

# The GOSPEL GUARDIAN

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## SPECIAL NUMBER

### "THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE"

"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me."  
— John 17:20,21

"Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."  
— 1 Corinthians 1:10

"I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."  
— Galatians 1:6,7

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."  
— Ephesians 4:1-3

"Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins . . . . if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God."  
— 1 Peter 4:8,11

GUARD THAT WHICH IS COMMITTED UNTO THEE

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## EDITORIAL

### The “Special”

The paper you hold in your hand represents an “all out” effort on the part of the editors and publishers of the Gospel Guardian to meet the crisis now upon the Lord's church, and to promote unity among the disciples on the basis of Bible teaching. This is our “Unity Special.” We sincerely plead for it a thoughtful and prayerful reading. The unity for which Christ prayed and the peace of his people are deserving of that much consideration from any Christian. Let these articles be studied, weighed in the light of Scripture, and preserved for further study. This is a paper you will want to save for reference.

The brethren who write for this issue represent a cross-section of the brotherhood—the hoary head of the veteran is present, and the vigor and force of young manhood is not wanting. Not all these men who write are agreed on every problem and question before the brotherhood; but on one thing they are agreed — the church of our Lord is facing a crisis, serious, threatening, and fearful. These men love the church; we believe there is not a one of them who would hesitate to give his life in defense of the truth. They recognize that one thing and one thing only can save the church from disaster—AN UNQUESTIONING ACCEPTANCE OF BIBLE TEACHING. In their own way and in their own style they have presented their contributions on the various topics assigned them. Here are the men who write:

**James W. Adams**, well known to readers of this journal, preaches for the Central Church in Beaumont, Texas. He is regarded by thoughtful brethren throughout the church as one of the keenest thinkers and reasoners among us.

**A. Hugh Clark**, of Baytown, Texas, has long been recognized as one of the ablest preachers of the age. He has held meetings all over the nation, and has preached as (local evangelist with churches in San Antonio, Fort Worth, Memphis, and Abilene.

**Roy E. Cogdill**, publisher and associate editor of the Gospel Guardian, is probably best known throughout the church as the author of “The New Testament Church.” This outline study book, soon to go into its ninth printing, has been in circulation for fifteen years, and is likely the most widely used book of this kind known to the church. Brother Cogdill has been doing local work with the West Avenue Church in San Antonio for nearly two years, but will shortly return to Lufkin and will resume his full-time meeting work.

**C. E. W. Dorris**, Nashville, Tennessee, is the oldest of our writers in this issue. He passed his eighty-fifth milestone on April 7. A student of David Lipscomb and James A. Harding, Brother Dorris has been a regular contributor through the years to the **Gospel Advocate**, and is the author

of two (Matthew and Mark) of the Advocate series of commentaries on the New Testament.

**Cecil B. Douthitt**, Brownwood, Texas, has done local work with churches in Birmingham, Alabama; Washington, D.C.; Louisville, Kentucky; and for several years now in Brownwood, Texas. He is the author of a widely used series of Bible study books, and holds from five to fifteen meetings each year in addition to his local work.

**George P. Estes**, St. Louis, Missouri, is a close and careful student both of the Bible and of Restoration history. His graduate work in the field of New Testament Greek as well as Church History provides him with technical equipment in these areas that few among us possess. He is presently working on a study of the meaning of the word “church” which will be an invaluable contribution to the understanding of present problems before us.

**Robert H. Farish**, Lexington, Kentucky, has done local work in Georgia, Texas, and Alabama, before going to Lexington. Foy E. Wallace years ago described him to this writer as “an Abraham Lincoln sort of fellow who smokes a pipe and does his own thinking.” Farish has quit the pipe — but not the thinking, as his article will abundantly show.

**Homer Hailey**, Tampa, Florida, is known everywhere as one of the finest Bible teachers ever to conduct a class. Young preachers who have gone to school to him (and they number many hundreds—some of them not so young anymore) are to be found in every quarter of the globe. Brother Hailey taught for a number of years in Abilene Christian College, and is now vice-president of Florida Christian College. He was for ten years the local preacher for Highland Church in Abilene, and spent two years in Hawaii.

**Charles A. Holt** is the youngest in our roster of writers; but already he has demonstrated his ability as writer, preacher, and debater. He is one of the busiest debaters in the church, being called for five or six or more nearly every year. He is an associate editor of the Guardian, and preaches for the fast growing West End Church in Franklin, Tennessee.

**John T. Lewis** has lived for forty-nine years in Birmingham, Alabama, and has seen the cause there grow from one weak little congregation to some twenty-five strong, active churches. Brethren in Birmingham will tell you that John T. Lewis has had a hand in the starting of nearly every one of those churches. Loved and respected in that city as few men ever are, Brother Lewis, like Brother Dorris, received his early Bible teaching at the feet of the great David Lipscomb. Birmingham, due in no small measure to Lewis' teaching and influence, is as little bothered by current issues as any city of comparable size in the nation.

**Marshall E. Patton** has done local work with churches in Lubbock, Texas; Cullman, Alabama; and is now with the North Birmingham Church in Birmingham. Clear and logical in reasoning and expression, his article on “How To Establish Scriptural Authority” is certainly one of the most important in this journal. It should be carefully studied.

**C. D. Plum**, Columbus, Ohio, was for many years a staff-writer on the **Gospel Advocate**. He

has done local work with some of the greatest churches in the Ohio Valley—Moundsville, Wheeling, and Parkersburg, West Virginia; and is now working with a newly established congregation in Columbus. He is known through all the northeastern part of the nation as one of the most truly consecrated Christians and soundest gospel preachers ever to stand before an audience.

**W. Curtis Porter**, Monette, Arkansas, is an associate editor of the Guardian. He is probably the most widely used debater among the churches of Christ today, being called by brethren in all parts of the nation to meet the proponents of error. A number of his debates are in print, and more are in process of being printed.

**Robert C. Welch**, Louisville, Kentucky, formerly preached for the Poplar Street Church in Florence, Alabama, and prior to that for churches in Uvalde, Texas, and Springfield, Missouri. His writings in the Guardian have made him known in recent years as one of the most careful students and most logical thinkers to contribute to the study of current problems. He now preaches for the new congregation meeting on Wendell Avenue in Louisville.

**Bryan Vinson**, Houston, Texas, has done local work in Dallas, and Denton, before moving to the Norhill Church in Houston. His writings (in the Preceptor and the Guardian) have been widely acknowledged as some of the most thought-provoking that have been contributed toward a solution of present problems. Possessed of innate courtesy, a keen insight into truth, and a profound reverence for God's word, his writings are not light and frothy; they require study. But being given such, are richly rewarding.

There they are— the writers for the “Special Issue.” Five of them are associate editors of the Guardian; ten are not, but all are men of conviction and courage. Their writing in this issue does not mean that they agree with everything the editor believes, nor does it mean they necessarily agree with the policy of the **Gospel Guardian**. It does not even mean they agree with each other on every question of Bible teaching. It does mean one thing: they are perfectly agreed that the Lord's church is facing a crisis, and that unless prodigious efforts are put forth, a disastrous situation may overtake us all. Patience, prayer, a consecrated study of the Bible, and sympathy and tolerance toward one another are our only hope. To that end this “Special Issue” is dedicated.

—Fanning Yater Tant

## **A PLEA FOR FORBEARANCE AND A WILLINGNESS TO STUDY**

### **A. Hugh Clark, Baytown, Texas**

The church of our Lord has met and solved many serious problems since it was established in the city of Jerusalem on that memorable Pentecost so long ago. The New Testament itself is replete with the record of these struggles within and persecutions from without which occurred during the first century. Moreover, it is a matter of revelation that such would be the case with the church to the end of time.

No one therefore, conversant with the sacred writings, can be surprised at the difficulties and problems that have confronted the church through the centuries this side of the apostolic era, including the span covered by our own lives, though he may, at times, be greatly dismayed.

This writer, as many of you who read these lines will know, has been actively engaged for more than forty years in the preaching of the gospel of Christ. He has for thirty and six years without a break in tenure continuously engaged in regular work with local churches of Christ, while at the same time conducting six or eight gospel meetings each year well scattered over the entire nation. This need be recounted here only because it is felt that surely since what, in [the very nature of the case, must be the greater part of the active years of his life has been spent in this sacred cause, right has been earned to be heard in an earnest plea on behalf of that cause.

Be not deceived, my brethren, since the days of the restoration and the great defection resulting in the birth of what is now called The First Christian Church, with its extra biblical organizations and institutions, its unscriptural form of worship and its human practices, comprising as it does the whole system of redemption and undistinguishingly blending with denominationalism, the church of our Lord has not faced a time so fraught with real peril to its unity and progress as the present.

I recognize that there are many who will deny this statement, who are not cognizant of the dangers we face; but make no mistake, what I am saying is the truth! The church may be “On the march” but unless something is done to resolve the difficulties within our own ranks we are marching toward disgrace and disaster.

The great apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus when the unity of the church there, as throughout the world, was seriously imperiled by a misunderstanding of the divine will on the part of many regarding the proper relationship of Jews and Gentiles, saying, “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE; GIVING DILIGENCE TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE “BOND OF PEACE.” Ephesians 4:1-3.

That a similar condition of estrangement and unrest obtains throughout the brotherhood today, as I have already stated, no informed person would sincerely deny. And, contrary to the opinion of

some, the number on either side of the issues involved is not inconsequential. Nor do they belong to any particular age group or measure of experience, the old, the young, the mature and the immature, are found on both sides.

Such a condition as this could have but one implication to a thoughtful mind. That is, that these issues about which the people are divided in mind at this time have not yet been studied sufficiently by all of us that we might understand just what the teaching of the Lord is.

This is not to say that there are not some who have studied the questions before us both earnestly and extensively, and whose position therefore is, with them, a real conviction; they are definitely sure, in their own minds, that they are right. But, let us remember, that no one knows everything about anything; that no one is infallible in his reasoning; and that any one of us could err in his application of the principles of divine truth to the myriad and complex problems common to the field of Christian service. It is possible therefore, that the most positive and fully convinced among us on either side of these issues could have overlooked some statement of revelation having bearing on these matters which, if it were brought to light and properly applied, in further study and brotherly discussion, would throw such light on the questions involved as would readily and easily resolve them; thus bringing about a general understanding among us all, and achieving that peace which we are commanded of God to endeavor to maintain.

Surely it is not too much to ask of brethren everywhere that they do with regard to these troublesome matters just what we continually plead with the denominational world to do regarding their religious differences with us, and which are much less complex than these; that is, in love of the truth to bear with one another in kindness, while we continue honestly to study our differences in the light of revelation, believing confidently in the power of truth to dissipate error, and ultimately to save all but those who wilfully rebel against it.

This is not a plea for compromise on the part of anybody. Truth can never be compromised on vital issues regardless of consequences, apparent or real, immediate or remote. But it is a sincere and soulful plea for that measure of love and forbearance on the part of us all which will suspend for the time, and because of the better understanding of truth to which our genial studies will bring us, we hope will suspend forever, that ultimate and final estrangement in the family of God which would separate brother from brother, brand us all with further and greater stigma in the eyes of the world, and cover those responsible with the everlasting displeasure of the Father.

Further, let us remember that the particular practices out of which these differences have arisen did not grow up overnight, but had their small and apparently inconsequential beginnings among churches of Christ at least a half century ago. They will not therefore be resolved overnight, wished away, nor dispatched by the interdiction of any man or set of men; Christ is the head of the church, and he alone has Lordship over the faith of the individual and of the church. The only prerogative any man, or group of men, may exercise without poaching upon the divine preserves of Christ as the head of the church, essentially inheres in that for which I am pleading, i.e. the disposition and the time for brethren in general to study and investigate, and thus to determine what the will of Christ is regarding the practices in question among us.

Further, we should all realize that if there is to be any change in the practices of brethren and the churches regarding these matters, since those changes must depend upon teaching and deliberation, a measuring of the practices by the divine injunctions, these changes will be gradual and all will have need for patience and forbearance. And if, on the other hand such study and deliberation shall show the practices in question to be authorized and in harmony with the will of Christ, then truth will have triumphed and peace and harmony will have been found again. Moreover, this is the only way in which it can be found.

Any man, or group of men, in any church, or among all the churches, undertaking to throttle this investigation and seeking after truth, and thus to force certain convictions on either an individual, a congregation, or on the church in general, in the very nature of the case is arbitrary in attitude, and is therefore, out of order. Truth has nothing to fear, and if "Crushed to earth, will rise again." Truth is invincible; error cannot contain it; it must be given its freedom or it will break through to find it.

So, until truth has been more generally ascertained and established in the field of our present difficulties it is far too soon for ultimatums and interdictions on the part of anybody. Let us instead, with kindness and brotherly regard for one another, renew our studies together, avoiding even the very mention of any eventuation other than the finding of the peace of God in Christ, lest by even the mention the thought of ultimate estrangement be fostered in the minds of any.

## **THE CHURCH AND HER MISSION**

### **Cecil B. Douthitt, Brownwood, Texas**

To bless the world by rendering the greatest possible service has been the divinely appointed mission of God's people since the beginning.

#### **1. A CORRESPONDING DUTY WITH EVERY BLESSING**

With every blessing that God has bestowed upon His people, He has assigned a corresponding duty and responsibility. His people must be channels of blessings; they must use the gifts of God in blessing others, and thereby accomplish their mission on the earth.

##### **1. Adam Had A Mission To Accomplish.**

After God had created the earth and all things therein, he “created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:27-28.)

“God blessed them” by creating them in His own image and by giving them dominion over the earth. Therefore, God assigned to them a mission to accomplish by means of the blessings wherewith they had been blessed. They must “subdue” and exercise “dominion” over the earth and all living creatures on it and in it, and in that way use their blessings in making the earth a suitable place in which to live. God put man into the garden of Eden “to dress it and to keep it.” (Genesis 2:15.)

##### **2. Abraham's Mission: “Be Thou A Blessing.”**

When God called Abram out of his country, from his kindred, and from his father's house, he gave him the promise of a three-fold blessing: God said to him, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great.” These promises were followed immediately with this responsibility: “And be thou a blessing.” (Genesis 12:1-2.)

Therefore, Abram was under obligation to remember that he had a mission to accomplish: that as a Worshiper of the true God he must use the blessings God gave to him, and render a service greatly needed by all peoples. He did so use his gifts from God, and did render that service; and all along the journey toward that “city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10), the altars that he erected and the smoke from the sacrifices thereupon were a blessing to the idol worshipers by giving them some idea of the one living God and the kind of worship He had appointed for the patriarchs.

##### **3. Israel's Mission.**

In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, in the giving of the law at Sinai, and in the building of

the tabernacle and the temple, we see clearly that God intended for Israel to bless the world by using all these gifts in preparing a people for the reception of the Savior of the world. "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. 3:24.) Israel was great in her national life insofar as she accomplished that divinely appointed mission.

#### **4. Individual Christians And The Church Must Serve.**

True greatness is measured by the service rendered. When James and John asked for exalted places in the kingdom, Jesus said unto them, "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28.)

Speaking prophetically of the church and the reign of Christ on the throne of David, Ezekiel said, "He shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd .... And I will make them and the place round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing." (Ezek. 34:23-26.) Jesus said unto his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world." (Matt. 5:13-14.) Peter enjoined, "Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing." (I Peter 3:9.)

### **III. WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S MISSION**

The needs of humanity are many and varied; wide-awake and zealous leaders in the church can see many possible ways to serve humanity and be a blessing in the world. Therefore, they are confronted often with the temptation to lead the church into fields of work that are forbidden by the Lord to the church as such.

The divinely appointed mission of the church is fourfold, and every church is restricted in all its activities to these four fields of endeavor.

#### **1. Preach The Gospel In All The World.**

God purposed eternally in Christ Jesus our Lord that the manifold wisdom of God "might be made known through the church." (Eph. 3:10.) Heaven's authority has decreed that the house of God, which is the church of the living God, is "the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3:15.)

From the first day of its existence the church all Philippi had "fellowship in furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:5), and the church of the Thessalonians "sounded forth the word of the Lord." (1 Thess. 1:8.)

Every church on earth is obligated to do this work, and there is no substitute for it. There is no field of operation in which a church can render greater services to humanity than this field of

evangelism.

## **2. Build Up Itself In Love.**

The scriptures state clearly that the edification of the church was the purpose of God in giving “some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” (Eph. 4:11.)

It is God's will for members of the church to become full-grown men in Christ, and “be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” (Eph. 4:14.) Noble qualities of the soul must be cultivated and sterling character developed in all the members of the body of Christ. The Lord has assigned this work to every church. (Eph. 4:16.)

## **3. Supply The Needs Of Its Worthy Indigent.**

Under the direction of the apostles of Christ, church in Jerusalem supplied the needs of poor widows in its membership. (Acts 6:1-3.) This work is assigned also in 1 Timothy 5:16.

If a church is unable to do this work of ministration among its own worthy poor, then other churches must send contributions to the poor church to enable it to provide for its own, and thereby restore mutual freedom from want. This is taught in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 11 Corinthians 8 and 9, and many other passages; agreement on this point is universal among the churches.

## **4. Assemble And Worship God.**

In John 4:23 Jesus represents the Father as a seeker of a particular kind of worshipers. Again, with reference to the time when all things must be done in his name, Jesus said: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18:20.) Members of the church are commanded, “Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is.” (Heb. 10:25.) This shows that they had an accustomed or usual date for meeting and worshiping God. Other passages (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2) teach that these customary meetings to worship God were on “the first day of the week.” The church that does not engage in this work of assembling on the first day of the week to worship God lacks that much in having a New Testament identity, and in fulfilling the mission which the Lord has assigned to it.

### **III. FIELDS OF SERVICE IN WHICH THE CHURCHES ARE FORBIDDEN TO OPERATE**

The individual, the family and civil government are rendering valuable service and are blessing the world by operating in the fields of education in secular branches, of entertainment, of recreation, of politics, of protecting the innocent and punishing the guilty, of secular business for profit and of civic improvement in physical features of the community. But the Lord has placed restrictions on the churches, which he has not placed on the individual or the family or the kingdoms of this world, and has forbidden the churches entrance into these fields of service. The work which he has assigned

to the churches is more important than these other services, and no church has right to go beyond, or to turn aside from, these prescribed duties of the greatest importance.

“But why does not the church have the same right as the family or the state to serve in the fields of entertainment, secular education and business for profit? Where is the Bible passage that gives families or the nations of the world or other organizations the right to operate in these fields of service, but denies the churches the right to serve in these same fields? If families in a given area can promote games of dominoes, hopscotch and soft ball, and sponsor picnics and hay rides for the entertainment of the young people of that area, why can't the churches of the same area do the same things for the entertainment of the young people of that area?” These and similar questions are asked by people who do err, because they have never learned the meaning of the passages of scripture which say that Christ is the head of the church. (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18.)

Neither the family, nor the state, nor the church, nor any other group can do anything decently and orderly without rules, regulations or laws authorizing the thing to be done and governing the doing of it. One could not contend “lawfully” in the games, if there were no laws governing the games. (2 Tim. 2:5.) There can be no laws, rules or regulations where there is no vested legislative authority.

Legislative authority for the family is vested in the parents. (Eph. 6:11-4.) Christ did not choose to be the legislative head of the family. “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church.” (Eph. 5:22.) Therefore the husband or father is vested with authority to enact laws governing the activities of his family, as long as his enactments are not inherently sinful. But who, except the Christ, has legislative authority in the church? (James 4:12.) The husband can make legislative provisions for the entertainment of his family, and for secular education and business for profit. But there is nothing in the legislative enactments of Jesus Christ to govern or to justify a church's activities in these fields, and since no authority on earth has legislative power in the church, it necessarily follows that no church can engage legally in these fields of service. To do so is to go beyond and to fail to abide in the teaching of Christ (2 John 9), and to usurp the legislative authority of Christ. (Matt. 28:18.)

Jesus did not choose to be the head of any kingdom of this world. Governmental authority in the nations of the world is vested in the “powers that be” (Rom. 3:1-7; John 19:11), with the right to enact, interpret and execute their own laws, as long as such actions are not inherently sinful. Therefore they may set up legislation to guide and govern their operations in the fields of secular education, entertainment, punishing the guilty, protecting the innocent, and all other fields of service they may wish to enter.

But not so in the kingdom of Christ. Jesus is the head of the church; he is the only lawgiver, judge and executive (Eph. 1:22-23; James 4:12) in his kingdom; the silence of his legislation must be respected. The Testament of Christ contains nothing which indicates that he wants his churches to serve in any field, except the fields of evangelism, edification, benevolence and worship.

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

### THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT METHOD

C.E.W. Dorris, Nashville, Tennessee

First of all, we wish it to be distinctly understood that the writer believes in church cooperation; and that each church should send its contribution directly to the missionaries. He also believes that the "sponsoring church" method is a central money power, unknown in New Testament times. He believes that churches ought to follow the method that all parties agree is scriptural, on which all can stand and work together in union and harmony. On this platform, he has stood for sixty years.

It is admitted by all, that to send support direct to workers in the field is scriptural. This is the direct method, over which there is no controversy, so far as the method itself is concerned. The controversy is over the indirect method-the sponsoring church. This is the heart of the issue and the battlefield.

I am one of the few now living of the generation that lived about two thirds of the time the war raged against the society by loyal brethren. I know the position they held. The main battering ram was the **Gospel Advocate**, with David Lipscomb in the lead. He held back the onrushing tide of societyism, coming from the North, from making much headway in the South. He accomplished this by the direct method. The original editors of the **Gospel Advocate** took the position that churches supporting missionaries should send their support direct to the laborers in the field. They held this position until God called them home.

For the information of younger brethren, who may not know this to be true, we give a few extracts from the writings of the old editors. J. C. McQuiddy, office editor, said: "The scriptures establish clearly that in New Testament times churches commended, sent, communicated directly with, and received the reports of the laborers in the field. If we now have proper respect for divine example, we will not turn away from the church of God to a human society to do mission work." (G.A., 1910, P. 329). F. D. Srygley, first page editor, said: "The Advocate called the Standard's attention to the fact that in New Testament times churches sent money direct to the missionaries instead of sending it to a missionary society to be, by the society, paid out to the missionaries." (G.A., 1892, p. 386.) "In mission work each church, in New Testament times, sent its contribution direct to those who were doing the work" (G.A., 1892, p. 449.) M. C. Kurfees said: "The churches themselves, as such, were the divine organizations for mission work, and were in direct communication with those whom they supported. Hence, it is simply an incontrovertible fact that in working through the church apart from all other inventions and organizations, that dealing directly with the missionaries in the field, we are following the expression of divine wisdom, and are, therefore, infallibly safe." (G.A., 1894, p. 160.) E. A. Elam said: "Brother Minton denies a plain statement in the Bible, that the church at Philippi communicated directly with Paul .... The church at Philippi did communicate directly with Paul at Thessalonica. .... The New Testament churches not only communicated directly with the missionary they supported, but when they helped the poor they sent the help directly to those needing it." (G.A., 1897, p. 358.)

