Then let us gather orphans or widows or old people from any place we choose, bring them here in places we have provided, and we will take care of just as many as the funds from other churches and our business enterprises will support. This work will be under our oversight and control; then no man on earth could raise any scriptural objection to the principle of centralized oversight and control, which developed the Roman hierarchy. But is there any man on earth who sincerely thinks that the churches in the days of inspiration participated in that kind of cooperation?"

## **Conclusion**

- 1. Let's make sure that all we do in the name of religion is based on Bible Authority.**
- 2. If people would remove the "I think's", "I Believe's", and return to "I will do the will of the Lord", then the church will function as it was designed and churches of Christ could be and would be united across the country!**
- 3. If we practice anything without Bible Authority we are sinning.**

Matthew 15:9 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

4. I hope that everyone of us can learn something else from these lessons on liberalism in the church today.

A. That is, that the true child of God will search the scriptures to find out what things are approved of by God. Paul wrote:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **having a form of godliness but denying its power**. And **from such people turn away!**

B. John wrote:

2 John 9-11 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; **for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.**

C. **We must see that when we fellowship error, we are partakers of that error!**

1) That is why it is so important to make sure that we strive to worship with saints that are striving to “Hold fast the pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13).

a) When away on a trip or vacation, which church do we seek to worship with?

**Articles**  
dealing with  
**Liberalism**

# Why I Left Liberalism

Brian A. Yeager

The Lord's church today is divided over many issues. Most of those issues are simply filed under the subject of Bible Authority. I spent my first preaching work teaching liberal doctrines relative to the church's authority to support things in which the Bible never authorized. I spent most of my second preaching work studying some of these issues because of Ed Phillips who was my neighbor, friend, and a fellow Gospel Preacher. I had studied with others and had seen some of my inconsistencies but I was not fully convinced that I was a false teacher on these matters of authority. I then began my third work and during the beginning of that work I was realizing more and more as I studied. I never did buy into the fact that we had authority to support orphan homes with the Lord's money, but I did not stand against it either. This article is going to reveal what finally made me leave the liberal position of Institutionalism and the things relating to that position. I knew of some like myself who did not belong in that belief system, but we also had a developed hatred towards what we termed "anti's". Of course labels are used to develop prejudice against a group of people. For example the Christian church calls faithful members of the Lord's church "non-instrumentalist". This is true, for faithful Bible students would be "anti instruments" or against instruments used in Christian worship. We must realize that there are extremists on all sides of every issue. I am not an extremist. I was listening to a lecture on the subject of "anti-ism" on the Internet. This fellow said that "anti-ism" was people who bind one communion cup, no bible class, etc. This is the case in some extreme positions, but not most. Do not allow your mind to be clouded by misrepresentations so that you will not study these issues. This is what I did, it took me too long to wake up and see the truth! Do not allow my term usage of "Institutionalism or Liberalism" to cloud your mind.

Before studying issues such as these there must be a proper understanding of Bible authority. When we read the Bible we must note that there are two divisions in it. There is the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is also known as the Law of Moses. The Old Testament Law was given to the Nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 5:1ff.). Prior to the Law of Moses there was the Law of the Patriarchs. The Law of Moses was done away when Christ died on Calvary's Cross (Colossians 2:14, Romans 7:1-6, Ephesians 2:13-16, and Hebrews 9:15-17). The Law of Christ, or the New Testament then became the binding law and this law was to all men (Romans 1:16). The New Testament Law is the final and everlasting Law (Matthew 24:25 and I Peter 1:22-23). The New Testament was once delivered (Jude verse 3), and is not to be changed in any way (Galatians 1:8-12 and Revelation 22:18-19). The New Testament Law is best summed up here: (Hebrews 1:1-2) *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."* The Bible teaches us that we must do all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17). We can apply Bible Authority in three ways: 1. Direct Command; 2. Approved Example; 3. Necessary Inference. Let's use the Lord's Supper for an example of how we obtain all three ways of authority. We have the command to partake of the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:23-26). We have an example of the Lord's Supper being taken on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). From the same example in Acts 20:7, we can infer that we are to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. Then of course we have that of expediencies. Expediencies are those things that help us to carry out commands. For example, we are to assemble together (Hebrews 10:25). It is expedient to have a place to assemble. Therefore, it would be authorized to have a building to meet in. An abuse of this would be the instrument used during the song worship.

The New Testament teaches that the heart is to be the instrument used in singing to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16). If something else was used that would be an addition which would be a sin (Revelation 22:18-19). Some would argue that if God does not tell us that we cannot do something, His silence permits us to do this thing. For example some might say that God did not tell us that we can't use popcorn in the Lord's Supper. Yet, when the Lord instituted it he gave the bread and fruit of the vine as the components (Matthew 26:26-30). Again, we must realize that we cannot add to nor take from what He tells us (Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19). The same person that would argue this statement would turn around and expect their children to obey their silence. For example when a parent tells their child to be home by 8:00 PM, the parent does not say "not 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, etc." That parent expects their child at 8:00 because that was the order given. God expects us to do what He has said, nothing more and nothing less. As we now have an understanding of establishing Bible Authority let us talk of some of the issues in which I had to change my views on. I pray that if you practice these things this material will help you to study them. I also share the words of the Apostle Paul: *"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"* – Galatians 4:16. Our lesson also will deal with what is commanded, approved, or inferred for the church collectively to do and that which is to be done by Christians on an individual basis. In this article when the "Lord's Money" is spoken of we are talking about that which is collected from the saints on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-2).

### **The Orphan Home Issue**

While I did not support many of my brethren and their stand that it was authorized to support orphan homes with the Lord's money, I did not stand against it either. I heard the arguments and the usage of James chapter one and the twenty-seventh verse. I did not feel that this verse authorized sending the Lord's money to orphan homes. I heard the frequent argument that "anti's" were heartless and that they were stingy with their money. I believed that argument. I looked at the word visit in James 1:27 and found that it meant to inspect. I wondered where my fellow brethren got "send money from the Lord's treasury" from a word that meant inspect. Looking further into this verse one must also look at the subject of the widows, and by studying that much is also revealed about supporting the orphan homes. I realized that the church is to care for widows. Yet, there are limitations and restrictions on how the church is to care for widows. (I Timothy 5:16) *"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."* Then after looking into the context of this verse it was impossible for me to say the James was saying something that contradicted what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy. I realize there is a limitation on these things.

I have taught from every pulpit that I teach from that the way to find someone using a verse out of context is to back up 5 verses and go forward 5 verses to get an idea of the context of a verse. Let's do that with James 1:27. (James 1:22-27) *"22. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. 26. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 27. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."* Notice all the underlined terms that also are in bold print. How many times do you see the church mentioned collectively? James



here, regardless of what is to be done, is speaking to the individual. Chapter two starts a different topic entirely.

