

# How Churches Can Cooperate

God's Work In God's Way



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## **Foreword**

This work has been written and published in order to evaluate in light of the New Testament the criticism leveled against church cooperation in benevolence and missions, and the work of the church in general. Some brethren would institutionalize the church by making it a worshiping society, separated from the community and the world, with a philosophical word\_gospel and a "faith only" attitude toward its mission and work. This dangerous tendency, if allowed to grow, can do nothing but sectarianize and eventually destroy the church and its influence. The arguments usually center around the methods employed, but in observing their arguments about methods a negative attitude concerning the church mission is usually discernible. Often good works have been stopped or greatly hindered because of adverse criticism.

### **About the Author**

Lewis G. Hale was born April 16, 1926 in Cowlington, Oklahoma. He attended Freed\_Hardeman and Abilene Christian College, graduating from the latter school with a B.A. degree. Later he attended the University of Oklahoma and finished his class work on a Master's in History. Brother Hale is married to Ruth Mallet Hale and is the father of two sons, Michael and Barry. He preached for the church in Stigler, Oklahoma, before coming to the church in Lorenzo, Texas where he now works.

Knowing Brother Hale's keen analytical ability and his regard for the Scriptures, I approached him about his writing a short critique on this issue. In his characteristic, unassuming manner, he accepted the responsibility with reservations. Part I of this work is the result of his labor. He treats the subject, as you will observe, fairly, scripturally and humbly, yet positively and forcibly.

### **Miscellaneous Articles**

Several other articles have been included in order to hear from other brethren on this important issue. It was felt that there should be one small book, easily accessible to all, where different brethren could express themselves on this question. Read and evaluate the articles in light of the Scriptures.

### **Use of the Book**

This work should be in the hands of all Elders, Deacons, Preachers, Bible School Teachers and other Christians who are interested in doing the Lord's work. The book has been arranged for class use with questions at the end of each chapter. Excellent, instructional classes could be arranged for the adults in every church, using this book as a guide to the issue and the Bible as the authority in studying the question of the church's work and the cooperating of churches together in discharging their God\_given mission.

May this book abound to the glory of God and to the progress of his Kingdom. Thanks to those who helped in a financial way in making this publication possible and to Robert L. Rouse, professor of Economics at Texas Tech, for carefully reading the manuscript and offering valuable suggestions in structure as well as content.

**Mont Whitson, Editor**

# HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

## Chapter I

### THE ISSUE

In recent years there has developed a great problem in the church of our Lord. Anything, which causes dissension, disruption of good will and fellowship, and at times reaches the point of division, must be regarded as being a serious problem. The problem concerns the proper method of caring for the needy, proper means of doing mission work, and cooperation among churches in general. There is not agreement regarding these matters, therefore the need for careful and prayerful study of the issues involved.

Many brethren seem at a loss to know what the controversy is about. They seem to have no clear idea as to what the issues are, or what principles are involved. In the paragraphs which follow shall be stated briefly what the issue seems to be. If it is in error, then this writer is among those to whom the issue is not clear.

There are among us many homes which have been erected to care for homeless children. Some of these homes are under the oversight of the eldership of a church which has complete charge of the home. Others have a board of directors composed of Christians from a number of congregations. These homes are not subject to the supervision of any church. They are controlled solely by the board of directors. Both types of homes receive their support alike: Offerings are received from individuals, churches, businesses, etc.

Some of the children who receive care are without either father or mother. Some have one parent living; some have both parents living. Surely the needs of a child cannot be determined by whether or not they have living parents. If so, the question of caring for them in private homes rather than public homes would be irrelevant. If children with parents are not to be assisted, then they could not even be received into a private home.

The controversy over homes arises because of their very existence as well as the operational methods employed in their management. There are brethren who oppose the very existence of "orphan homes." They tell us there is no place for them, that the only Scriptural way of caring for homeless children is to take them into private homes.

Others say that such a home has a right to exist, but only under the direction of the elders of some one church, receive all its support from that one church, and care for that church's needy children. Others believe that such a home may receive outside support as long as it is to care for those who are the "peculiar responsibility" of that church. Others as firmly believe that such a home should be privately owned and operated. A church could then "buy the services" of such a home. This buying of services would consist of a

church's sending one (or more) of their needy children to be cared for and the church would pay the bill for such care. This would be very much the same as the church's buying the services of a hotel for the room and board of a preacher.

Other brethren believe that a home can be under the oversight of an eldership and receive help from individuals and churches to care for children regardless of where they may have been living. In other words, the children need not have been the "peculiar responsibility" of the church which has the supervision of the home. Other brethren believe that such a home may be supported in the same way and yet be under the supervision of a board of directors, that it is not necessary to be under an eldership. It is not difficult to see that there are a wide variety of ideas regarding the care of homeless children. All these same ideas are found regarding homes for the aged.

Let us now notice the controversy as it pertains to means used to preach the gospel. There is a congregation among us, which presents a, nation\_wide radio program weekly. This church receives most of the support for the program from other churches. The entire program is under the supervision of that church's elders. Whether or not it is, the elders consider it to be the work of that church. There are hundreds of churches, which send financial aid to help keep the program on the air. They have no part in the management of the program. They have no part in the selection of the preacher, singers, nor sermon topics. Their part is solely that of financial assistance.

There are good brethren who earnestly believe that such cooperation among churches is sinful. They believe that one church may not send money to another church simply to do a good work, but only to relieve a church which is in dire need. They believe that the elders which supervise the radio network program cease to act as elders, acting rather as a board of directors to supervise the work of many congregations, thus paralleling the Missionary Society. Such cooperation has not been confined to the nation\_wide program. For many years there have been numerous congregations among us who have conducted similar programs on a much smaller scale. One such program has reached into as many as seven states and received support from many churches and individuals.

There is another practice among us, which has been severely criticized. There are churches known as "sponsoring churches." Feeling that they are not financially able to carry on a certain program single\_handedly, they invite sister congregations to share the expense of the work. They receive funds from other churches and add these to whatever funds they themselves provide for the work and they become wholly responsible for the oversight of the work. This is particularly true of the support of many preachers in foreign fields. The "sponsoring church" sends the missionary to some field and they have complete oversight of the work in which he is engaged. This cooperation is opposed by some on the basis that it "exists by a type of cooperation which is without scriptural authority." It is asserted that the only scriptural basis for one church's contributing to another church is for the contributing church to have an abundance and the receiving

church to be in want. The purpose of the gift must be to bring about an equality among the two churches. It is also contended that by such cooperation with a "sponsoring church," one church is simply engaging another church to do her work for her.

This chapter is not an attempt to give an answer to the problem, but rather to state the problem. It has been well said that to understand a problem is half the solution. These matters, with their implications, shall be examined in detail in the chapters which follow.

## HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

### Chapter II

#### **THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

##### **Is Scriptural Organization Endangered?**

There are those of our brethren who believe the purity of the organization of the church of our Lord is being destroyed. They are persuaded that its original simplicity is being corrupted. Many writings have set forth their objections to a number of present day practices of our brethren. It is my firm conviction that much of the present controversy stems from an improper view of the nature of the church.

That the church of our Lord should be today as it was in New Testament days does not admit of doubt. We should strive to be what they were. The church belongs to the Lord who bought it with His own blood. He is the King of His kingdom, the Head of the body. To Him alone belongs the right to govern that body, His church. Man has no right to introduce anything which would corrupt the purity and simplicity of the original church.

We are charged with having introduced things which are foreign to the Bible and contrary to the Divine Pattern. This is particularly true with regard to the cooperative work of many churches. As one brother has stated: "The impression that I get from large centralized projects is the very antithesis of the impression that I get from the simplicity of the New Testament methods." Again, "Frankly, I think that our interest in such super\_projects is a reversion from the simplicity of the methods used by the church in New Testament times."

What does it require to constitute a "reversion from the simplicity of the methods used by the church in New Testament times"? Is it valid reasoning to say that "I can hardly conceive of the early church's having `thus and so'"? I read nothing in the Bible of the early church's having buildings of its own. Yet, we have beautiful commodious structures, air\_conditioning, beautiful pews, carpets, indirect lighting, educational buildings equipped with modern aids\_flannel boards, blackboards, slide projectors, etc. We use graded literature. We have elevated baptistries with beautiful paintings and lighting effects and also provide baptismal garments. We have nurseries, or "cry rooms." None of these impressions is gotten by reading the Scriptures but who among us would contend them to be antisciptural? We are willing to defend the position that none of these is a corruption of the original pattern. We believe these to be details regarding which God has not legislated. There are many things which are essential and there are many others which are incidental. We believe the above named to be among the incidentals.

The injection of such matters at this point is for the purpose of demonstrating the necessity of studying the nature of the church in order to determine the essentials of church government and practice, especially as they concern the cooperation among churches, and at the same time be able to learn what was incidental in the practice of New Testament churches with regard to cooperation.

I am aware that we must exercise the utmost caution and wisdom to be able to determine what was done because nothing else would have been acceptable and what was done out of expediency. Let me illustrate: In every instance where any specific designation is made of the place where the Lord's Supper was observed (including its institution), it was in an upper room. Was this by design or was it a chance circumstance? Since there is nothing in the Lord's Supper which bears any sort of relationship to the particular floor level of a building, it is universally acknowledged to be a matter of judgment and not of law. Also, it would make our worship dependent upon the architecture of the people among whom we might chance to travel. We conclude that the floor level was a matter of indifference. What God has legislated, man has no right to alter. What God has not bound, no man can rightfully bind upon us. This same principle is equally true with regard to cooperation among congregations and among individuals as well.

## **Uses of "Church"**

The word "church" when used with reference to God's people under the New Covenant is used in at least three distinct senses. To speak intelligibly of what the church may or may not do, it must always be understood in what sense the word is used. What might be true of the "church" in one sense would not be true in another sense. For example, it is correct to say there is but one true church, but it would be very untrue if by "church" one means some local congregation. "Church" may refer to: 1) the great mass of Christians, or the universal church; 2) a local church; 3) a group of Christians in assembly for worship. Let us now pass to an examination of the nature of the church in the light of these distinctive uses.

### **1. The universal church, the mass of Christians.**

It is generally recognized by all Bible students that the Lord spoke of the church in a comprehensive sense when He said in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church." He most certainly meant more than some local church. It is used in the same sense in Ephesians 1:22\_23, "And (God) 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 fullness of him that filleth all in all." The local church is never referred to as a body. The body of Christ is comprised of all the saved. When we read of the body of Christ it always refers to the great mass of Christians, even\_ the departed saints. There is "one body" but there are many local churches. Again, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the

church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:25\_27. It is undeniable that this is the church in its largest sense. He will not present some local church unto Himself. Christ has but one bride. Not any one local church is a bride of Christ, but rather all the saved will be presented unto Him.

### **What Constitutes the Universal Church?**

Of what does the universal church consist? The importance of this question will become more apparent when it is seen that the most fundamental objection to current methods of cooperation has its basis in a misconception of the nature of the universal church. That misconception can be simply stated: the universal church is composed of all local churches. We are persuaded that this is completely false. If such a conclusion is untenable, then any proposition which rests upon it is likewise unreliable.

If the universal church is not composed of all local churches, what is its composition? The universal church consists of all Christians without regard to local church membership. Upon becoming a Christian, or obtaining remission of sins, one is added to the church. It may be hours, days, or longer before he becomes a part of some particular local church. Of what local church was the eunuch a member upon being baptized by Philip? One preacher said, "The one back home." It is not at all certain that there was one "back home" in Ethiopia. Yet, 1 Corinthians 12:13 informs us that we are all baptized into one body. One is baptized into the one body, not a local church. This does not belittle the necessity of the local church, nor one's work and worship therein, but first and foremost a Christian is a part of the body of Christ. He sustains an individual relationship to Christ. John 15:1\_6; 2 Corinthians 5 :17.

### **What Are The Members of The Body?**

There is yet another Scripture which demonstrates beyond any doubt the nature of the church in its largest sense, 1 Corinthians 12:1\_31. This chapter names the various gifts of the Spirit. It tells how the gifts are diverse, but are of the same Spirit. These gifts were given to individuals never to congregations. The reverse would be true if the body of Christ were made up of congregations rather than individuals, for the gifts were distributed to the members of the body. If congregational units are members of the body of Christ, then the congregations received the gifts of the Spirit. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; . . . But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to

drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." Verses 7\_14. "But now are they many members, yet but one body." Verse 20. This was not spoken from a congregational standpoint. There is no question but that individuals were baptized. Also, the manifestation of the Spirit was given to every man to profit withal. Again, "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

A Christian should be at work in a local church. He should be active in its program. But even while actively engaged in local work, he at the same time sustains an individual relationship to the Lord. One who views Christianity solely from the standpoint of his relationship to the Christians who meet in some particular building has a very narrow and sectarian view of Christianity. Particularly in large cities, many Christians living in the same block may attend separate congregations. In some cities, there are Christians who pass by two or three local churches of Christ while going to the one with which they think it best to work and worship. Yet, these people in a given community are looked upon by their denominational friends and neighbors without particular regard to their local church membership, but all are regarded as Christians, members of the church of our Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 12:14\_30, it should be self\_evident that the members of the one body are individual Christians, not local churches. "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body." Verses 14\_20. Did Paul teach that one church is an eye, another is an ear, etc., and thus all churches together compose the body of Christ? Obviously, he was discussing the function of individual Christians. Neither did one congregation have the gift of prophecy, another the discerning of spirits, another the gift of tongues, and still another congregation the gift of interpretation of tongues. These gifts were bestowed upon individuals, not upon congregations.