May 27, 1911, the Christian Standard published an article indorsing the method of churches and Christians contributing directly to J. M. McCaleb in Japan. David Lipscomb lifted the following extract from the article, and published it in the Advocate.

“Brother McCaleb advocates that method, now growing in favor, by which each missionary and his work is supported by churches and Christians contributing directly. Not many months ago we published a report of his work, and we are pleased to note that it continues to prosper.” Brother Lipscomb replied under the caption: “A True Method of Work.” Here is what he said. “We publish this to show how the true method of missionary work is approved by all. The Standard has done more in its time and its work to build up the societies than any other influence. I am glad to see it rise above all selfish and party influence and commend that which all must recognize as scriptural and right. The Standard says this method is now growing in favor. The churches and individuals are contributing directly to the work without the intervention of the man-made societies; which method brings familiarity with the work to the knowledge of the members and forces them to study and know its facts and workings, as the human system fails to do. ;It is singular that any one who understands the Bible and believes in its being of God should hesitate as to what course to pursue. The present method is God’s approved method. He guarantees its success if Christians will faithfully use it, and churches growing out of it will be, beyond all doubt, true and faithful churches of Christ. We thank the Standard for its faithful statement of the truth and commend the work as approved of God and that must be a blessing to men. Why should men strive to introduce other systems, when all can unite in this way; when all can, without hindrance or hurt, cross or objection, work through God’s appointed ways?”

“Sooner or later all professed Christians must be one. There is no possible chance for Christians to live as children of God and not become one. They must be one in Christ, one in the understanding and practice of the word of God. They must be one as Jesus and the Father are one. ‘Even as Thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me.’ (John 17:21.) The world is waiting to believe on Jesus, and he who strews discord and division among the people of God by introducing things not required by Jesus Christ is contrary to God and His teaching. He is not a worker with God. Let us all so believe and act as to stand with and for God that we may be one with him.” (G.A., 1912, p. 337.) Thus we have the teaching of David Lipscomb, editor-in-chief of the **Gospel Advocate**, on “the true method of missionary work”--“God’s approved method”—One “approved by all”—One “all must recognize as scriptural and right”—ne that God “guarantees success.” But what is that method? Here it is: “The churches and individuals are contributing directly to the work.”

Guy N. Woods, at present a staff writer of the **Gospel Advocate**, commenting on Philippians 4:15, 16, said: “Here, too, we see the simple manner in which the church in Philippi joined with Paul in the work of preaching the gospel. There was ‘no missionary society’ in evidence, and, none was needed; the brethren simply raised the money and sent it directly to Paul. This is the way it should be done today.” (Annual Lesson Commentary, **Gospel Advocate** Co., Lesson XI, December 15, 1946, p. 341.) G. C. Brewer, also at present, a staff writer for the Advocate, in a message to me, dated September 30, 1953, said: “Yes, Brother Lipscomb advised that it was better for the one who contributed to a missionary, be the donor an individual or a church, to send direct to the missionary

instead of sending through the **Gospel Advocate** or an individual. This is the best method and there is no question about it.”

Whatever may be said in defense of other methods, we all are agreed that it is eminently scriptural and unquestionably right for churches to send support directly to missionaries they support. Then why not let us come together on common ground, cease to expend our energies against each other, and all make a united effort for the evangelization of the world?

Here is a sample how churches in those olden days worked. Campbell Street church, Louisville, Kentucky, “We raised this money exclusively by freewill offerings, the only way of giving recognized in the Bible, and sent it to the laborers in the field, thus dealing directly with those whom we support, as New Testament churches did.” (G.A., 1894, P. 41.) “The brethren at Castalian Springs, therefore, probably, acted wisely in sending their gifts for mission work directly to those who are doing the work.” (G.A., 1892, p. 242.) “The Plum Street church, Michigan, ignores the general denominational societies and sends its contributions for mission work direct to those who do the work, after the manner of New Testament churches.” (G.A., 1892, p. 785.) Nashville, Tennessee churches supporting Bishop in Japan; “About twelve of these churches of this city are now cooperating in the support of Brother Bishop. This is done by each church being in communication with him. These churches have measured their strength and each has agreed that it will do so much during the year. Each church takes up its offering and forwards it direct to the missionary, as though no other church were cooperating with him.” (G.A. 1911, p. 1221.)

Here is a short history of the origin of the indirect method and “sponsoring churches.” The indirect method was born when brethren met in convention and organized the American Christian Missionary Society at Cincinnati, October 24, 1849. It caused strife and division among brethren from its birth, and finally developed into two separate and distinct churches—the Christian Church and the Church of Christ.

The first Church of Christ that dressed itself up looking like a sponsoring church, was the church at Henderson, Tennessee. On January 13, 1910, eight brethren sent out a call for “every preacher, with the elders of the various congregations in West Tennessee, Southwest Kentucky, East Arkansas and North Mississippi to meet at Henderson, Tennessee, January 25-29, 1910.” (G. A., 1910, p. 59.) The meeting was held at the appointed time. Plans were agreed upon. The Henderson church was to direct the work and take charge of the funds raised by the contributing churches and pay the evangelist. The evangelist was selected. (G.A., 1910, P. 329.) The brethren had the machinery set up, oiled and ready to go, but never pulled out from the shed, for the reason Lipscomb, through the Advocate, shot its propellor off so it was never able to fly. Lipscomb killed at Henderson what is considered today a “sponsoring church.”

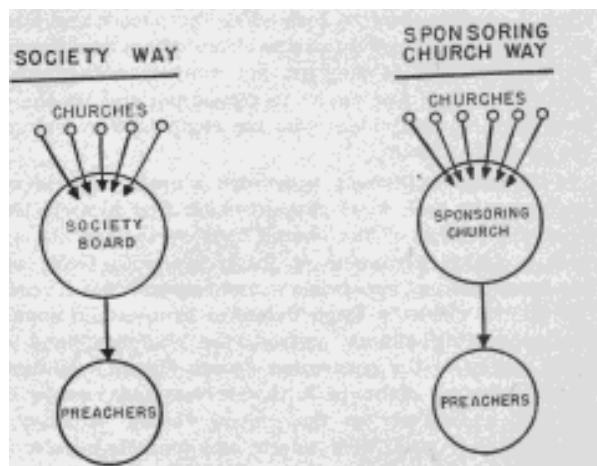
At the close of World War I, we had a good sized crop of what was called the “One Man Missionary Society.” That is, individuals appointed themselves to collect money from churches and forward to missionaries. It, too, sowed discord among churches. But, brethren, through the **Gospel Advocate**, killed the influence of these promoters.

At the close of World War I, we had one or two sponsoring churches supervising mission work,

receiving and disbursing money from other churches. The method has grown until now we have sponsoring churches located in many parts of the country. This method, like those mentioned above, has sown discord among brethren from its beginning. This, the Lord says, is an abomination unto him.

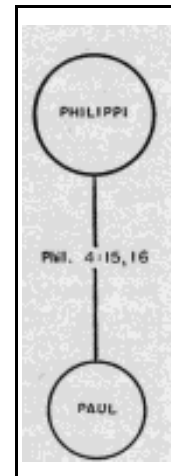
The sponsoring church method is a human invention, invented by the wisdom of man and guided by the spirit of man, to do the work God gave to each individual church. The implications are far reaching. First, it is implied that the individual churches as God gave them, are incapable of doing the work God gave them to do. This in turn reflects upon the wisdom of God and puts man's wisdom above God's. Second, it is implied that the Bible itself is not an all-sufficient guide in religion. The school of thought that will tolerate the existence of a method of work unknown to the word of God, will, in time, cast reflection upon the inspiration and authority of the scriptures. It is a human invention whose logical end is apostasy. It robs churches of their independence and takes control of their money, creating a power and authority God never granted to any one church, and therefore, contravenes the word of God.

One reason given for starting this new method of work was, the churches were not doing their duty in doing missionary work, and, therefore, the new method was necessary. But grant that they were not doing their duty. What then? Was it necessary to put to work a new method unknown to the New Testament to do that which churches had failed to do? Surely not. The thing that ought to have been done was to set about reforming the churches, in order that they might do the work the Lord required of them, instead of inventing something new that contravened the word of God and that set His wisdom aside. The sponsoring church borrowed its method of work from the society. Here is the way both work:



Both parties operate through a middle institution—one through the society board, the other through a sponsoring church. There is as much New Testament authority for one as there is for the other. There is none for either. Both are inventions of men and sow discord among brethren. Subtract from the sponsoring church all it has borrowed from the society, there is nothing left but zero. “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” (Rom. 14:19.)

Here is another chart showing how New Testament churches worked: Philippi acts independently of all other churches and sends her support directly to Paul. There was no middle man nor institution standing between Philippi and Paul. The sponsoring church stands as the center and hub around which other churches revolve, and through whose hopper preachers and money are ground out. In New Testament times there was no centralization of power, no combination of men and churches such as is seen in sponsoring churches. Philippi acted independently of all others in communicating directly with Paul. The sponsoring church takes the work out of the hands of those to whom God committed it and does it for them. This can work only evil to all parties to it. God commits work to churches, not because he needs their help, but because the work will strengthen and build them up, and give spiritual growth and activity to the churches. Each church should collect, control and direct its own means, do all it can in spreading the gospel. They need this exercise for their own growth and development. One objection to sponsoring churches is they take the missionary work out of the hands of the churches and leave them to die spiritually of nothing to do. The work God gave to churches to do is as much needed for their salvation as for the salvation of the world. Each church should look after and use its own means both of men and money, for its own growth and spiritual strength. One church cannot turn over its own work to another and please God. In the judgment, each will be judged according to his own works, not according to the works of others. The church that turns mission work over to another to do it for them, will have but little, if any works, to be judged by. Why are not elders of one church as competent to look after the money and men of their own congregation, as are elders of another church to do it for them? If they are not competent, they are not qualified elders, and ought to step down and let the congregation appoint elders who are competent to look after the church's affairs.



There is a divinely appointed plurality of elders or overseers in each local church which God himself places over the affairs of the church they serve, and the sponsoring church arrangement interferes with God's order by transferring supervision and control to a central "board" of elders, a thing unknown in apostolic days. In the sponsoring church method, the churches hand over their money to the sponsoring church "board," relinquishing thereby all claim to it themselves, and leaving it to be used exclusively as the central "board" directs; and the central "board" then selects and controls missionaries precisely as it pleases, and the churches can have no voice in, and nothing whatsoever to do with the matter. In such cases, the churches have surrendered the control of matters to the central "board" and can themselves have no control as to whom or what their money shall sustain. In fact, so far as missionary work is concerned the churches have surrendered all power to a central board and have no voice or control in anything, not even the power to recall a missionary for false teaching, bad conduct, or both. The central "board" alone has the power to do this and the churches are powerless to act. Churches may withdraw from the sponsor and have nothing to do with it.

The one fateful fact about the sponsoring church method is the commitment of its advocates to the principle of a central "board" in religion and the placing in the hands of that central "board" of supervisors and managers, work which God placed in the hands of a plurality of managers and supervisors in each local church. Such a central "board" of supervisors and managers is not only

contrary to God's order revealed in the New Testament, but it contains the seeds of ecclesiasticism. It is the one fatal rock on which the church in all ages has gone aground.

New Testament churches were entirely independent of each other. If there had been no central "board" of managers for missionary work among the advocates of the Restoration Movement, but each local church had been left, as God ordained it, to manage its own missionary work and all other business, the evil of division into two separate and distinct churches would never have occurred.

It is necessary to observe strict conformity to the New Testament ideal. But this ideal can never be attained and maintained except on condition of adopting and strictly following the principle or rule of procedure embodied in the famous and familiar motto: "Where the scriptures speak, we speak; and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent."

The scriptures furnish us unto all good works, and preaching the gospel stands pre-eminent as a good work. We boldly affirm and earnestly contend that the Bible contains a divine system of evangelism that was powerful enough to shake the Roman Empire in its day and perfect enough to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth during the first century of the Christian era; and we modestly submit that, putting that faith and system into practice, it will be just as effective in our day as it was in primitive times. Believing that all now engaged in mission fields can be sustained and more work be done in harmony with the example of the apostles and inspired men, we come before you with brotherly love and beseech you in the name of our Lord that you abandon the "sponsoring church" method that found no necessity or recognition in apostolic times, and that you concentrate your zeal and energy in the divine method ordained of God, which we all admit to be common and scriptural ground; thereby removing a cause of widespread division and contention and bring about that union and cooperation in which there is strength and which will enable us to make more rapid conquest of the earth for Christ.

All professed Christians should do everything within their ability to bring about the unity of Christians. This is a great and vital truth for which all should labor. We feel sure that strife among God's people will never cease, until all Christians themselves, with an open New Testament, shall be willing to face and discharge the following threefold duty. (1) To carefully survey their faith and practice, retaining whatever they are preaching and practicing that can be read in the New Testament. (2) Laying aside everything that cannot be read therein. (3) Adding to their faith and practice whatever can be read therein that they are not already teaching and practicing. If this course was faithfully pursued, strife among God's people would vanish like a snow pile before the noon day sun, and unity and fellowship of all in Christ would inevitably follow. May the Lord help us all to see and follow this truth, is my prayer.

**AS THE NEW TESTAMENT DEFINES****THE SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF ELDERS' AUTHORITY****John T. Lewis, Birmingham, Alabama**

The term church is used in the universal, and also in the local sense. The universal church includes all baptized believers. The local church is made up with baptized believers who meet together at an appointed place and at designated times to worship and carry on God's work.

There is not the remotest idea in God's word about a universal or brotherhood eldership. In Philippians 1:1 Paul says: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." This is the New Testament idea of the local church with its bishops and deacons, and it is the only idea or way that we should ever think, preach, or write about the church or the elders. That is if the church is local, the elders must be local.

In Acts 20:17, 18 Luke says: "And from Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them." All he said to them was confined strictly to the conditions in the church at Ephesus, in which the Holy Spirit had made them bishops. There was no way by which those elders could have gotten the idea that their bishopric extended over "all Asia," much less over all the world, or brotherhood. In verse twenty-eight Paul says: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." I do not believe that any conscientious person can read into Paul's statements that the elders at Ephesus could delegate any part of their authority, or responsibility, to look after both the temporal and spiritual needs of the church at Ephesus to any other elders on the face of the earth, or to any organization other than the church.

"The elders therefore among you I exhort who am a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." I Pet. 5:1-4. I am not a Greek scholar but God has endowed me with enough intelligence to know that inspiration, in the above scripture, has limited the authority of elders "to the flock of God which is among you." And in doing this I do not believe that the Holy Spirit made Peter either a "hobby rider" or a "Somerville."

In James 1:27 we read: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Therefore every congregation, whose elders are not looking after the temporal needs of the "fatherless and widows" among them, has not the "pure and undefiled religion." I am not "President emeritus" of any great college "among us," but I know "this is that" which James was teaching, and if all congregations were looking after the needy "among them," there would not be enough institutional gas to float one organizational gas bag outside the church, of which we have many

today.

In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus Christ slides the curtain aside and lets us view the final judgment. In telling us how we serve him, he says, in verse forty: “And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.” We should always be ready to do good unto all men, but we serve Jesus Christ by serving our (His) brethren.

I am in my forty-ninth year in Birmingham. The first ten years I was the only gospel preacher in a hundred miles of the city giving all his time to preaching and teaching God's word. During those early years not one dime was ever sent here for my support. I have seen the cause of Christ grow here from a few faithful members worshiping in the third loft of a grocery store to more than twenty congregations with several hundred thousand dollars worth of church property. There are also more than twenty gospel preachers in this field now.

This does not include the colored congregations and preachers, of which there are several. The congregations in Birmingham are not only carrying their own work, but the most of them are helping build meeting houses and supporting preachers in other fields. If there has ever been an orphan, a widow, or any needy person in any congregation in Birmingham that has gone without food and clothing, I have never heard of it, and I do not believe the congregation knew about it.

Therefore nothing but an institutional gas bag, inflated with personal ego, would say that there are elders in any congregation in Birmingham that do not believe in having the gospel preached to the world, nor in caring for the widows and orphans among them. I hope Birmingham will never become a fertile field for the promotional, sponsoring, or institutional bugs to lay their eggs. And it never will so long as the elders believe in the wisdom of God's eternal purpose in establishing the church to carry the Gospel to all the world.

## CARING FOR THE NEEDY

### THE BENEVOLENT WORK OF THE CHURCH

Charles A. Holt, Franklin, Tennessee

This study has to do with the ministry to the poor, the widows and orphans which is to be performed by the church of the Lord. The New Testament has much to say about such work. In the main it is an individual obligation, but under certain circumstances the church as such has duties in this field. It should be clearly understood, however, that the church is not a big Red Cross organization, nor was it founded to function in the material realm of providing the physical necessities for the poor and needy. The primary work and mission of the church is to provide spiritual needs—not physical needs; to save spiritual life—not physical life! The one transcends the other in importance as much as the divine transcends the human. The benevolent work of the church is very limited and restricted, and such work is purely secondary and subsidiary to the great work of soul saving.

#### The Performance of This Ministry

The New Testament plan of operation in performing this ministry to the poor and needy, provides for two avenues in accomplishing the task. The first and main is individual action on the part of all Christians. Most of the teaching along this line is directed to the Christian individual and has to do with practicing “pure religion.” As Jesus “went about doing good,” so must His followers. In rendering assistance to their fellow-man when he is in need, Christians are practicing “pure religion” and their influence radiates for the glory of God. Two purposes are accomplished in addition: (1) The individual himself is helped spiritually; and (2) Those in need are relieved. Truly “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

James 1:27 reads: “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.” There seems to be no doubt but that this instruction is to the Christian individual, pointing up in general terms the requirements of that religion which is both pure and undefiled. It is not instruction to the church authorizing congregational action. From the context this is readily seen. Verse 26 is definitely addressed to the individual. The latter part of verse 27—“Keep himself unspotted from the world”—makes sure and certain that this is for individual application.

“To visit,” in James 1:27, embraces the idea of supplying the needs of the fatherless and widows. This, Christians are to do as they have the ability and opportunity. The lesson of doing for others—serving others—is one that is sorely needed in our day. Jesus taught that greatness comes as a result of service to others. In leaving us an example (I Pet. 2:21) Christ came to minister and not to be ministered unto. We must serve others ourselves. We can not hire others “to visit” the fatherless and widows for us anymore than we can hire another to “keep unspotted from the world” for us. It is the idea of serving by proxy; turning over such obligations to others that has involved the churches in the present controversy over human institutions. We live in a day of “let George do it,” or paying some institution to do for us what we need to do ourselves. Both as churches and

individuals we are prone to take the easy way out. We are neglecting a means of real spiritual development when we fail to act for ourselves to the limit of our ability and opportunity in serving others. Some of the richest experiences of life come in this manner.

In Vincent's Word Studies In The New Testament, Volume 1, page 736, commenting on James 1:27, we have this excellent comment:

“To visit ... James strikes a downright blow here at ministry by proxy, or by mere gifts of money. Pure and undefiled religion demands personal contact with the world's sorrow: to visit the afflicted, and to visit them in their affliction. 'The rich man, prodigal of money, which is to him of little value, but altogether incapable of devoting any personal attention to the object of his alms, often injures society by his donations; but this is rarely the case with that far nobler charity which makes men familiar with the haunts of wretchedness, and follows the object of its care through all the phases of his life.'”

Upon our service and help to others our eternal destiny depends. (Matthew 25:31-46. Read these verses please!) Can we really expect to hear the Lord say: “Come, ye blessed of my Father ... inasmuch as ye have done it unto me,” if ours has been a ministry by proxy or accomplished for us through some human organization

Galatians 6:10 which reads as follows: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith,” is more instruction, like James 1:27, which is addressed to the individual. It is found among sundry instructions governing the duties of the Christian. However, even if it be assumed, that James 1:27 and Galatians 6:10 have to do with congregational action, there is absolutely no justification in either passage, nor in any other, for churches to build and maintain some humanly-devised benevolent society as a supplement to the church, through which to accomplish this work! Religion by proxy on the part of the individual or the church, is not the “pure religion” commanded. One who thinks he finds divine authority in either of the passages for the brotherhood benevolent societies such as have been fastened upon the church today as appendages (and some even claim them as necessary supplements) through which the church may do benevolent work, should certainly have no trouble in seeing authority in the great commission (Matthew 28) for the missionary society!

As Christian individuals we must “bear our own burdens” and provide for our relatives when they are in need. There is no clearer teaching in the New Testament than this. Listen to it: “Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God . . . and these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (I Timothy 5:3-8) Much teaching needs to be done along this line. Many have reached the place that they want to burden the church with the duties of the individual. Some churches seemingly think it right to assume such and do so. This Paul positively forbids and says of one who fails to discharge his responsibility along this line, that he “hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” This is a

terrible condemnation. Let us fulfill our obligations in this field that we may indeed be “blameless.” Let us learn to provide for our own—widows, children, and others when they are in need, knowing that such is “good and acceptable. before God.” It is as necessary :as partaking of the Lord's Supper. Churches cannot scripturally, and should not, for the good of the individual, assume the duty of the individual. Neither do churches have the right to build and maintain orphan homes, homes for widows and the aged, such as we have today, which so readily become a “dumping ground” for individuals who do not desire to bear their own burdens! Such is the general situation with our benevolent societies today. If an individual reaches a place where he cannot provide for his own and he has no relatives who should help out in such instances, the church may and should step in and help him meet his own obligation. The church dare not assume the responsibility for him, but only assist him by supplying what he lacks or needs to do it himself.

### **Congregational Action In Benevolence**

The second channel of operation in performing this work of ministry is by and through the congregation—congregational action. That churches as such provided benevolence in ;certain instances and under certain circumstances is a matter too plainly set forth in the New Testament to be denied by anyone. The Jerusalem church very early in its existence found it necessary to provide for some who were in “need.” (Acts 2:43-46) This was a temporary and emergency situation and it was met by to the church.