## Benevolence

Benevolence is the subject that I had the hardest time with. I read debates, spoke with conservative brethren, and debated it with myself and also discussed it with my wife. I believed that the church was to help all people including the alien sinners with the Lord's money. I had read many "non-institutional" publications that taught that the work of the individual was to help the alien sinner and that the church was limited to Christians only. I could not see this from my study of the scriptures. I used logical arguments like: "If I die the church can help my wife who is a Christian, but not my children who are not". I fought it with those things. Just like a denominational person might argue against the truth by saying: "The Lord loves all and would not judge those who were not baptized". The scriptures clearly teach that baptism is commanded (Acts 2:38, John 3:3-5, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:3-5, and I Peter 3:20-21). Using emotional arguments does not change the truth. I realized this. Then of course the only way to prove that the church can help the alien sinner is to do so with Bible (I Thessalonians 5:21). I sought out to do so. **Yet, every time I found a passage where the Lord's money was used it was given to Christians such as in Romans 15:25-26.**

I began the argument from what seemed to be two of the liberal positions strongest arguments. The first is found in II Corinthians 9:13 which reads: "*Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men.*" This seemed to clear the subject in my mind. I stopped my search. Then one day I was doing a word study on fellowship as I was preparing a sermon on the subject. I found that the word "distribution" found in II Corinthians 9:13 was the same Greek word as the word translated as "communion" in II Corinthians 6:14. I asked myself the same question Paul asked the Corinthian brethren in II Corinthians 6:14: "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*" I did further research, not being a Greek scholar just using Strong's number 2842. I found that every time this Greek word appeared it had to do with joint participation between Christians and Christians or Christians and God. Not once does it appear Christians to non-Christians. For example this is where that word appears and what English word is used for it:

*Act 2:42 fellowship [2842], Romans 15:26 contribution [2842], I Corinthians 1:9 fellowship [2842], I Corinthians 10:16 communion [2842], II Corinthians 6:14 communion, [2842] II Corinthians 8:4 fellowship [2842], II Corinthians 9:13 distribution [2842], II Corinthians 13:14 communion [2842], Galatians 2:9 fellowship [2842], Ephesians 3:9 fellowship [2842], Philippians 1:5 fellowship [2842], Philippians 2:1 fellowship [2842], Philippians 3:10 fellowship [2842], Philemon 1:6 communication [2842], Hebrews 13:16 communicate [2842], 1 John 1:3 (TWICE) fellowship [2842], fellowship [2842], 1 John 1:6 fellowship [2842], and 1 John 1:7 fellowship [2842].*

I asked myself the next logical question. If in all these passages the only time non-Christians are referenced is a time in which Paul asked what Christians were doing in fellowship with non-Christians, why would he turn around and use the same word authorizing the church to give to non-Christians? As a matter of fact God demands that we have NO fellowship with darkness (Ephesians 5:11). Another example of what this word study has done is that it let me see this "all men" argument in a new light. In Ephesians 3:9 the statement "all men" is

mentioned. The passage reads *“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”* Now, if the Gospel is hid, it is hid from whom? That answer is found in II Corinthians 4:3, it is hid from the lost. How can those who have been blinded have fellowship in the mystery? Obviously Paul did not mean that in an unrestricted sense. Those that reject the Gospel, the lost, cannot share in the Gospel and the benefits of being in the church. Obviously not all times we see the statement “all men” includes every kind with no exclusions. A note should also be made that the word “men” in II Corinthians 9:13 has been added to the text which the King James makes us aware of by putting it in italics. Also, you can look to verse fourteen for further clarification. (II Corinthians 9:14) *“And by their prayer for you...”*. Let me ask, is that the non-Christians praying for the Christians? I thought sin separates men from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), and that God does not hear the prayer of the alien sinner (I Peter 3:12). There is also contextual proof that Christians are the only ones supported here by the church. Read the whole context of chapters eight and nine. Notice the beginning passages of each chapter. (II Corinthians 8:1;4) *“1. Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. 4. Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”* (II Corinthians 9:1) *“For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you.”* Why would Paul write two chapters about providing for the saints then, in one verse talk about non-Christians?

The only other passage that I could argue from stating that the church has authority to give to non-Christians from the Lord’s money was in Galatians 6:10. Again, let us look at this passage and determine if the passage means for Christians or the church to “do good unto all men”. (Galatians 6:5-10) *“5. For every man shall bear his own burden. 6. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. 7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. 9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* Again, as we did in James 1:27, the underlined words should point out to the honest person to whom Galatians 6:10 applies which is the individual Christian. Paul is talking to the individuals telling them that which they sow they will reap. Giving them instructions for their works. This points to passages such as (II Corinthians 9:6). We will be judged on OUR works (II Corinthians 5:10). The argument then given in response to this is: “whatever the individual can do the church can do collectively”. Some would say that the book of Galatians is written to the church and it is addressed to the church (Galatians 1:1-2). They then add to that statement the thought that this Epistle is for the church collectively and they are to do those things told to them collectively. Let me ask, was the church baptized into the church (Galatians 3:27)? Surely we can see that the individuals there were baptized into the church. Thus, this Epistle is addressed to the members of those congregations meeting in the area of Galatia. There will be those who will say: “Non-Institutional brethren are stingy with their money, they just do not want to spend it”. Think about this for a moment, the Pro-Institutional position states it is the work of the church with the Lord’s money. The Non-Institutional position says this support must come from your own pockets without taking what we give to God it is in addition to what we give to the Lord. I must now ask, who is stingy with their money?

## **Can the Church Do Everything the Individual Christian Can Do?**

Part of the Liberal doctrine teaches that the church can do everything the individual can do. We must realize that the individual Christian as pointed out in Galatians 6:10 does have a role of benevolence to the non-Christian and is also pointed out in passages such as (Matthew 25:31ff.). Yet, the argument that “the individual Christian must do it and the church has authority to do anything the individual Christian must do” is not biblical. For example, in Matthew chapter 18 verses fifteen through seventeen we are told how two Christians can handle a problem between each other. The text reads: *“15. Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”* Notice that the church was not involved even when a plurality of brethren were involved. The church became involved when the issue was brought before them, not until then. You also have a difference of the work of the church and individuals shown in I Timothy 5:16.

### **Churches Breaking Autonomy**

Another practice that helped open my eyes to the error of Institutionalism was churches breaking autonomy. You have elders of congregations overseeing the work and funds of others. This is nothing more or less than Catholicism. Elders only have authority to oversee the flock among them (I Peter 5:1-2). There is no authority for this practice.

Then you have the formation of missionary societies. Congregations get involved in works that are too large for them and they need to draw funds from others. When we look to the New Testament pattern the only time we find Christians getting help is in time of need. Not in time of starting a work too big for the local congregation to handle.