### **Is A Local Church The One Body?**

Until recently, we have never had any difficulty in understanding what the "one body" of 1 Corinthians 12 is. It has been universally understood as referring to the church in its widest sense. This view has been held without respect to denominational ties. Now we are informed that it\_refers to the local church in Corinth. As proof, verse 27 is introduced: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." That this is not limited to the church at Corinth is amply demonstrated by the following verse (28), "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." No

one would contend that God set the apostles in the local church of Corinth. That local church did not even exist when the apostles were set in the church, the one body. Yet these Christians of Corinth were members of the body of Christ in which the apostles had been set. Let brethren face their own unanswerable presentation to the denominational world of the absurdity of one head having hundreds of bodies.

### **Does It Make A Difference?**

You may be wondering what bearing this matter may have on the question of church cooperation. What difference does it make whether the church universal is composed of congregations or of individuals? How could that possibly relate to the opposition to current methods of cooperation? This: We are told that God has made no provision for the universal church to function as a unit. We are further told that the methods of cooperation being employed by our brethren brings congregations together in such a way as to attempt to make the universal church function as a unit, hence it is sinful. If these two premises can be proved, the conclusion is inevitable. If it is sinful for the universal church to function as a unit and if present methods of cooperation constitute a function of the universal church, then without doubt we are in sin. However, if either of those premises is false then the conclusion is also false. Actually, is there anything among our brethren which even approximates the universal church as a unit? Two or more (even a thousand) congregations fall far short of being the universal church, even if it were constituted of congregations. If such a conception of the universal church were correct, it would require every congregation to be bound together in a cooperative effort to have the universal church to function as a unit. If a small segment of the great mass of Christians may be thought of as the universal church at work, then one local church would be the universal church at work. How many Christians does it require to "attempt to make the universal church function as a unit"?

If any argument could be made from 1 Corinthians 12 regarding the function of the one body as a unit, it could more nearly be shown that the body should so function than that it should not. That perfect peace and harmony should exist in a local church is not denied, nor that a local group should have the smooth functional unity of the human body, but 1 Corinthians is speaking of the body of Christ over which Christ is head and into which people are baptized.

### **Does The Universal Church Function When Individual Christians Cooperate?**

Since the one body is actually composed of all Christians rather than all congregations, would not a cooperative effort on the part of a great number of Christians more nearly approximate a functioning of the universal church than would the cooperative effort of two congregations? If not, why? Those who oppose the type of church cooperation in which we are engaged have clearly expressed themselves as favoring cooperation among

individuals. Some of them have banded together to form publishing companies. They often invite others to join them in their efforts by sending them money and they will send literature to whomever may be specified. They are engaged in a religious work. One's expressed purpose for existence is stated on the masthead thus: "Dedicated to the Propagation and Defense of New Testament Christianity." The church of our Lord could have no higher and holier purpose than is stated there. Since "God has made no provision for the universal church to function," and since the universal church is composed of individual Christians, is this cooperative effort on the part of many Christians an attempt to make the universal church function as a unit?

If by "a function of the universal church as a unit" is meant the work of a small segment of the universal church (such as the work of two or more congregations), then it is emphatically denied that such a function is sinful. The churches of Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia worked together with each other (whether or not they worked jointly or through one congregation would not affect the universal church aspect) to relieve the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. If they were the universal church functioning as a unit, then there is scriptural precedent for such. If they were not, then neither are we.

Those who oppose anything that makes "the universal church to function as a unit" could have two possible meanings for "universal church." First, it could mean a fractional part of the universal church, such as a group of Christians in a local church, or a group of Christians from a number of local churches. We deny that a function on the part of such people would be sinful. Second, it could mean all Christians joined together as a unit and so functioning. We deny that any cooperative effort among us bears any resemblance to such a unit. We do not stand guilty by either interpretation.

If the methods presently employed in cooperative work are wrong, they must be opposed on other grounds than the universal church at work.

### **We Must Maintain Local Independence Even While Cooperating**

We are jealous of the autonomy of the local church. All are opposed to anything that would destroy the independence of the local church. It must not become subordinate to any conference, synod, or similar organization. We know of nothing among us which resembles such in any way. If so, it should be vigorously opposed. There is a vast difference in a church's assisting in some worthy work which has come to her attention and in having some hierarchy inform her that she is going to support a work and has been given a quota.

Some denominations want the name of congregational independence and at the same time be bound together in a formal organization. They have attempted to defend their "independence" on the grounds that it is not compulsory to accept the "suggestions" of

the conference or association. Such independence is more apparent than real. The members of such an association realize that unless they conform, they will be cut off. Anything which amounts to coercion does not leave true autonomy. There is no such coercion in the support of any of the programs being conducted by our brethren. Each congregation is free to act with reference to any work as she deems best. Failure to assist in any particular work does not result in disfavor, much less in disfellowship. If a congregation cooperates with another in a work, each maintains its congregational status. It does not become subordinate to a "super organization."

Each congregation which assists in any cooperative work with which this writer is familiar is left free to conduct her own affairs. She selects her own elders and deacons, decides where and when she shall conduct worship, what buildings she shall construct, selects her preacher, plans all her work in every sense of the word. No outside interference tells her how to conduct her local program of work, nor dictates what work she shall do outside her own locality. If there is something in our brotherhood today which has destroyed this local independence, it needs to be exposed. It needs to be pointed out in detail how a church has lost her right to direct her own business. We do not need a general assertion that "churches are losing their independence." We need to be specific. If there is a hierarchy among us, it is not sufficient to simply assert such, it should be specified. Who is handing down orders? Who is brought into bondage? What are the orders so given? How are they enforced? What are the demands of the hierarchy?

### **The Universal Church Is Not Formally Organized**

God did not see fit to give the universal church an organization. We must be content to leave it that way. He gave no one the authority to oversee it, as He has the local church. For anyone to assume such authority would be presumptuous in the highest degree. For congregations to voluntarily assist each other in doing works of benevolence and evangelization does not hint of such presumption of authority. We have no desire to organize the universal church. We would zealously oppose such, but would defend with equal zeal the right to cooperate as individuals and as congregations.

### **2. The Local Church.**

Some have thought of a local church as being the Christians in a certain locality. However, there are numerous Christians in a given locality whose membership is to be found in a plurality of local churches. Christians living next door to each other sometimes go to different congregations, yet are in perfect harmony and fellowship. Of what does a local church consist? It is composed of a number of saints who by mutual agreement, work and worship together regularly. It is God's purpose that such a group shall have overseers to direct them. Paul addressed "all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." This same salutation would apply equally well to a plurality of congregations in Philippi or to a single church. Each church would have its

own officers, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church . . . ." Acts 14:23. These saints who meet together with their elders and deacons compose a local church.

### **Similarities**

The local church has this in common with the universal church: it does not have to be in assembly to exist. Of course, a local church does assemble\_and that with regularity\_but her members continue as members at all times just as they are Christians at all times. Of course they are at liberty to choose the congregation with which they desire to worship. The conduct of the members, whether at work or at play, will reflect either honor or dishonor upon the local church. It will at the same time affect the estimation which an outsider has of the church of Christ in general.

### **Differences**

The local church differs from the universal church in that the universal church has no earthly organization. There is no body of human officers to direct the universal church. The local church is to have its elders and deacons. Their qualifications are to be found in 1 Timothy 3:1\_13 and Titus 1:5\_9. Their duties are found in these passages as well as in Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1\_4; 1 Timothy 5:17 ; Hebrews 13:7; 17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12. Briefly, they are to take heed to the flock, to labor among them and be over them in the Lord, to rule well, to exhort, to convince gainsayers, to teach, to watch for our souls, to feed the flock, take oversight of the flock, and to be ensamples to the flock. An elder is an officer of a local church. His oversight is confined to one congregation, the one which is "among you." If an elder should move from one congregation to another, there is nothing to indicate that he automatically becomes an elder in the church to which he has moved. There can be no question but that Peter limited the oversight of elders: "Feed thereof." 1 Peter 5 :2. They are warned against overlording God's heritage. Much less should they attempt to be dictatorial to the church as a whole.

### **We Must Make Right Applications of Right Principles**

After having established a principle of church government, we must exercise caution lest we proceed from that to something which cannot be established. Let us see how one brother went yet another step: "All the authority they (elders) have is limited to the congregation, the local organization in which the Holy Spirit has made them Bishops. And if they try to oversee a work outside that local congregation, they are doing so in some other capacity other than elders, because they cannot do it as elders for the Bible has not given them that authority. Now if one congregation then undertakes to oversee a work somewhere else, and the elders take it under their supervision, they obviously then are operating in the capacity of a board of directors."

The basic error of this reasoning is a failure to understand that if a congregation can do a work beyond her own borders, then her elders can oversee a work beyond the confines of the congregation without exercising oversight over anything other than the local church. Would not a program of personal work among the unsaved of our own community be a "work outside that local congregation" since the unsaved are certainly not within the congregation? If it be said that such work is within the congregation because it is done by members, then any work done by that church, even on the other side of the world, would be a work within that local congregation.

The brother's reasoning would prohibit a church's doing a "work somewhere else" even if unassisted by other congregations. In an attempt to deal a death blow to the "sponsoring church," this brother would deal the same death blow to the same work done by a single congregation. Let us illustrate: May a local church send a preacher to India, Japan, Spain, or even to a neighboring community in an attempt to establish a New Testament church? If such is a work of a local congregation, who shall direct it if it is forbidden to the elders? If the elders do oversee such a work, do they do so as a board of directors? Obviously not. They are overseeing the congregation in their work. They are no more a board of directors for such a work than they are for the oversight of all other affairs of the congregation. Why would they be any more of a "board" if part of the funds were given by some other congregation? Does the source of funds determine whether or not a group of elders constitute a "board"? If the elders do not oversee such a work, then someone else must. They certainly would not be acting in the capacity of elders. Would they comprise a "board of directors"? Many honest brethren have been led to believe something is wrong because someone else gave it a bad name. To say that a group of elders in a local church constitutes a board of directors sounds sinful! Essentially, what is the difference in overseeing something and in directing it? In effect, are not the elders a "board of directors" for a congregation?

### **Locally Organized But United In Christ**

We are agreed that each local church should be independent of all other local churches in the sense that no other has any jurisdiction over it. Christ has given to every congregation the right to manage its own affairs, by its elders, of course. No congregation is subject to outside control. Though each local church is an independent unit, all Christians should enjoy unity in Christ. To be a member in any place is to be a member in every place. The Apostles, Evangelists and people in general enjoyed great freedom in moving about in the various churches. Christianity enjoys the exalted conception of local church independence and at the same time one great and grand fellowship of all Christians in the body of Christ. Evidently the early churches received no censure for conferring with each other in matters of great importance. The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about the question of circumcision. We read that they were "brought on their way by the church" and that "when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders." This must be

regarded as an intercourse between churches, yet neither of them surrendered their independence in the management of their own affairs. Acts 15:1\_4. It is possible to assist one another in many ways without corrupting God's organization, the local church. We must be cautious but we should not deprive ourselves of those privileges and blessings which are rightfully ours.

### **Specify Your Charges**

Let us all work diligently to preserve the purity of God's church in every respect. It must be pure in its teaching, in worship, in work, and in organization. If the organizational purity of the local church has been corrupted, let those who have detected the impurities give us a clear, specific, and detailed account of the departures. There can be no vagueness. It will not do to deal in generalities. If there is a ruling class other than elders, let them be exposed and we will join in the effort to correct them. If there are congregations which have surrendered their right to govern themselves, name them and point out clearly their bondage and we shall join in the attempt to persuade them to regain their God given rights and duties. If there is a super organization composed of a confederacy of churches, name its members and give its organizational structure, its officers, its constitution and by\_laws, show clearly how its actions constitute such a confederacy and we shall assist in urging it to disband and resume congregational activity. We know of no such super\_organization of churches among us.

### **The Church Is Competent And Sufficient**

We do know of some human organizations which have assumed the position of "riding herd" on the churches of Christ to "protect" them from error and departure. Apparently, their promoters consider the church to be lacking in that which they delight to so glibly refer: competency and all\_sufficiency. One such organization publishes a journal which carries an advertisement telling people "You Need \_\_\_\_\_. " Also "This is a sixteen page weekly journal devoted to the propagation and defense of New Testament Christianity." Yet the writings found in its pages would lead one to believe that the church is fully competent and sufficient to propagate and defend New Testament Christianity. So do we. However, we do not use "church" in the local sense in such a statement. The church, the great mass of Christians, is fully competent. We trust that these men propose to do their journalistic work as Christians, hence a segment (but not a local church) of the universal church at work.