Later on the Grecian widows were neglected in “the daily ministrations.” The apostles met this situation by divine guidance and it was handled by the church without any trouble, and certainly without the formation of some supplementary organization through which to do it. (Acts 6:1-7.)

Several years afterwards we read about “a great dearth” which came to pass. Agabus, a prophet, foretold of its coming. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:27-30) Thus a record of the Antioch church sending “relief unto the brethren in Judea. This “relief” was not sent to nor through some man-made benevolent society. The “relief” was sent to the elders in Judea. The “relief” was sent because “the brethren” in Judea were in need and were unable to supply their own necessities due to the “great dearth.” To send such “relief” was never thought of before it was prophesied there would be a need, and the “relief” stopped when the need was supplied!

Nearly thirteen years later the Jerusalem church was in “want.” Paul urged the churches in Macedonia, Galatia ,and Corinth to send to relieve the “want” of these saints. (1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8-9) The “collection for the saints” had been urged and promised a year before it was finally gathered up for delivery. It was time for it to be delivered to the Jerusalem church. The Macedonian churches had given liberally, “yea, and beyond their power” for this “ministering to the saints.” Paul now urges the Corinthian church to “perform the doing” of that which they had promised. He wrote them: “For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality.” (2 Corinthians 8:13-14) Paul points

out that these churches were to give out of their “abundance.” These churches were able to help the Jerusalem church in this time of need. From their “abundance” they were to, “supply” the “want”—make up the deficiency of the Jerusalem church so she (Jerusalem) could meet her exclusive obligation of caring for her own.

In passing let us note these facts:

- (1) There is no precept, approved example or necessary inference that one church ever sent a financial contribution to another church except when and where the receiving church was in want—need.
- (2) That one church helped another church only when the receiving church was unable to accomplish the work of providing for its own needy.
- (3) That churches never contributed of their resources, or agreed to do so, to another church to help the receiving church set up any kind of benevolent society; whether it was to provide care for orphans, widows or others.
- (4) The sending church (es) sent to the elders and the elders, within the framework of the local congregation and without the necessity of any man-made appendage, supervised the work of benevolence.

### **Benevolence Limited To Saints**

Another significant fact concerning the benevolent work of the church is that the church never carried on such a work among “outsiders” or aliens. If it did, where is the passage that says so? There is much loose and baseless talk today relative to the obligation of the church to provide for all the widows, poor, afflicted, and all the dependent and neglected children in the world. Quite often some one gives the churches a “word-lashing” for its miserable failure in this respect, and they argue that we need to build and maintain more human institutions through which to do this work. Quite a touching and appealing picture is painted of the unfortunate of earth. Our efforts in caring for such are compared to what the Catholics, Baptists and others are doing and, of course, we are far behind! They have many more orphan homes, homes for widows, bread lines, hospitals, homes for unmarried mothers, clinics and such like than we do! The argument seems to be that we can never expect to compete with them and win the world to Christ as long as we fail so miserably in providing the physical necessities of life through such agencies. Thus some seem to want to make such organizations and benevolent societies for the church indispensable to the salvation of the world. Where is the passage that binds upon the church the obligation of providing the physical needs of all the world, or even those in any given community for that matter? Where is it? Surely before such a tremendous burden is laid upon the Lord's church, there should be some authorization from “the Head” concerning it and how such should be done! Such is not taught! Christ has not ordered the church to undertake such a task or to even operate in the field of supplying the physical need of the world. The Lord has provided no facilities or organization for the church to function in this realm. Moreover, the church is engaged in a far greater work. Surely only those who are blinded by zeal without knowledge could desire to bring the church down from its high and exalted work of saving souls and bind on it a work of caring for bodies! The work of saving souls shall last for time and eternity, while helping the body is only temporary.

Let no one conclude that we are opposed to helping people in need. We are as desirous as anyone to see the physical necessities of every person in the world supplied. It is a good and noble work. Our only concern is with keeping overly-zealous people from binding upon the church this obligation and seeking to engage the church in such inferior work (relatively speaking) and thus turn the resources of the church into this channel.

The work of benevolence **for the church** has been greatly **over-emphasized**. The idea of some seems to be that if we can feed all the hungry, look after all the widows and orphans, build some hospitals, etc., that we can make an impression on the world and convert them to Christ. Efforts along this line have been made in recent years. The work in Germany and Italy was launched through making the church a benevolent society. Clothing and food were sent in abundance; even to the point of requiring several full-time workers to handle the program. Gospel teaching went begging while benevolence took precedence. "Feed and clothe them first, and then preach to them" was the idea. This proved to be a complete failure and the wrong approach. Hundreds came while the food and clothing lasted, but the attendance dwindled to nearly nothing when such stopped. The wrong impression of the church had been instilled in the minds of the people. Here is a truth that needs to burn in the mind of all. **Benevolence was never used as a means of introducing the gospel to the people!** Benevolence was a fruit of gospel teaching, exemplified in the lives of Christian individuals as they went about doing good.

### Church To Care For Its Own

Many are busy trying to burden the church with benevolent obligations that the Lord never bound upon it. It is the obligation of each congregation to care for the needs of its own to the extent of its own ability. This is the limit of the benevolent obligation of the church.

In every passage of scripture concerning the church operating in the field of benevolence, one will find that only Christians (and those who were their obligation) were relieved. When the church acted in the benevolent realm it was to help other Christians who were in want to meet their own obligations. Note the instances:

1. Acts 2:43-46. Here only "all that believed" were involved.
2. Acts 6:1-6. We learn here how the Jerusalem church cared for some widows. The context shows that those under consideration were all disciples.
3. Acts 11:27-30. Here we learn that the disciples sent "relief **unto the brethren** . . . and sent it to the elders." It does not say or indicate in the least that they sent relief for all the suffering in Judea. Surely if the church was suffering others were also. Was this the proper Christian spirit? These disciples were concerned about their brethren! Was this narrow? Call it what we may, it was God's will. We dare not be presumptuous and go beyond such restriction.
4. 1 Cor. 16:1-2. "Now concerning the collection for the saints." This collection from other churches was for the benefit of the saints and not all the poor and needy.
5. 2 Cor. 8:1-4. ". . . ministering to the saints." They were not called upon to minister to the

whole world, not even to all in Jerusalem. Neither were the churches called upon to finance the building of some home for the poor in Jerusalem!

6. 2 Cor. 9:1-5. “. . . as touching the ministering to the saints.” This is the same as the one above.
7. Rom. 15:25-31. “. . . ministering to the saints.” This has reference to the relief being sent to the Jerusalem church.
8. 1 Tim. 5:9-16. Here Paul instructs that the church may provide for certain widows — “widows indeed.” Certainly this does not embrace all widows for the qualifications of a “widow indeed” are laid down. (9-10.) There is no question but that these widows were all saints.

The only conclusion that can be reached from these passages is that the church is to care for its own when the need arises and to assist other churches meet an emergency in caring for their own. Dare we, brethren, go beyond what is written?

### **Benevolence Among Saints Limited**

The church is even restricted in providing for the saints. The church cannot assume the obligations of the individual. The individual must provide for his own. (1 Tim. 5:8) The church is forbidden to take into the number (provide care for) any but the “widows indeed.” (1 Tim. 5:9) Paul positively says: “But the younger widows refuse.” (1 Tim. 5:11) He further forbids that the church be “charged” when there are relatives who can and should provide for those in need. “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, **let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged**” in such cases. (1 Tim. 5:16) Why this restriction? The church will have all the benevolent work it needs to do in relieving “them that are widows indeed.” The church then may provide care for only “widows indeed”—those who are unable to care for themselves and who have no relatives to do so, and for only the dependent and neglected children who are in the same condition! This is a part of sound doctrine and it needs to be taught today. Children without relatives to care for them and who have a right to look to a congregation for that which they are unable to provide for themselves may become the “charge” of the church. Their right to look to a congregation for such depends Upon their connection with said church through relatives or association. Unless these restrictions are respected and followed, there is no way to measure the extent of the responsibility of the church in this respect. Besides this if there are no such restrictions, then the churches may throw open the doors to any and all, and exhaust their resources without ever touching “the hem of the garment” in providing the physical needs of all the world!

### **How To Do Such Work**

The question naturally arises, How shall the churches provide the care for those that are their responsibility? This deserves serious study. There should be no need in pointing out that there is but **one organization** divinely given **through** which the churches may operate in benevolence or evangelism. That organization is the local congregation! All the work the Lord has assigned to the church can and must be done in and through the divine framework of the local church and under the oversight of the elders. The local church is the largest, the smallest and the only organization the

Lord has provided. There is absolutely no authority in the New Testament for such benevolent societies and human institutions as we have today. They had no such in the days of the apostolic church and yet they took care of their benevolent obligations. Moreover, in the New Testament no eldership ever had or assumed the oversight of a benevolent program for more than the congregation in and over which they were elders.

Where is the authority (precept, example or necessary inference) for churches to organize human institutions through which to do their benevolent work? When such is found, the authority will at the same time be found for the formation of human organizations (missionary societies) through which churches may do their evangelistic work. It is as much a lack of faith in the all-sufficiency of the church to argue for the necessity of a brotherhood orphan home as to argue that a missionary society is needed. Since the Lord has not authorized any such institutions, this means there is no need for such. For men to organize such and lead churches to work through such human agencies is to declare by **ACT** that the church **alone** is not sufficient to perform the work assigned to it. It means that the divinely-built and divinely-organized church must be supplemented by creations of human wisdom! These institutions undertake the care (as the obligation of the church) of those who are **NOT** scripturally the burden of the church and in so doing violate the word of God. (1 Tim. 5:1-16) The vast majority of the children in the orphan homes have relatives and others who can and should care for them. The churches should not be “charged” in such cases. The same is true with the majority in the homes for old folks. With respect to those who are “widows indeed” and the dependent and neglected children who are the obligation of churches, let each congregation care for its own. This is scriptural and beyond this we dare not go.

### Two Kinds Of Homes

There are two different arrangements in vogue today as pertains to orphan homes. One type is formed and governed by a board of directors; made up of men from various places. This arrangement is in no way connected with any particular local church, but purports to be the work of churches in general; a method by which and through which any and all churches may work.

The other type of home is under a “local eldership.” These homes were first incorporated as separate institutions and then placed under an eldership. Some erroneously think this justifies such a human supplement for church operation. The missionary society could be placed under an eldership in the same way.

Fundamentally, there is no basic difference in the two arrangements. Both present a medium for brotherhood action; the activating of the universal church. In the one case it is universal church action through a board of directors. In the other it is the same unscriptural concept of church action through a “local eldership.” God did not

intend that the “church general” should function through some “local eldership.” No set of elders has the scriptural right to undertake and oversee such a work for the brotherhood or any segment of it. This is the “brotherhood institutional” idea—one church doing the work of many churches. It violates the autonomy, as well as the independence and equality of the congregations (as other

articles in this series will no doubt establish). The work of elders begins and ends with the congregation in which and over which they are elders. (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Acts 20:28) All such institutions as they exist today are a promoted work—a **created** need, and, therefore, represent an effort to “help” God.

### **Methods—Means—Modes**

Since we have learned that the benevolent work of the church is to be accomplished by and through the local congregations, each acting independently and in its own capacity, what method shall be used in providing for those in need. The selection of methods, means or modes is left to the discretion of each congregation. There axe many ways which a congregation might use to care for the fatherless and widows. The only restrictions are such as have already been pointed out. Here are some suggested ways:

1. The children might be placed in a private institution that specializes in child care. The church pays the organization for “services rendered,” just like when they utilize the services of a hotel in keeping a preacher. The church provides for the children in this way.

2. The children might be placed in the home of some members and the members paid to care for them.

3. The church could, if such was deemed wise and necessary, buy a piece of ground; build a house and supply it with the needed equipment; hire the necessary help and place the children in such. This is simply a local church in action—the work of a local church. It is not a human institution in the objectionable sense any more than when the church provides a home for the preacher. This is certainly not a brotherhood project.

In these and perhaps other ways each church can provide for the needs of all for whom they are responsible. Remembering the restrictions and limitations placed upon the church in benevolence, and, also, the fact that the church has a far greater mission to perform, the obligations of the church in this realm are not very great and can be handled without any organizations or supplements of human invention.

## RULES OF INTERPRETATION

### HOW TO ESTABLISH SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

Marshall E. Patton, Birmingham, Alabama

Divine authority is the real issue at the base of all religious differences. In our dealings with modern religious cults we must prove that divine authority is established by the scriptures and by the scriptures only. Where there is no scripture there can be no divine authority. Our title assumes unanimity among us on that point. Let us hope that it does not assume too much.

A knowledge of how to establish divine authority; a recognition of the different kinds of divine authority; a clear conception of the nature of each, and a faithful application of such knowledge will necessarily result in our speaking the same thing with no divisions among us, but all being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1:10.)

Are there differences among us today? Then someone is at fault in one or more of the above mentioned matters. These faults must be found and recognized, otherwise we will remain hopelessly divided. **THE NEED OF THE HOUR IS AN OBJECTIVE STUDY OF THESE MATTERS!** When unanimity is attained here, honest brethren will make faithful application to current issues. This will resolve our differences; unity will prevail, and together we can march on to victory beneath the banner of the cross.

#### Three Ways

Until of late it has been axiomatic with us that scriptural authority is established in one or more of three ways; expressed statement, necessary inference, and approved example. Recently, however, some have added a fourth way, namely, by “principle eternal.” Then there are some who have not named other ways, but who do affirm that they exist. Those who so affirm should both name and prove these ways, otherwise faithful brethren will continue to deny them. I deny that there is a fourth way of establishing divine authority—by “principle eternal” or otherwise. Any principle to be divine must first be revealed of God. Questions: **WHEN, WHERE, and HOW** can any principle be revealed unto us save in apostolic days (when), in the scriptures (where), by way of either expressed statement, necessary inference, or approved example (how) ? There is no other **TIME, PLACE, or WAY** for such revelation! If so, let those who so affirm name and prove it. Until this is done, I contend that scriptural authority is established only by one or more of these three ways.

The following illustrates the three ways by which scriptural authority is established:

(1) **EXPRESSED STATEMENT**—“. . . this do in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19.) This expressed statement establishes scriptural authority for observing the Lord's Supper.

(2) **NECESSARY INFERENCE**—“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water:” (Matt. 3:16.) Although the Bible does not say that Jesus went down into the water when he was baptized, it does **TEACH** by necessary inference that he did just that. He could not have

come “up” unless he had been down, and he could not have come “out” unless he had been in. By necessary inference the Bible teaches that the church was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:4.) Other examples might be given. However, let it be observed that in order to establish scriptural authority the inference must be NECESSARY. Herein is the mistake made by those who practice infant baptism. In the case of Lydia's household they reason that she MIGHT have been married; PROBABLY had children; if so, it is POSSIBLE that one of them was an infant, and, although she was away from home, in all PROBABILITY she had her infant with her. Hence, they conclude that an infant was in her household, and, therefore, infant baptism. Their inference is based upon “might,” “probably,” “possibly,” “probability,” etc., all of which amounts to only a reasonable inference based upon assumption. Scriptural authority is NOT established by reasonable inferences—they must be necessary!

(3) APPROVED EXAMPLE—”And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread . . . .” (Acts 20:7.) This approved example establishes scriptural authority for observing the Lord's supper upon the first day of the week. By approved example I mean Holy Spirit approved action on the part of Christians in the day of the apostles. In this connection the following references should be considered: Hebrews 13:7; John 16:13; Eph. 3:5; 1 Corinthians 10:1-12; Philippians 4:9; 1 Peter 2:21. Unfortunately, some have begun to question whether or not divine authority is established by approved example. For a more extensive treatment of this particular point the reader is referred to another article in this issue under the heading “When Is A New Testament Example Exclusive?” It will suffice here to observe that “holy apostles and prophets” were “guided” by the Holy Spirit “into all truth.” The Holy Spirit guided Luke in revealing Acts 20:7. Unless the practice of Acts 20:7 can be shown to conflict with other plainly revealed truths, we must conclude it to be “truth” into which the Holy Spirit “guided” Luke—therefore, an approved example. Thus we can observe it on this day with ASSURANCE of divine approval. No man knows that the Holy Spirit approves any other day for its observance. To observe it on some other day is to do so without divine authority. This is sinful!

## Two Kinds

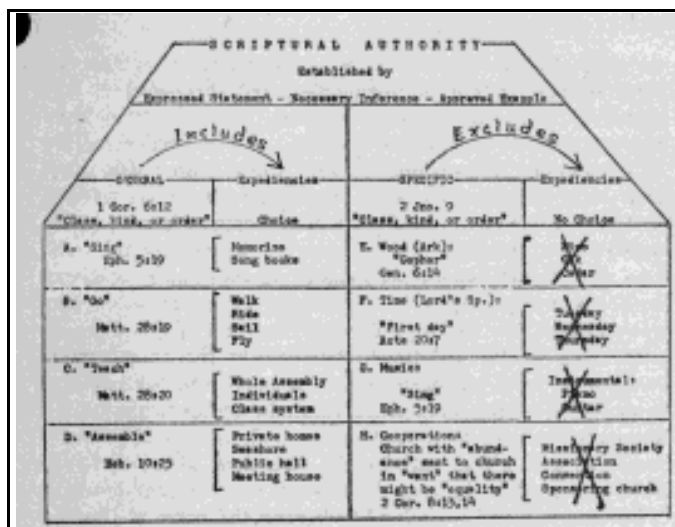
Most students of the Bible know that there are two kinds of divine authority—general and specific. Yet, a failure to distinguish between the two and to understand clearly the NATURE of each accounts for much of the controversy over current issues. Therefore, it will make for simplicity if we take the time to learn how to distinguish between the two and learn clearly the nature of each.

## The Nature Of Each

The word “general” is defined by Webster: “Pertaining to, affecting, or applicable to, each and all of a class, kind, or order; as, a general law.” Negatively, “Not limited to a precise import or application; not specific.” The word “specific” is defined by Webster: “Precisely formulated or restricted; specifying; explicit; as, a specific statement.”

From these definitions it is obvious that the differences between the general and the specific is simply this: The general INCLUDES each and all of the class, kind, or order under consideration,

THOUGH NOT PRECISELY STATED NOR REVEALED. On the other hand the specific EXCLUDES everything save that which is precisely stated or revealed. The following chart illustrates this difference:



A failure to recognize the INCLUSIVE nature of the general has led some to affirm that we do many things with God's approval for which we have no expressed statement, necessary inference, nor approved example. I deny it! Question: Can expressed statements, necessary inferences, and approved examples be generic? If so, then they INCLUDE "each and all of the class, kind, or order under consideration, though not precisely stated —nor revealed." In the realm of the general it suffices only to authorize the class. All that is within the class, though not precisely stated nor revealed is INCLUDED! Upon this basis we claim divine authority for our meeting houses, pews, light fixtures, and other facilities that expedite our assembling together for worship. (See D on chart) Because of this inclusive nature of general authority I contend that expressed statements, necessary inferences, and approved examples, either general or specific, "COMPLETELY furnish us unto EVERY good work." To contend otherwise is to open wide the flood gate of digression. The pattern will no longer be determined by divine authority, but by human judgment. This would make unity impossible. Surely we are not prepared for such a conclusion or its consequences.

Furthermore, a failure to recognize the INCLUSIVE nature of general authority makes "antis" and "hobbyists." They try to make the general exclusive when in reality it is inclusive. This is the mistake of the anti-Bible class brethren. They try to make the general command "teach" exclude the class system. Why? Because it is not specifically authorized. They overlook the INCLUSIVE nature of general authority. A recognition of this on their part would solve this problem. (See C on chart)

On the other hand a failure to recognize the EXCLUSIVE nature of the specific accounts for digression. The idea of exclusion inheres in the very meaning of the word "specific." Yet, our Digressive brethren try to make the specific inclusive when in reality it is exclusive. They would make the specific "sing" include instrumental music. They overlook the EXCLUSIVE nature of

specific authority. A recognition of this on their part would solve this problem. (See G on chart) Brethren, here is the truth between the two extremes of digression and hobbyism! Remember, however, that opposing that for which there is NEITHER general nor specific authority does not make one a hobbyist or an anti.

### **General Or Specific**

This raises the question: How do we determine whether it is generic or specific? The answer is simple: When CHOICE is divinely authorized it is general. If no CHOICE is authorized, then it is specific. The meaning of the two words demands this conclusion.

Choice is divinely authorized, first, when something is necessary to execute the divine order, but that something is not revealed. Whatever is used must be a matter of choice, and is, therefore, a matter of expediency. (See A on chart) This accords with the meaning of the word “general”: “Including each and all of the class, kind, or order under consideration, though not precisely stated or revealed.” Notice, however, that the expediency must be WITHIN 'the class, kind, or order divinely authorized. This also accords with I Cor. 6:12. EXPEDIENCIES MUST FIRST BE LAWFUL!

Choice is authorized, secondly, when two or more things ARE revealed and one may be chosen to the EXCLUSION of others. (See B on chart) Such are expediencies. For where choice is expediencies are. And where expediencies are the general is. Thus we determine the general.

Unless choice is authorized, we dare not go beyond that which is revealed. (2 John 9) There is no choice in the realm of the specific. The specific excludes everything save that which is specified. (See E on chart) For this reason we observe the Lord's supper on the first day of the week to the exclusion of all other days. This day is authorized by a specific approved example, and is, therefore, exclusive. (See F on chart) For the same reason we oppose the use of instrumental music in worship. “Sing” is specific, and, therefore, is exclusive. (See G on chart)

### **Application**

The differences among us over the current issue of “Congregational Cooperation” would be resolved immediately, if those promoting the “sponsoring church” type of cooperation would recognize the EXCLUSIVE nature of the SPECIFIC authority that authorizes one church to send money to another church. Like the time for observing the Lord's supper there is neither expressed statement nor necessary inference authorizing such. Both are dependent upon approved example for authority.