### **The Social Gospel**

When I was a teenager I loved “Vacation Bible School”. We had cookies, a puppet show, and yes also a bible class. I never thought about what we were doing. The way it was set up is that on Friday night the children would perform a little show after the puppets taught their little thought for the night. What was our goal for VBS? It was to get to the parents by letting the children have a good time. We even admitted that to be the case. We even had a Friday night graduation show followed by a cookout that drew in the parents. I look back and I am sorry that I was not wise enough to see that error. We would never allow the children to perform songs in front of us at any other service, and this was the assembled service of the saints. We would have called that a choir anywhere else. We would never allow a puppet show on Wednesday nights or any other time. Then we used a cookout to draw the parents. Of course this practice was not mentioned in the Bible. The only method of evangelism employed in the first century was preaching the truth (Matthew 28:19, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:4, and Romans 1:16).

## Conclusion

This article did not give every argument against institutionalism. It did give why I left my former positions. The Bible teaches us that if we do not teach the truth we do not have God and that faithful Christians should not fellowship us. (II John 9-11) *"9. 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. 10. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."* I have and will continue to repent of the error of my past practices. We must strive always to speak as the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11). We must not employ tactics to grow that are beyond or short of the New Testaments teaching. The only way to come out of error is to realize what it is. Studying the Bible, as did the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11), is what brought me away from Liberalism. Dear reader, study your Bible and if there is a need of repentance on your part please do so before it is too late (Luke 13:3-5).

# **Responsibility: Individual or Institutional?**

Harry Osborne

Our country is undergoing another experiment of shifting the burden of solving social ills onto the government and its institutions. This is part of the constant cycle in which people grasp at the promises made that someone else can solve their problems and meet their responsibilities. Much the same type of promises were made to pass the so-called "Great Society" programs of the 1960s. Since poverty, crime and a variety of social ills have increased in the presence of those programs, it is obvious that they have not produced the "Great Society" promised.

In our time, we hear proposals for more government programs promising relief from our present problems. Whether or not the programs are enacted is a political issue which I have no interest in discussing here, but we may note that the basic problems we face in our society are not due to the absence of a governmental program. Murder, theft, immorality, hatred, dishonesty and other forms of ungodliness are not due to the absence of governmental programs, but are due to the wrong actions of individuals. Thus, they will not be solved by instituting a program, but by the proper actions of the individuals responsible.

A parallel can be drawn between the above and the way our institutional brethren seek to solve various ills around us. It seems that these brethren think the way to solve every problem is to set up an institution funded by appeals to various churches and depend upon the institution to do the work for them. This absolves them of personal responsibility to dirty their hands in the work since they did their part by giving into the treasury of the church which then funded the work to be done by the institution setup to solve the problem.

Our liberal brethren consistently justify such efforts by perverting passages which charge individuals with a given work into mandates for a church-funded institution to meet the charge. Lest some think this charge too harsh and our liberal brethren to have been misrepresented, let us look at a few examples of their institutional mind set and the means used to justify their treasured institutions.

## **Institutionalizing Matthew 25**

The following was taken from an article by Larry Frank in the Christ's Prison Fellowship newsletter of February 1990 appealing for support of the program:

We are frequently asked why and how we go about getting things done in our prison ministry. Considering that we are no doubt the low budget leader of the major ministries in Texas prisons, the question generated a desire to define some of the programs that occur in carrying out the ministry.

First, we believe as members of the body of Christ that we are encouraged by the Word of God to support others who use their individual gifts and talents in serving our Lord, "... for then, we will all go away into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46, NIV). Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink (impact church ministry); I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Homeless-visitor ministry); I was naked and you clothed me (benevolence ministry); I was sick and you visited

me (Medical Center Chaplaincy-Hospital ministry); I was in prison and you came to me (Christ's Prison Fellowship-Prison ministry)" (Matt. 25:34-36, NIV).

Second, Texas State policy and philosophy emanate from Brother Whitt's "Christ's Prison Fellowship" and in the Southern Region is under the oversight of the Elders of the Eldridge Road church of Christ in Sugar Land. We implement policy and programs through direct contact with prison officials, chaplains, inmates and families, and the best network of dedicated volunteers that one could expect or hope for (emphases his — HRO).

The context of Matthew 25 concerns the time when the sheep and goats will be separated in the final judgment. According to Mr. Frank, the Lord's criteria for that separation will be whether local churches created enough bureaucratic institutions and sponsoring churches to fund others to do the work for them. If such were the case, I trust that our brother and those of like mind would have no fear of judgment, for they have created enough to make even Washington jealous.

However, Jesus will not judge me based upon whether I put a check into the plate to help fund a "Church of Christ Chaplain" program to visit the sick. He will judge me on the basis of what I did to personally meet the needs of the sick as I had opportunity. My responsibility to go to those in prison is not directed by the "policy and philosophy" emanating from Mr. Whitt's institution, nor is it met by laying by in store on the first day of the week so that the local church here may surrender a part of its autonomous work to "the oversight of the Elders of the Eldridge Road church of Christ in Sugar Land."

If there has ever been a clear statement of the institutional mentality, the above is it! Such thinking betrays the concept that one can fulfill his individual responsibility by proxy to the church and the church can fulfill its responsibility by proxy to an institution. While this thinking is a trademark of liberalism, it is absolutely foreign to the New Testament.

The need presented in Matthew 25:1-11 was not for a "Church of Christ Lamp Maintenance Program" under the oversight of the Elders of the Jerusalem church to facilitate the unlawful centralization of local churches and keep the lamps of foolish virgins shining worldwide. The need was for those foolish virgins to do what was their responsibility to do. In Matthew 25:14-30, Christ does not propose a "Church of Christ Investment Institution" to solve the problem of slothful servants who stuff their masters' money in holes. He notes the individual responsibility of the one talent servant to do that which was his responsibility to do.

### **Institutionalizing James 1:27**

A notice was sent to "Churches of Christ, Greater Houston Area" a few days ago by the First Colony Church of Christ regarding "Preachers' Luncheon, Month of October, 1993." In the notice, Homer O. Gainer, "Program Chairman," informs as follows:

On each Tuesday during the month of October, 1993 we will be privileged to hear speakers who are closely associated with childcare operations. The teaching of James 1:27 remains relevant.

The speakers are: Benny Glover (Boles Home), Gene Boone (Foster Home), Dempsey Simpson (Medina Home), Ed Moore (Sunny Glen Children's Home).

The first thing that interested me about this announcement was the fact that our liberal brethren no longer go through the charade of calling their institutions "orphan homes." They correctly call them "childcare operations." The named institutions have for years been filled with children who have fathers and mothers and cannot properly be called "orphans." They are institutions which cannot and will not place children in the "home" authorized by God in Genesis 2 for the raising of children.

The second thing which caught my attention in the ad was the abuse of James 1:27 which says, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Since the children in the above institutions are not orphans, how are they justified in this passage? Obviously, they are not!

Who is given this charge in the text? The same man who is charged to bridle his tongue in verse 26 and to "keep oneself unspotted from the world" in verse 27 is also charged "to visit orphans and widows in their trouble." Does a local church have a tongue in the middle aisle that needs to be bridled? Does a church-funded institution have one? No, but an individual does.