### **The Church At Work**

When Christians work, whether singly or in cooperation with others, the church is at work. When Saul "made havoc of the church," he did not personally afflict every individual Christian nor did he destroy some particular local church. He was "haling men and women" committing them to prison. Acts 8:3. His wrath was against "saints,"

"disciples of the Lord," or those that called on the name of the Lord. Acts 9:1, 13\_14. These people could have been called "the church" in their work as well as in their affliction. Whatever we do, individually or collectively, must be done in the name of Christ. Colossians 3:17. This will include a journalistic effort, congregational work, individual work, as well as cooperation among congregations. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31.

### **3. The church as an assembled group.**

Sometimes the church has reference to saints who have met in assembly for worship. Paul used it in this sense in 1 Corinthians 14:23, 28, 34, 35. The church in these passages could not refer to the body of Christ. If so, since women are commanded to "keep silence in the churches," she could never speak at any time because a Christian woman is always in the church in its universal sense. Christians are in the universal church at all times and in all places. Certainly Paul was not teaching that women should never speak at any time or in any place. It clearly has reference to the public gathering for worship. The church in is reference made to the members? Not at all, but rather to an ecclesiastical organization. In this case, it does not have the proportions of either the Roman Church or the English Church, but simply a local congregation. However, the concept is basically the same: a hierarchy and its subjects. That such a concept exists with reference to a local church is demonstrated by the writings of brethren who frequently speak of what the church "as such" can or cannot do in contrast to what the members can or cannot do.

"Individual Christians, any number, may scripturally engage in any worthy work, such as running colleges, papers, orphanages, and other individual Christians may properly assist them in every proper way; but no local congregation should be called upon, as such, to contribute a thing to any such enterprises." Such reasoning makes the church to be above and apart from Christian people. Such a philosophy would mean that the entire membership of a local church could properly cooperate in doing such a good work, as long as they did not do so as "the church as such." But, to take the same time, Let us quote from a reprint of an article which carried an editorial note, "This is a timely article": money and energy and use it at the direction of godly, consecrated elders of the church would be sinful! Who can believe it? Brethren deplore "Institutionalism," yet they have institutionalized the local church.

There are two extreme views of Christianity: a radical individualism and exaggerated collectivism. The one, individualism, would make Christianity a purely personal matter, a matter between a man and God alone, a relationship in which there is no room for the church. This would mean a religion apart from any fellowship with others who are God's children. The other view, exaggerated collectivism, is to be found in various hierarchies. The chief of these is the Roman Catholic Church. They believe there is no room for individual activity apart from the organization. For example: "Now, the Scripture is the great depository of the Word of God. Therefore, the Church is the divinely appointed

Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible. For, her office of infallible Guide were superfluous if each individual could interpret the Bible for himself. That God never intended the Bible to be the Christian's rule of faith, independently of the living authority of the Church, will be the subject of this chapter." (The Faith of Our Fathers, p. 63.) To them, the individual Christian can have no understanding of God's word apart from the Roman hierarchy. To them, the Bible is God's word only when interpreted by the "Church."

Both of these extreme views are derived by corrupting the teaching of the New Testament. That a Christian's relationship to God and His Son is foremost an individual one cannot be denied. The Judgment itself is based upon a personal relationship. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:12. However, we believe that such a personal account will include what we have done apart from others as well as what we have done in conjunction with others. To the student of the Bible, one need not argue that much of the teaching of the New Testament is directed toward the individual. However, when one sees only the personal aspect of Christianity, he becomes an individualist. They take pleasure in saying one can worship God as well in the forest as in the church. While we do not deny that there is the privilege of private devotions, no amount of such private worship can remove the necessity of public worship.

### **The Church The Same As Christians**

The New Testament teaching is clear that when one is saved, or forgiven of his sins, he is added to the church. Acts 2:47. When one is born again, he is admitted to the Kingdom of God. John 3:3\_5. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), yet one is baptized into the one body, which is the church. 1 Corinthians 12 :13 ; Ephesians 1:22-23. To be a Christian and yet remain aloof from other Christians was unknown to the New Testament. Christians were strictly warned against forsaking the assembling of themselves together. Hebrews 10:25. They met together on the first day of the week to break bread. Acts 20:7. The fellowship of the saints was so sacred and held in such high esteem that for one to be cut off from such company was likely to cause such an one to "be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 2:6\_7.

When one becomes obsessed with the congregational aspect of Christianity to the extent that he cannot comprehend individual action apart from congregational direction, he develops the hierarchal concept of the church. Congregational activity does not preclude the idea of personal responsibility. There is room for both. It would be more accurate to speak of individual activity and ,group activity, rather than individual activity as contrasted to church activity. Any work which a Christian does because he is a part of the body of Christ is church activity.

### **The Seven Churches**

A study of the letters to the seven churches of Asia, Revelation, chapters two and three, will reveal that many of the things written to the "churches" could hardly apply in an organizational sense. Such matters as: "patience," "repent," "Be thou faithful unto death," "be watchful," "I

I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation" could hardly apply to the churches as units. It is clear that the acceptance or rejection would be on an individual basis. Someone may object that the letters were addressed to the angels of the churches and not the churches themselves. However, in each letter is given the command: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Emphasis mine, L.G.H.). There can be no doubt but that the things written were for the "churches," yet most of the commands could not be carried out as a congregational function, or by the "church as such." The promise is: "He that over cometh, the same shall be clothed in' white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Revelation 3:5.

The church at Pergamos was told to repent, yet it is self\_evident that a church could repent only as the members repent. The messages to the seven churches of Asia cannot possibly be construed as being exclusively to organizations, or "churches as such." Too many of the commands are of a purely personal nature for such an interpretation. Yet, they are to the "churches." The conclusion is that when Christians obeyed those instructions, the "churches" repented, returned to their first love, were faithful unto death, were kept from the hour of temptation, etc.

This is not to argue in any way against congregational work as contrasted to individual work. It is simply to show that both are church work. Nothing is clearer than the teaching regarding the organization of the local church. The local church is under the direction and oversight of the elders and the members are strictly enjoined to: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your soul." Hebrews 13:17. We are of the persuasion that their oversight includes the control and management of property and finances of the church, as well as the spiritual care of the church. A fuller discussion of these matters will be found elsewhere in this work.

While it can be demonstrated beyond a doubt that there is congregational activity as well as individual activity, by what logic can a good work be defended when it is conducted by an individual, or group of individuals apart from the congregational unit, yet condemned when conducted by the same people under the oversight of devout and experienced elders? The church is at work in either case.

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5. Are we lively stones only when we act as a congregational unit, a local church "as such"? Obviously not. Let us hasten the day when we cease to regard the church as an ecclesiastical organization

separate and apart from the membership. True, the church has elders to oversee it, but that is quite different from regarding the eldership as the church. Paul did not regard the elders of Ephesus as the church, but rather told them to "feed the church of God." Acts 20:28.

There is nothing to indicate that the oversight of elders is limited to what is done by the church "as such." For example, it is agreed that personal instructions are given regarding a husband's relationship to his wife and children, of the wife to her husband, and of children to their parents. , "Husbands, love your wives," "Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands", "Children, obey your parents." However, if a Christian husband should begin to conduct himself in a sinful fashion with reference to his relationship to his wife, who would deny that those that "watch for your souls" have the right and duty to go to that husband and admonish him to correct his error? Whence came the idea that an elder's oversight is limited to things conducted as a congregational unit? Not from the Bible. In correcting an errant husband, an elder would be "tending the flock," the church of God. The church is no less the church simply because an action may be of an individual nature.

For the foregoing reasons, we believe it to be incorrect to say: "This is church work, but the other is individual work." It may be correct to say: "This work was done as a group, that work was done by an individual." Both would be church work. When the individual Christian works, the church works. We are of the persuasion that any righteous work can be conducted by an individual, a group of individuals, a congregational unit, or by a congregational unit assisted by other local churches and/or individuals.

### **Summary**

To understand what is right and proper for a church to do, we must understand the nature of the church. We need to know its government and its composition. We must strive to preserve its purity and simplicity.

Church is used in at least three senses: universal, local, and the congregation assembled for worship.

The universal church has no earthly organization, or formal government. It is composed of all Christians without respect to local church membership. It is the "one body" and individual Christians are members of that body. No local church is the one body, nor a member of it. The relationship of its nature to the cooperation question is due to the doctrine that God has made no provision for the universal church to function as a unit. Some think that much cooperation among churches is such a function, hence, sinful. If a function of the universal church as a unit requires the entire universal church to act on any matter, there is nothing among us which resembles the universal church at work. There is nothing of such proportions to be found among us. If a small portion of the universal church at work constitutes the universal church functioning as a unit, then such

is widely practiced and there is ample scriptural precedent for such a function. In fact, the members of a local church would constitute such a unit.

Since the universal church is composed of all Christians as individuals, any cooperation among individuals would constitute a function of the universal church as much as would cooperation among two or more congregations. Cooperation in either case is simply the church at work.

Although the universal church is composed of all Christians irrespective of local church membership, every Christian should be subject to the elders of some local church. The local church is a unit of work and worship under the direction of its elders. Elders have no authority outside the church over which they are overseers. However, the work of a church may extend far beyond the geographical location of the church, in which event, the elders direct such work the same as they would some local project. The elders have oversight of all the work of the church, both spiritual and material.

There is no work of benevolence or evangelism available to the individual Christian which is not likewise available to the local church.

Even though we defend the right of local churches to cooperate in good works, with equal vigor we insist that each participating church must maintain its independence.

The church is competent and sufficient to do the work God has given it. However, this use of "church" is not confined to the local church, but includes individual work and cooperative work. The church must not be thought of as being something apart from the members.

God's work for humans is church work, whether performed by individuals (singly or cooperatively) or by local churches (singly or cooperatively).

Questions

1. Distinguish between things which are essential and those which are incidental.
2. What are the three uses of the word "church" as used in this book? Illustrate.
3. Evaluate this statement using these three uses: "There is one true church."
4. What constitutes the universal church? What are the members of the one body?
5. Is a local church the one body? Is a local church a member of the one body?
6. How is the nature of the universal church related to the question of church cooperation?

7. Does the universal church function as a unit when individual Christians cooperate?
8. Is there anything among us which constitutes the entire church functioning as a unit?
9. Does the universal church have a, formal earthly government?
10. Does anyone have the right to divide it into informal dioceses ?
11. Distinguish between the conception of the church as an ecclesiastical organization and the conception of it as being identical with the members.
12. Is there any difference in elders being overseers and in being a board of directors over the church?
13. What is the limitation of the rule of elders? Of what people and in what respect?

# HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

## Chapter III

### **THE RIGHT TO EXIST**

As long as work is being done there will be criticism. This is not to disparage investigation nor criticism. We need to maintain a constant vigil to keep our actions according to the Divine Pattern. However, we cannot afford to spend our entire time in telling how something must NOT be done and thus fail to do anything at all. We may become guilty of the sin of the one\_talent man. He was so afraid of mishandling his means that he buried his one talent. We cannot escape doing the wrong thing by doing nothing.

There has been much criticism as to how needy children are being cared for, particularly regarding some operational methods, financing, and whether children should be attended to locally or be sent to a home in another locality. There have also been contentions regarding what children qualify to receive assistance. Before we concern ourselves with the HOW of operating or financing a children's home, we should be assured of its right to exist. If such homes have no right to exist then no method of operation would be scriptural. We believe wholeheartedly that such a right exists. The reasons for this persuasion are set forth in the following paragraphs.

#### **The Necessity of Means**

It is generally recognized that where an obligation exists, some means must be provided to fulfil it. For example, the church has an obligation to preach the gospel. The church may acquire the services of a preacher in fulfilling this obligation. We also recognize the right to purchase and distribute literature which aids the sinner to better understand the Scriptures. This also includes the right to pay for advertising which is designed to increase our opportunities to teach the sinner. Everyone agrees that the church has the right to provide a place in which to meet while the gospel is being preached, to provide comfortable seating, lighting, heating or cooling, rest rooms, etc. While these physical arrangements are not actually a part of preaching the gospel, they are considered useful in making the teaching program efficient. All such things must be considered as mere expedients to the command to teach.

In order to relate these matters to the care of homeless children, let us carry the expediency one step further. There is no disagreement that it is permissible to provide a residence for the preacher. Sometimes such a house is completely equipped with furniture. Very often the utilities are provided by the church. On what grounds? It is another of the many means used to further the preaching of the gospel. Many congregations feel that in maintaining a preacher and his family it can best be done when

they provide him a house in which to live. These provisions are made by the congregation as a group, in other words, by the "church as such." Churches which realize that they have a responsibility, as a group, to preach the gospel usually realize they have some responsibility, as a group, to provide benevolence. Any group which is aware of a responsibility to provide housing for a preacher should have no difficulty in perceiving the rightness of providing a dwelling place in which to house children who have no home.