The New Testament examples that authorize such cooperation are SPECIFIC! (2 Cor. 8,9; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; Rom. 15:25,26; Acts 11:27-30) It was always a church with “abundance” sending to a church in “want” that “equality” might be established. (2 Cor. 8:13,14) The word “abundance” is a relative term and does not necessarily mean a wealthy church. Macedonia gave out of “deep poverty.” (2 Cor. 8:2) Yet, they had “power” to give. (2 Cor. 8:3) Jerusalem did not. Hence, in

relation to Jerusalem, Macedonia had an “abundance.” The word “want means inability to perform a work peculiar to the receiving church. “Equality” simply means freedom from such “want.” The context demands these conclusions. (See H on chart)

If the authority for congregational cooperation is general, then it is sinful to try to bind one type to the exclusion of others. However, if the authority for such cooperation is specific, then it is sinful to try to make it include any type save that which is specified.

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## THE “WHAT” AND THE “HOW” OF EDIFICATION

### THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION — EDIFICATION

**Bryan Vinson, Houston, Texas**

The church first existed in the mind of God, and certainly as it therein resided it was associated with, or related to, that which He designs it to accomplish. As a Divine Instrumentality it is so created, ordered and endowed out of respect for that which is to be performed by it. Otherwise the manifest incongruity of the situation as resident in the mind of God would reflect against him to the point of an impeachment of the Divine Wisdom. The idea in the term mission is that of being sent, and this necessarily involves the purpose for which sent. Hence, we employ it in this study as suggestive of the purpose of God as identified with the church, and the execution of its commission in the fulfillment and accomplishment of this purpose. The Great Commission, as commonly referred to, sets forth two magnificent endeavors to be pursued and accomplishments to be wrought. Both activities are confined to the work of teaching, and differ only as to those to be taught out of respect to their peculiar circumstances. The unbeliever is to be taught that which is designed to make him a believer in Christ, a baptized believer; and the baptized believer is to be taught all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. Christ gave the commission to the apostles, and, subsequently, endowed them with the Holy Spirit to the end they might effectually execute this commission.

But, of course, in their own proper person they could not do all that was needed, and, hence, through them God gave gifts by Christ to others so they might be enabled to labor with the apostles in the furtherance of this great mission. When Christ ascended to the right hand of God, and there enthroned, he gave gifts to men. “He gave some (gifts) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” (Eph. 4:12-13.) Why? For what purpose? In the occasion as herein stated is to be discovered the mission of the church and its competency to accomplish it. The work to be done is of an importance that merited the bestowal of miraculous endowments on those engaged to perform it, and, consequently, is to be esteemed too highly to either be suspended or substituted. These gifts of the Spirit were of a two-fold design: first, to enable them to function without a completed revelation; and, second, to unfold to them a complete and perfected revelation of the Divine Will. Hence, they were necessary only until the completion of revelation with regard to both objectives. Since revelation is now complete there is no need of miraculous powers; and since there is no continuing need for such the Lord does not now bestow them on anyone, inasmuch as the economy of heaven does not engage in the superfluous and wasteful employment of its resources and powers.

Just as there is in the above passage a distribution of these gifts severally adapted to the offices here mentioned, even so is there a distribution of the functions as peculiarly related to these several offices. The apostles were told that the Spirit would guide them into all truth, and the superior character of their office required the correspondingly superior investment of this office with supernatural power; hence, they received the Holy Spirit in baptismal measure. They had no successors in office; they alone have occupied it, as they alone qualified for it, and alone were endowed to occupy it. They still are apostles inasmuch as their work in that office has not been

supplanted nor supplemented, and their decrees and decisions are still of unimpeachable force today. They occupy thrones, and cannot be dethroned by any advocates of apostolic succession. Their work here was preeminently to serve as the earthen vessels of the gospel, and the ambassadors of Christ in enforcing his will on the belligerents of earth, and in reducing to writing this will. The work of evangelists, and pastors and teachers, continue in the lives and actions of each succeeding generation. The apostles function in direct regard to the perfecting of the saints—to the attainment of a perfect man, or church, as pertained to a perfecting of revealed truth. The evangelists were related to the “work of the ministry,” which is a continuing task in the absence of supernatural gifts, and in the presence of a perfected revelation. Equally true is this of pastors and teachers with respect to the work of “edifying the body of Christ.” By some it is thought that the work of ministry is identifiable as benevolent enterprises of Christians, but such would not have incurred the necessity of spiritual endowments at any time and under any circumstances. And we must recognize the vital relation of cause and effect in this question. The spiritual gifts were bestowed out of regard for the “work of the ministry” along with the others specified,” and, hence, could not refer to material benefactions for this reason. A gift of the spirit can never serve as the cause and material benevolence as the effect wrought by a direct dependence on the cause. There is no homogeneity of cause and effect in such an arrangement. But to the mission of the church as it pertains to the work of edification.

There could not well be imagined anything more vain and fruitless than the conversion of sinners to the gospel to be left uninstructed and undeveloped spiritually, except on the assumption that the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy be true. And since those who know and believe the truth repudiate that doctrine, it is assumed we all recognize the wisdom and necessity of the saints, as new born babes, to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of the truth. This involves, therefore, the work of edifying the body of Christ. To edify is to build up, to strengthen, to bring to a state of maturity. This is accomplished with the body of Christ just as, and to the extent, the individual members of this body ;are built up in the most holy faith and are led to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they have been called. It is the duty of the local congregation to indoctrinate the members thereof in the teaching of Christ, not only to know but to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded of his followers. The apostle chided the Galatians with the statement that “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth”? (5:7) They had initially obeyed the gospel, but had been diverted therefrom, and hence had ceased to be obedient thereto. From which we would observe the continuing character of gospel obedience, and the corresponding necessity of continuing instruction and increasing spiritual development. Paul beseeched the Corinthians to receive not the grace of God in vain, thereby implying that such is possible, and in their case, would be true in the event of their continuance in the course of apostasy. Frequent instances are narrated in Acts to the effect Paul and his companions in travel revisited places where formerly the gospel was preached and confirmed the saints and exhorted them that with much tribulation they were to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Is the church as God made it competent to accomplish this aspect of its mission? The creators of the Missionary Society evidently thought the church incapable of competently functioning in evangelizing the world or else they would not have fashioned this instrumentality of their own to accomplish this work. Brethren today, while not entirely disavowing the sufficiency of the church in this work, are, by their arrangements, evidently of the persuasion that the church, as Christ made

it and the apostles ordered and fashioned it, is incapable of efficiently functioning to this end.

While entertaining the conviction that colleges may well exist and operate as conducted by Christians, when viewed as collective efforts of parents to discharge their parental duties in the proper education of their children, I do not believe they can or should exist as auxiliaries of the church in any sense or to any degree. It is the duty of parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and so long as they sustain parental obligations to them it is proper they provide the environment and instruction necessary to the accomplishment of this duty. A college is that which affords an advanced stage of this parental performance of duty. Unfortunately there has developed a widespread conception that the church can and should assume the family and social duties of mankind from the cradle to the grave. Parents have come to think, largely, that the command to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is a divine directive to the church, but such isn't true. Bear in mind the Commission is to teach the subjects of the gospel message the truth as it applies to them in leading to their faith and obedience, and, then, as the children of God they are to be taught to observe all things the Lord commands of them. The church, therefore, is God's educational institution; he has no other, and to either impose on the church the exclusive educational duties of other relationships, or divert from it to other institutions that which is peculiarly the obligation of the church is to pervert the will and arrangements of the reign of heaven.

In the passage initially noted, Ephesians 4:12-13, the arrangement of the language certainly relates the edifying of the body of Christ to the offices and functions of the pastors and teachers. In the recognition of this, together with the temporality of the spiritual gifts, is seen the significance of the qualification of "apt to teach" being germane to the office of elder or pastor. While the expression, "pastors and teachers" precludes the idea of all teaching being done exclusively by the elders, it does not relieve them of the necessity of being able to teach, and their active engagement in this work. The responsibility of elders is solely identified with the particular congregation of which they are the overseers. This is true in the overseeing, the watching after and the feeding of the flock among them. Elders who do not know the Word of God can neither teach themselves nor justly appraise the value of that taught by others, and ably discriminate between the truth and the error as taught.

Among the qualifications is the ability and the facility of "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision; whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." Be it observed that this passage doesn't warrant an arbitrary stopping of mouths by an assertion of authority assumed to reside in the office of the bishop, but a stopping of the mouth by virtue of a repudiation of the error as determined and effected through the familiarity with, and application of, sound doctrine. From some prominent quarters today there arises the clamor to have the elders close the pulpits against many preachers, not by refuting by the scriptures the teaching of these preachers but by an arbitrary exercise of their assumed authority. Such appeals are, of course, inviting to those who are imbued with a sense of importance and intoxicated with a feeling of authority and power, in converse ratio to their knowledge of God's Holy

Word. Diotrephes wouldn't receive John, the aged and beloved apostle, and even cast out of the church those who would receive the brethren. It is lamentable that today there are those, editors and preachers, who are recommending this attitude and course upon elders of congregations.

In the work of edifying the church, by the church, we see the body of saints as a congregation of disciples, a self-edifying body of people, wholly dependent on the word of God as affording the curriculum and defining and outlining the exercises to be pursued. Anyone who is mature enough to become a Christian should be capable to be instructed in the scriptures themselves, and certainly not be subjected to a system of instruction and material borrowed from alien sources. The children of God cannot be subjected to sectarian diets without it resulting in spiritually enervating effects on them. We are suffering from too many specialists and experts among us today, and are infatuated with so-called modern methods of instruction. We have a number of women specialists among us, and some college lectureships are loaded down with programs designed to afford them a stage for the display of their superior talents, and furnish an avenue for the sale of their wares. The trend and direction of all such is away from the simplicity that is in Christ and a cultivation of a taste for the wisdom of this world rather than for the sincere milk of the word. The second chapter of Titus affords a splendid and enduring distribution of influence, and procedure of instruction, for the children of God of one another.

In the teaching activities of a congregation a fundamental principle should always be respected, and that is that no office was ever made for the officer; that is, no class should be established with the design of gratifying the ambition of a would-be teacher. Just as in the matter of establishing a congregation, it would be an unholy purpose to do so in order to gratify the ambition of someone to be an elder, a deacon, a teacher, or a preacher. The church doesn't exist for these positions, but rather they exist for, and out of regard for, the interest of the church. When the spirit of rivalry and jealousy was noted by Paul, as present in the Corinthian church by reason of the possession and exercise of many and diverse gifts of the Spirit, he appealed to them not to endeavor to excel one another in respect thereto, but to seek to excel with regard to, and as a contribution toward, the high and holy end of edifying the body of Christ. The church is not designed to afford a means, or supply an instrumentality, for the furthering of human ambition, but to secure the salvation both presently and eternally of the souls of those properly influenced and controlled by the teaching of Christ. In becoming the Savior of mankind Christ made himself of no reputation, and taught others that he that exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. The church, in any of its endeavors, and in the accomplishment of its divine purpose, is not to cultivate human pride nor gratify human ambition, but to exhibit the wisdom of God in its noblest employment.

There is being exemplified by many in the church today a confused state of mind in not being able to discern between entertainment and edification. Christians are new creatures in Christ, and are, therefore re-created or created anew. But this isn't equal to what is contemplated in the expression of "Christian Recreation" and the activities associated with this term.

By this expression, as currently employed there is the intended thought of social activities and pleasant pastimes which, in being engaged in, does not violate the principles of morality and religion. Such activities, however, are not Christian in any sense whatever; and, consequently, should not be

so described and identified. While altogether proper and desirable are such interests, yet they are wholly to be divorced from, as having no legitimate connection with, the church of Christ in its mission and activity. Some congregations build “fellowship halls” and “recreational centers” as a legitimate part of their operations. There isn't an instance of the use of the word fellowship in the relation between the children of God and their relationship to God and Christ that warrants such a use of this word. There isn't anything about Christians eating together that is akin to the fellowship of the saints. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, and to bring such into the church as an activity of the church is to be guilty of innovation. There isn't anything edifying insofar as being built up in the most holy faith is concerned by such affairs. By this there is no intention to reflect against the propriety of Christians associating together; on the contrary it is a fine thing, but only so when recognized as completely divorced from the work and activity of the church.

Too often is the appeal made to young folks to identify themselves with a particular congregation on the basis of the attraction held out to them of an abundance of social activity by the church in their behalf. Anyone who is old enough to be a Christian is old enough to be attracted to the teaching of God's word without the tinsel trappings of youthful social and physical recreation. One doesn't need to be a member of the church to secure a satisfaction of these desires and interests. The work of edifying the saints doesn't embody a matrimonial bureau, nor is the church a glorified chaperon for those of a courting age. It is a prostitution of the purpose of the church to bring it down to the status of a handmaid for parents and to function in the role of a baby-sitter. A diversion of its energies and resources to such ends cannot but reflect injuriously on the accomplishment of its God-given mission in this world to both saint and sinner.

The edifying of the church is not the increase of the body numerically, though this will inevitably be the experience of a congregation which enjoys a development and growth spiritually in the hearts and lives of its members. There is no end to the possible growth of the inner man as there is of the outward man. The latter reaches an apex and from that point begins to perish, whereas the inner man is to be renewed day by day. The Psalmist tells us the man is blessed that “walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” He is likened to a tree planted by the river of waters that bringeth forth its fruit in due season, and its leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. This prosperity is that of faith—faith in God's Word and walking in response to this faith. Among the Hebrew saints there were those who, though by reason of time should have been teachers, were themselves in need of being taught again the first principles of the oracles of God, and were in need of milk rather than strong meat. Consequently, they were unable to discern between good and evil.

Many of the afflictions and disturbances, if not all, which currently beset God's people have been occasioned by this very state of affairs. We have not developed our powers of discernment and are largely in an infantile state spiritually. We have forgotten we were purged of our sins and cannot see afar off—we are shortsighted, a condition of spiritual myopia that makes us blind to the intruding dangers of the hour. The only remedy is an aroused interest in and devotion to the study of the scriptures with an accompanying satisfaction with what they teach. We need elders qualified to not

only rule, but even more so, capable of feeding and watching after the souls of the flock among them, and members who will devote the time and effort necessary to learn what is taught in the Bible, not relying exclusively or primarily on someone to teach them. Also, Christians not content with a superficial grasp of the gospel system, but who are striving to comprehend the system of divine truth increasingly, and to secure an appreciation of the principles of God's Philanthropy without being satisfied with a fragmentary and incoherent conception of the Truth. The more one progresses in his knowledge of the truth, the larger will the horizons of truth yet before us appear, and the whetting of our desire to acquire a familiarity with it.

Viewing the church as God's building, established on the imperishable truth of the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus, having been laid by the apostles and prophets by the proclamation of the gospel, and ourselves as living stones in this building, will inspire us with a sense of the enduring importance of our relation thereto. This importance appreciated by us should lead to the recognition that all we experience ourselves in growing into a holy temple of the Lord, and what we contribute to the growth of others, is the most worthwhile endeavor of our lives. Only this is enduring and assures our everlasting enrichment. The progress and success which we rightfully aspire to in our social, business and political economies shall be brought to an end; our growth and progress as Christians can never be brought to a fruitless end, except that we grow faint and fail to remain steadfast, firm unto the end. To learn the will of God by the consecrated study of his word is the most immediate and pressing need before the church, with the determination to bring our practice into harmony with that learned as we strive to magnify Christ in our lives here on earth. Let us leave the problems and interests of other realms in their rightful spheres, and be content only with the word of God and its enlightening, directing and consoling influence fully felt in our lives.

## WHAT ARE THE REAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE CONTROVERSY OVER “INSTITUTIONALISM”?

Roy E. Cogdill, San Antonio, Texas

It is always a tragic thing when people lose sight of the basic and fundamental issues involved in any study, discussion, or problem. It is also unfortunate that it is so easy to do. It is our hope in this article to help clarify the issues that are involved in the present controversy among brethren over the question of “Institutionalism.”

Scriptural questions should be resolved by scriptures. If personal victory is the objective in a discussion, then the inconsistency of one's opponent, either in teaching or practice, might be relevant and material. In that sort of struggle one would expect personal recriminations or anything else that might be calculated to destroy the opposition. But if the truth is the object of the study or the discussion, then the Word of God alone is the standard that can be appealed to properly. For gospel preachers to affirm that a certain thing is scriptural and then spend their entire effort trying to vindicate what they are trying to defend by something someone else has done and make no appeal to a “Thus saith the Lord” is a reflection upon their attitude toward God's Word and their faith in it. It is a matter of “say not in thy heart—but what doth it say? The word of faith which we preach”! There should be complete unanimity of purpose that the issues, whatever they are, should be resolved only in the light of divine truth. Every effort should be in the interest of truth and from such a course we should not allow our minds to be diverted. What saith the Lord? That is the solution to the problem if we are interested in pleasing God.

The difficulty is separating the real scriptural issues from all of the matters of preference, opinion, judgment, prejudice, etc., that are ordinarily aroused in such a discussion. We can be sure of one thing, that is that present day problems cannot be solved by the approach that many are taking to them. For example:

**1. Look at how much good is being done! Surely you won't criticize or condemn anything doing that much good!**

Paul said, “Shall we do evil that good may come?” The answer is obvious. God's work must be done so as to please God or good is not done. People who engage in unscriptural worship justify it because it “lifts them up” and does them “good”—they think they get so much good out of it. But that does not make it right because God must be pleased or no spiritual good is accomplished.

**2. We have done it this way for so many years it must be right.**

That was altogether true of Jewish tradition but it did -not prevent their making void God's commandments and rendering their religion vain. Matt. 15:1-14.

**3. It is no more wrong than what others have done and are doing.**

This is a poor brand of consolation. If it is wrong at all it will condemn those who are guilty.

They will simply be held guilty along with the rest. There should be no comfort found in the fact that others are wrong with us.

#### **4. Wise and great men in the church have approved it.**

Trusting in human wisdom is always wrong. God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound and bring to nought them that are wise. We are walking by faith and not by the way things seem to us. I Cor. 1:18-31. If Cor. 5:7. Our faith should be in God. All men are fallible, even the greatest. Men can greatly help in learning what God has said, but they cannot determine the truth. Truth must always be determined by what God has said.

#### **5. Those who oppose this work are unworthy. They have the wrong motive.**

The character of opposers will not test the merit of their opposition. A scoundrel can stand upon truth in what he contends for sometimes. The worthiness of the work in the light of the truth is the test we should be interested in making. Besides, we do not know the motives in the hearts of others and God does not permit us to Judge in such matters.

The issues involved are not what some seem to think. False issues only scuttle or muddy the water so that truth cannot be seen. We need to eliminate the false issues ,that have been raised in the discussion of present problems.

##### **1. Whether or not churches can cooperate in doing their work is not the issue.**

Who opposes churches cooperating? The charge has been repeatedly made but it is not so. It creates a false issue. The issue is “scriptural cooperation”—what kind of congregational cooperation is authorized in the scriptures? New Testament cooperation is not opposed by anyone. Whether or not churches may cooperate is not the question but HOW can they cooperate in harmony with the will of God?

2. Whether or not the church has an obligation to care for its needy is not the issue. No one has been heard to deny that the church out of its treasury is obligated by divine authority to care for certain ones in need. Only an infidel would deny that. God has prescribed that the church shall do it. 1 Tim. 5:1-16. The question is how shall it be done? Has God given a pattern for such work? Are there any limitations in the scriptures placed upon such work?

3. The question is not how shall the local congregation under its own elders provide facilities for caring for their own?

No one has undertaken to overrule the elders in the matter of what is expedient as to the details or facilities in doing such work. The right of each congregation to care for its own in harmony with God's will is not the question and the right of the elders of the congregation to use whatever means are the most expedient in order to do it cannot be questioned. But remember that in order for a thing to be scripturally expedient it must also be lawful. I Cor. 10:23. Surely anything that is contrary to

God's law could never be expedient.

4. It is not a question of method. This is not the issue. Place, provision, someone to have charge of the work to be done or to do it; these are always necessary no matter what organization does the work. If the congregation cares for its own orphans and widows under the supervision of the elders, they must be cared for somewhere, by someone, and must have provided the things essential and necessary to their proper care. But the same thing is just as true if they are cared for by some organization other than the church. If a corporation is formed under a board of directors, that organization must still provide a place, someone to care for them, and the provisions necessary to their care. So the question of means, provisions, or method is not the issue. It is a question of which organization shall provide such method or means, the organization God designed, which Jesus built, and which the Holy Spirit revealed or one built by the wisdom and will of man. This is the issue. We would state the first primary issue in all of this discussion about present day problems like this:

**IS IT SCRIPTURALLY RIGHT FOR CONGREGATIONS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN HUMAN ORGANIZATIONS AND TO DO THEIR WORK THROUGH SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS A MEANS OF COOPERATING?**

Much is involved in this question that deserves careful and prayerful consideration. For instance, has Christ given to His Church authority to build any other organization at all? Can the church rightfully build anything but the church? Does any congregation have the right to establish anything other than another congregation?

To answer such a question we need only to remember that authority is not exercised by the church. It is rather exercised by the Lord over the Church. Matt. 28: 18-20. Eph. 1:19:23. Catholics contend that the primary source of authority in religion is the priesthood or hierarchy of the church. Christians believe and the gospel teaches that "all authority" is in the hands of Christ; legislative, executive, and judicial. He exercises it in the church through His word. No one has any right to do anything in the Church of the Lord unless the Lord authorizes it in His word.

Where is the passage that authorized the churches or a church to build and maintain a human organization as a means of doing anything. This is the problem. This is the issue. Such a passage cannot be produced. It isn't in the word of the Lord. The whole problem then is one of reverence for divine authority, respect for the Word of God.

If Churches can build human organizations to do some of their work as a means of cooperating, then they can build human organizations to do all of their work. If not, why not?

If churches can build a human organization—a corporation under a board of directors, as a medium of cooperating in their caring for orphan children or the aged, then churches can build a human organization, a corporation under a board of directors, as a means of cooperating in preaching the gospel and we should apologize to the missionary society advocates, and to the Baptists for condemning their convention. We have been wrong, if such is right.

Moreover if we can add to the organization of the Lord's Church, remodel the government of God's people, why can't we formulate a human creed, and introduce any human practice into the worship we offer God that we might wish? Is it any more permissible to disregard divine authority and act without it in the matter of church organization than in the matter of teaching or worship? Where is the stopping point?