My individual charge to bridle my tongue cannot be met by the local church and its programs, whether lawful or unlawful. Neither can that responsibility be met by an institution. I must take responsibility for my tongue by acting in ways to control it. Only then have I met the charge of this passage. My individual responsibility to help the orphans cannot be passed off to the local church or an institution either.

The liberals' attempt to paint us as heartless orphan haters is a lie! The guilt actually rests with their efforts to escape the demands of individual responsibility and place it upon someone else while leaving themselves with only the need to write a check and put it in the plate on Sunday.

### **Institutionalize It All**

A few years ago, I received a brochure appealing for churches of Christ to help fund the Nigerian Christian Hospital, described as a "benevolent work supplementary to the extensive evangelistic ministries" in Nigeria. After the bold heading, "Is Medical Missions Scripturally Sound?," the appeal attempted to justify the work biblically. It claimed such works to be authorized upon the basis of the good Samaritan (Luk. 10), avoidance of the Pharisee's neglecting the "weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23), and the customary misuse of Matthew 25 discussed earlier. It then added the following for good measure:

Providing medical care is pure religion (James 1:27). It shows the love of God (1 John 3:17). It fulfills the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). It changes our words into deeds (1 John 3:18).

NCH is serving about 100,000 people who would have no other modern medical facility if we were not there. In an effort to preach Christ to them, we cannot say "go, be warmed and filled" (Jas. 2:16), without attempting to help them.

Yes! It is scriptural, like feeding the hungry and caring for the orphans and widows.

Somewhere in the passages listed, I missed the part about the "Church of Christ Hospital" to fulfill the commands. An examination of the passages shows that they actually charge individual Christians with various responsibilities. None of them has the slightest connection with providing medical services in the name of evangelism!

With that type of exegesis, I wonder if these brethren will build new wings onto their church hospital and justify them with equally inventive uses of Scripture. How about building an aerobics workout center so that the church can fulfill the command to "exercise thyself" (1 Tim. 4:7)? They can ignore the fact that Timothy was the one commanded and that the exercise involved was "unto godliness" rather than physical fitness. How about a heart surgery wing? After all, Jesus wanted to correct it when he saw those whose "heart is waxed gross" (Matt. 13:15) or those with "hardness of heart" (Mk. 16:14). If they charged the same rate as American hospitals, it would be more scriptural — for they could honestly say in the consultation before surgery, "Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). Space prohibits discussion of other inventive ways to justify further expansion.

### **Conclusion**

Though the degree of the brazen misuse of Scripture has changed as our liberal brethren sought to justify their unauthorized institutions, the fact remains that they were initiated by misusing and abusing Scripture. It has gotten to the point now that even some of our liberal brethren are increasingly uncomfortable with the proliferation of institutions among them. The arrival of the "Bread for the Hungry World" program jointly funded by "churches of Christ" and Christian churches has caused this element to react in horror. They do not like the ultimate end of institutionalism, but they still want to hold on to the "innocent, little orphan homes." It is about time that they wake up and realize that their institutions are neither for "orphans," nor are they "innocent." As they awake to this realization, let us be ready to help teach them the nature of individual responsibility and call them to join in the true practice of pure and undefiled religion.

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# The Continuing Apostasy of Liberalism

Harry R. Osborne

The following article by Wayne Jackson is reprinted from Christian Courier, a paper published by our liberal brethren, regarding some of the current teaching done by some of the most extreme preachers among them. As you read the article, ask yourself a few questions. Where did such apostasy begin? What approach is taken to defend such outrageous positions? How in the world have these teachers of error been tolerated to this point? Where will it all end? We will discuss some of these points more at the end of this article:

On October 17, 1989, San Francisco, California was jolted by a powerful earthquake. Two days later, on the campus of Lubbock Christian University, Randy Mayeux, who preaches for the Preston Road church in Dallas, delivered a radical, almost earthquake-like speech, the shocking effects of which are reverberating across our brotherhood months later.

The theme of Mayeux's presentation, which was really a veneered tirade against the "traditional" church of Christ, was "unity in diversity." He brazenly threw down the gauntlet to faithful gospel preachers everywhere.

In a series of sweeping charges, Mayeux alleged that although the churches of Christ claim that they have no creed but the Bible, they in fact do have one. He referred to a well-known tract, *Can We All Understand the Bible Alike?*, as an "ignorant" viewpoint, and charged that the Scriptures cannot be uniformly understood, which, of course, makes the apostolic charge that we "all speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10) rather meaningless. Brother Mayeux equated the use of mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship with such expedients as the Sunday school and multiple communion cups. He suggested that the division which came about between the Christian Church and the churches of Christ in the late 1800's was principally economic, i.e., some churches could afford the instrument and others could not, hence, a spirit of rivalry developed. Our brother is as uninformed in history as he is in biblical matters.

Our misguided friend is also quite confused as to what it takes to constitute a Christian. He affirms that he teaches that baptism is for remission of sins, but he confesses that his heart inclines otherwise. (I believe there is an appropriate word for one who believes one thing and teaches another.) He contends that there are many respectable men among us who do not believe that our view of baptism is correct. He argues that if persecution should come, we would meet for worship with believers of all sorts, and whether one had been sprinkled or immersed would hardly be significant. He says, in fact, his belief actually is that God will accept a person at the point of his or her understanding. Would that mean that the Lord would accept the Jew as he is, even though he does not "understand" that Jesus is the Messiah? Mayeux mentioned "Mother" Teresa, the Roman Catholic nun, whom he acknowledged has never been immersed for the forgiveness of her sins, and he wondered if a poll were taken, how many might feel that she is saved anyhow. There is an implication as to what his vote would be.

Brother Mayeux praises the writings and preaching of Charles Swindoll, a staunch Calvinist, and concedes that he has personal inclinations toward Calvinism. He avers that hundreds of our women in the church across the country are attending the organized "Bible Study Fellowship" programs which, he says, are "unabashed, unashamed Calvinist Bible studies." And he exclaims, "It is wonderful!" He predicts that a growing number of our people are going

to think like Calvinists because they are reading men like Swindoll, and because they are not getting good Bible instruction in the church. Those sitting under him certainly aren't getting much!

Mayeux tells of a Herald of Truth family conference recently conducted in Texas during which a woman "preached" to 900 people, and, he exclaims, she "was dynamite!" He asks: Is there no place in the church for women who want to preach publicly to both men and women? He declares that the church of the Lord will not survive in the 1990s unless we allow women to exercise their ministerial gifts. On and on he railed as the audience laughed at his glib sarcasm. Randy Mayeux concluded his infamous diatribe by asserting that in the 1990s, diversity will be the only game in town!

Meanwhile, in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex area, Larry James of the Richardson East congregation, has boldly blasted churches of Christ for their opposition to the use of instruments of music in worship. In a sermon delivered on February 26th of last year, James caustically attacked our position on worship innovations. He made no attempt, of course, to answer the major arguments employed to sustain our stand; rather, he chose simply to ridicule those who contend for the primitive pattern of worship.