To what extent may we rightfully go in caring for needy children? The brethren in Jerusalem recognized a responsibility in feeding some widows. They were instructed by the apostles: "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). Surely no good work becomes wrong because sound, systematic, business\_like principles are followed. Such a group as "the Seven" would likely be referred to as a committee. That is what those seven men constituted whether or not they were ever called that. A thing does not have to be so designated to exist. Furthermore, it has never been wrong to call things what they are.

### **How Many Needs (and What Kind) Can We Meet?**

As far as is revealed, the need of the widows of Acts 6 was only one of food. If housing had been (or, was) one of their needs, who would deny that such would have been provided on the same principle by which food was distributed? Just what kind of needs can a congregation rightfully meet? Clothing? Nursing? Shelter? Food? Surely all such needs could be relieved by the church. If all these needs existed in a group of widows and the church provided for them, we would have a "widow's home." Some well\_meaning brethren have attempted to discredit the idea of an orphanage by asking: "Why not have a `widowage'?" WHY NOT? Such a question takes for granted that a "widowage" would be sinful. While many widows might prefer to live alone, or remarry, the right of such a home to exist would not be invalidated.

By the same kind of reasoning, if the church can help needy children and they are in need of food, clothing, shelter and care, the church would certainly be within its right to care for all such needs. If to purchase property, provide food, clothing, and adequate supervision is "Institutionalism", then I most heartily favor it. Such is no more "Institutionalism" than to provide adequate classrooms, teachers, educational facilities and subject matter for systematic Bible study on Sunday morning. One must not confuse expedients with "Institutionalism."

### **May the Church Help the Fatherless?**

Some brethren are of the persuasion that the care of the homeless is solely an individual responsibility and that the congregational unit cannot make provisions for them. They believe that individuals may operate an orphanage, but that a congregation may not. They

believe that individuals may help the fatherless outside an orphanage, but that it cannot be the responsibility of a congregation to render aid whether the child is in or out of such a home, "I have not found, in my study, any passage that charges the church as the church with this responsibility of caring for orphans." "Since there is no example of the New Testament church overseeing a permanent child care program for 'the fatherless,' there is no reason to assume that such is the work of the church." This is the sort of philosophy which makes the church something different from its members. It reduces the church to a worshiping society. In reality, when Christians are at work the church is at work. However, is this demand for all specific details and specific examples for every type of good work justifiable? Would it not be just as reasonable to demand the same details and specific examples for individual action? Where is the example of an individual's caring for a child in an orphanage? Yielding to these demands for details, no congregation could assist a destitute man and wife, regardless of how severe their needs. If she were widowed, aid could be rendered, but not as long as her husband liveth. It would make no difference how badly disabled he is, she would not be a widow.

When Paul wrote the church of God in Corinth regarding the contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, he reminded them that they would reap according to how they sow. He taught them that God would continue to bless them. For one to withhold of that with which God has blessed him is a sure indication that he does not have the faith that God will bless him in the future as He has in the past. But Paul said, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). The church is mentioned many times in connection with this offering for Jerusalem. Its connection is such that there is no margin for argument but that the offering was made through the treasury of the congregation. Yet Paul assures them that God's grace will so abound as to give them such a sufficiency that they may abound to EVERY GOOD WORK. Whatever is a good work cannot be denied to the church. It has never been questioned that caring for homeless children is a good work.

### **Do Emergencies Set Aside Divine Law?**

Some would discard the principle involved in the feeding of the widows in Acts 6 by declaring that such was "an emergency." They contend that since this need was only temporary, we have no right to practice something like it on a continuing basis. How have brethren conceived the idea that Divine Law can be set aside in cases of emergency? Such reasoning was the very basis upon which sprinkling or pouring was substituted for baptism. A man (Novatian) was considered to be too sick to be immersed, therefore in this "emergency" they poured much water over his whole body. Such an action is rejected by all who accept the Bible teaching regarding immersion.

In a study of the cases where benevolent aid was rendered (Acts 6:11; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9), we are told that we cannot justify such cooperation to meet ordinary needs

because these were cases of emergencies. At still another time, when such opponents would contend against any other method of cooperation, we are informed that these cases constitute a Divine Pattern. These brethren may not be aware of the inconsistency, but these two positions cannot be reconciled. A man cannot be the exception and the rule at the same time. If so, it is truly an exceptional rule!

Is the "emergency" contention valid otherwise? Granting that the need of the widows of Acts 6 was a temporary one, what can one safely conclude? As long as a need existed, the church could meet it. What if such a need should continue for as long as ten years? Then we firmly believe that for ten years the church could rightfully meet that need. Rather than talking about an emergency, it is more correct to say there were people who could not meet their needs without assistance and such assistance was provided by the church. Could not the church continue to provide such assistance as long as the people were unable to meet their own needs? This same principle holds equally true whether it concerns widows or homeless children.

### **What Did God Bind and Loose Regarding Care of Orphans?**

"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." James 1:27. That widows and the fatherless should be cared for does not admit of doubt. The controversy arises over how to care for them. Many good brethren tell us that James was speaking of individual responsibility altogether. There is no question but that it includes individual care for such needs, but does it exclude congregational participation? If it excludes the congregation from caring for the fatherless, it would of necessity also exclude such care for the widows. The view is untenable since there is plain scripture to the contrary. 1 Timothy 5:16.

When God commands us to do something, there is no room for controversy as to whether or not it ought to be done. If He has specified how to do it, neither can there be any argument as to how it ought to be done. What God has bound, no man has the prerogative to loose. What God has loosed, no man has the right to bind. Has God prescribed any particular method of caring for the fatherless? If so, let the informed produce the scripture for it.

You may take an orphan into your home, adopt him as your own, train him and care for him as you would if he had been born to you, then say that no better care could possibly be provided for the child. To this everyone would agree. If you then should say, "This is the way God requires it to be done," you could not show where God ever commanded to do it in that manner, nor where anyone in the Bible ever did it that way, nor any necessary inference for that particular method. Care for the homeless child in any way you may, then you will be at a loss to give scripture for it to be done that way.

What is the inevitable conclusion? That God did command us to help them, but has not bound any specific method of care. No one has the right to bind some particular way to the exclusion of all others. Since this is one of the things God has loosed, any method of care which does not conflict with some principle of scripture would be acceptable. Expedients need not be specified in scripture but of necessity they must not violate any teaching of the Bible.

### **Should All Fatherless Children Be Put in Orphanages?**

This chapter thus far has been designed to set forth the right of an orphanage to exist. It must not be taken as a recommendation that all homeless children be placed in an orphanage. There are many homeless children which are adoptable and can be placed in the home of some Christian man and woman who can properly care for them. We believe such a placement to be the most desirable and advisable.

One of the sad results of the assault against the existence of orphanages is the regrettable neglect to give God the glory for the great number of Christian men and women who have taken children into their homes. It would prove most interesting if there were some means of knowing just how many children have been adopted by Christians. I personally know enough to fill a fair\_size children's home. With very few exceptions they are in the homes of people who are not opposed to orphanages. Those who oppose orphanages do us a great injustice when they attempt to make us appear to favor care in an orphanage above that in a normal home. Some are so rabidly opposed to orphanages that they leave the impression that such is the only means employed by our brethren to care for the homeless, at least that it is the major means employed to care for them. The number of children so cared for are in a very small minority. This is a case of magnifying what one considers an error to the extent of overlooking what he would approve, care in a normal home.

It would be fitting to make another observation about care in a normal home. It is usually admitted by those who have adopted children that they did not have the primary motive of doing benevolent work but rather that they were interested in acquiring children for their own joy and pleasure, much like those who want and have children by procreation. Seldom do you see a couple who adopt what they know to be a handicapped child, one that will be a burden to care for, one they know really needs them and will not likely receive proper care and attention elsewhere.

### **Abuses or Misuses Do Not Invalidate Principles**

Whether or not orphanages are supervised correctly, financed scripturally, receive children who should be adopted, or corrupted in any other manner, none of these factors invalidate their right to exist. The abuse or misuse of a thing does not argue that the thing itself is wrong. If faults are found they should be corrected rather than abolish the homes.

That there are dangers is self\_evident. Must we avoid everything that has potential dangers? Everything potential for good is also potential for evil. The course to pursue is one of caution but also one of ACTION.

It seems that it has been amply demonstrated that the existence of orphanages is not inherently wrong. If they are to exist, how should they be supervised, financed, and whom shall they receive for care; likewise, from where shall they receive them? Would there have to be uniformity of operation and finance, or could two methods be within the bounds of scriptural action? These are fair questions and must not be treated lightly.

### **How Shall a Home Be Supervised?**

How shall a children's home be supervised? Honest and sincere brethren have said that "orphan homes" can exist "provided that they be separate and apart from the church, operated by board of Christian directors. These homes would receive no `contributions' from church treasuries, but would be supported by Christians and interested civic groups." This was recently published by a journal known for its opposition to homes as they are now operated.

It has already been shown that the church in Jerusalem cared for some needy widows by providing food. Acts 6. On the same principle, if shelter, clothing, nursing, and general care were provided, the church would be operating a widow's home. The same provisions for homeless children would make a children's home. Surely it must be agreed that the church could care for one type of need as well as for any other, and that to provide for all such needs would be comparable to operating an orphanage. Who shall be received and the source of finance shall be discussed later. The point of inquiry at this time is one of supervision. Certainly the elders of the church may supervise such care.

Must such a home be under the supervision of some local church? If not, may churches contribute to it? Of all those who grant the right of orphanages to exist, this writer has read of none who has opposed the existence of such homes apart from an eldership. In fact, it seems that more would favor such homes. Such advocates propose that when a church has a child who requires such services, let the church send the child to the home and pay for services rendered. This would be much the same as paying a preacher's hotel bill. When the child is no longer there, they quit sending any money. Could anyone object to such a procedure? At the same time, can we with certainty say that it cannot be done otherwise? Such a method has been compared to paying a poor man's grocery bill. "Surely you can see the difference in paying a poor man's grocery bill and making a contribution to the grocery store. Can't you see a difference in that? Well, that's exactly the difference here. There's a difference in buying the services, and paying an orphan child's keep, and making a contribution to the institution that's keeping him." This reasoning runs so close to the truth that I am sure the brother who presented it believed it, also, that other good brethren believe it. It is fallacious, as shall be demonstrated.

Naturally one does not make contributions to a purely business enterprise. If the grocer were distributing food to needy, not for gain, but for charitable purposes, what would be the difference in paying the bill of one poor man and in paying the bill of fifty poor men? Would the deference lie in specifying whose bill was to be paid? Would these brethren approve of such support if a contributing church were to specify the child to be cared for with the funds contributed? Whether or not the child would have to be the particular charge of the contributing church will be discussed separately. The point here is one of supervision. Of course the care would have to meet the standards of the contributing church, but must it personally supervise the care? No one would so contend in case some worthy couple should care for one such child with funds supplied by the church. Why would it become necessary if they could care for fifteen children with funds supplied by the church?

An argument has been made against a church's contributing to a home under private supervision by comparing such to contributing to a publishing company. "The church can buy literature\_books, Bibles, song books, helps, etc., to use in doing her work, but she cannot put the Publishing Co. in her budget." Is the publishing company in the budget of a church which subscribes to a journal for its members? Or is that simply "buying services"? Would it become sinful if the church paid for the subscriptions of people suggested by the publishers? The brother quoted was actually in the publishing business at the church's expense. He was "editor", styled so by himself, of a church bulletin. He published a number of song books for use in vacation Bible schools. He also published material for use in Bible classes. The above quotation was in a church publication, their bulletin. These things are not said disparagingly, for this writer believes all those things to be within the right of that church and its preacher to do. The brother, a good friend of mine, did not see any inconsistency in his teaching and practice. That "publishing company" was most certainly in that church's budget.

We should notice another objection to homes which are supervised by a board of directors other than the elders of a local church. "Would there be any difference in principle in a church contributing to a human organization through which to do its benevolent work and in contributing to a human organization through which to do its evangelistic work? If so, what is the difference? On what grounds will God's will allow the one and disallow the other? I am against the church shifting its responsibility to a human organization in the preaching of the gospel, and I am opposed, and on the same grounds, to the church shifting its responsibility to a human organization in doing its benevolent work."

### **May We "Employ" Someone to Do a Work, But May Not "Contribute" to Them to Do That Work?**

Is it so very different to employ a human organization to do a work than to "contribute" to a human organization to do the same work? Brethren have no hesitancy to make use of

a human organization, a hospital, to "visit" the sick. If a church were caring for enough needy sick people to justify a hospital's devoting full time to their care, would it become a "church hospital"? If all of a hospital's patients were receiving assistance from a church, would the staff then have to be under the supervision of the elders?