The second fundamental issue in present day problems can be stated in this fashion:

**IS IT SCRIPTURALLY RIGHT FOR CONGREGATIONS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH TO COMBINE THEIR FUNDS AND CENTRALIZE THE CONTROL OVER THE USE OF THOSE FUNDS IN ONE CONGREGATION AND UNDER ONE ELDERSHIP AS A MEANS OF COOPERATING IN ACCOMPLISHING THEIR MISSION?**

This, in fact, is exactly what is being done. One church solicits money from many churches to be turned over to them to spend in evangelizing Germany. Another congregation assumes a similar position in order to evangelize Japan. Many others follow suit and we have congregations acting in the capacity of brotherhood agencies through which many churches try to function. The elders of such congregations become brotherhood elders. It is a perversion of God's plan for the congregation and its eldership.

The Herald of Truth radio program is perhaps the most prominent example of such a perversion. The Highland Church at Abilene agreed to accept supervision of a radio program that had been promoted by two preachers, James W. Willeford, and James Walter Nichols. This congregation became the medium through which many churches seek to cooperate in preaching the gospel over the radio. But if the congregation can serve as a medium through which many churches can cooperate in preaching the gospel over the radio, it can serve as a medium through which all the churches can cooperate in preaching the gospel over the radio. And if they can cooperate through one church in preaching the gospel over the radio they can cooperate through one church in doing all of their preaching. Further, if they can cooperate through one congregation in doing their preaching they can cooperate through one congregation in doing all the rest of their work and Romanism is the inevitable consequence. It leads to one Church acting as a medium to control and direct all of the work of all the churches throughout the whole world and that is all Rome is. In that event all we would have to do is elect a Pope and the apostasy would be complete.

There are many objections to such an arrangement:

1. There is no scriptural authority for one church sending money to another church unless the receiving church was in need. All of the writing, debating, discussing that has been done has not yet produced the passage authorizing anything else.

Antioch sent to several churches—to the elders of those churches—when they were in need. Acts 11:27-30. The church sending the contribution selected her own messengers and intrusted them with the responsibility of delivering the funds. The occasion for the contribution being sent was churches in Judea (Gal. 1:22) which had a greater obligation to care for their own needy than they

were able to meet.

Churches in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia sent to one church, Jerusalem, when the need among the saints in Jerusalem was so great that the church there could not meet the obligation to care for them. I Cor. 16:1-3. I Cor. chapters 8 and 9. Romans 15:25-27.

Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas to Antioch when the disciples there needed spiritual help and the church, having just been planted, was weak and small. Acts. 11: 22.

Churches enabled Paul to remain in Corinth a year and six months by supporting him while he more firmly planted the Church of the Lord there. I Cor. 11:8.

These were all instances of cooperation between congregations. In each instance the contributing church sent through their own individual messenger to the work that was in need and in no instance did they send through another church. Neither is there any instance in New Testament history of a congregation assuming to do or promoting what they considered a "good work" which they were not able to pay for and calling upon other churches to come to their aid. The need in Judea in the first instance (about 45 A. D.) and the need in Jerusalem in the second instance of benevolence referred to (about 57 or 58 A. D.) were neither one a created need or a promoted project. They were instances where local congregations were responsible for caring for their own; but the obligation, because of the need, was so great those local churches responsible for it were not able to meet it without aid. ONE CHURCH SENT MONEY TO ANOTHER CHURCH ONLY WHEN IT WAS IN NEED. That is New Testament teaching.

2. No church ever sent a contribution through another church. When a church in the New Testament contributed to another needy church they always selected their own messenger to take the money. The messenger was always an individual or individuals—never another church. The messenger selected delivered the contribution into the hands of the church being helped. 1 Cor. 16:1-3; Acts 11:27-30.

3. For one congregation to become the agency through which another congregation seeks to discharge its responsibility is to pervert the purpose for which God instituted congregational government in His church. The independence and autonomy of the congregation in doing its own work and directing its own affairs is a fundamental principle in God's arrangement. A congregation is not a brotherhood medium in any sense in the divine arrangement.

4. When an eldership of one congregation functions as a board of directors for many churches they assume a function God never gave them or intended for them to exercise. The authority of the eldership is restricted to the members and work of the congregation over which they are elders. "Tend the flock of God **which is among you.**" 1 Peter 5:1-4. "Take heed **to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.**" Acts 20:28.

5. The equality of churches is destroyed when one becomes a "promoting" or "sponsoring" church and assumes control and direction of a work to which others can only send their money and

be “contributing churches.” Congregations are to be equal under Christ just like Christian individuals are to be equal; without any class distinction or rank.

When a church surrenders control over any work that it seeks to do even though it may be voluntarily done, that church shirks its God-given duty and is displeasing to God.

When any church seeks to concentrate within its control the money and power of other churches, it is too ambitious and thinks much too highly of itself to be pleasing unto God.

6. Brotherhood projects and promotions such as the “sponsoring church” type of evangelism, the Herald of Truth radio program, et cetera, are not the right of just a few congregations. If one church can undertake such a promotion, put out its propaganda agents and its brochures and literature to arouse and solicit funds from other churches, any other church and all other churches can do the same thing and the people of God are subjected to pressure control, promotional schemes, and political chicanery, that is destructive to Christianity and a threat to the very existence of the church of God.

We should be satisfied with the church as God designed it, as Christ built it, and as the Holy Spirit revealed it. The church of the New Testament day did the greatest job that the world has ever witnessed in carrying its message to the ends of the earth. The greatest growth in the history of Christianity was then achieved without the aid of any of these present day man-made, man-promoted, institutions and unscriptural arrangements. Each congregation then had the control and direction of the disbursement of its own funds and the oversight of its own work without any pressure control, coercion, “quarantining,” disfellowshipping, or interference from any agency from without, even from other churches. If there is work to be done that one congregation cannot do alone, let other churches cooperate in doing it, but do not let any church be elevated above another or subordinated to another. Let equality reign in their relationship to such work, no church handling the funds of any other church, no church directing the affairs of any other church but each remaining free and independent of outside control and subject only to Christ.

Inter-congregational arrangements are not scriptural. They are without scriptural authority. They have neither principle nor precedent in the Word of God. They are therefore unscriptural and that means that when injected into the work of God's church they are anti-scriptural. We can solve these issues only in the light of God's Word. We can resolve our differences only by “speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent.”

## SUFFICIENCY OF THE DIVINE PATTERN

# THE CHURCH AND HUMAN ORGANIZATIONS

Homer Hailey, Tampa, Florida

This article is submitted in the hope that it may contribute something toward a better understanding of the scripture teaching of matters before us today. It is presented in a non-partisan spirit and in the interest of love and unity among the brethren.

An organization is a body of persons formed into a whole, consisting of independent or coordinated parts, especially for harmonious or united action. A human organization would be such a body formed by man, and governed by man, apart from divine origin or authority. The point at which a coordinated effort passes from the realm of a divine organism to a human must be determined by scripture.

By all its faithful members, the church of the Lord is defended as a divine institution, having its origin in the mind of God, and established in fulfillment of His eternal purpose. It has the deity of Christ for its foundation, the glorified Christ as its head, and a covenant sealed by His blood for its rule of faith and practice. Its divine origin bespeaks for it a divine purpose and mission in the world, and a predetermined divine destiny for its end. It is believed by all who hold to this premise that the church needs no additional adjuncts in the form of human organizations in order to achieve this purpose, but that it is all-sufficient for the carrying out of God's purpose for the needs of man, in all generations from Pentecost until the end of time.

In this paper only one proposition is discussed and defended: The church, being divine in its origin, needs no human organizations through which to do its work, and that the innovation of such organizations violate the divine will, and thereby become sinful. The exact point at which various methods of doing the work of the Lord become human methods and develop into human organizations comes not within the scope of this paper, but is being discussed by other writers in this series. It is the purpose of the writer to make this a study, rather than a dogmatic statement of opinion.

### The Divine Wisdom

The first assumption in determining any position religiously is: God is infinite in all His attributes. He is infinite in knowledge, infinite in wisdom, and infinite in His power. This means that God knows His own mind and knows man and man's needs. It means that He has the wisdom to provide perfectly for those needs as they contribute to the accomplishing of His divine purpose. Further, He has the power by which to bring to man the remedy for his needs, and through man to carry out His divine purpose to its triumphant end. Being infinite in these attributes God makes no mistakes, nor does He experiment. He knows the end from the beginning, and knows what He can do and how that which He wants done should be done. This should be axiomatic and accepted by every Christian.

Another attribute of God is immutability: He is unchangeable. All that God does is based on His own character and infinite nature. Principles are as eternal as God; they never change. Therefore, that which reflected the wisdom of God yesterday, reflects the wisdom of God today. The covenant through which God may act toward the desired end may change, but the principles of conduct do not change. Through the ages God has acted on the principle of eternal righteousness and justice. (Psalm 89:14.) Men accepted of God have been men who acted on the principle of faith in that divine wisdom to guide them aright. Faced with the apostasy of his day Jeremiah was made to cry, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23.) This is as true today as then. God reveals His knowledge and will and power through His chosen means. He calls upon man to submit and follow through faith.

Human organizations, created for the purpose of doing work God designed His church shall do, reflect the wisdom of men, and in so doing, reflect upon the wisdom of God. From the beginning such organizations have been efforts on man's part to do God's work man's way. When Israel asked for a king that they might become like the nations about them, they were reflecting upon the wisdom of God. This came when a common faith, which was to have held the nation together, was disintegrating, and some form of human organization must be effected in order to have a semblance of permanence. The same was repeated in the era following the apostles. Again God's people were to have been one in faith, held together over the world by a common faith, each individual functioning as an individual in his personal relation to God, with congregations caring for certain needs as stipulated by the Spirit through the apostles of the preceding generation. Again faith became confused God's way was forsaken, and human organization supplemented and supplanted the divine arrangement. Apostasy followed. And strangely enough, with this example before them, the restorers of a past century followed the same pattern, falling into the same error.

On the premise that God is infinite in His knowledge of man's needs, and that His wisdom provides a way that is right and cannot be wrong, and that His power is able to accomplish His work through the provisions of His wisdom, then it follows that any substitution on man's part reflects on that wisdom. Every effort on man's part to improve on the wisdom of God, or to depart from it, has led to dire consequences.

### **The Divine Pattern**

The divine wisdom has provided a divine pattern in all his ways. The doctrine which men obey is a "form" or pattern, a mold, such as metal is poured into, in which the life is fashioned. (Rom. 6:17.) This pattern of doctrine was from God by Christ, who did and taught as the Father had showed him, thus following a pattern given him of the Father. (John 5:19; 7:16; etc.) Christ gave the words to the apostles (John 17:8, 14), which the Holy Spirit was to bring to their minds. (John 14:26.) The apostles in turn committed these words to uninspired men as a mold or pattern, instructing them to hold fast the "pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13), and to commit them to faithful men who should be able to teach them to others. (2:2.)

Jesus Christ is the pattern of moral conduct in all things. (I Peter 2:21-24.) To the saints at Philippi Paul was an "ensample" (tupos: pattern) (Phil. 3:17), which they were to follow. (Christ

was his pattern. I Cor. 11:1.) The elders, as they follow Christ, are likewise a pattern (tupos) to the flock. (1 Pet. 5:3.) This pattern of conduct revealed by Christ, is actually God himself, since Christ is the declaration, the “exegete” of God. (John 1:18.)

The organization of the church, so far as its arrangement for service under elders can be called an organization, was after the same principle of following a divine pattern. Elders were first appointed by apostles, “elders in every church.” (Acts 14:23.) Titus was instructed by Paul concerning the church in Crete, “to set in order the things that are wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge.” (Titus 1:5.) The word “charge,” *diatasso*, meant “to arrange, appoint, ordain, prescribe, give order.” (Thayer.) The word is used of soldiers under command. (Acts 23:31; 24:23.) It was used of Paul concerning the walk of Christians: “as the Lord hath distributed to each man, as God hath called each, so let him walk. And so ordain (give order, command) I in all the churches.” (I Cor. 7:17.) If Paul was so ordaining in “all the churches,” then the walk was after a pattern, a universal arrangement. Paul's charge to Titus concerning the appointment of elders was a “charge,” a command; and if a command by an inspired man, then a law of God. That law becomes a pattern, a mold, for all who follow after. This is further enforced by the fact that Timothy was also to assist in the appointment of elders (I Tim. 3), and Paul said of him, he “will put you in mind of my ways . . . even as I teach everywhere in every church.” (1 Cor. 4:16-17.)

There was also a pattern for the collection of money for the support of the needy, as is clearly shown by Paul's instruction to the church at Corinth, which was identical with that given to the churches of Galatia. (1 Cor. 16:1-2.) Since Paul was following a pattern (2 Tim. 1:13), and since instruction to all congregations was the same, it must become a pattern for the church dedicated to the doing of the divine will.

The Lord “ordained” (*diatasso*, as above) “that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9:14.) At this point there can be no argument as to the right of such support. The pattern for this support is found in Paul's taking wages of churches that he might preach in certain localities. (2 Cor. 11:8.) In every instance recorded of Paul's receiving this help it was sent directly to him. (e.g., 2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 2:25; 4:18.) The passages that reveal to us what local churches did also reveal that they acted through no human organization nor through another congregation. (Acts 11:30; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:2; 11:8; Phil. 4:15ff.) Every church of which we have record did the same kind of work in the same way.

These examples show that the pattern of all doctrine, conduct, organization, and method of doing certain things was for the whole church, therefore for us. Congregations acted as a body of believers in one locality. Messengers were selected to deliver certain funds, but they did not constitute an organization apart from the local church they served, nor was ecclesiastical authority committed to them. They were what the word declares: messengers of the churches. There is no instance where either an organization or a congregation became a messenger for another congregation.

Further evidence of a pattern for churches everywhere is indicated by Paul's statement to the Corinthians, partially quoted above, “I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you

in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.” (1 Cor. 4:16, 17.) Not only did Paul teach the same as to his “ways,” but he instructed Timothy to teach the same, and that in every church. If this was Timothy's obligation, so is it the obligation of everyone today. If it was the same everywhere, in every church, then Paul's ways in Christ became the divine pattern for all churches everywhere throughout all time.

Human organizations designed to do the work God ordained the church to do ignore the divine pattern. The church is the realization of God's eternal purpose, which purpose was a plan or arrangement fixed in the mind of God before the world was. (Eph. 3:8-11.) There can be no plan or purpose apart from a pattern of some sort. The very plan is a pattern. A church of Christ is a body of people having obeyed a pattern of doctrine, following a pattern of conduct, and observing God's ways and will in Christ in the carrying out of God's purpose.

### **The Divine Objective**

The divine objective is two-fold: the assisting of those in need, whether spiritual or material, and the development of the church by the exercise of the individuals who make up the church. The spiritual need, salvation from sin, is supplied through the gospel. The material need is supplied through financial aid or by providing the particular commodities needed. In either case God has seen fit to make the church the agent through which the needs are supplied, and in so doing has thereby made provision for the development of the church through this exercise.

But this raises the question: Can the church act except in a distributive sense? It is that which each several part supplies and does that makes for the building up or the operation of the body. (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4.) Even when a congregation supports a work, either evangelistic or benevolent, the exercise of each member in the matter of giving is called into play. This brings each several member of the body into direct responsibility to the work being done. When the congregation so works, it is always a direct contact with the evangelist or with the congregation in need, never indirectly. When it is a need within the congregation, the congregation meets the need, or is assisted directly from sister congregations.

When the church acts as a lampstand, supporting the truth, it is as each “holds forth the word of life.” (Phil. 2:12-15.) Thereby those holding forth the word are exercised and builded up, and hence, the church is builded up. When the church supports a work there is a fruit which increases to the account of the saints. (Phil. 4:17.) Further, there is the matter of fellowship. Paul thanked the Philippians for their “fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first until now.” (Phil. 1:5.) This fellowship is a “joint-participation” enjoyed directly with the work, either evangelistic or benevolent.

When this work is done through human organizations, the church is deprived of this direct fellowship with the evangelist or with the recipients of the benevolence. Also, there is the loss of the development of the church through the development of its various members, its deacons and its elders and teachers, whose obligation it is to function in these capacities. Every work done by the church in the New Testament was done directly by the church if the work was outside the confines

of its own locality, or by the various members if within its confines. In so doing, it was exercised as a body and built up by that which each joint supplied, thereby achieving this particular objective of the divine purpose. Human organizations defeat this divine objective of the Lord.

### **Conclusion**

It is the conclusion of this writer that human organizations through which men seek to do the Lord's work are condemned on these grounds:

1. They reflect upon the wisdom of God, which is infinite, by substituting human wisdom, which is finite and fallible. They ignore God's knowledge of what is best for the accomplishing of what He wants done.

2. They ignore the divine pattern, and by their existence deny the reality of such a pattern, notwithstanding the teaching of such a pattern for congregational activity and life.

3. They defeat the purpose of God in establishing the church according to His wisdom. The development of the church in all its parts and functions is neglected.

4. Like mechanical instruments of music, human organizations created for the purpose of doing what God designed the local congregation to do are a substitution for, or an addition to, the completeness of the Lord's arrangement, and, consequently, cannot be an aid to the carrying out of that will. In thus violating the divine will, substituting human will and wisdom for the divine, such organizations result in presumptuous sinning.

God knows what He wants and how best to accomplish that end. Let Christians be content to yield to that will, working in congregational capacities and not creating human societies through which to do the work. This is the only infallibly safe course to pursue.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH**

**THE CHURCH AND THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN**

**Robert C. Welch, Louisville, Kentucky**

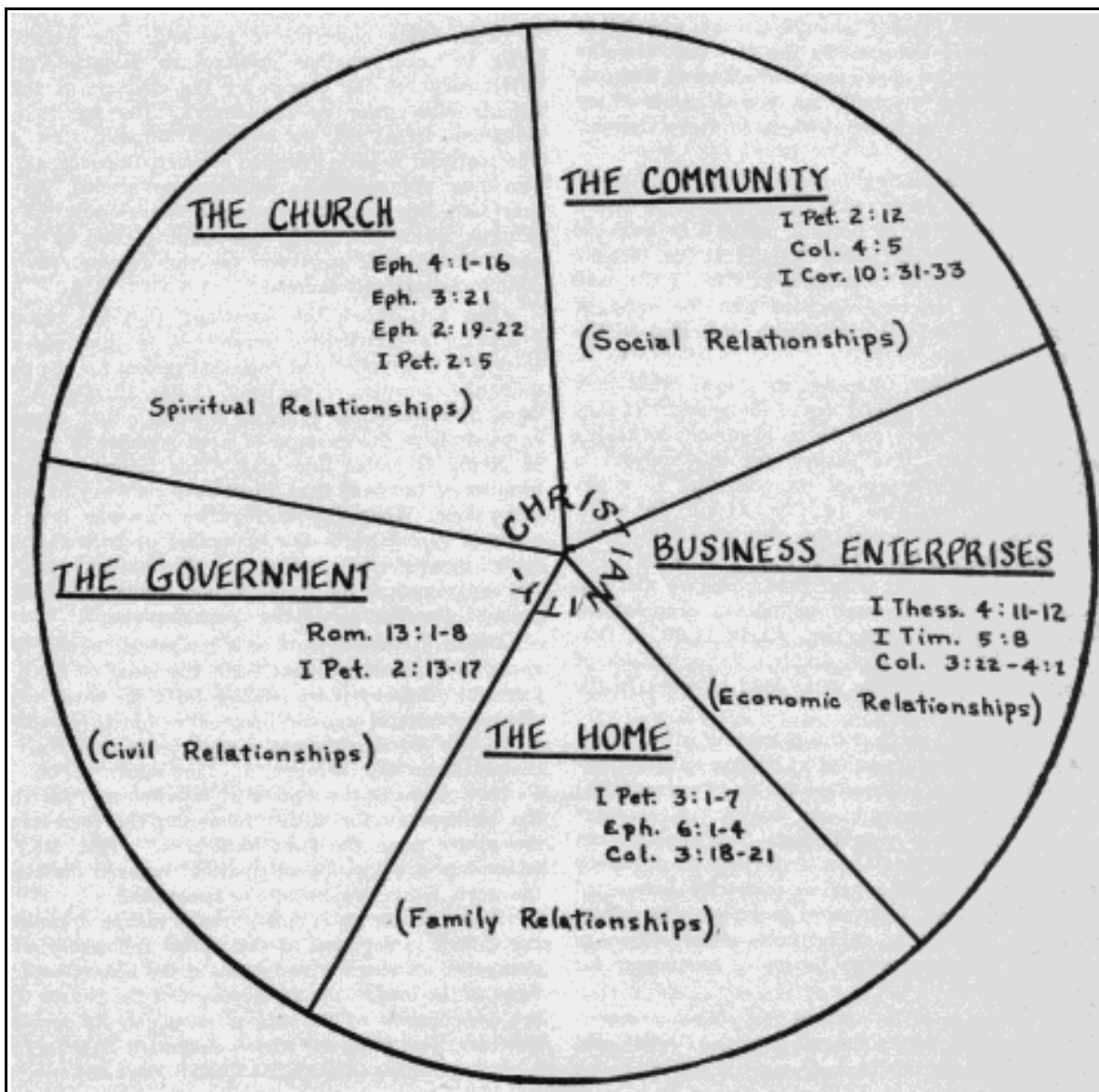
There is needless widespread confusion over the difference between the church and the individual Christian. This confusion does not arise with reference to the primary acts of obedience that salvation might be granted. All seem to agree that the individual must obey whether the church as a whole be right or wrong. The confusion does not exist in the matter of the judgment before Christ. All are agreed that there is a difference, that the individual will stand or fall on his own action or merit even though the church may be just the opposite, that in the judgment the individual's actions will not be judged to be the church in action and the church's actions will not be considered as the individual's actions. See Ephesians 5:25-27; Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 5:10.

The confusion exists in the realm of the duties, work and organization among Christians and churches. The same theory, though opposed in application, is held by two erroneous and extreme parties within the churches of Christ. Those who advocate that churches fulfil their obligations by contributing to and operating through human institutions base their theory on the proposition that **THE CHURCH CAN DO ANYTHING WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN CAN DO.** The other extreme party contends that individuals cannot contribute to and operate through any human institution which might be classed as religious in nature, basing its contention on the proposition that **THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN CAN DO NOTHING EXCEPT THAT WHICH THE CHURCH CAN DO.** The former theory has been promulgated by many, possibly the outstanding promoter being Brother G. C. Brewer. The latter theory has many promoters, possibly the outstanding one of this generation being Brother Carl Ketcherside.