The sermons of Mayeux and James reflect a typical revolutionary spirit that is becoming increasingly common in the church. I am convinced that many sincere Christians are not aware of the extent to which the restoration movement is drifting (actually, rushing) into digression. It is quite a shocking experience to hear these men so arrogantly proclaiming their unorthodox views, and to note their mounting popularity (Wayne Jackson, Christian Courier, February 1990, p. 39).

A generation has now past since the painful "split" over institutionalism which occurred in the 1950s. During those dark days, many faithful brethren warned their digressive brethren of the horrible consequences which would come if they gave up the appeal for Bible authority in all matters (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Those favoring efforts for which there was no Bible authority answered, "We do many things for which we have no authority." The plea for all things to be authorized from God's Word fell on deaf ears which called such thinking "picky," "outdated," and "narrow." Those who demanded Bible authority for all that they practiced were labeled "anti's" and quickly dismissed as some kind of crazy nuts. While the vast majority set out upon the path of the unauthorized, a few brethren sounded a warning about the end of that trail. They warned of a time these liberal attitudes would be applied even further than the digressives wanted. They warned of compromises extending to embrace instrumental music and denominational error. Even they, no doubt, would be surprised at the extent of the apostasy in such a short time.

I must confess that even though I keep track of the current papers among liberal brethren, I am shocked at the errors openly embraced by some of their prominent preachers. Randy Mayeux, named in the above article, was one of the speakers at the Nashville meeting I attended in November of 1988. He can hardly be dismissed as an obscure person with little influence since he preaches at one of the largest institutional churches in this country (Preston Road in Dallas, Texas). At that time of the Nashville meeting, he was making veiled references to his Calvinist leanings. Less than a year later, however, he made the speech documented above in which he openly admitted to teachings so loose a good Calvinist couldn't even say, "Amen." Ten years ago, who would have guessed that anyone among institutional brethren would declare that a Roman Catholic nun was saved in her present state? Those brethren in

institutional churches who still have any doctrinal convictions for the truth need to wake up and leave such defenders of error to make a stand for God's truth!

As if the above mentality were not enough of a problem among the liberal brethren, the article just before the one above detailed even more trouble among their ranks (Christian Courier, Feb. 1990, pp. 37-38). The author stated that a biology professor at "one of our major universities" called Genesis 1 a "myth." The author went on to say that such is becoming common. The article also admitted that "theological liberalism" (the belief that the Bible, is not a product of Divine inspiration, but of human origin) is the guiding principle in dealing with the Bible for many institutional preachers. Bill Swetmon and others among those brethren have stated views which leave me in shock!

How did it all get started? It started with some who believed it was alright to do just a few things that were unauthorized by God. When those innovations were accepted, a few more were introduced. And so it progressed with one innovation followed by another until these brethren lost any concept of proving all things and holding fast that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). They have followed the downward spiral of apostasy plainly declared in God's Word (2 Tim. 3:13; 3:5; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Thess. 2:10-12). They have sown the wind and they are reaping the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). Let us always be vigilant against the very start of error. It must be seen for what it is - a deadly cancer which will spread through every part of the body until it destroys any semblance of life remaining (2 Tim. 2:16-18). Don't be deceived - there is no harmless error!

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# The Problem Of Church Cooperation

David Hartselle

A year ago, while sitting in a Chinese restaurant in Czechoslovakia, I spoke with another American preacher. I asked if he believed that Christians could scripturally worship God with mechanical instruments of music. He said, "Yes." He then suggested that the Bible was not really a pattern at all but rather a "general guide." Later, as I thought about our conversation, it occurred to me that many today, even some from "Churches of Christ," view the Bible in much the same way - as a general guide but not a pattern. And yet, the Bible plainly admits to being a pattern, one that should be carefully followed. "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim.1:13). As we examine the New Testament, God's pattern, we learn many things about the worship, work, and organization of Christians. This article will give emphasis to the scriptural organization and cooperation of God's people. But it will also expose some of the unscriptural practices that have been started by our brethren.

Jesus chose to organize Christians very simply. His way is designed to exalt the wisdom of God Almighty (Eph.3:10). Early Christians were organized into local congregations; no earthly organization (head, council, treasury, . . . etc.) was given to the universal church. Rather, local churches were ideally to consist of elders (bishops), deacons, and other saints. Elders had the authority to "shepherd" only the congregation that they were members of (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet.5:13). Of course, all Christians - including elders - were under the headship of Jesus Christ (Eph.1:2123). Bishops had no right to establish a pattern where Jesus had not. And, all faithful Christians recognized that the writings of the Holy Spirit gave foundation to the church (Eph.2:1920; 3:36). God's word prescribes that each local church, as well as each Christian, should do only the work that they are capable of doing. Their responsibilities in the work of the Lord extend only so far as their abilities, resources, and opportunities will allow.

Naturally, first century churches were active in spreading the gospel. The Jerusalem church chose a preacher, Barnabas, and sent him to Antioch to encourage the new Christians there (Acts 11:2224). Later, Antioch sent out both Barnabas and Paul to preach the gospel throughout Asia Minor (Acts 13:13). The Philippians were the first to send material assistance to Paul (Phil.4:1516). But eventually other churches supported Paul by sending "wages" directly to him (2 Cor.11:8). In a sense there was cooperation among these churches. Obviously, when different churches sent to the same man, Paul, for the same purpose then cooperation occurred. But in each case every church decided on its own whom, how much and how long they would support in the preaching of the gospel. (Of course, methods change. Today, local churches may use vehicles such as T.V., radio, newspapers, . . . etc. to spread the truth.) Each local church was autonomous and, therefore, independent from all other churches in making such decisions. No New Testament church ever sent to another church to assist it in preaching the gospel.

Physical emergencies did occur in early churches. At times, Christians were in need of the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter. The Jerusalem church experienced this from the very beginning. And some members of that church sold their property, laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to the needy saints there (Acts 4:3235). Eventually however, the Jerusalem church could no longer adequately care for its own. Therefore, other churches sent to the destitute at Jerusalem (Rom.15:26; 1 Cor.16:14). Some contributing churches knew that other groups were sending to Jerusalem. But the

Scriptures present independence of action by each church. Also, the Bible reveals that such aid was sent to the elders of the destitute groups (Acts 11:27-30). Again, this sending from one church to another was exclusively for the relief of saints from physical want. Furthermore, it was to occur only for a specified period of time. Paul addresses the limits on this giving while encouraging the Corinthian brethren, themselves in poverty, to follow through with their commitment to give to the poorer saints in Jerusalem.

For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack - that their may be equality (2 Cor.8:13-14).

Equality from want is to exist among Christians. When it does, the sending from one congregation to another should cease!

In the mid 1800s brethren divided over the support of a human organization: The American Christian Missionary Society. Its mission was to take the gospel to the world more efficiently and effectively than local churches could. This society solicited and received funds from numerous churches. Its board of directors then decided exactly how the money was to be spent. When faithful brethren stood with open Bibles and asked for a pattern or principle for such practices, none was given.