I am confident that brethren who attempt to show a parallel between orphanages and the missionary society are sincere in their arguments. We believe them to be mistaken. If they are parallel, would it not be the same logic to say that one would have to oppose buying the services of the one on the same grounds which he disallows the other? These good brethren believe it would be scriptural to send a child to a home supervised by a board of directors other than the elders of some local church and which receives no contributions from churches. Would these brethren be willing to buy the services of a missionary society which is under a board of directors and which receives no contributions from churches? Why would God allow the buying of services of a human institution for benevolence and disallow such for evangelism? We do not believe them to be parallel. To show that two things have some things in common does not prove them to be parallel. The church of Christ has many things in common with denominations, but who among us would grant that they are parallel? It is not enough to show that two things have something in common, it must be proved that those things had in common are wrong. If such practices among us parallel the missionary society, why not content one's self with using the arguments against such practices as one would in opposing the missionary society? Why bother to establish a parallel? Comparisons, analogies, resemblances, parallels, and illustrations serve to clarify matters but never constitute proof that something is sinful.

If brethren continue to believe that it is sinful for churches to support individually supervised orphanages on the same grounds which they would oppose churches contributing to the missionary society, they must either deny individuals the right to operate orphanages (which they now believe to be right) or else allow that individuals have the same right to operate a "preaching society" on the same lines. We believe the missionary society to be sinful, but it is not the purpose of this work to deal with the question of the society.

### **How and Where Shall a Home Be Financed?**

Regardless of the proper method of supervision for a children's home, there remains the question of finance. Since there has been no disagreement regarding the individual's right to contribute to such homes, that question shall be passed over here. It has also been generally agreed that if a church has a right to supervise a home to take care of the needy in its midst, it has the right to assume the financial burden of such care. It is as generally agreed that when a congregation is not financially able to care for the needy in its midst, sister congregations may send funds to assist in meeting those needs.

Differences arise when we come to what some have been pleased to designate as "brotherhood projects." For example, here is a home for children and is under the supervision of the elders of some local church. This home receives children without regard to the locality in which they formerly resided. Furthermore, the elders receive money from sister churches to assist with the financial burden of caring for these children. This involves both the matter of who may receive care and whether or not they must be the particular charge of the church which administers the care.

A recent editorial stated some definite views of this subject. "It is the responsibility of the church, according to its ability, in any locality to care for the fatherless who are it's obligation. (Emphasis mine, L.G.H.). This obligation would include, at least those orphans whose parents had been faithful members of the church. If the father, a member of the church, should die, survived by his wife and children, if the widow were a widow indeed, it would be the responsibility of the church of which the widow is a member to support her and her children. If the church where the widow is a member were unable to support the mother and the children, another church or churches could send to the church in need so it could care for the needy mother and her children.

"However, it is somewhat different from the above for a congregation to create a need by receiving fatherless children from other localities and then to beg other churches of Christ for money to support `your' orphans. Each church is to provide for its own; for those who are its responsibility."

This lengthy quotation is justified since it states the objection so well. Let us carefully notice some of the concessions granted in this statement. This is not an attack on the editor. This writer has no reason to believe that the editor has anything but the deepest of convictions of what he wrote. One does not have to be aware of concessions in order to make them. How can one reconcile the statement, "Each church is to provide for its own; for those who are its responsibility" with the statement that "other churches could send to the church in need so it could care for the needy mother and her children"? Would the receiving church really be providing for its own, or would the contributing church be providing for them? We, too, believe that a church may properly receive such assistance. However, is not this a concession that a church may support the poor who are not in their midst or locality? To deny a church the right to receive such needy people from other localities is to say that a church may support the needy from another locality but cannot supervise such care. There would also be this inevitable conclusion: It would be right to send the aid where the needy person is, but would be sinful to move the needy person to the locality where the aid is supplied. It would be a mere technicality, but would brethren be satisfied if a needy child (or, children) were moved to the locality where a church cares for homeless children, let them become the "responsibility" and "particular charge" of that church, then sister churches could assist that church to care for "its own"? We think not.

Our brother stated that a church's obligation would "include, at least those orphans whose parents had been faithful members of the church." He did not exclude others. How could the needs of a little innocent child be determined by whether or not its parents had been faithful members of the church? Also, how could its needs be determined by whether or not its parents are living? Many times children have not the faintest idea where their parents are. They are in need, nonetheless. The same sort of reasoning which would deny the church the right to receive such children would at the same time deny an individual the right to adopt them.

If children are to be received regardless of whether or not their parents were Christians, what children would constitute the "particular charge" of any given church? In cities where there are many congregations and whose members are greatly intermingled in the city, who could draw lines and tell a church that all the homeless children within a certain boundary would be considered the charges of a particular congregation? In Jerusalem where the number of disciples was multiplied greatly and where they were "breaking bread from house to house," there was one program for the care of the widows. Those who sold their possessions to care for the needy, "brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." Acts 4:34\_35.

One of the most repeated objections to such cooperation is that it provides a means for the universal church to function as a unit. All are in agreement that there is to be no ecclesiastical structure for the whole church, but in effect these good brethren would erect one by restricting a local church's responsibilities to a given vicinity. The Roman Church has its formally organized diocese, we would have an informally organized one.

Since it is agreed that one church may send aid to another church to care for "its own needy," it becomes a question of when does a person become one of a congregation's own needy? Is it the time element? Must one have been there a year? six months? a week? Or, is it a geographical matter? Must they be from the same city? county? state? Or, is it a matter of proximity? Must the needy one reside closer to one congregation than to another? Or, is it a matter of lineal descent? Is it a question of where the needy one's relatives attend church? Is it not rather a matter of a group of Christians who are willing to assume the responsibility of seeing that the needy one is properly cared for under their supervision?

### **Summary**

For the reasons set forth in this chapter, we are persuaded that orphanages, widow's homes, homes for the aged, etc., have a right to exist. We believe that such a home may be operated by a local church under the oversight of its elders, or that it may be supervised by another board of directors. We further believe that in either case, such a home may properly receive assistance from both churches and individuals. Also, we

believe that children, widows, and aged people may be received into such homes without regard to previous residence or locality.

This writer humbly recognizes that godly and learned brethren are in disagreement regarding these matters. The foregoing is not intended to be an authoritative decree on the subject. It is prayerfully hoped to provoke thought in the belief that it will survive the critical examination given it. It is not presented in opposition to any person. The writer recognizes that good brethren may differ and should study their differences charitably.

### **Questions**

1. Would there be any value in discussing HOW to operate or finance a children's home if its very existence were inherently sinful?
2. Does it require means to carry out most commands?
3. To what extent may we go in providing for needy children? Food? Shelter? Clothing? Care? Supervision ?
4. Is the provision of all such needs "Institutionalism"?
5. Can the needs of a child be determined by whether or not its natural parents are living?
6. Can the needs of a child be determined by whether or not its parents have been (faithful) embers of the church?
7. Does the church have any responsibility in caring for orphans?
8. Can Divine Law be set aside in cases of emergency?
9. Has God bound any particular means of caring for the fatherless? If your answer is yes, be prepared to give scriptural authority.
10. Does a defense of orphanages mean that one favors putting all fatherless children in such homes?
11. Would the abuse or misuse of such homes invalidate their right to exist?
12. Must such homes be under the supervision of the elders of some local church?
13. May churches "as such" contribute to such homes?
14. Is there any essential difference in contributing to a home to care for children, and in paying for a specified child's care?

15. If an orphanage is parallel to a missionary society, why could a church buy the services of one but not the other?

16. Is it right to send the aid to where the needy person is, but wrong to move the needy person to where the aid is furnished?

## HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

### Chapter IV

#### **COMPLETELY FURNISHED**

One of the most fundamental principles in the re\_establishment of New Testament Christianity is that the Bible is an all\_sufficient guide in all matters religious. It is contended that whatever is taught by the Bible must be scrupulously observed and that whatever it does not enjoin upon us must as scrupulously be omitted. Of course, this principle is a scriptural one: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." 1 Peter 4:11. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Colossians 3:17. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." 2 John 9.

#### **Both the Church and the Individual Are Completely Furnished**

These Scriptures should be studied very carefully. Our preaching has left the impression upon people that these have their application in what a church may or may not do. An observance of these Scriptures will keep a church from going beyond what is written and also from falling short of what God expects: However, these statements are general, not applicable to churches alone. An individual must do all, word or deed, in the name of Christ. The Scriptures furnish an individual unto every good work, "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

#### **Its Relation to Cooperation**

What possible relation could this principal have with the question of cooperation among churches? What is the significance of the fact that the Scriptures as certainly furnish the individual unto every good work as it does the church for all its activities? This: Many brethren readily approve many good works when performed by a group of individual Christians but as readily condemn the same work when done by a local church. On what basis is such a good work denied to a congregation? Because "it exists by a type of church cooperation which is without scriptural authority."

What reasoning would allow a group of individuals to engage in a type of cooperation for which they cannot find command, example, or necessary inference, yet deny a group of churches that right for the absence of the same kind of "scriptural authority"? If the law

of liberty allows an individual, or group of individuals, to do a good work, the details of which are not given in the Scriptures, why would not that same law of liberty apply to a church, or churches, for that particular work? This is with the understanding that such a work is not contrary to any established rule governing the actions of a church. Certainly the preaching of the gospel and the doing of benevolent deeds is not denied to a church. It is likewise agreed that such works are allowable for the individual to cooperate with each other in such works? They are agreeable to individuals cooperating in the operation of a children's home, the publishing of a journal, the operation of a "Christian college." By demanding the same kind of proof they demand, we could conclude that such projects are wrong because "they exist by a type of individual cooperation which is without scriptural authority."

If 2 Timothy 3:16\_17 is violated when a local church does a given work, why would there not be the same violation in the case of an individual who does the same work? This must be understood to be a case where God's Divine system of church government is not disturbed. What about the case of the Pharisees: "And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and of tables." Mark 7:4. It is recognized that such actions were altogether acceptable for individuals to perform as acts of cleanliness but wrong to introduce into the worship of God. Does this mean that such acts would be denied to the church? By no means. Who would deny the church the right to send someone to the house of an incapacitated person to clean the house and do the dishes and wash the clothes? These things would not be introduced into the worship of God but nonetheless would be a work of the church. Neither the individual nor the church has a right to introduce any foreign element into the worship. What can a Christian do in cases of benevolence or evangelism which the local church could not do? At least, could have done? This discussion does not concern those matters which are wholly secular, such as operating a business for profit. However, there is no legitimate transaction of business which others perform for profit or gain which the church could not do as an act of charity. For example, the church often gives groceries. The grocer sells them. The church often gives clothes. The clothier sells them, etc.

Let the following illustration serve to clarify the matter: Many conscientious brethren are opposed to a local church maintaining a children's home under the supervision of the eldership of a local church, supported by a number of churches, and which receives children from a wide\_spread area. However, many of the same brethren approve of a children's home if not under the supervision of a local eldership and which does not accept contributions from churches. Why is such a home condemned when supervised by elders? Because the Scriptures completely furnish us to every good work and it makes no provision for a church's maintenance of such a home. QUESTION: Where do the Scriptures make specific provisions for such a home when not under supervision of the elders of a local church? ANSWER: Such a home is simply an expedient to the command to care for the fatherless. If it can be an expedient to the command for an individual, why not for a church?

## **Must We Have Detailed Examples?**

Do the Scriptures give all the detailed circumstances under which one congregation may assist another in a work? Does the Bible ever tell of an instance where one church sent another church money to help pay their preacher? No. We know Paul received help from other churches while he preached at Corinth. There is no indication that he received it through the church at Corinth. For lack of such a detailed example, shall it be forbidden, or is the case of such assistance for the poor a sufficient example? We all believe it to be sufficient. Never do we read of one church's sending aid to another to help construct a building. We allow it on the same principle as help for the poor.

## **A Church's Work, or a "Brotherhood" Work?**

With few exceptions, our brethren recognize the right of a church to employ a preacher to devote his full time to work among and with them. These same brethren recognize the right of that same church to send a preacher to another field to do what is commonly called "mission work." There are good brethren who raise no objection to that church's receiving assistance to help maintain the preacher who labors among them. The same brethren sometimes object to that church's receiving assistance to maintain the preacher away from home. What is the basis for accepting one and rejecting the other? We are told that one is to help a church to do "her own work" and the other is not, but is to do a "general brotherhood work." It is evident that if such reasoning is accurate, then a church which fully supports a preacher in a "mission work" is doing something other than "her own work." Yet, everyone recognizes it as "her own work" if the church supports it without assistance. If assistance makes a mission work something other than her own work, why would not assistance to pay the local preacher make that work something other than "her own work"? If true of one, it would be true of both.

## **Summary**

If the Scriptures completely furnish the church but not the individual, it should be proved and demonstrated for the benefit of the brotherhood. If such a limited application is erroneous, it should be pointed out. We believe that it has. One may be ready to say that if the individual is completely furnished to all good works it would reverse our stand on a number of matters. Let us first be concerned with learning truth, then be prepared to accept whatever consequences follow, however sweeping they may be.