### **The Christian's Relationships**

The individual Christian has many relationships of life ordained of God with conditions and regulations set forth in the scriptures. One of these relationships is with and within the church. To say, however, that the church has the identical relationships of the individual would place the church in the awkward and unscriptural position of engaging in everything material, especially if that material thing has any connection with religious affairs. The other extremist will likewise be in an unenviable position which he really cannot accept. If the individual can do only what the church is authorized to do he will be cut off from some of the most solemn relationships and obligations.

In the above diagram five relationships are outlined which belong to the Christian. The church may sustain a relationship to the other four but in no instance is it the same relationship which the individual sustains. The Christian is taught in Romans 13:1-8 to be in subjection to such higher



powers. The church will observe the regulations of the higher powers concerning ownership of property, etc. But, the Christian may occupy some civic office or position, such as teaching a school which is maintained by the government, an honorable occupation. (Titus 3:14.) This the church cannot do; for she would then have church and state combined, a practice which does not necessitate exposure here as false. Brother Brewer is now publishing a paper which opposes this kind of thing.

The individual always sustains some relationship in a family. It may be that of child, parent, husband or wife. The Lord has given each member of the family specific obligations with reference

to his relationship. (Col. 3:18-21.) However, the church, of which every person in the family may be a member, does not and cannot sustain the same relationship to the members of the family. The church cannot by any stretch of the imagination sustain the same relationship as the \*husband in his family. Fathers are to nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), but such is not the obligation or right of the church.

The scriptures obligate the Christian to an economic relationship: “But if any provideth not for his own, and especially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim. 5:8.) He is limited to that which is honorable in such provision. (Rom. 12-17.) There is no scriptural teaching, however, for the church's engaging in business. It is generally recognized as a true principle that the church should not be engaged in business enterprises, yet when human institutions engage in such business and ask churches for support the principle is forgot by many. Individuals may engage in many businesses which have a charitable or spiritual aim, but this will not justify the church's engaging in it and contributing to it any more than the church is justified in moving over into the realm of government or family. This relationship is the center of the confusion about the church and the individual, hence will deserve attention in further headings of this article.

Some social relationships of the individual Christian are detailed in I Timothy 5:10: hospitality to strangers; washed the saints' feet; relieved the afflicted. The church may have some relationship to strangers and to the afflicted. But she does not sustain the same social relationship as does the individual. If so, there would be a general church foot washing. This act never belonged to the church as such. It was a social custom for the individual Christian.

The spiritual relationship must not be omitted. The individual is a member of, worships with, works with and is edified in the church. (Eph. 4:1-16.) However, the fact that he is a member of the church and has many duties and obligations therein does not cause the church to be equally related to his other relationships. For example, my being a member of my family does not make the other members partners in my occupation. A man might be a citizen of this nation while the rest of his family are aliens. In like manner a man can be a member of the church, at the same time sustaining a relationship to all these phases of life, without the church having any such relationship to them.

### **Parallel Lines of Duty**

There are occasions when the church, the family and the individual may move or operate in parallel lines of duty before God. This does not mean that one is encroaching upon the work of the other; instead, it means that they are not doing so, possibly complementing the others. Certainly, it does not imply that the work is identical. A line cannot be parallel to and identical with another at the same time. Hence the following diagram is not given with the intention of arguing that the work of the church and the individual is the same in some respects or that one encroaches upon the other's work seeking to substitute for that work of another. The opposite is the purpose. The individual may carry on work which is parallel to that of the church, but such work be not identical with that of the church, without seeking to take from the work of the church or becoming a rival to the church.

The passages cited in the diagram teach that every individual Christian is to study the scriptures, pray to God, show his faith by benevolence and have a part or fellowship in evangelism. According to the scriptures the family is to have a part in these matters also. The church

INDIVIDUAL	STUDY OF SCRIPTURES	1 Tim. 2:15	PRAYER	Matt. 6:6	BENEVOLENCE	James 2:15, 16 Gal. 6:10 James 1:27	EVANGELISM	Gal. 6:6
FAMILY		Eph. 6:4				1 Cor. 16:15		Acts 18:26
CHURCH		Eph. 4:15, 16		1 Tim. 2:1		Acts 11:29		Phil. 4:14-16

is taught to engage in these activities as well. Thus they function on parallel lines, but the activity is not necessarily the same. The way some would have it the church can take over the function of scripture study. They want the churches to support human organizations established by individual Christians because they teach the Bible in such colleges. The individual is fulfilling his own obligation by going there to study, or the parent is partially fulfilling his obligation by sending his child there to study. The college when operated as an individual enterprise is not an encroachment upon the church. It is individual action on the part of educator and educated. Within the same realm an individual Christian may contribute to it. But when it attempts to put itself under the support of the churches, that college has moved from its parallel line of individual function and has encroached upon the church.

An easy demonstration of the difference between the individual and the church in parallel matters is to be found in the requirements for prayer. The individual is to pray in secret. This cannot be true of the church in her prayers. Yet, both the individual and the church is to engage in prayer, parallel but not identical. Men can see this, but they fail to recognize such difference in the matter of teaching and study of the scriptures. They want to place church supported orphan homes, missionary societies, Herald of Truth, and colleges on the same basis as papers which are purely individual private business enterprises used as a medium of teaching truth. If the churches form a cooperative or some other form of organization, to which they contribute, through which they seek to carry out their obligation to teach, then it is wrong. Such churches will have moved from their line of duty and will have encroached upon the individual's parallel line of duty in teaching. Papers and colleges belong in the individual's economic relationship of business, it is not the church's business but is the individual's. (See first diagram.)

The individual has an obligation in benevolence, no matter what the church does or does not do (see diagram). In doing this the individual may operate, commit himself to, send others to, and contribute to homes for the aged, infirm, orphans and delinquents if they are operated on honorable and righteous bases. Support of no kind could be encouraged to one of these individual enterprises

of an economic and social nature which seeks to leave its individual line of duty and get into the line of church work, receiving its support from church contributions. The church has its definite pattern of benevolent work in the scriptures: distribution to those of its number in need (Acts 6:1-6) and contribution from one church to another which is in need. (Acts 11:29.)

When an individual goes along in partnership with another in evangelizing, the two receiving funds from individuals, from churches, forwarded through messengers, they are doing exactly what Paul and his companions did and taught. They do not have a human organization in which or through which to operate, such as the missionary societies. Missionary societies are human organizations formed for the inherent purpose of doing the work of the churches. It is not merely an evil of which the society could be stripped. It is the inherent life of the institution. The individual preaches the gospel, the church is to support the individual who preaches. When the work remains on such simple parallel lines there is no confusion and violation. But when an attempt is made to bring the lines together in a human organization, violation, confusion and division is the result.

May the time come when brethren will recognize the parallel lines of duty with reference to scripture study and benevolence: a time when they will cease trying to make the parallel lines of individual and church duty converge in the human institutions such as colleges and Homes. When this is accomplished the confusion will cease, and we can press forward with a concerted effort in the cause of Christ.

Let the individual Christian fulfil his obligation in all his relationships of life, without trying to involve the church in them; and let him encourage the church in all her work as set forth by the Lord. In this way peace and harmony will prevail, God will be glorified, souls will be saved, eternal life will be gained.

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**AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S WISDOM, REVELATION AND AUTHORITY****THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHURCH****C. D. Plum, Columbus, Ohio**

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the word sufficiency like this: "Sufficient means to meet one's needs; competency. Quality or state of being sufficient; adequacy; enough. Self sufficiency."

Since the church was designed by Divine wisdom, the sufficiency of the church means that the church as God gave it meets His needs, is adequate.

**I. TO DENY THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHURCH IS TO IMPEACH THE WISDOM OF GOD, OF HIS DIVINE PLAN, AND OF HIS DIVINE PROGRAM.**

1. If God's plan and program for His church is a failure, man is left without chart or compass in his religious realm because: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23.) Both "angels" and "men" who would "pervert" God's plan and program, who would "add to" or "take away from" His plan and program for His church, are living under the "curse" of God. (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 2,2:18-19.) If the church as God gave it to us lacks sufficiency (is a failure), who is to supply that which is lacking since: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men"? (1 Cor. 1:25.) And since, too: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"? (1 Cor. 3:19.)

2. The sufficiency of the church, of God's plan and program for His church, is assured by the wisdom of Him who sees the end from the beginning. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15-18.) According to God's plan for the church, it was so sufficient that, in the short space of about thirty-one years, the church as the church, and only the church, without establishing any "missions" or "colleges," or setting up "sponsoring" churches to exercise a sort of centralized control and oversight of the work of a number of congregations, did preach the gospel to "every creature which is under heaven." (Col. 1:23.) This doesn't read like insufficiency of the church to me. Let all of us poor, puny mortal men memorize this scripture: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that replieth against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20.) Let the critics of the church, who do not believe in the sufficiency of the church, apply this question to the church. Shall the thing formed (the church) say to Him (God) that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

**I. TO DENY THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHURCH IS TO IMPEACH THE WISDOM OF JESUS WHO BUILT THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE PATTERN.**

1. It was prophesied that Jesus was to build the church. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." (Psalm 127:1.) Jesus said of the church: "Upon this rock I will build my church." (Matt. 16:18.) The Holy Spirit informs us that this promise to build the church was fulfilled by Jesus. We read of this church (or true tabernacle), "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true

tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” (Heb. 8:2.) If the church is insufficient in its Divine design, as some seem to think, since they are trying to prop it up with the wisdom of man, it makes one think it reflects against Jesus, and that He went to a lot of trouble for nothing.

2. God has always been particular about his plan and program being carried out in detail. It has been so all down through the ages. He told Noah to build the ark of “gopher wood.” He gave him the exact specifications and he was commended in “building the ark by faith.” (Heb. 11:7.) Noah did not supplement God's instructions concerning the ark with wisdom of his own, or that of another. Moses was to make all things “according to the pattern” showed to him in the mount. (Heb. 8:5.) No deviations allowed. Nadab and Abihu lost their lives in failing to adhere strictly to the pattern of burning incense. (Lev. 10:1-2.) Even Jesus let it be known that he was limited in activity to the exact will of the Father. (John 12:49-50.) Hence, we had better accept the church as the Lord gave it to us. The Divine pattern is set. “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.” (Psalm 119:89.) The Lord has revealed in his word “what” the church should do, and “how” the church should do it. Let us respect God's boundary lines.

### III. TO DENY THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHURCH IS TO IMPEACH THE DIVINE REVELATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1. That the Holy Spirit through the apostles gave us a complete revelation of Christ's message, is believed by all those who believe the teaching of John 14:26. It is here declared: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” This is in strict harmony with the teaching of Jesus: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matt. 24:35.) The church surpasses the tabernacle service, and the temple service. The church presents bodies as living sacrifices. (Rom. 12:1-3.)

All scripture is given. The revelation is complete and final. No room for a Joseph Smith, or a Brigham Young, or Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, or Mrs. White. “According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue.” (2 Peter 1:3.) This revelation left “sponsoring” churches out, which exercise centralized control and oversight of other congregations.

2. The Christian's scope of activity is completely and safely outlined. It is said to the church: “Ye are complete in Him.” (Col. 2:10.) We do not need human aids for the work of the church any more than we need human aids for the worship of the church. We no more need human institutions for the benevolent work of the church than we need human institutions for the teaching work of the church. Has the Holy Spirit failed in not authorizing human institutional aids?

### IV. TO DENY THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHURCH IS TO IMPEACH THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF ITS GOVERNMENT UNDER CHRIST ITS HEAD.

1. Christ's connection with the church is delegated authority. All the authority he had was given to him. He said as much. Hear him: “All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matt.

28:18.) Bible students understand that God gave Jesus this authority. A careful study of Ephesians 1:17-23 will reveal that God gave Jesus his power (authority). God gave Jesus to be the head of the church. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Again we read: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18.) We must look to Jesus and his word, not to commentators and their comments. Can we believe that Jesus heads an insufficient church, a church that cannot function without human props?

2. We view the church from the standpoint of a kingdom. Jesus is "King of Kings." (Rev. 17:14.) Yet if this kingdom is insufficient without the aid of human wisdom, we have a mighty Monarch, but he is helpless. Really, now, is Jesus the head of an impotent body; the King of an impotent kingdom; the captain of an impotent army. Yes, if the church is insufficient. But Divine revelation allows no such conclusion.

#### V. TO DENY THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHURCH IS TO LAY NO HIGHER STRESS UPON GOD'S WAYS THAN UPON MAN'S WAYS—WHEREAS THE CHURCH REPRESENTS GOD'S WAYS VERSUS MAN'S WAYS

1. God's way of being buried in baptism is advocated faithfully by the church, and should be. Here we hew to the line. We follow the pattern. The plan is plain we say. We must adhere to it as revealed. Just as ardently we contend that baptism is "for" the remission of sins. Any other purpose of baptism differing from this is insufficient. And so it is. To those who "pour" or "sprinkle" for baptism, and who teach baptism has nothing to do with our salvation, we point out to them the error of their ways in this. And we should.

2. God's way is to "sing in the midst of the church." (Heb. 2:12.) We quote scripture to prove it. We warn against instrumental music in church worship. And we should. We say there is no scripture for it, and there isn't. We tell our denominational friends if they want to be right they'll have to give up such music in church worship.

3. And faithful brethren still point out that we cannot improve upon God's way of supporting preaching, like the Philippians sent directly to Paul at Thessalonica. (Phil. 4:15-17.) There are others, however, that say this support can be sent by one congregation "to" and "through" another sponsoring church to the preacher. But like those who sprinkle for baptism, and like those who use instrumental music in church worship, the brethren among us who ignore Philippians 4:15-17, and advocate this sponsoring church type of cooperation always forget to give scripture for such a practice. Do you know why? I do. They don't have any to give, no more so than those who sprinkle, and those who use instrumental music in church worship. If they had it they'd give it. They would forget the so-called "eternal principle." They would call those scriptures from the house tops. They would shout them from the pulpits. They would write them in "our" papers. They would even write them on a postal card.

## WHAT IS N. T. "COOPERATION"?

### HOW NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES "COOPERATED"

James W. Adams, Beaumont, Texas

"A proposition well defined is half argued." Some noted logician of the past is to be credited with this sage observation. Many of the controversies of the centuries have revolved around vague ideas imbedded in the debris of ambiguous, undefined terms involving no clearly understood issue or principle. The issues which confront the church at this hour have been greatly obscured and prejudiced by the mist of vague, uncertain terms. The controversy concerning "how New Testament churches cooperated" is a case in point. Those who oppose the "**centralized control and oversight**" arrangements of our day have been stigmatized and anathematized as "**those who oppose cooperation,**" "**non-cooperative,**" and "**those who deny New Testament churches the right to cooperate.**" These charges have prejudiced the minds of many innocent people and involved them in the sin of false accusation of their brethren in Christ.

Such charges are true or false depending upon the definition one gives of the term, "cooperation." If these charges are true, the individuals who occupy such ground are to be **commended** or **condemned** depending upon whether that which is involved in the definition one gives of the term, "cooperation," is taught or not taught in the New Testament. It may be **praiseworthy** to be against what is involved in the word, "cooperation," or it may be **reprehensible** depending on the meaning attached to the word. Any man who uses the term either in an indictment of a practice or in an affirmation of its scripturalness is obligated to define clearly what he means by its use. Much of the confusion on present issues would disappear if this were universally practiced by speakers and writers in the church of the Lord.

#### "Cooperation" Defined

According to **Webster's New International Dictionary** (The Merriam Series), "cooperation" means: "1. Act of cooperating; joint operation; concurrent effort or labor." This definition highlights the controversy which now afflicts the churches of the Lord. It indicates two types of activities, not the same in character, yet both of which come within the scope of the meaning of the English word, "cooperate," or "cooperation." These two types are: (1) "**joint operation**"; (2) concurrent effort or labor." "Joint operation" represents the type "cooperation" found in such arrangements as "The Lubbock Plan," "The Herald of Truth," and the general benevolent institutions under the oversight of elders of a single church. "Concurrent effort or labor" is the type "cooperation" taught in the New Testament and that for which thousands contend in opposition to such **centralized control and oversight** arrangements as those mentioned above. Our brethren who promote "joint operation" projects contend that "concurrent effort or labor" is, in fact, not "cooperation" at all, hence that those who oppose "joint operation" do not believe in "cooperation." In this, they but make themselves ridiculous, expose their lack of information on the meaning of words, and contribute to the confusion of many honest hearts among the rank and file of the churches of the Lord. Peter Mark Roget, author of **Roget's Thesaurus**, wisely observes, "A misapplied or misapprehended term is sufficient to give rise to fierce and interminable disputes; a misnomer has turned the tide of popular opinion; a verbal

sophism has decided a party question; an artful watchword, thrown among combustible materials has kindled the flame of deadly warfare and changed the destiny of an empire.”

### **“Cooperation” Not A New Testament Term**

A diligent search has been instituted both in the King James Version and the American Standard Version of the New Testament, and not a single time has the English word, “cooperation,” been found. This, within itself, should be significant to right thinking people. Does it not seem queer indeed that people who profess to “speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent” should stand on the very brink of a severance of fellowship over something that must be described by a word not found in the Bible? Surely those who attempt to stigmatize others by means of the use of this term should exercise greater care in setting forth its precise significance as it relates to the controversy involved. One type of church action which comes within the scope of the meaning of the English word, “cooperation,” is taught in the New Testament; namely, “concurrent effort or labor.” “Joint operation” is neither taught nor permitted by New Testament teaching. It might very well contribute to the resolving of present issues if the word, “cooperation,” were banned from the discussion entirely. For centuries the term, “Trinity,” has beclouded the minds of men and hindered complete acceptance of the Bible teaching concerning the “Godhead.” It is altogether conceivable that the word, “cooperation,” may do likewise with reference to present issues.

In this article, an exploration will be made to determine precisely how New Testament churches functioned in accomplishing their mission in the world. On the basis of the principles thus established, we shall stand. This is right and cannot be wrong.

### **“Concurrent Effort” Is New Testament “Cooperation”**

In the battles that raged 100 years ago over the missionary society and instrumental music in the worship, the uniform position of the opposition was that concurrent effort or labor is the only kind of “cooperation” taught in the New Testament. This was the position of the **Gospel Advocate**, the leading periodical in the South opposed to the missionary society principle of church operation (called even then “cooperation”). Brother H. Leo Boles of sainted memory was one of the faithful preachers who bridged the gap between that generation and ours. Though Brother Boles, like many others, may not always have acted consistent with the principles to which he subscribed governing such matters, the fact remains that he followed in the steps of the generation which preceded him in affirming that the only type “cooperation” taught in the New Testament is “concurrent effort or labor.” There follows an interesting comment from his pen:

**“Every church in the universe that operates or works according to the will of God cooperates with every other church in the universe that is working according to the same rule. Churches which are fulfilling their mission separate and independent of other churches nevertheless are cooperating with all other churches that fulfill their mission. It seems that we ought to see this, that we ought to recognize this fundamental truth.” (Gospel Advocate, 1932.)**

It may be seen, therefore, that the position now occupied by writers for the **Gospel Guardian** was the position uniformly occupied by the opponents among our brethren of the missionary societies of days gone by. On the basis of their conviction of the absolute truth of their position they fought, won, and saved the churches from the then developing **Frankenstein monster, The United Christian Missionary Society**. No appeal is made to these men as authorities. We present these matters only as historical facts and in rebuttal to the charge that the present fight is “something new under the sun.”

**Examples from the New Testament of churches working together corroborate the statement that “concurrent effort or labor” is the only type cooperation taught in the New Testament.** The facts speak for themselves. The only examples we have of churches sending money to a sister church are those found in (1) Acts 11, and (2) 1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

(1) In Acts 11, the brethren in Antioch in Syria sent help to the famine-stricken brethren that dwelt in Judea. The help was sent to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30.) There was a need among the brethren of Judea greater than they could meet brought on by a cause over which they had no control. They, therefore, were in want and the legitimate objects of the benevolence of their brethren. Some have labored long and hard to prove that Jerusalem may have received the funds and exercised the oversight of their administration among all the churches of Judea. Inasmuch as such an arrangement would be subversive of the equality of congregations and set a precedent for a diocesan eldership (an arrangement utterly repudiated by all Bible students among churches of Christ), the man who so contends must find something stronger than a may, a might, or a probably. Brother J. W. Roberts, Ph.D with a major in Greek and a professor in Abilene Christian College, who has so contended has been unwilling to occupy stronger ground than a **maybe** or a **probably**. If Brother Roberts is to overthrow the faith of brethren in the absolute equality of New Testament churches, he must adduce proof based upon established New Testament precept, example or necessary inference. His probabilities and possibilities are completely impotent. Our brother scrapped sectarian scholars to lend weight to his contention. This writer has checked the sources, in numerous libraries over the land, that were employed by Brother Roberts, and unhesitatingly affirms that the very men he quoted do not agree with his views of the in matter. One man, Horatio H. Hackett, Baptist, comes more nearly than any other to agreeing with our brother. From the others, Brother Roberts culled only what he wanted and ignored all else they said. Such use of authorities is a reflection on his scholarship. From the scriptural example of Acts 11, we are taught that one church may help sister churches when they are in want produced by causes over which they have no control. and that such help is to be directed to the elders, the duly constituted overseers of the congregation. **Anything other than this must be read into the word of God by human ingenuity.**

(2) In I Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8, 9, there is to be found another example of money passing from church to church. The occasion is another emergency in Judea. This time, it appears, from the Divine record, to affect only the “saints in Jerusalem.” The apostle Paul took the lead in stirring up the churches with reference to the work beginning at Corinth and including the churches

of Asia Minor and Macedonia. “For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.” (2 Cor. 9:1, 2.) The money of the churches was placed in the hands of “messengers” to be carried to the saints in Jerusalem, there being no trustworthy banks or postal service to handle such matters. Each church chose its own messenger to carry its own funds. One messenger may have, and probably did, serve more than one church, but he was chosen independently by each church which he served. There is no indication in the Word of God of collective action on the part of the churches in the selection of the messengers. Each church functioned independently in the choice of its messenger and by him sent its contribution to Jerusalem, the place of need. Furthermore, it should be observed that the messengers who traveled together to Jerusalem did not constitute an organic body. They did not have organic entity as a body. Those who would justify a missionary society or a general benevolent organization under an institutional board by this group of men greatly err. He who attempts such is obligated to show that this body of men had organic entity—that they performed a service other than that of “messengers.” Paul said, “Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.” (2 Cor. 8:28.)