Years passed and faithful brethren continued to follow the New Testament in doing the Lord's work. But a century later, again problems arose. Some said that the missionary society was wrong because it is a human organization, separate from the church, which is true but only part of the problem. Many brethren who objected to the missionary society, introduced a new invention of human wisdom: the sponsoring church. Supporters of the sponsoring church argue that it is not a separate human organization but simply a church of the Lord directed by qualified elders. Consequently, they maintain it to be a scriptural arrangement. One of the earliest and best known examples of a sponsoring church was the Fifth and Highland congregation in Abilene, Texas (an organization: The Herald of Truth). The elders of this local church announced that they had decided to oversee a great work of taking the gospel to the whole world. The work was enormous and so was the cost. In fact, they could not pay for it out of their own treasury. So they appealed to all Churches of Christ to send contributions to this "great work."

Since that time, there have been other such efforts. One recent "brotherhood work" was begun by the Sycamore Church of Christ in Cookeville, Tennessee. It was called "One Nation Under God." The Sycamore church, like Fifth & Highland, assumed the responsibility to take the gospel to all. They planned, first, to target the United States and then later to push this effort around the world. The cost for the U.S. work, they estimated, would be \$17 million. Sycamore pledged \$200,000 and reported that some other congregations would send from \$5,000 to \$25,000 toward this project. The Sycamore elders gave several reasons why they decided to enact this plan. One of those reasons was: "We believed that God would help us accomplish something He had commanded us to do" (Sycamore brochure, 1990, page 2). But had God indeed "commanded" this local congregation to oversee such a brotherhood work? Let us briefly examine this statement.

God, of course, promises to help every congregation and Christian do what he has told them to do. But God gave every local church, no matter how large or small, the same responsibility to use its manpower and finances to support the spread of his Word. God judges based on what we do with what we have, not with what we do not have (Matt.25:21-30; 2 Cor.8:12). God

will not be displeased when a church uses its own money to preach the gospel to the best of its ability.

Furthermore, when one eldership asks other congregations to send to them in the sponsoring church arrangement, they take on more authority than Christ has given them. Brother Peter, himself an elder, commands that elders are to oversee the "flock that is among you" (1 Pet.5:2). Elders are not lawmakers and the scope of their authority and oversight extends only over a single congregation. When they receive funds from other churches they are making decisions about the use of other churches' resources. Someone may say that the elders of the contributing churches gave of their own free will. Who gave them that authority? Could Abraham have relinquished his responsibility to sacrifice Isaac by asking his chief steward to do it? Of course not. God specifically told Abraham to carry it out! Neither can elders shift their God-given responsibility, in part or wholly, to another eldership. The Lord did not command the Sycamore elders, the Fifth & Highland elders, or any elders to assume such responsibilities.

Sometimes brethren will argue that it is simply a matter of methods. They will suggest that though God has said what to do (preach the gospel), he has not specifically said how to preach it. Though it is true that God did not specify every method to be used, this argument does not really meet the issue at hand. It is not a matter of "how" to preach the gospel but of "who" will oversee the work. And the "who" is the eldership in every local group of God's people.

Why, insist on doing things according to the pattern? Are we a radical fringe? Are we cranks? No, rather we are people who believe that to do things God's way is the simplest and best test of our faith in him. New Testament Christians did not have human institutions or sponsoring churches to carry out God's work. They had only their zeal and faith that God would help them to do what he had commanded them to do - in the way he had directed. And it worked! For in that first century the gospel was taken to "every creature under heaven" (Col.1 :23).

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# What the Bible Teaches on Benevolence

Lindsay Allen

Since God is a God of love, pity and compassion, it is not surprising that he has always championed the cause of widows, the fatherless and other poor and unfortunate people. At the same time, God has stressed that these people should not be shown preferential treatment before the courts simply because they were poor. The poor too, may pay their due according to their ability and opportunity. However, God's law regarding the treatment or neglect of such people is firm and stringent. "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children father-less" (Exod. 22:22-24). Jesus reminds us, "The poor ye have with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good" (Mk. 14:7). Matthew's picture of the final judgment makes it clear that caring for the poor weighs heavy in determining one's eternal destiny (Matt. 25:34-46). James reminds his brethren that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). God's people today must be as diligent and faithful to care for such people as in any previous age (Heb. 2:1-3; 8:6).

However, it is equally important to know that God has severely restricted the work of benevolence. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). This is strong language. Indolence is a sin that must not be tolerated. Those who aid such become partakers of this sin. God expects each person to stand on his own feet and do for himself as he is able and has opportunity. This leads to another restriction: each one is to be responsible for his immediate family and near relatives as he is able. This includes aged parents and other relatives. Those who refuse to do so "hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:4,8,16). Notice also that the care of widows is restricted. James 1:27 teaches this work belongs to individuals, and could include those widows, aged parents and fatherless of his own household. If these guidelines were followed today, welfare rolls would be drastically reduced, and the church not be burdened. It is easily seen that the great majority of benevolent work is to be done by individuals, not the church nor secular organizations.

It should also be noted that God never intended for benevolence to be used as a tool to bring people into Christ or to keep them faithful. Follow Paul on his preaching tours into Asia and Southeastern Europe. There were poor people then as now, and yet Paul never used either clothes, food or money to entice people to obey the gospel. The only drawing power used was the gospel. True discipleship cannot be bought with material goods (Rom. 1:16,17; In. 6:44-45). Such tactics were used after World War II. Baptisms came easy, the building overflowed, but when the "loaves and fishes" ran out, so did the "converts."

There are nine groups of passages of Scripture in the New Testament on benevolence that is the responsibility of the local church. Lack of space prohibits a full discussion of each passage. Please read these Scriptures: (1) Acts 2:44,45; (2) Acts 4:32-35; (3) Acts 6:1-6; (4) Acts 11:27-30; (5) Romans 15:25-32; (6) 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; (7) 2 Corinthians 8; (8) 2 Corinthians 9; (9) 1 Timothy 5:9-16. Having read these Scriptures, answer two questions about each. First, *who* did the relieving and *who* were relieved.

The Christian's life is a training school for eternity. It is in this school that traits of character will be developed that prepare for heavenly citizenship. These traits cannot be developed by proxy, but only through personal exercise and experience. Among these traits are kindness, pity, compassion, gentleness, tenderheartedness, and love. God wants his people to become personally involved in service, not the mere giving of money through some agency. This plan does not exclude money, but also includes becoming personally involved. I once knew a lady who willingly gave money but would not go where there was filth and unpleasant odors. Such work is Christ-like and makes one strong spiritually. Christ went among the poor, lowly and out-cast. Yes, he washed his disciples' feet with his own hands. This is true benevolence.

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# Helping Widows and Orphans

Weldon E. Warnock

**Question:** Why is it wrong to help widows and orphans by taking money from the church treasury?

**Answer:** To my knowledge there is nobody who opposes helping widows and orphans from the church treasury, providing they come within the scope of the church's responsibility. The church is not obligated to help, financially, all widows and orphans, but just certain ones.