If this interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:16\_17 is true, it is obvious that any benevolence or evangelism I may do as an individual, the church may do unless the work by its very nature or circumstances is confined to an individual; or, unless by the very nature and organization of the church it cannot do; or, unless the church is specifically forbidden to do. Any one of these conditions would limit an action to the individual. If objections are

raised, it must be on other grounds than: "That would mean that a church could do this" or "That would mean that a church could do thus and so." Determine first if the principle be true. Determine whether or not it violates any other portion of scripture. If the principle is true, then is the time to determine what it allows and disallows.

The Scriptures do furnish us completely unto all good E works, whether those works are performed individually or by a congregational unit.

### Questions

1. Is the church "as such," or the man of God, said to be completely furnished unto all good works?
2. On the basis of this, is it reasonable to demand scriptural details for every good work done by a local church, yet the individual is not required to furnish such details for every good work he does?
3. How much detail is required to have "scriptural authority" for doing something?
4. What scriptures are given as a basis for individual cooperation in operating a children's home? Publishing a journal? Operating a "Christian college"?
5. If Christians can act under general authority for such cooperation, by what logic can the same be denied to local churches?
6. Sometimes individuals and congregations operate under one command, as, "Go teach all nations." Are the same expedients available to both an carrying out such commands?
7. Is a church doing something other than "her own work" when she supports a preacher in a "mission field"?
8. Is it her work if she fully supports it, but not her work if she receives assistance?
9. Would assistance to support a local work make the program something other than that church's own work?

# HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

## Chapter V

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

Every true Christian is interested in learning what are his responsibilities before God and man. Having learned our responsibilities, we should be as anxious to perform them. The problem of church cooperation is vitally connected with the matter of responsibility. It is generally agreed that Christians have responsibilities as a part of some local congregation and at the same time have responsibilities as individuals, without respect to local church membership.

#### **Its Relation to Cooperation**

The question of responsibility is related to cooperation in this manner: There are brethren who teach that one church may send a gift to another provided that the gift is to assist the receiving church to perform a work which is her peculiar responsibility. It is further contended that one church cannot assist another church to do a work to which both are equally related. The work must be the responsibility of the receiving church and not that of the contributing church.

To properly examine such cooperation, it becomes necessary to understand fully the nature of responsibility. Also, there must be some means of knowing when something becomes our responsibility.

The brethren who oppose most of the cooperation as it is being practiced among us have written in a very clear manner as to the scriptural principle of responsibility. However, we believe there has been a failure to make a right application of the principle after it has been given. Let us notice a quotation from a prominent preacher who opposes such cooperation: "After we have done our full duty as congregations or individuals, there may still remain much to be done, but our responsibility is coextensive with our ability. (Emphasis mine, L.G.H.). We have a responsibility to feed the hungry but when we have reached the limit of our ability in that respect we are not held responsible for the millions who may be just as hungry and just as deserving. In like manner there is a limit to the ability of a local congregation and beyond this the Lord does not expect us to go.

To this, all should be able to give agreement. However, the implications of this principle are broad. In fact, they are most destructive to the brother's stand regarding church cooperation. The principle of responsibility applies equally well to churches and individuals. Also, it applies with the same force with reference to a local responsibility or to a mission responsibility.

**Opportunity Plus Ability Equals Responsibility**

In the event of doubt that responsibility is according to opportunity and ability, it would be in order to study the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14\_30). In this parable, a man traveling to a far country called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. He gave to every man according to his several ability, that which he was capable; of managing. It has long been recognized that this capability coupled with the opportunity created a responsibility. In the absence of ability (or capability), one does not have responsibility. God never requires one to perform that which he cannot do. In the absence of opportunity (in this parable it was finance), one does not have responsibility. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." 2 Corinthians 8:12. No individual or church is responsible for more than it can do. No one (or church) has the responsibility to do that which he is unable to do.

### **Doing One's Own Work**

Let us hear from another brother who also opposes church cooperation as we practice it. Regarding the Parable of The Talents: "How well this parable illustrates what God justly expects of his church. The Lord has made each independent congregation responsible for doing its own work to the best of its ability!"

With this understanding of the nature of responsibility, it is evident that no individual, or church, requires the aid of another to meet his responsibilities. What I do not have the means to accomplish cannot be my responsibility. When each means are made available, then and not until then do I have the responsibility. What one requires aid to do cannot be his peculiar responsibility. God will not regard something as a man's duty which that man cannot perform. If the task cannot be done without assistance, there is no sole responsibility. When such assistance is furnished so that there is now both ability and opportunity, then one has a responsibility. It is clear that there can be no such circumstance as sending funds to another church to help her to fulfill her "peculiar responsibility." In the absence of means, she has no responsibility to fulfill. Where is the responsibility? Would there not be a responsibility on the part of a contributing church if she has the ability and opportunity even though the need exists among those of another locality? They have the opportunity and ability to provide financial aid. The receiving church will then have the opportunity and ability to dispense such financial aid. This is not a matter of a church's turning over her work to another church to do for her. In this case, the work of the contributing church would be that of providing aid. The work of the receiving church would be that of dispensing aid. Each church would be doing its own work, fulfilling its own responsibility.

### **Responsibility: Individual and Group**

It is in order also to give notice to the matter of church responsibility and individual responsibility. It is a point of agreement that there are duties which are of a personal nature and other duties which are of a congregational nature. For example, it is the duty of the church to conduct public worship, but I may have individual duties assigned me in the program of worship. It may be that the work of the church will be identical with that which an individual might do. For example, the church might assume the burden of caring for a widow "indeed." However, "if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents." 1 Timothy 5:4. The work would be no different in either case. The responsibility of the church was not determined by the nature of the work but rather by whether or not there were relatives to assume the burden. There are duties which are specifically addressed to individuals: "Husbands love your wives," "Children obey your parents," etc. However, nothing should be construed to be of a strictly personal nature unless it is so specified or unless by the context or by the very nature of the duty it is necessarily so. One must not arbitrarily draw lines of individual duty and congregational duty.

Another duty which is fulfilled either individually or as a unit is that of teaching. Without doubt the New Testament churches conducted programs of teaching (1 Corinthians 14). At the same time, we find individuals teaching without respect to local church membership (Acts 8:4). The individual is not competing with the congregation in teaching. Rather, they supplement each other. One finds himself confronted with a dual responsibility: teaching individually and as a part of a functional unit known as a local church. In the broadest meaning of "church," he is at work in the church in fulfilling both these responsibilities. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Ephesians 3:21. At the same time, we are enjoined: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31. We glorify God in the church by Christ Jesus in all that we do as Christians, whether it be in our work or in our play. Christ-like conduct always glorifies God. Since we are in the body of Christ at all times, all that we do is in the church. If by "church" one means the local church, then preaching the gospel is not limited to the church for we have a duty as individuals to teach God's word. The same would be true of benevolent work. How then would such work be the "peculiar responsibility" of the local church? How could it be said that another church was assisting such a church to fulfil its "own duty"? How much of such work in a locality is the responsibility of the local church and how much is the responsibility of the individuals?

### **Does the Church Have a Responsibility To the Fatherless**

Some have set forth the view that the support of the fatherless is wholly an individual responsibility, that there is no command, example, or necessary inference that the church should care for orphans. It is taught that James 1:27 concerns individual action altogether

because the context reads: "and keep himself unspotted from the world." That this part is individual and personal is readily granted. Notice the complete reading: "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 is no question but that this includes individual care of the fatherless and widows, but does it exclude the church in such care? We know it does not. Acts 6 gives an example of a church's caring for widows. 1 Timothy 5 gives the command. Since James 1:27 includes widows, it is certain that the teaching does not exclude the church in such care. Again, if this excludes congregational activity, then nothing done in a congregational capacity can be considered as pure and undefiled religion, such being confined to individuals! Pure and undefiled religion would be limited to all deeds done on an individual and personal basis.

### **What Shall Determine a Responsibility?**

The right of a church to maintain a home in which to care for widows or orphans will be discussed in a separate chapter. However, if it has such a right, what persons shall be considered as being her responsibility? How far does a church's responsibility reach geographically? Can it reach past another congregation? Did the responsibility of Antioch reach unto Corinth? At the time Paul went to Corinth there were a number of churches in Asia Minor, much closer geographically to Corinth than was Antioch of Syria from whence Paul went. Who is willing to draw lines around any given church and say, "You may care for the widows and fatherless within these boundaries, but no further?" Also, "It shall be considered as your responsibility to preach to the lost within these boundaries, but you must not exceed them"? Or, "You may receive assistance from other churches to do a work within these boundaries, but if you go beyond them you must support that work without assistance?" In many cities, members often pass by two or three congregations in going to the particular place where they worship. How shall several congregations divide their responsibilities?

With reference to responsibility and cooperation, we are told that a church may send aid to another church to help care for the widows and fatherless who are their peculiar responsibility. Who among us is willing to witness as to what constitutes the proper limits beyond which a church has no duty? To assign a local church such boundaries would be to do the very thing which all of us would protest: organize the universal church.

### **Are We Creating Needs, or Recognizing Them?**

Sometimes brethren who have taken the widows and fatherless from far and near and have received help from sister churches in caring for them have been charged with "creating a need" artificially. There is a great difference in creating a need and in attempting to make provisions for one which already exists. They have not created a need, they have recognized one. One does not create a need simply by bringing a needy person into our locality. There is a vast difference in moving a needy person and in

creating a need. To build a hospital does not make people ill, but provides adequate means to care for those who are ill and those who will become so. A children's home does not make orphaned children, but provides a place of care for those who are homeless and those who will become so.

### **Do We Destroy a Sense of Personal Responsibility?**

It has been said that the "institutionalized methods" of benevolence have all but destroyed the sense of personal responsibility. To be able to do some work representatively most certainly does not mean that one can fail to render aid first\_hand whenever it is possible for him to do so. In the case of the Good Samaritan, the injured man was in need of immediate help. The Samaritan rendered such aid. However, for some reason he considered it best that he put the man in the care of an innkeeper and continue his journey. He asked the innkeeper to do whatever was necessary and upon his return he would pay the expenses. For many and varied reasons it is not always expedient to render personal service, but it becomes necessary to find someone else who will attend to such services and in return receive pay. Certainly if a church cares for either the sick or hungry or naked, it must use means. These means may be some of the members of the local church, the members of another congregation, perhaps a hotel, cafe, or hospital. Whatever the means used, aid requires a medium of service. If such people requiring care were of sufficient numbers and with such regularity as to require full\_time workers, who would deny that the church could rightfully maintain a staff to care for the needs? If it had the ability and opportunity to alleviate distress, would it not become responsible? The church in Jerusalem evidently thought it had a responsibility toward some widows (Acts 6) . Did that mean that the individuals must have lost their sense of personal duty when such cooperative aid was required? We must have a willingness to render aid to those who require it whether it be as a part of the congregation or a personal service.

### **Summary**

When does one have a responsibility in any matter? When something good and right needs to be done and one has both the ability and opportunity to perform the deed. j If one does not have the means to achieve a goal, it is not yet his duty. If he has the ability and opportunity to acquire the means, then it is his responsibility to obtain the means. Having acquired the means, it then becomes his responsibility to perform the task.

All Christians have responsibilities to perform personally, they also have responsibilities to perform in conjunction with others functioning as a local church. Others may be relieved of their burdens but not their responsibilities. No one can fulfill another's duty for him. There is no such thing as assisting another to perform his responsibilities. Two or more people may work together in meeting their responsibilities. Everyone is responsible only to 'the extent of what he can do. This principle is true whether applied to

individual action or to group activity. Let us close this chapter with this thought: If one church can give to another church only to aid that church meet its own responsibilities, then under no conditions could one church ever send an offering to another church. To this no one would agree, and rightfully so. But why would this be true? Because no church ever requires assistance to perform its duty. It has no duty to do what it cannot do. What then shall we conclude? To receive assistance, a church need not have a peculiar responsibility but rather an opportunity to meet a need. When it receives the means it will then have the responsibility to meet the need. The question of need is discussed in another chapter. Let us all seek to fulfill all our responsibilities, both congregationally and individually.

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### Questions

1. In what two general respects do Christians have responsibilities? Distinguish group and individual responsibility.
2. What is meant by "peculiar responsibility"?
3. What two factors bring about a responsibility?
4. Does God ever require more of man than he can do?
5. Is something "one's own work" which he is unable to do?
6. Does any person, or group, require assistance to fulfil his responsibilities?
7. In view of this, does one church ever send funds to another church to help it fulfil its "peculiar responsibility"?
8. Is glorifying God confined to any particular phase of our lives, or does it concern the whole of living?
9. Is it the peculiar responsibility of the local church to preach the gospel? To do acts of benevolence? If so, could such be any part of an individual's responsibility?
10. Does a congregation have any responsibility to the fatherless?
11. Do we create needs by bringing orphans into our vicinity?
12. Does the maintenance of orphanages to care for some of the homeless destroy a sense of personal responsibility?
13. Do we have the right to relieve others of their responsibilities?