If this body of men had been chosen collectively by the churches, such would be the authority for a “convention” or a “conference” such as characterize the Baptists and the Methodists. If the body had organic entity and so functioned, it constituted a separate organization from the local congregation and justifies the missionary society. Our brethren who thus seek to argue by way of justifying their benevolent organizations and sponsoring churches will, if they succeed in establishing their contention, pave the way for a general convention of the churches of Christ and the organization of a general missionary society. Our brethren who have instituted and who defend present cooperative arrangements are obligated to show from the word of God that the churches of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia acted other than independently in this matter, and that the “messengers” thus chosen constituted an organic body. It is not enough for them to say, “Perhaps they did thus and so; we do not know.” Brethren should either recognize the fact that independent churches acted concurrently for the accomplishment of a common objective, thus “cooperated,” or they should apologize to the Baptists, Methodists, and Digressives and call for a general convention of the churches of Christ and the formation of an organization through which the churches, universally, may act as one in benevolence, evangelism, and edification. Too many are trying to “have their cake and eat it too.” It is either—or, there is no middle ground to occupy in the matter.

Another example of the “cooperation” of New Testament churches is to be **seen in their support of Paul as he preached throughout the world.** A plurality of churches supported Paul at Corinth. “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service.” (2 Cor. 11:8.) Philippi sent more than once to Paul in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15, 16.) and also to him in Rome. (Phil. 4:10, 18.) These passages in the long fight which brethren waged with our digressive brethren over the missionary society were their proof texts for the “**direct**” support of the missionary. Quotations could be given from Elam, Lipscomb, Kurfees, and a host of others to sustain this fact, but such is too well known for this to be necessary. With the development of our present “cooperatives,” however, a ridiculous attempt has been made by Brother J. W. Roberts, previously mentioned, to

show that the Philippian church was a centralized agency for other churches in the support of Paul's work. In the very face of every standard translation of the New Testament and in opposition to the scholarship of the world, Brother Roberts distorts a figure of speech in Philippians 4:15, 16—a “mercantile metaphor”—in an effort to make a sponsoring church of the Philippian saints. No one reading his English New Testament would ever dream of such a thing. Brother Roberts has but followed the course of our digressive brethren. They introduced mechanical music, and then tried to find it in the Greek, “**psallo.**” Sponsoring churches of our day were conceived and the arrangement set in motion, then Brother Roberts finds them in “cis logon” and “**dosis**” and “**lepsis.**” Verily, “history repeats itself.”

### Conclusion

Our summation shows that we have established following:

- (1) Churches helped each other in time of emergency of need by contributing directly to the needy church.
- (2) Many churches contributed to one church in time of need.
- (3) Each church made up its own “bounty,” selected its own “messenger,” and sent its “bounty” by its “messenger” directly to the church in need.
- (4) The New Testament example shows that a church with “ability” gave to a church in need to produce **freedom from want**, or as Paul puts it, “equality.”
- (5) Individuals, not churches, served as messengers.
- (6) Messengers served only in the capacity of delivering the contributions from the contributing church to the church in need, or to the worker as in the case of Epaphroditus carrying the gifts of the Philippian church to Paul in Rome. (Phil. 4:10, 18.)

More than this cannot be learned from the Word of God concerning “how New Testament churches cooperated.” Anything other than this emanates from human wisdom. In this manner, New Testament churches covered the world with the gospel in one generation and completely fulfilled their responsibilities to the needy, the widow, the orphan, and the aged. If they could do this, so can we. New Testament “cooperation” consisted of the concurrent efforts of independent churches of the Lord in the accomplishment of a common objective. “Joint effort” has always led to apostasy and ecclesiasticism. **Brethren let us go back to Jerusalem—not to Rome.**

## DEFINING AN “APPROVED EXAMPLE”

### WHEN IS A NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLE EXCLUSIVE?

**Robt. H. Farish, Lexington, Kentucky**

The question of the authority of examples of apostolic actions is not limited to current controversies, nor is the heat with which it is discussed a new thing under the sun. Eighty years ago the scholarly Brother Pendleton wrote that “blind adhesion to models, apostolic or apostate, is mere slavish stupidity.” Apparently “our” fathers realized that their reading audiences would contain many souls of a caliber capable of enjoying and being influenced favorably to their side by such stigmatizing of those who held opposing views. The effectiveness of such tactics for the advancement of party is still recognized by many, as evidenced by the vast volume of ridicule, and insolent stigmatizing that goes on. Pendleton and his sympathizers denied that there was a divine pattern of cooperation, this necessitated a denial of the authority of apostolic example. This same pattern of apostasy is observable today. When some men come to realize that the pattern, imposed by example, cannot be manipulated to include their plans, they will reject the pattern rather than give up their idol. To get rid of the pattern of cooperation, the teaching of examples must be rejected. This Pendleton did by arbitrarily asserting that “adhesion to examples —is unworthy of the Lord's freemen.” Brethren, let no one deceive you in this matter: **the authority of the scriptures is the real, the fundamental issue.**

Formerly, it was deemed sufficient to study only the one question, “When is an Example Binding”? This, however, is no longer the case for some are questioning the authority of the teaching of apostolic examples. The study of New Testament examples must include the question, **do the scriptures teach by example?** This problem must be resolved before there is any point in trying to determine when examples reveal the will of God, hence, the title, “When is a New Testament Example Exclusive”

#### **Revelation And Reason**

To determine when examples reveal the will of God, reason must be employed. In order to properly use reason, we need to know the province of reason and its relation to revelation in religious matters. Revelation itself fixes the province of reason in this area. (1) Reason cannot determine the will of God to man. It is not the means through which man learns the things of God. (1 Cor. 1:2,1; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 Cor. 2: 10-12.) (2) Reasoning “from the scriptures” is endorsed by the scriptures. (Acts 17:2)

Some observations based on the above facts follow: (1) Reason's province is to draw inferences from facts revealed in revelation and test the soundness of such inferences. (2) Any conclusion reached by inference that conflicts with an expressed statement of revelation is false. The teaching of expressed statements takes precedence over all other evidence: e.g., regardless of the seeming absurdity, from the standpoint of human reason, that baptism for the remission of sins may involve, we by faith accept it as the will of God because it is required in the scripture by expressed statement.

Equally true is it that if it be the will of God that the Lord's supper be observed in an upper room, the upper room can be arranged, and must be arranged to please God and that in spite of the seeming absurdity. If, by expressed statement, God required the upper room, no appeal to reason would be proper. The evidence of reason is incompetent in any case where we have direct evidence from revelation. This I have never been disposed to deny, but in the absence of an expressed statement, when by reasoning from the scriptures, we show that the requirements of the scriptures render absurd the "upper room" as a necessary feature of acceptable observance of the Lord's supper, the imperative conclusion is that the "upper room" feature is not binding.

With these preliminary considerations in mind we approach our first problem:

### **Do The Scriptures Teach By Example?**

If the answer to the question heading this section be negative, a denial of the scriptures is involved, for the scriptures make the claim for themselves of teaching by example. The first passage we consider in support of this assertion is Heb. 13:7-9. "Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spoke unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yea and forever. Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings. Here the scriptures, by express statement, require that apostolic action, which reflects apostolic faith, be considered in order to imitate that faith. That faith is fixed "once for all delivered," it is the same for all generations. This is established by the character of its author who is the "same yesterday, today, yea and forever." The imitation of that faith will prevent our being carried away by divers and strange teachings. This is also brought out in a similar passage, (1 Cor. 11:1) "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." Here apostolic action which reflected Christ is set forth as example to be imitated. Another passage offered as evidence that the scriptures claim to teach by example is Phil. 3:17. "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample." Also Phil. 4:9 "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you." This scriptural precept requires that we do, not only that which we hear from the apostles, but that which we see revealed by their actions. Other scriptures of the same import could be cited, but these are sufficient to establish the fact that the scriptures claim for themselves to teach by example.

### **Character Of Teaching Of Approved Example**

Having established that the scriptures do teach by example we are now ready to grapple with the matter of the exclusive character of such teaching. The character of the teaching of approved examples is the same as that of any scriptural teaching. The claim of sufficiency and exclusiveness is made by the scriptures for themselves. (2 Tim. 3:16,17; Acts 3:22; 2 John 9.) Hence, the scriptural teaching of examples is of the character claimed by the scriptures for themselves. Without the teaching of approved examples, an incompleteness in revelation is observable: e.g., the time to partake of the Lord's Supper. The expressly claimed "completeness" of revelation, considered in connection with the obvious fact of a lack in revelation, if this example is not binding, is strong evidence of the exclusive nature of this example. The specifications of the teaching of approved examples are exclusive just as surely as specifications of expressed statements are exclusive. Just

as Noah would have been guilty of “going beyond” by using other kinds of wood in addition to gopher wood, those are guilty today who, in addition to partaking of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week, also partake on other days.

By what rules shall we determine which apostolic actions are exclusive? This is the next step logically in our study.

### **Hermeneutical Rules**

**1. The rule of unity or harmony** is the first rule which we will consider. An example is never to be construed in such a way as to violate the teaching of expressed statements. The teaching of express statements, approved examples and necessary inferences is never conflicting. The teaching of the scriptures is harmonious. The Holy Spirit did not teach one thing by express statement and then teach by example or inference something contradictory to the express statement. The unity of the faith requires this. I. B. Grubbs puts it this way, “The first is the law of harmony, which as presupposing the unity of the truth, requires such interpretation and application of a given passage as is consistent with other undoubted scripture teaching.” (Exegetical Analysis)

Here is an illustration of this rule: The extent of the elders' oversight is expressly stated by the apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 5:2 “Tend the flock of God which is among you.” Thus it is clear that the elders have no responsibilities as elders beyond the flock of God among them. Most of those among “us” will give lip service to the principle of congregational independence, but some of these same brethren, in an attempt to justify their practice of centralized control, will urge the Antioch example of Acts 11:27-30 as authority to exercise oversight over a work which by no scriptural or reasonable means can be identified as a work peculiar to “the flock of God which is among them.” The scriptures do not teach one thing by express statement and teach contradictory to that by approved example. The Jerusalem elders, like all elders, by express statement of scripture (1 Pet. 5:2) were limited in their “tending” to the flock of God among them. They could not have constituted themselves a “sponsoring” church, receiving funds from Antioch and distributing them to the other churches in Judea, without violating an expressly stated truth. We dare not, therefore, attempt to wrest the Antioch example to make it authorize a practice which would be in conflict with a clearly expressed principle. Much reasoning, that is “more ingenious than candid,” has been directed toward establishing and maintaining an interpretation of the Antioch example which would array the action in this case against the requirements of 1 Pet. 5:2. Brethren, let us leave such efforts to infidels. Their idolatrous infatuation with reason better equips them for the task of undermining the faith of good people. Let us destroy not, for pride of life, the church for which Christ died.

This rule of unity also applies in the example of first day observance of the Lord's supper. In Acts 20 we have the example of the brethren partaking of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week. Now does the law of unity rule out the action of this example? Is first day observance judged not exclusive by the law of unity? This will be determined by collecting express statements and seeing if the pattern of the example conforms. The express statement of the law informs us that: (1) Observance is a required thing. 1 Cor. 11:24 “this do in remembrance of me.” (2) Repeated observance is required—a command, like baptism, which once obeyed is not to be repeated. I Cor.

11:26 “For as often as ye eat the bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.” (3) An assembly (coming together) is involved. 1 Cor. 11:20 “When therefore ye assemble yourselves together.” Examining the example in the light of the expressed law, we see that in no particular is there the slightest conflict. (1) The action of the example, “to break bread,” is the “doing” required. (2) The example shows how “often” the supper is to be eaten: “Upon the first day of the week.” (3) The example involves an assembly, “When we were gathered together.” Thus we see that there is no discrepancy between the statement and the example—the example complements the express statement.

But what about the rule of unity and the “upper room” incident? Can the rule be applied to this example of “place where”? In answer to this we go to the scriptures for evidence which we consider competent in this particular case. The first piece of evidence is the law of worship expressed by Christ in John 4:21 and 24. “Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father .... God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” In this expressed statement Christ positively rules out any one place or location as being acceptable over another. Any place where one can worship in spirit and in truth fills all the requirements of this passage. Any place “where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ” will fulfill all the requirements of place where.

## II. Rule Of Uniformity

Uniformity in essential details must be present in examples of the same kind of action. This rule is in a sense subsidiary to the rule of unity, in that it requires harmony between examples of the same kind of action. The application of this rule requires discriminating powers—the ability to distinguish between essentials and incidentals and between situations which are different. To illustrate: Constancy is observable in the essentials, “go . . . and preach the gospel,” but variation is present in the examples of ways of going . . . walking, horse back, ship, etc. Distinction must also be made between situations which really differ. Some are confused in the matter of the pattern of cooperation as set by examples. They think they see variation in the examples of cooperation between the congregations of Acts 11:22, 27, 80; and cooperation between congregations and an individual in Phil. 4:16. It would be about as reasonable to try to establish variation in conversion because the requirements of the conversion of an alien differ from the requirements of conversion of an erring child of God. Most of us can see that these are alternates, but are binding in the area of activity to which they are assigned. The pattern of cooperation stands, if between congregations, the needy congregation is the receiving congregation; the congregation with abundance is the sending congregation. Neither one is a “sponsoring congregation.” **No place can be found in the pattern for one congregation standing as a “middle man” between the sending and the receiving congregation.** In the case of cooperation between churches and individual, the church sends direct to the individual. These examples of cooperation are no more disqualified by the rule of uniformity than are the express statements of conversion.

Contextual study is the chief dependence in determining what is essential and what merely incidental. The value of contextual study, in distinguishing between the essential and incidental, is best appreciated experimentally: i.e., by engaging in such study of a given passage. To this end we

will subject Acts 20 to such a study to see what the context will reveal.

In the first place, a casual reading is sufficient to impress upon our minds the contrast in the manner of mentioning the two incidents, “the first day of the week” and “the upper room.” “The first day of the week” occupies a focal position in this account. It points out, specifies the day upon which they came together to break bread, whereas the “upper room” is only incidentally mentioned in connection with the accident of the young man falling out of the window. No more significance can be attached to this feature than to the fact of his falling asleep. Both (the upper room and his falling asleep) are related as details in connection with the death of the young man and their only utility is to make that account complete. They were two factors in combination which resulted in the youth's death. His going to sleep was the cause of his falling. The distance he fell (from a third story) explained why death resulted from his fall. Had this accident not occurred, the upper room detail would have had no point in the narrative.

Cumulative evidence of the prime or essential character of the “first day of the week” detail is found in statements of actions, which statements we would be incapable of harmonizing on any thesis other than that the observance of the Lord's supper was at a definite, universally recognized assembly; and that the assembling was upon the first day of the week. The first of these statements is found in verse 6b. “And came unto them to Troas in five days; where we **tarryied** seven days.” The other statement is found in verse 16b. “For he was **hastening**.” Unnecessary **tarrying** when one is **hastening** is to say the least unreasonable. Their tarrying under such circumstances must have been necessary. What could have necessitated tarrying? They certainly were not aimlessly wasting time. Nothing is said of their activities during the tarrying period. It is only when the first day of the week comes that their actions receive detailed attention by the Holy Spirit. They **tarryied** seven days but they **gathered together** to break bread upon the first day of the week. To me it is very clear that they were waiting for the first day of the week in order to partake of the Lord's supper and because the first day of the week would be the time when Paul could expect to be able to address the whole church which would be assembled to break bread. By tarrying these two important objectives could be accomplished. I am unable to discover from the context another fact which satisfactorily explains their tarrying when they were in a hurry.

Applying the rule of uniformity to the place where the Lord's supper is to be eaten will establish that the upper room is not an essential element but is only an incidental. From the following considerations we learn that uniformity does not prevail in the matter of place where.

1. The church in Jerusalem steadfastly observed the Lord's supper. Acts 2:42.
2. The daily assembly place was the temple. Acts 2: 46; 5:42 “in Solomon's porch”; 5:12
3. The first day of week is one of the days of “daily.”
4. Hence, the necessary inference is that the Lord's supper was observed by the church in some part of the temple, probably Solomon's porch.

As variation exists between the temple and the “upper room” neither is binding. They are only incidentals.

### III. The Rule Of Universal Application

No example is to be regarded as reflecting the will of God which is not susceptible of universal application. The gospel with all its requirements and blessings is for all the people in all the world (Mk. 16:15) hence is capable of universal application. The impartial character of God (no respecter of persons Rom.: 2:11; Acts 10:34,35) requires this rule. The scope of the gospel is world wide, providing salvation for all men; its requirements are such as can be met; its provisions, such as can be enjoyed, by all men of every clime.

In the example of “time When” to partake of the Lord's supper, there are no requirements but such as can be universally (in all the world) observed without involving it in absurdities. The Eskimo in his igloo—the African in his hut or under a tree—any creature in all the world where the gospel has gone, has a first day of the week upon which he can “assemble to eat the Lord's supper.”

The “upper room” does not possess this quality of universal application as does the “first day of the week.” Were it the Lord's will that our assembling to partake of the Lord's supper be in an “upper room,” then the Eskimo must be converted not only from his former manner of life but also from his former manner of architecture. He will have to build three storied igloos! The same would hold true with other peoples. Our preachers who are preaching in Japan, Africa, other remote regions would need to arrange for “upper rooms” before they could teach the converts the will of God on partaking of the Lord's supper.

### IV. The Rule of Legitimate Extension

**No example is to be extended beyond its legitimate province.** No New Testament action (of apostles, Christian's or churches) is to be considered as binding beyond the proper province of that action. If the action be in emergency situations, it is not to be extended to include normal or regular action: e.g., the community of property practiced by the Jerusalem church. There was an emergency situation in Jerusalem that called forth this action of selling “their possessions and goods” land parting them to all, according as any man had need. (Acts 2:45.) Now not many people reason that this example is binding for any land all congregations regardless of circumstances. To contend that this action is binding in all cases is to be guilty of extending the example beyond its legitimate province—which province is emergency situations. **This example is an “approved example” for this situation but** not an “approved example” for all situations. This example reflects the will of God for emergency not general or normal situations.

We have other examples similar to this in the New Testament, that is, examples of action in emergency situations. We read of churches sending to sister churches (Acts 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8 and 9) in emergency situations. Some have disregarded the proper province of these examples and have attempted to take these examples of churches sending to needy sister churches in their emergency, as authority for churches in circumstances other than genuine emergencies sending to other churches. This is to fail to “handle aright the word of truth.” In no command, example or necessary inference can we find authority for one church sending to another church except where the receiving church had a real need, but did not have the means necessary to perform

its own work.

We close with the heartening assurance from Christ, “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself.” (John 7:17.) Brethren, let us determine to do,, not our own will, but the will of God. Equipped with this single aim, we can by studying the Word know the will of God.

## OUT OF THE PAST

**CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION ISSUE DURING  
THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT****George P. Estes, Maplewood, Missouri**

Behind the thinking of the men who attempted to restore the New Testament church lie two basic premises or accepted facts: first, that the church as it existed in the apostolic age contained no admixture of human doctrine and was, therefore, a God given and perfect pattern in respect to its form, organization, design and function for all succeeding generations; and second, that the New Testament presents the full and complete revelation about that church. There was general agreement here. But where does divine revelation end and where does human wisdom begin? Did God reveal in the New Testament a complete and full plan instructing the church how it should carry out its mission, or did He leave the **methods** to the discretion and judgment of men? What constituted congregational independence in the apostolic era and how did congregations cooperate in that age? These have proved to be the most vexing questions to answer in the history of the entire Restoration Movement and from them stemmed the great controversies. Brethren reached different conclusions in their concept of the church and found themselves at variance on how churches can cooperate. Debates and open division have resulted. More space has been devoted to these subjects in the publications edited by brethren than to any other. The purpose of this article is to set forth, from a historical point of view, a brief survey of the cooperation controversy and to give credit to whom credit is due.

In 1799 the Haldane brothers broke with the State Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) and attacked the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. (Watters: History of British Churches, pg. 16.) Thomas Campbell's affiliation with them is explained by Robert Richardson: "The Haldanes in Scotland were engaged in this work. A considerable missionary society was formed for the above purpose. It consisted in part of the Episcopal Church in England. Thomas Campbell sympathized with the work and became a member of the society." (Memoirs, Vol. I, pg. 73.)

In America Thomas Campbell formed the **Christian Association** of Washington in 1809. It was constituted a society not a church and had a secretary and treasurer and a committee of twenty one. Its purpose was to promote simple evangelical Christianity and to support ministers in this, though it never sent out a minister. "Neither Thomas Campbell himself, however, nor those associated with him had a full conception of all that was involved in these principles." (Memoirs, I, pg. 238.) This association formed the Brush Run church in 1811. Although Campbell believed in "the independence of the local congregation from presbyteries and synods" (Garrison and DeGroot: The Disciples of Christ, pg. 155), nevertheless, he held to the idea of societies and association of churches through which evangelistic work is to be carried out.

In 1811 Alexander Campbell became the preacher for the Brush Run church. It applied and was admitted to the **Redstone Baptist Association** in 1813 but withdrew in 1823 over doctrinal differences. Whereupon, it promptly joined the **Mahoning Baptist Association**, which was more

sympathetic with the restoration principles and “claimed to act in an advisory capacity only.” (West: *The Search For the Ancient Order*, I, pg. 66.) The churches sent messengers to the annual meeting of the association. It received money from the churches and directed the evangelistic work. In 1827, Walter Scott became an evangelist for this association on the Western Reserve (Ohio). He was familiar with the writings of John Glas of Scotland. Glas believed an evangelist possessed an extraordinary office like the apostles in contrast to the ordinary office of a teacher or pastor. (History of British Churches, pg. 9.) Likewise, Scott considered the work of an evangelist as itinerant in starting and organizing congregations rather than located with a congregation. Campbell held to the same view: “Evangelists are a class of functionaries created by the church but do not serve it directly. They are sent out into the world. 'To do the work of an evangelist' indicates his duties, rights and privileges. His work is to plant and organize churches wherever he may be laboring.” (Christian System, pg. 85.) The fault with such thinking lies in the fact that the work of an evangelist is a function rather than an office and Paul's words “Do the work of an evangelist” are to Timothy while he was staying in Ephesus, not traveling from city to city.