The Word of God teaches to "honor widows that are widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:3). W.E. Vine states that "honor" means "the respect and material assistance to be given to widows." Concerning the word, "indeed" (ontos), Vine says it "denotes really, actually." Hence, the meaning of the passage is "to care for those women who are really, actually widows." (The principle also applies to widowers.) Williams' translation is clear: "Always care for the widows who are really dependent."

In 1 Timothy 5:16 Paul states the limitations of church assistance to widows very succinctly. He says, "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." Children should take care of their own mother or grandmother, that the church be not burdened in order that the church may be able to relieve those saintly widows who are dependent and destitute. This dependency may be as a result of not having any family or the children are so sorry that they will not help. Albert Barnes wrote, "To require or expect the church, therefore, to support those women we ought ourselves to support, is, in fact, to rob the poor and friendless."

The Jerusalem church supplied the needs for its widows by selecting seven men to expedite the church's responsibility toward those worthy saints. We must not be any less concerned for our widows and widowers today.

As to orphans, I have never seen a single orphan who became the responsibility of the church. This does not mean there has not been any. It simply means I have not seen one. Someone says, "There are orphans, or homeless children, all over the world." This is true! But are they the obligation of the church? Certainly not! God never gave the church the chore of taking care of all the orphans any more than he gave the church the job of relieving all the widows, or caring for all the sick, or all the hungry and naked. The governments of the world have not been able to alleviate the benevolent needs of all the people, and it is certain the church cannot.

The Bible teaches that the church is to provide for its own - the needy saints (Acts 2:44,45; 4:32; 6:1-3; 11:27-20; Rom. 15:25,26; 1 Cor. 16:12; 2 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 9:1,12,13). A good example of this practice was at Jerusalem. None of the saints lacked, as stated in Acts 2:44 and Acts 4:32. However, in Acts 3, the beggar at the gate Beautiful, asked alms of Peter and John. Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none . . ." The church had funds, but Peter did not refer him to the church. Wonder why? Because the church had no responsibility. Brethren, the church's obligation to the world is to try to save souls through preaching the gospel.

Now then, if there are orphans who are Christians, then the church may relieve their needs. But as I said before, I have never known of a situation where a child was orphaned or left homeless with no one to care for it, other than the church. Either grandparents or an aunt or an uncle would take such a child, and this is the way it ought to be.

Our hypothetical cases about children being abandoned on the doorstep of the church building overlook the civil laws that regulate such incidents, if they ever happened. The first thing the church would do, and must do, is call the police and they would handle the matter from there.

However, the crux of this issue is not so much whether the church may care for widows and orphans, but whether the church may make contributions from its treasury to human benevolent institutions in order for them to care for widows and orphans. This, the Bible does not authorize. The church may not, scripturally, subsidize any human organization. If so, where is the passage that authorizes it, either generically or specifically? The reasoning that allows the church to include in its budget allocations for widow wages and orphanages, also allows the church to allocate money for hospitals, publishing houses, sanatoriums, Bible colleges, etc. If not, why not?

Although the church is limited in its benevolent work, there is a need in the world for general benevolence toward orphans and homeless children, the elderly, the infirm and the sick. Institutional homes for children and nursing homes for the elderly and infirm serve a useful purpose for the indigent. All of us, individually, may contribute to any deserving benevolent organization to help provide food, shelter and clothing for homeless children, the elderly and the infirm. If circumstances permit, we could adopt one or more of these children or act as foster parents. Pure religion is "to visit the fatherless and the widows" (Jas. 1:27).

Brother Foy E. Wallace, jotted down the following diagram for me several years ago as to what the church may and may not do with the money. It shows the difference of the church doing its work and subsidizing human organizations. (Searching the Scriptures [Apr. 1986], pp. 79-80.)

*Guardian of Truth* XXXIV: 13, pp. 398-399  
July 5, 1990

# Eating and Drinking in the Church Building

Luther Blackmon

A church bulletin came to my hands the other day that carried the following short article:

## The Drinking Fountain

Many meeting houses now contain drinking fountains in the basement or somewhere in the building. What is the difference in principle in drinking in the basement of the meeting house and in bringing food for a meal in the basement, all apart from the worship, the church assembly (1 Cor. 14:23)? What is the difference in eating to satisfy hunger and drinking to satisfy thirst? Such eating and drinking are both condemned in the church, in the assembly worship, but not in the meeting house (1 Cor. 11:22). Remember the church may meet in a house or home where there is eating and drinking daily by those who live there (Rom. 16:5). - Gus Nichols

The above article is misleading. Whether the writer intended it so to be I would not attempt to say. But I will attempt to point out wherein it is misleading. In the first place, there is no one, so far as I know, who thinks that it is wrong to eat a meal in the church building. I often bring food to the study when I plan to be there most of the day. If I believed that it was wrong to eat in the church building I would not do that. Long ago brethren had to drive long distances to the meeting house, they would often bring their lunch, and after the morning worship was over they would get out under the trees, if the weather was good, spread their lunch and eat it. If it was raining or cold they would get inside the building and eat it. Then they would sit and talk about Scriptures and other subjects until the night service, after which they would drive back home. I never thought of this as being wrong. I doubt that anyone else thinks that it is wrong.

When the Lord commanded his people to assemble for worship there is implied in that command authority to provide a place and facilities for such assemblies. The command to assemble includes a place to assemble; a place to assemble includes a house to get in out of the weather, a stove to keep warm in winter and a fan to keep cool in the summer, a watering place for thirsty people and particularly small children, and rest rooms for both sexes.

Now if brother Nichols will find where God authorized the church to get together for a banquet, I will admit that we have Scripture for a banquet hall, a kitchen and all the other things necessary to having a banquet. If he will find the Scripture that authorizes the church to get together for feasting and merriment, or for a "Fellowship Dinner" then I will admit that the church has Scripture for building a house in which to have feasts and fellowship dinners. The same command that authorizes the church to meet for such an affair will authorize it to provide a place to meet for such an affair. But brother Nichols cannot find that Scripture. You may be sure that if he could have found it he would have used it instead of the ones he did use. Look at them: 1 Corinthians 14:23: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" What on earth does this have to do with eating in the church building? 1 Corinthians 11:22: "What? Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the church of God and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." True the apostle is rebuking them for perverting the worship, but he still says, "What, have ye not houses to eat and drink in?" Then Romans 16:5 refers to the church that

met in some home or house, and our brother makes a play on the fact that there must have been eating and drinking in this house since it was a dwelling. Let me repeat that I know of no one who thinks that merely eating and drinking in a church building is a sin. That is not the question. The question is, and don't be misled: Is it the business of the church to build a kitchen, dining rooms (mis-named 'fellowship halls'), banquet halls, recreation rooms, and such like? Is it the business of the church to provide for the social activities of its members and others? This is the issue! This is what the brethren are doing all over the country. And this is what brother Nichols and others would like to defend, if there were any scriptural defense for it. But having no scriptural defense they come out shadow boxing with an imaginary opponent, and hope to draw the attention of the people from the real issue.