14. Must a church have a peculiar responsibility before outside assistance to do a work?

## HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

### Chapter VI

#### **REPRESENTATIVE WORK**

The question of cooperation among churches and individuals could not be adequately discussed without giving some notice to the matter of doing work representatively. Is there ever a time when an individual or church may make use of an intermediate agency in performing a good work? If so, to what extent?

#### **Work "of" and "for" the Church**

There are those who find occasion to distinguish between a work "of" the church and a work "for" the church. A work for the church is one which is of such a nature that it need not be performed by a Christian, the church may hire a sinner to do it. A work of the church is one which must be performed by Christians. For example, the church might employ a sinner to construct a building in which to meet. This would be a work "for" the church. The church need not do such a work personally, it may have it done. The preaching of the gospel is a work "of" the church because it is a work which must not be delegated to others.

Because these terms have some merit, unless one exercises caution he might easily be led into false conclusions. The general truthfulness of such a distinction is readily granted. However, an unrestrained application of such distinctions is an indication of a very limited view of Christianity. Too many people seem to think that Christianity affects only certain phases of our lives. Actually, anything that contributes to the furtherance of the cause of Christ is worthy of the greatest Christian diligence. For example, if the construction of a building will facilitate the work of saving sinners and edifying Christians, then it is worthy of the time and effort of Christians in erecting such a structure. If the building is an expedient to carry out the command to preach and to worship, then so is the construction of the building.

#### **As the Members Do, So Does the Church**

Let us examine the distinction of work "for" the church and work "of" the church. The church in such usage refers to the congregational unit. It could not refer to anything other than work thought of as done by the membership in unison. It could not mean an exclusive work of the congregational unit. Certainly benevolence and preaching the gospel are works of the church as a unit, but not exclusively so. The individual may do both without any thought of his local membership. When he does so, is he trying to usurp the work of the local church? He is only meeting his personal obligations. However, since he is a part of the body of Christ, he is doing a work of the church. We must not consider

the church to be one thing and the members to be something different. What the members do, the church does. Someone objects by asking, "If a member gets drunk, does the church get drunk?" Is that so ridiculous in the light of the fact that the world finds its estimation of the church in the life of its members? Did the church at Corinth throw a drunken and gluttonous party? 1 Corinthians 11:21\_22.

### **Is Preaching a Work "of" the Church or "for" the Church?**

We are told that preaching the gospel is a work "of" the church. If that means it must be done personally and individually in all cases (cannot be done representatively), what conclusion must one draw? The church as a group could never preach the gospel in this manner. Everyone would be talking at once. They must necessarily have a spokesman, a representative. If a work "of" the church cannot be done through a representative, then preaching the gospel is not a work of the local church. If so, when a preacher gives a discourse, it must be understood that the church is in no wise fulfilling her responsibility to preach. They are paying him to do a work "for" the church! Is the preacher simply meeting his personal obligations when he preaches? Or, since he is doing so under the oversight of the church, is it also their work? When Paul told the Corinthian brethren that he robbed other churches, taking wages of them while he had done work in Corinth, shall we conclude that these "other churches" did no mission work, but that Paul alone (in this instance) did missionary work? If these other churches were preaching in Corinth, it was representatively.

### **\*Can You Receive a Prophet's Reward?**

The principle of representative work has the endorsement of scripture. "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." Matthew 10:40\_41. Notice in particular the matter of receiving a prophet. To receive a prophet is to entertain him as a guest and thus aid him in his mission. What does it mean to receive a prophet's reward? Does it not mean to receive the same reward which the prophet receives? The evident meaning of the passage is: to aid a prophet in his work is to be regarded by the Lord as doing the work which the prophet does, hence to receive the same reward the prophet receives. "He that receiveth a prophet from no ulterior motive, but simply qua prophet (ut prophetam, Jer.) would receive a reward in the coming age equal to that of his guest" (McNeile). This is nothing short of doing work representatively. John expressed the same idea: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 10\_11. Of course, one would likewise be partaker of the deeds of one who brought the right doctrine.

This in no way intimates that a Christian could or should attempt to do all his work through a representative. It is designed to show that at least a part of the Christian's work

is that of assisting others in a work and thus sharing in the work. The same is true of the local church. When a church purchases tracts for distribution, is the person who actually hands the tract to someone the only person who can be said to obey the command to teach? Does the person who wrote the tract receive no credit in the sight of God? Does the church which purchased the tract have nothing to do with any teaching which results from the distribution of it? Who can be said to have done a given work? Everyone who has a part in the work, including those who finance the work.

The principle of representative work is involved when a church sends a gift to another church to assist in a work which it is doing. If the gift is to help pay the expenses of an evangelistic effort, the contributing church is preaching the gospel just as surely as if it had used those finances to have the preacher come to its own locality to do the preaching. In either case, the church is preaching by means of a representative, the preacher.

### **Writing the Check**

Most of the cooperative work among churches and individuals involves the principle of representative work. Let us hear from a brother who opposes much of the cooperative work among churches: "With the increase of centralized projects dependent on the support of large numbers of other congregations, many smaller congregations begin to feel that their responsibilities in mission work, benevolent work, etc., are fulfilled by writing a check and sending it to some other congregation which is superintending the work."

The implication of such a statement is that no responsibility can be fulfilled by "writing the check" and sending it to another congregation to assist in preaching or benevolence. I know of no brother who favors current methods of cooperation who would take the position that all responsibilities can be met by such efforts. Let us notice the consequences of the brother's implications. If we must personally be on foreign soil in order to do foreign mission work, then a church which wholly supports a given mission program, superintends it, and considers such to be its work in every sense, is not doing mission work. The church is not personally on foreign soil, only the representative is. This would no more be mission work than to "write the check" and send to another congregation which is overseeing such a work. It would be mission work by representation in either case. The natural conclusion to such a position would be that no one is doing mission work except those actually in the field. On the other hand, if those who supply the funds are doing preaching abroad, why would it not be just as true even if the funds reached him indirectly ?

### **Who Does Benevolence?**

These same principles apply equally well in the matter of benevolence. Who does benevolent work? Can we benevolent work by supplying the needed funds, or we

personally administer the funds? This must not be interpreted to mean that one may do all his work by way of finance, but it is intended to show that the financing is also a benevolent work.

One brother has attempted to demonstrate that a superintendent of a children's home is not doing benevolent work for he is simply performing a task for which being paid. There is much more involved than "so much work, so much pay" in superintending such a home, but for the sake of showing the invalidity of the position in general, we will grant this premise. It was asserted in the same manner that the matrons, cooks, etc., were not doing benevolent work. They were doing a work "for" the church, not a work "of" the church. The obvious design of such reasoning was to show that such a work is supposed to be a work "of" the church and therefore any method of caring for children is sinful when the method makes it a work "for" the church.

### **Does the Church Preach Representatively?**

By the same method of reasoning, shall we conclude that since a preacher is paid for preaching, as well as other duties, the preaching and other duties become work "for" the church and not work "of" the church? The conclusion follows that since teaching God's word is a work "of" the church, any method of teaching which makes it a work "for" the church is sinful! Who is willing to accept such consequences? There is plain scripture to the contrary: "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your?"

Notice another inevitable conclusion of the teaching that carnal things?" (1 Cor. 9 :6, 7, 11) .

one cannot do benevolence by "writing the check" and that those who are paid to administer the needed help do no benevolence. If these two premises be true, in such a case no benevolence is done! If those who pay the bills do no benevolence and those who render the personal service do no benevolence, then who does? Yet it is self-evident that in cases of need and the need is met, there has been benevolence administered.

### **Are Deacons the Only Benevolent People in the Church "As Such"?**

There is yet another statement of this view: "We have so institutionalized and centralized benevolent work, that we don't know what deacons are supposed to do. I believe that the primary work of deacons in New Testament times was to administer the benevolent funds and care of the needy. Now we send the needy off somewhere else, and deacons don't know what they are supposed to do."

If one must personally administer funds in order to do benevolent work, then by this brother's logic the deacons were the ones to do the check" and thus benevolent work. Those who "write provide funds for the deacons to administer have not actually been benevolent. It is still true that "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). But what right have I to make it mean: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and do not personally serve tables, it profiteth me nothing"?

The principle of representative work is no different when one writes the check and a local deacon administers it and when one writes the check and sends it to another church which is caring for needy people and one of their deacons administers it. The one writing the check does not personally administer aid in either case.

### **Does Administration Determine Who Is Benevolent?**

Did the disciples of Antioch (Acts 11) do benevolent work in sending relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judea? They did not deem it necessary to go and personally supervise the distribution of that which they gave. It was sent to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. How did they administer it? The Bible does not reveal it and it would be presumptuous for anyone to contend for any particular way of their handling such relief. Did the Antioch disciples "write the check" and let another church do their work for them?

### **Summary**

Every Christian should strive to do all that he can without the use of intermediates. When possible, it is best to render services personally. Sometimes it becomes expedient to do a work through a representative. To be expedient, it must first be lawful. That it is lawful to do work representatively is illustrated in the case of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), the relief for Judea (Acts 11), and the bounty for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25\_26; 2 Cor. 8 and 9). These cases concern both individual and congregational action.

We would be among the first to protest that a Christian can do all of his work with a check\_book. We are equally persuaded that those who provide funds do fulfil certain responsibilities in evangelizing and benevolence.

"He that receiveth a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward."

### **Questions**

1. Distinguish between a work "of" the church and a work "for" the church? Can strict applications be made on the basis of the general truthfulness of such a distinction?

2. Is the use of a building an expedient to the command to assemble for worship? If so, could the construction and maintenance of such a building also be an expedient?
3. Are preaching and benevolence exclusive works of the church as a congregational unit?
4. When an individual privately does benevolence and evangelism, is he usurping the work of the local church?
5. Is preaching a work "of" the church "as such"? If so, may the church make use of a representative in preaching? Does this mean a work "of" the church may be done representatively?
6. What does it mean to "receive a prophet's reward"?
7. Is any responsibility met by "writing the check" for a work?
8. Is a church doing any mission work when it pays the preacher in the mission field? If so, would it be any less true when such pay reaches him indirectly?
9. Is it representative work when a member contributes to the local church and local deacons administer such funds? Would the principle of representative work be any different if such funds were sent to another church and its deacons administered them?
10. Does the actual administration of aid determine who does benevolence?
11. Is representative work allowed an individual but denied to a congregation? If your answer is yes, be prepared to defend your answer with a "Thus saith the Lord."

## HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

### Chapter VII

#### **IF SOME, WHY NOT ALL?**

This book is not intended as a review of objections. However, in showing how our practice is in harmony with both reason and revelation it becomes necessary to show the fallacy of certain objections. Perhaps the most appealing objection to the general public is this: "If it is right to do part of our work through another congregation, why not all of it?" Since this reasoning seems to have such an appeal, it becomes necessary to examine it both in the light of reason, revelation, and the practice of those who propagate it.

In order for the argument to have its full force, we shall give a direct quotation from one of its most brilliant proponents: "If 1,000 churches can do radio work through one church, all congregations could do their radio work through one congregation. Thus, the church universal would be acting, and the eldership of one congregation would have become a planning board to direct the radio work of the church universal. Similarly, all mission work might be consolidated under the eldership of one congregation, and all benevolent work under another. Remember: if churches may cooperate in 'any good work' by pooling their funds under one eldership, our brethren have now found what the advocates of the missionary society were searching for—a medium through which the church universal may work. The church universal could function through one congregation! However, should this happen, how different it would be from the simple New Testament plan for each independent church to do its own work.

"Those who argue that churches may cooperate in 'any good work' may object that they consider it 'inexpedient' for all churches to work through one on a given project. However, this would be a tacit admission that they believe it would be scriptural for all churches to work through one; for before anything can be expedient or inexpedient, it must first be scriptural."

The quotation is lengthy but without doubt it gives a clear exposition of the objection. Another writer has stated the same idea more concisely: "It is obviously sinful for one congregation to do all of its works through another eldership. If it is sinful to do all that way, why not some." If this were sound reasoning, would it not be safe to conclude that if it is scriptural to do some work through another eldership, it is scriptural to do all our work through another eldership? To this, none of us would agree. However, it is not debatable that some such work was done.

By such reasoning, we could conclude that if it is right for one to spend any money for benevolence individually (apart from the church treasury), it would be right to spend all

in the same way. The consequences of such reasoning are far\_sweeping, so sweeping that we seriously doubt that those who so reason will be willing to accept them.

We know of no one in the brotherhood who would oppose the practice of one church's sending to another church to help build themselves a meeting\_house, or if necessary, to help support their preacher, provide them song books, etc. Shall we conclude that since they can rightfully send part of their money to another eldership, why not send all to such work? Is it reasonable to say that no work may be done representatively because it is not right to do all work representatively?