Barton W. Stone sought to unite forces with Campbell and the Reformers. “Stone looked at the Mahoning Association and wondered. Twenty years earlier he had renounced all human organizations by dissolving the Springfield Presbytery. Should the union be consummated, would the “Newlights” be called upon to work through these organizations?” (Earl West: *Congregational Cooperation*, pg. 6.) In 1826, Stone began to publish the **Christian Messenger**. It carried a discussion between himself and Scott on the cooperation question. Stone and his brethren were against Annual Meetings and Conferences and felt the Reformers were too much like the Baptists. Scott defended the Association by claiming it did not take away any independence of the churches in the transaction of their business nor did it legislate to them. Its purpose was to bring the churches in closer connection with one another, strengthen the bonds of union, help destitute churches and set things in order. The sound scriptural position Stone took cannot be questioned; Campbell's practice lacks scriptural proof. Did not the influence Campbell attained through publications, popularity by debates, and prominence by writers and historians leave Stone a rather dim figure and also prevent his contribution to the Restoration Movement from receiving due recognition? Finally, unrest and criticism led Scott to the disbanding of the Mahoning Association, though both he and Campbell were in favor of retaining it.

From 1823 to 1830 Campbell published the **Christian Baptist**. In it he exposed all innovations and corruptions and advocated the restoration of the ancient order of things. He attacked “unauthorized organizations of the church; and all 'popular schemes' for the support of the clergy, churches and societies.” (The Disciples of Christ, pg. 176.) “But the delegates, are they representative of the churches? If so, what do they represent? The wish, desire or conscience of them at home? This is possible in national councils and in life but not in things pertaining to the kingdom of God . . . . The power of an association is declared in fact to be inferior to the power of a single congregation.” (Christian Baptist 18,26, pg. 267.) “Every Christian who understands the nature and design, the excellence and glory, of the institution called the church of Jesus Christ, will lament to see its glory transferred to a human corporation. The church is robbed of its character by every institution merely human, that would ape its excellence and substitute itself in its place.” (ibid 182:3, pg. 33.)

It is impossible to reconcile Campbell's teaching with his practices for during this period the Brush Run church was in two Baptist Associations. In 1830 he began to promote “**cooperation meetings**” at first in counties, but they grew to districts, states and finally national (Missionary Society of 1849). If they are wrong on a large scale, then they are wrong on a small scale. In 1830 he began to edit the **Millennial Harbinger** in which he changed his editorial policies and upheld doctrines he had formerly condemned. He began a series of articles about the church and cooperation of churches to defend the district meetings. He started by saying that the mission of the church is to preach the gospel to the world, but ten churches could do more than one and a hundred more than ten. He appealed to the geographical divisions of the churches in the apostolic age; that all Christians united in prayer; that there was collective cooperation in contributions raised; that the kingdom is one; that cooperation requires consultation and intercommunication of churches; and strong churches are to help the weak. (1831, pp. 436-8; 1832, pp. 244-250.) A summary statement is as follows: “In all things pertaining to public interest, not of Christian faith, piety or morality, the church of Jesus Christ in its aggregate character, is left free and unshackled by any apostolic authority.” . . . we “are left without a single law, statute, ordinance or enactment in the New Testament.” (May 1849, pg. 270.) Herein is the concept of the **universal church** with no divine plan and so it is left to devise its own plan in the most expedient way.

Why did he change? Sweet points out the parallel movements of church and state; that the trends in the government influenced the churches. Through this period there was nationalization in the country, centralization in the churches. (Story of Religion In America, Chap. VIII.) Campbell also gained wide recognition and worldly fame through his debates, publications and personal appearances. “When Mr. Campbell established Bethany College (1840) his developed belief in general support of evangelistic and other activities enabled him to assume that the churches ought to support it, since it was designated by him, if not by them—to train ministers and other young people for Christian living. Program makers for the district and state gatherings soon learned that they could be almost certain to get this prize attraction, the nationally eminent debater and orator, on their list of speakers if they would permit him to give an address on education and take an offering for the college.” (History of Disciples. pg. 242.)

Opposition to the cooperation plans began as early as 1836. T. M. Henley from Virginia wrote: “It appears to me there is a falling off in some measure from what we set out with—'a restoration of the ancient gospel' and order of things, and a pure apostolic speech.” He goes on to say the cooperation meetings with a president, secretary, messengers from churches and laying off of districts is the principle of the Baptist Associations with the exception of their creed. (M. H. 1836, pp. 333-4.)

Jacob Creath Jr. was the first real foe to the Missionary Society. It was necessary for one with such an indomitable character to lead the opposition. With boldness of spirit, he rose up against the popular trends; with fearless courage, he clashed with Alexander Campbell. Creath had learned the truth by reading the Christian Baptist. He believed the Harbinger of 1849 and following had changed its editorial policy and was promoting ecclesiasticism. He desired to call a convention of all the churches to see whether or not the Missionary Society was scriptural. To Campbell he wrote: “Now,

permit me, my dear brother to say in all kindness and candor, that your brethren who now oppose conventions, and who have opposed them since they entered this Reformation, are equally sorry to find you and others opposing conventions in the great platform you laid down for us in the Christian Baptist, and now to find you and them, advocating conventions as zealously as you then opposed them. If you were right in the Christian Baptist, you are wrong now. If you are right now, you were wrong then.” (Harbinger 1850, Nov., pg. 615.)

“The advocates of the conventions have totally abandoned the rule on which we and all Protestants set out—that the Bible alone is the religion of the Protestants. They have not produced one single passage of scripture, to countenance these assemblies from the New Testament.”. . . .Because our Father divinely commissioned His Son to our world, and His Son sent the apostles as missionaries to the world, and they divinely organized individual congregations all over the Roman Empire, in the first century, does it, therefore, follow, that we in the nineteenth century, without any divine warrant, and contrary to our own rule of faith, have the right to call conventions, form Bible, missionary and tract societies, elect popes, and do all the things we wish? My logic does not run that way. They had divine credentials for what they did. We have none for what we are doing. This is the difference between them and us.” (M. H. 1850, pg. 615.)

The value and worth of Creath's work can be seen in the following fact: those who accepted his belief (that the local church is the only divine organization given) became the church of Christ; while those who followed Campbell's cooperation plan formed the Christian Church. They are listed separately in the census of 1906. Creath never attained the prominence of Lipscomb mainly because he never edited a paper; however, he laid the foundation which marked the turning point in the controversy.

Tolbert Fanning possessed profound wisdom and a penetrating insight into the problems of his day. He would ponder and meditate upon a question before making a decision but when that was made he was unyielding. Creath and Fanning are two of the most underrated and underestimated men of the whole Restoration Movement. Though much of Fanning's writing is negative and against human organizations (Missionary Society), nevertheless, he accomplished more fully what men had attempted to do a century before his day — a presentation of the true nature of the apostolic church.

He started the **Gospel Advocate** in 1855 “to give the subject of cooperation a thorough examination.” (Oct. 10.) Lipscomb took up where Fanning left off and expounded for the rest of his life the fundamental doctrines of the church he had learned from Fanning. The following quotations are typical of the pointed, terse way Fanning expressed himself: “It is well for brethren to decide the question as to the utility of such organizations to keep the church alive. Can she perform her mission on earth without the aid of human legislation? Can the churches of Christ cooperate without converting them into human establishments? This embraces all the controversies of the age. Settle this point and all sincere religionists will become one.” (Advocate, Feb. 1857, pg. 54.) “We have made up our minds long ago, and unless better reasons are shown we shall consider all religious expedients as unnecessary and in opposition to the reign of Christ.” (Advocate, May 1857, pg. 131.)

“Each church must be left free to perform her own duty at her own time and in her own way. On this plan the active energies of the respective congregations are called forth and success is made sure.” (Advocate, 1857, pg. 217.)

The monumental work of David Lipscomb needs no recommendation for it speaks for itself. He stood like the rock of Gibraltar against the Missionary Society and all other human innovations. To follow the divine order was his goal. His method was primarily through teaching and by his articles in the Advocate the tide was turned. Lipscomb emphasized the local church and believed if each congregation carried on its own program it cooperated with others doing the same work; that there is a difference between cooperation and organization.

“Two farmers, living as neighbors work side by side. One has work to do that he cannot do himself. So, he asks aid from his neighbor. Each farmer pursuing his own independent course cooperates. The emergency that necessitated the call for aid ends and the farmers are left free without the encumbering machinery.” (Earl West: Congregational Cooperation, pp. 17, 18.) He placed the Missionary Society and all human organizations formed by cooperative efforts in the category as banks, railroads, governments, sectarian synods all of which tended toward corruption. The tendency of man has been to try to improve upon divine wisdom.

“The congregations of the Lord, Lipscomb contended, are by nature organized cooperative bodies, ordained by God. All work which is done in these bodies is true cooperative work. Every individual in any part of the world, working in true cooperation in these bodies, is necessarily cooperating with every other.” (Congregational Cooperation, pg. 18.)

The question rose again in Henderson, Tennessee in 1910. The Advocate carried a notice of a meeting to be held in Henderson and invited the elders and preachers in the surrounding area to attend in order that they might become better acquainted and discuss concerted action of the churches. The Henderson elders were appointed to accept money and take the oversight of an evangelist in West Tennessee. Lipscomb criticized the meeting as being unscriptural. He wrote: “All meetings of churches or officers of churches to combine more power than a single church is wrong .... For one or more to direct what and how all churches shall work, or to take charge of their men or money and use it, is to assume the authority God has given to each church.” (Advocate, March 24.)

The issue did not rise again until the present sponsoring church controversy or for a period of some forty years. During this period there have been great promotions of institutions and very few lessons on the basic fundamentals relative to the form, design, organization and function of the church. As a result we live in a generation of brethren, many of whom are not aware of the implications and dangers of brotherhood projects.

The sponsoring church is comparable to that form of cooperation which rose in Texas shortly after the Civil War. “A local church was appointed through which the other churches could do their mission work .... In short, a way was provided for the **church universal** to act through the elders of a local congregation.” (Congregational Cooperation, pg. 4.) It finally became the Texas State

Missionary Society. Concerning this Lipscomb wrote: "Now what was that but the organization of a society in the elders of this church? .... The same course was pursued in Texas a number of years ago. The elders of the church in Texas were made the supervisors of the work, received the money, employed the preacher, directed and counseled him. For a number of years they employed C. M. Wilmeth. He then dropped out of the work and the Texas Missionary Society took its place. Other experiments along the same line have been made. All of them went into the Society work." (Advocate, 1910, pg. 364.)

The gospel plan of salvation and the meaning of the word baptism lay buried for centuries under the confusion of sectarian interpretation until men of the restoration movement by study, discussion, writing and debates, freed them from the traditional views set forth by creed books and expounded the scriptural meaning. The same must be done concerning the church and church cooperation for the scriptures are inspired by God **"that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work"** (2 Tim. 3:17), not part of the works.

## A DEFINITION OF "AUTONOMY"

# THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

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To have the proper background to enable us to understand the "autonomy of the local church," we must have an understanding of the New Testament uses of the word "church." By an investigation of the word of the Lord it will become evident that the word "church" is used in two senses by divine writers. First, it is used in what may be called the "universal" sense. This simply means that the word "church" is used to include all of the saved in all of the world. When Jesus said, in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church," he certainly did not refer to any particular local congregation, for if he did, then all other congregations would be without divine origin. The word was used in the institutional, or universal, sense. The same is true of the statement made by Paul in Ephesians 5:25, as well as in many other New Testament references. However, in the second place, the word is used in a "local" sense. By this use of the word reference is made to all the saved in some particular locality, as "the church of God" at Corinth (I Cor. 1:1, 2), or "the church of the Thessalonians." (I Thess. 1:1.) The "local" sense of the word is also found in such expressions as "the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2), "the churches of Judea" (Gal. 1:22) and "the seven churches which are in Asia." (Rev. 1:4.) The first, or "universal," sense of the word refers to the people of God in the aggregate, but the second, or "local," sense of the word has to do with "local congregations." With this proper meaning of the word in mind, as used by New Testament writers, let us consider the "autonomy of the local church."

### I. God's Government For His Church Is Congregational

Through many years of the past gospel preachers have contended that any organization to do the work of the church that is larger than a local congregation is too large to be a scriptural organization, and that any organization to do such work that is smaller than a local congregation is too small to be a scriptural organization. This position is eminently scriptural for the word of the Lord has never authorized any organization to do the work of the church except the local congregation. To establish and maintain an organization, such as a Missionary Society or a Benevolent Society, through which a number of churches may perform their work of evangelism or benevolence, is therefore an unscriptural set-up, for such an organization, through which a plurality of churches function, is **larger than a local congregation**. On the other hand, if within a local congregation we should set up a Young People's League or a Dorcas Society to perform certain functions of the local church, we have **organizations that are smaller than a local congregation**. Such has always been regarded as an unscriptural practice. Of course, any of these organizations, whether larger or smaller than a local church, is unscriptural because it is a human organization. But that is not the principal point to be considered in this article.

When God set up the organization of the local church he ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23) in every city (Titus 1:5) if men were found who possessed the necessary qualifications. He did not authorize one elder or a number of congregations, or even one elder for one congregation. Nor did he authorize one group of elders for a number of congregations. The divine authority

requires a plurality of elders for each congregation. According to this arrangement each congregation would be independent of every other congregation, and such an arrangement establishes what we call the “autonomy of the local church.” It makes the government of the church congregational.

## II. The Meaning of Autonomy

If you are not familiar with the word “autonomy,” a brief study of its significance will be helpful. It is derived from the Greek words “autos” and “nomos.” The word “autos” means “self,” and the word “nomos” means “law.” Hence, a combination of the **terms autos nomos**, which gives existence to our word “autonomy,” simply means “self-law.” Or, putting it another way, it means “self-rule” or “self-government.” And this may be expanded into the expression, “the right of self-government.” The “autonomy of the local church” means, therefore, “the right of a local church to govern itself.” This government of the church is exercised, of course, through the elders that God has ordained for each local congregation. (Acts 14:23; 20:28.)

Autonomy, or self-government, by the elders of a local congregation does not mean that such elders have the right to legislate or to enact laws to govern the church in which they are elders. We have but “one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy” and that lawgiver is Christ. (James 4:12.) No uninspired man has any right to establish laws to regulate the church of the Lord. Such is not the “self-government” that God has given to local congregations. The authority of elders in any congregation is limited to the judicial and executive realms—to judge, and to put into execution the laws that Jesus gave approximately 1900 years ago. They are not to “judge” in any way that would set aside divine requirements, as such judging is condemned in James 4:11, but they are to make decisions relative to the progress and work of the church—but not as lords over God’s heritage—as divine revelation is put into execution in the hearts and lives of the members of the congregation. Compare I Corinthians 5:12. The independence of each congregation is, therefore, maintained when the government of the church is held to the elders of each congregation.

## III. Points Involved In Church Autonomy

With no intention of presenting an exhaustive outline of local church autonomy, the following points are presented as illustrative of the jurisdiction of elders relative to the congregation of which they have the oversight. In other words, the congregation has the right of self-government in the following respects.

**1. It has the right to discipline its own members when they become unruly.** Paul, in the fifth chapter of First Corinthians, gives us an example of this matter. A member of the Corinthian church was guilty of fornication—such as was not even named among the Gentile—sin that he had taken his father’s wife. Relative to the action to take in this matter, Paul made the following declaration: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (I Cor. 5:4, 5.) Thus it was that discipline was to be administered to the disorderly member. But you will notice that this disciplinary action was to be taken by the Corinthian church. No authority was given for some other congregation to exercise such

corrective measures in the church at Corinth. It was purely a local affair to be looked after by that particular local congregation. It was a matter of autonomy belonging to it and to it only. No other congregation—nor the elders of any other congregation—had any right to take the necessary steps of discipline in the matter.

**2. Each congregation has the right to manage its own affairs in matters of judgment and expediency.** In sending a contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem there were matters of judgment and expediency involved. In the absence of a postal system, such as we have today, it was necessary that messengers be used to transport the funds to the point of destination. But each church was to choose its own messengers. (2 Cor. 8:19.) Paul told the Corinthian church: “Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem.” (1 Cor. 16:3.) No other congregation had the right to make Corinth’s selection—it was a matter of autonomy that belonged solely to her.

**3. The right to oversee its own work belongs to each congregation.** The charge Paul gave to the Ephesian elders is a definite proof of this. He said: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28.) These elders had the oversight of “all the flock” in the church at Ephesus. They were given no right to oversee the flock at any other place—nor was any other church given the authority to oversee the Ephesian church. It was a matter of local church autonomy.

**4. It has the right to control its own resources.** Money contributed by the members of a congregation is to be spent by that congregation. The Philippian church, while Paul was in Thessalonica, “sent once and again” to his necessity. And when he “departed from Macedonia” no church “communicated” with him “concerning giving and receiving” but the Philippian church. (Phil. 4:15, 16.) The congregation had charge of its own resources and spent the money as was its scriptural right to do. Its contributions were not turned to some other church to use according to its discretion, but money was sent by the church to Paul as he was engaged in the proclamation of the gospel. It was exercising its autonomy and maintaining its independence in these matters. Such should be true with every other congregation.

**5. Providing for the needy among its own members to the extent of its ability is the right of every congregation.** When the Grecian “widows were neglected in the daily ministration” steps were taken by the apostles at Jerusalem to have the church there to look after the needs of such widows. The church exercised its right of self-government by taking the necessary steps to make provision for the neglected widows. It will not change the matter to argue that this was the only congregation in existence at that time and that no other church could have had any control over it, for every other church established by inspired men subsequent to this was set up exactly like the church at Jerusalem. If the Jerusalem church was able to manage its own affairs in things of this kind, other congregations, when they were established, were given the same right that the Jerusalem church had. It would be foolish to argue, since the Jerusalem church was the only one in existence when it “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42), that other congregations did not also do the same. All congregations

were established after the same pattern, and when a second one was formed the independency of the first one was not changed.

#### IV. A Congregation May Lose Its Autonomy

When a congregation's right of self-government, as it pertains to discipline, to matters of expediency, to its own resources, to its work, to its relief programs, or to any other matter, is taken over by another congregation, the autonomy of the first congregation is violated. Every one will admit that no congregation can scripturally force its way into another congregation and seize the management of the affairs of that congregation. Such would be a violation of local church autonomy. But do not get the idea that a **church never loses its autonomy** unless such is **taken by force** by some outside group, whether it is a human organization or another congregation. A church may **willingly surrender** its autonomy to a human organization or to another church, and when it does so, it just as definitely loses such autonomy as if it were seized by another group. Since, in the matter of self-government, a church has the right to discipline its own members, this, as has been shown, is a part of its autonomy. But suppose that church willingly turns over the disciplining of its members to another congregation. When any of them becomes unruly or disorderly it takes no steps whatever toward correcting the situation, but allows another congregation to have charge of such matters. Has it not lost its autonomy in that particular field? The fact that it willingly surrendered such does not change it in the least. When we say that such congregation has lost its autonomy, we do not mean that it has lost its autonomy in every field of endeavor, but it has surrendered its autonomy concerning that particular point.

The same holds true concerning other matters involved in local church autonomy. If it willingly surrenders its right to manage its own affairs in matters of expediency, and judgment, it loses its autonomy in that field. If another congregation, or another group, makes the decisions relative to such things that should be made by the first congregation, then the autonomy of the first congregation has been violated, regardless of how willingly it may have been surrendered. Or if a congregation surrenders the oversight of its work, or any portion of it, to another congregation, the same principle obtains. It may retain its autonomy relative to local evangelism but surrender its autonomy relative to foreign evangelism to another congregation; it may retain its right of self-government in the edification of its members but surrenders such right to another congregation in the field of radio preaching. If it surrenders the control of its resources or of its funds to another congregation to do a work to which both are equally related, the right of self-government has been violated. It may spend its own money for one phase of work that is its responsibility but turn money to another church to spend for another phase of its work. When we say that a congregation thus loses its autonomy, we do not mean that it has surrendered all right of self-government. It may retain its autonomy concerning many things that affect the local congregation, but it has lost its autonomy on that portion of its resources, used to discharge its own responsibility, but placed in the hands and under the oversight of the elders of another congregation.

How willingly a church may turn its work to another, or the fact that it can discontinue such

practice when it so determines, does not prove that it in no wise loses its autonomy. A hundred years ago when churches placed their funds and their work in the hands of a Missionary Society the autonomy of the church was violated. They were not forced into such an arrangement but willingly accepted such a program of work. Furthermore, they could discontinue the practice when they chose to do so. But this did not change the fact that they had lost their autonomy while the program was in operation. The same thing is just as true concerning our “brotherhood projects” today.

#### **V. The Local Congregation Is The Only Medium Through Which The Church Functions**

Attention has been called to the two uses of the word “church” in the New Testament—the “universal” sense and the “local” sense. But God gave no organization to the “church universal.” The only sense in which the church universal can act is for every local congregation to act. But each congregation would have to act in its local capacity. No super-organization or centralized agency has ever been provided by the Lord for inter-congregational action. There were no inter-congregational alliances ever authorized. No group of elders ever became, by New Testament authority, “brotherhood elders.” Each congregation, as has been already shown, had its own elders. Any number of congregations could help another congregation that was in need—that was an object of charity—to relieve distress among its own members when that church was unable to care for its own. But no church was ever set aside by divine authority to become a brotherhood agency through which all churches could do a work to which all were equally related. Each congregation maintained its independence. The only organization ever authorized by the Lord through which the church is to function is the local congregation. The New Testament reveals no other organization for such work. And each congregation is ordained to carry on its own work in its congregational capacity. No one congregation can scripturally become a medium through which the whole brotherhood can function in accomplishing the work of all the congregations. Such has no resemblance to the simplicity of the divine arrangement revealed in the word of the Lord.

#### **VI. God's Wisdom Shown In Local Autonomy**

We can easily see the wisdom of God manifested in the autonomy of the local church. If all the congregations were joined by some sort of “inter-congregational alliance” or “organizational federation,” the dangers of apostasy would be greatly increased. If one congregation in the “alliance” should turn to apostasy, there would be a distinct danger of every other congregation in the “alliance” becoming affected. Or if one group of elders were given the right to oversee many congregations, and they should go into apostasy, every congregation under their oversight would likely be led into the same apostasy. But when each congregation is an independent and autonomous body this is not true. One congregation or one group of elders may go into apostasy without affecting all of the others. Any congregation, of course, through false teaching, may be led into apostasy, but we should recognize and respect the greater degree of safety that is found in the autonomy and independence of the local church. God arranged it that way. Let us strive to keep it that way. Man's “brotherhood projects” are not an improvement upon the divine system of operation.