The Bible authorizes the church to meet for worship, to preach the gospel to the lost, to edify the saints and relieve the needy within certain limitations. Any houses or facilities that are necessary to the church doing these four things, comes within the authority of the command to do them. But until someone finds some Scriptures authorizing the church to have parties and banquets, I will continue to teach that no provisions can be made by the church for such things and although the church building is not defiled because someone eats in it, the church building was built for a place to worship and ought not to be used as a banquet hall (Truth Magazine, Jan. 1963, pp. 92-93).

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July 5, 1990

# One Is Found In The New Testament, The Other Is Not!

Roy E. Cogdill

Sometimes the question is asked: "What difference does it make whether each congregation takes care of it's own 'charge' in the work of relieving the destitute; or all of the churches do their work' through a human organization built and maintained by them for this purpose?" The difference is exactly this: One is found in the New Testament and the other is not! (Ac 6:1.6).

Then sometimes brethren are heard to ask: "What difference does it make whether a church sends a preacher and supports the preacher by sending money to him; or sends the money to another church and lets that church support a preacher with it?" The difference, again, is exactly the same: One practice is found in the New Testament and the other is not! (Phil 4:15-16).

"What difference does it make whether each church does its own work, by using its own resources, under the supervision of its own eldership; or pools its resources with another congregation or a group of congregations (as is the case with the Highland Church and Herald Of Truth), as a means of cooperating in fulfilling their preaching mission?" The difference is exactly this: One is found in the New Testament and the other is not found there: (Phil 4:15-16 1:1).

"What difference does it make whether a church sends its contribution directly to a preacher or church; or through another church, acting as its agent?" The difference is exactly this: One is found in the New Testament and the other is not! (Phil 4:15-16; Acts 11:27-30).

"Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9; see also, Ephesians 2:12).

*Truth Magazine*, XVIII:10, p. 12  
January 9, 1974

# **The Work of the Church**

Weldon Warnock

God designed the church (Eph. 3:16-11), established it on earth (Matt. 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 laborers into his vineyards" (Matt. 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 sin (Rom. 3:23). The gospel is the only power to save (Rom. 1:16). Consequently, God wants the gospel preached (Mk. 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:21), and has given the obligation to the church.

The church's marching orders to evangelize are given in Matt. 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 (Matt. 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" (1 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 Thesslonica 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 wind of doctrine, by the 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" (1 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; 1 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" (1 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 (1 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" (1 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 everyone, 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 be made free, use it rather" (1 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 (1 Cor. 16:1-2). There are 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 counseling 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 counseling 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.) (*Searching the Scriptures*, Aug. 1978, pp. 162-63)

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# Understanding THE GOOD of Galatians 6:10

Richard Thetford

Galatians 6:10 says: *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."* This passage of scripture has been used and quoted by people in an effort to justify the church doing everything and anything they want the church to do. And I mean everything from church-sponsored recreation (church kitchens, ball teams, church scout troops, sewing classes, singles and divorce classes, etc.) to church donations to the Red Cross, missionary societies, and colleges. Does Galatians 6:10 really mean all of this, or, are they just trying to justify what they want to do? It has been a "catch all" verse in denominations for many years and in the past several years in some churches of Christ. Let's answer three questions about Galatians 6:10. 1) What is "the good." 2) Who is commanded to do this good (local church or the individual saint)? 3) Will any accept the consequences if the good is unqualified?

## What Is The Good of Galatians 6:10?

The word "good" means "good, profitable, generous, beneficent, upright, virtuous." It is used in mentioning things physical (Matt 7:11) and things spiritual (Luk 10:42). The good part in Luke's account is learning the word of God, not serving the physical things. Since the word "good" can mean either spiritual or physical good, what does it mean in Gal 6:10? Let's look at the context of this passage.

Galatians 6:1 - Refers to spiritual good in restoring brethren.

Galatians 6:2 - Refers to spiritual burdens (not talking about helping one carry a sack of groceries).

Galatians 6:3 - Not physical but spiritual.

Galatians 6:4 - Proving our spiritual work (not proving what a good fence you built).

Galatians 6:5 - Spiritual (bear own burden).

Galatians 6:6 - "Communicate" in this passage is from the same word translated "Fellowship." It is joint participation. When a teacher teaches the truth, you live the truth and you are having communication with the teacher in every truth that he teaches. It is not a passage that "proves" that one must pay the preacher.

Galatians 6:7 - You reap spiritually what you plant spiritually.

Galatians 6:8 - You'll reap spiritually what you sow.

Galatians 6:9 - If you work spiritually then in due time you will reap spiritually.

Galatians 6:10 - Do you think the apostle Paul after spending these nine verses stressing the spiritual things, would now switch and stress the physical? No. He is still discussing the spiritual good. It is true that verse 10 looks back to verse 6, but not in the way so commonly supposed, namely that in verse 6 we dispense material gifts to our teachers and now in verse 10 to all men in general and especially to our fellow believers. It is in fact quite otherwise: We are first to make ourselves participants with our teachers in all the spiritually good things they have to offer us. This is to be the source of our enrichment. Then we dispense our spiritual wealth to others with all tireless energy so that they may share it with us. We must conclude that the "good" in Galatians 6:10 then, is spiritual good.

### **Who Is Commanded To Do This Good?**

Is it the individual or the church? We learn that it is the individual as we read further in the text. Verse 12 says: *"As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ."* Do you think they were trying to circumcise the individuals or the church? We can clearly see that this whole passage pertains to the individual. Note these key words: Gal 6:1 "if a man," Gal 6:2 "one another's," Gal 6:3 "if a man," Gal 6:4 "every man," Gal 6:5 "every man," Gal 6:6 "let him," Gal 6:7 "a man," Gal 6:8 "he that," Gal 6:9 "let us." Is this us churches or us individuals? Paul was writing this text so was Paul a church or an individual? Gal 6:10 says "as we.." We should be able to see that Galatians 6:10 is individual action and in spiritual matters. This is not to say that the church cannot teach or that individuals cannot help the needy, but this passage of Galatians 6:10 just isn't the passage that teaches it.

### **Will You Accept the Consequences?**

If Galatians 6:10 is church action and good is everything in the world that is good, will you accept the consequences? If one teaches that Galatians 6:10 is church action and the good is everything that is good, will you get the church involved in all good in the world? We must be extremely careful in what we do in matters of religion. Individuals are to do good to all men in the spiritual realm in keeping with the context of Galatians 6:10. This passage has been perverted over the years to mean to "do good" is to have ball teams, recreational grounds, gyms, operate schools, teach math, science and history, have social parties, camp outs, retreats, rallies, etc. Our goal should be to help one another spiritually, doing good to all for the cause of Christ.

*Thoughts taken from "Truth in Love," Volume 1, Number 20, November 1975 (David D. Bonner)*