### **Individuals But Not Churches?**

It seems that the chief objections in the quoted statement is that relating to the universal church. The writer says, "The church universal could function through one congregation!" He believes that anything which would make that possible must surely be sinful. Let us see. No one would deny that an individual has the right to move to a new locality and place his membership in whatever congregation he desires. Every Christian enjoys that same right. If everyone exercised their right to have membership in that particular congregation, then all Christians would have their membership in one local church. That local church would be the universal church! You may say that it would not be logical to do so, that it will not happen, that it would be most inexpedient. All this would be true. But what principle would have been violated? None. Yet by the brother's reasoning such would be sinful "because it provides an arrangement by which the `church universal' may function through a single agency, one local church!"

The brother is of the persuasion that individuals may co\_operate. Let us again quote him and substitute "individuals" where he has "churches." "Those who argue that individuals may cooperate in `any good work' may object that they consider it 'inexpedient' for all individuals to work through one (individual) on a given project. However, this would be a tacit admission that they believe it would be scriptural for all individuals to work through one (individual) ; for before anything can be expedient or inexpedient, it must first be scriptural." If this reasoning is good regarding groups, it would be equally good regarding individuals.

Let us quote this staff writer's editor: "If one congregation is not financially able to care for its own needy, then sister congregations may be asked for help and they may send the help to the church in such need on the basis of scriptural teaching as 2 Cor. 8 and 9, and 1 Cor. 16:1, 2."

If "sister congregations" may send assistance, how many such congregations may send help? Would not one church have the same right as any other church to send such aid? If Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia could send assistance to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, why could not every church do the same? On what grounds would they be

denied such a privilege? Shall we by the brother's reasoning conclude that such action would be sinful on the basis that it would provide a medium by which the universal church could function as a unit? Would not a church (he assumes that a church(es) in Jerusalem received this aid) which is engaged in a solely local work but receives assistance for it from all other churches provide a medium for the whole church to cooperate on one project? Would the universal church be functioning as a unit? If so, we must conclude that it is not sinful, per se, for it to do so. If not, then neither is it so functioning by the "sponsoring church" method of cooperation.

### **A Ridiculous Situation**

Let us hear from another brother, "If one church has the right to plan a program larger than they can take care of, and then call on the rest of the brotherhood to help them support it, every other church has the same right, so you would have the ridiculous situation of every church planning larger programs than it could finance, and then having field men out soliciting every other church who had likewise planned bigger programs than they could finance, with each one grabbing for the other's money, and depending on which one had the best press agent as to which one was the most successful. That's a ridiculous situation, but if one church has the right to do it, every church has the same right to do it."

The ridiculous situation is readily granted. Does the fact that something can become ridiculous make it wrong? There would be no end of ridiculous situations which could be imagined. For example, no one denies that it is the right of a church to be sending out assistance to another church, yet receiving no such assistance from another church. Shall we say that since one church may so do, all churches enjoy the same right? You would then have the "ridiculous situation" of every church attempting to be a contributing church but there being no receiving church.

If any brother has the right to operate a "Christian college" every brother would enjoy the same right. If every brother exercised that right you would have the ridiculous situation of every Christian operating a school and thus leaving no other Christians to attend! Thus, no brother has a right to operate such a school!

If the church in Antioch had the right to send Paul, Barnabas and certain other of them up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about the question of circumcision, then every church had the same right to send men to that same meeting. "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders . . . And the apostles and elders come together, for to consider of this matter" (Acts 15:4, 6). Barnabas and Paul were in that meeting. Verse 12. If this group could receive men from Antioch, why not from all the other churches? If some, why not all? Who among us would deem such a meeting advisable? The apostles and elders wrote a letter unto the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. They also sent chosen men with Barnabas and Paul. This was not a case of just an apostle writing such a letter. This was not a case of

just an apostle writing such a letter. The elders had a part in it. If they could send such a letter to a few churches, why not all? If they could send "chosen men" to these churches, why not to all? To argue they acted under Divine guidance does not weaken the point, it strengthens it.

### **Summary**

The argument of "If some, why not all?" will not stand the test. On the surface, it appears to have great merit. When applied to the great variety of things a church may do, it becomes obvious that such reasoning is false. For example, if it is permissible for a church to send part of its funds to another church to assist it to do "its work," why not send all funds to other churches? If it is scriptural to spend some church funds for a building, would it be right to never spend any money on anything else but buildings? If it is right to do part of our teaching in Bible classes, why not all of it? Even if permissible, would it be expedient?

No good work should be discarded on the basis that it would be sinful, or even inexpedient, to attempt to do all of our work by the same means.

### **Questions**

1. May an individual spend any of his money for benevolence or preaching apart from the congregation?
2. If it is permissible for an individual to spend some of his money apart from the congregation, is it right to spend all in the same manner?
3. Is there a scriptural example of a church's doing some work through a medium? If so, does that mean it would be right to do all work through a medium?
4. Is it permissible for an individual to do part of his work through a medium or representative? If so, would not each and every Christian be privileged to make use of that same medium? If they did so, would that provide a medium for the universal church to function as a unit?

## Chapter VIII

### **RELIEF FOR JERUSALEM**

#### **Can We Assume A Basic Point?**

The controversy concerning church cooperation has many interesting sidelights. There have been many points which have been assumed without any proof whatsoever. This has been true of proponents of either view. An assumed point is often used as a premise for many other statements. This is not a safe course, regardless of the honor and integrity of those who innocently do so.

#### **Was the Relief for Jerusalem Sent To Any Church(es) "As Such"?**

One such point is that the offerings which Paul and others gathered for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem were delivered to "the Jerusalem church." Still others take the stand that the offerings were delivered to a plurality of congregations in Jerusalem. Actually, there is no intimation that Paul and the others ever delivered the funds to the Jerusalem church or churches. There is not even a hint that he intended to do so. If so, such should be forthcoming from those who reason from these assumptions.

How can this be used as an example of the circumstances under which one church may contribute to another church until it is first proved that a church, or churches, in Jerusalem received such offerings? This is used in the sense of money being taken from one "church treasury" and put into another "church treasury." Some have asserted that this is a pattern for churches sending to another church in dire need, and that one church can contribute to another church only to produce equality. Proof is called for which demonstrates anything in the case of relief for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem that even intimates that funds were sent to a local church, or local churches.

#### **Was the Church "As Such" in Need?**

Of this contribution, Paul said, "For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:26). There is no intimation that all the saints in Jerusalem were in need. This contribution was not for the "church as such," as brethren are fond of saving, but for the "poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem." (American Standard Edition). Some have objected that the offering must have been received by the church because Paul asked the Romans to pray that "my ministrations which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints" (Rom. 15:31). Saints may constitute a local church, but Christians are saints without regard to their particular local church membership. Paul did much evil to the saints at Jerusalem (Acts 9:13), but there is no indication that he ever persecuted local

churches "as such." He made havoc of the church. His wrath was not directed at some particular local church, his attack was against Christians regardless of local membership. He sought those of The Way, disciples of the Lord, those who called upon the name of the Lord. Would not the contribution for the poor in Jerusalem be received of "the saints" if it were received by a plurality of individual Christians? If not, why?

### **What Did Paul Intend To Do?**

It can be demonstrated that it was the intention of Paul and his company not only to carry the funds to Jerusalem, but to distribute them also. It can be reasonably demonstrated that because of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem it would have been next to impossible for him to have carried out his intentions. This does not erase the fact that he intended to do so, nor the fact that the others of the company of Paul could fulfil their purpose without his assistance.

### **"Administered By Us"**

This writer makes no pretensions to being a scholar in the Greek language. Relatively few people could rightfully make such a claim. One need not be a scholar in the language to determine the basic meaning of a Greek word and the places in scripture where such a word is used. That will be the extent of its use with reference to the relief for Jerusalem.

Such a study of the Greek words diakoneo and diakonia will prove most helpful in this case. "And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:18\_21). Paul says twice in this reading, "which is administered by us." "Administered" is rendered from diakonoumene, present passive participle form of diakoneo. It is variously defined as: To minister to, attend upon, relieve, to wait at table and offer food and drink to the guests, supply the necessaries of life, administer, care for one's needs.

It should be of benefit to read a great number of other places in scripture where this same word is found and try to determine what is meant by "administer." It is with reference to the same "abundance which is administered by us" of which Paul again speaks in Romans 15:25, "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister (diakonon) unto the saints."

The same verb (diakoneo) is used with reference to the work of the Seven in the care of the widows in Jerusalem. "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve (diakonein) tables" (Acts 6:2). No one doubts what the work of the Seven was. If

Paul was related to the relief for Jerusalem as the Seven were to the work of relieving the widows, then Paul intended to personally administer relief, or supervise it.

The same verb is used to describe the action of Peter's mother\_in\_law after she was healed of a fever. "She arose, and ministered unto them" (Matt. 8:15).

It is used to describe the work neglected by those who failed to help Christ by failing to help others. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" (Matt. 25:44).

It is also used to describe the work of one who attended a table. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37). "Will serve" is rendered from diakonei, third person, singular, future indicative of diakoneo.

This word is used to tell of the work of Martha. "But Martha was cumbered about much serving (diakonian), and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve (diakonein) alone? bid her therefore that she help me" (Luke 10:40).

The use of diakoneo with reference to temporal matters is surely clear. These are cases of personal help and service.

The case in Acts 6 should help us to better understand what Paul intended to do with reference to the bounty of 2 Cor. 8 and 9. The Grecians murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The twelve called together the multitude of the disciples and told them to select "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). These men were to be in charge of the ministering to the widows. They were engaged in the actual administration of benevolence. Yet the twelve said, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve (diakonein) tables." Paul, speaking of the relief for Jerusalem, said, "I go unto Jerusalem to minister (diakonon) unto the saints" (Rom. 15:25). Whatever is involved in the meaning of diakoneo is what Paul was going to Jerusalem to do.

In view of the fact that it is nowhere stated, or inferred, that Paul intended to deliver the bounty to churches in Jerusalem, is it safe to assume it since the case for a "Divine Pattern" by which one church may contribute to another church rests on such an assumption? Also, the argument of "equality" between churches rests on the same assumption.

**Did the Antioch Church "As Such" Send  
Help to Judea?**

Someone objects that the pattern for a gift from one church to another does not depend on the gifts from churches for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. We are told that such a pattern is found in Acts 11, that the church in Antioch sent relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea and that such was sent to the church, or churches. Since the relief was sent to the elders, it undeniably was received by a church, or churches. But, was it sent by a church "as such"? "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea" (Acts 11:29). Was this relief gathered by the direction of elders in Antioch? Such can never be proved. It may or may not have been given as a congregational unit. Since it cannot be proven either way, is it safe to assume it to have been done a certain way, especially when that certain way is so vital to a "pattern"? Can a pattern be established by what may have taken place? This is set forth in a published work as "NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN OF CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION (In which one church cooperates with many churches)." The one church was Antioch. The many churches were Jerusalem, Bethany, Joppa, Lydda and Emmaus. Bear in mind that "church" is used in such statements in an organizational sense, not the broad sense of Christians even when acting independently of each other. Can it be proved that such relief was "run through the church treasury"? It cannot.

### **Three So\_Called Qualifications for Scriptural Cooperation**

The purpose of contributions from one church to another has been prominent in discussions regarding cooperation. The following is in print: "To be scriptural, cooperation must have proper action (a gift from one church to another) between proper subjects (a church having abundance and a church in want) for the proper design (to produce equality)."

How do the test cases of the New Testament meet the brother's qualifications? Not at all. Notice the first: "To be scriptural, cooperation must have proper action (a gift from one church to another)." There is not an action in the New Testament which can conclusively meet such a qualification. Let those to the contrary prove a clear case of a gift from one church to another church.

What of the second qualification? "Between proper subjects (a church having abundance and a church in want)." Do we have cooperation between such "proper subjects"? In the relief from the disciples in Antioch to the brethren in Judea, did a church having abundance send to a church in want? It cannot be proved that the church in Antioch sent the relief at all, not in the limited sense in which these brethren use the word "church." They do not believe that what the members do, the church does. They use "church" in an organizational sense. That such an organizational unit sent the relief to Judea cannot be demonstrated. What about the contributions made by Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem? Were these "churches having abundance"? The

individual Christians in Corinth had an abundance (1 Cor. 8:14), but that does not mean there was an abundance in the church treasury. Paul said, "Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness" (2 Cor. 9 :3\_5 ). Someone may object that when the bounty was collected, then the church had an abundance. To meet the brother's qualifications, the gift would not only have to be from a church having abundance, but must be received by a church in want. That there were saints in Jerusalem in want is not denied. That the "church as such" was in want is yet to be proved. If one could prove that the church was in want, he would then need to prove that the church received the gift. It is not enough to assert such, we should like the reading where it occurred, or where it was intended to occur. The contribution was for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 8:1, it clearly speaks of the churches of Macedonia, but in verse 4 where it speaks of those helped, it simply refers to them as "saints," which expression does not necessarily refer to the church in an organized capacity.

What of the third qualification: "That there may be equality"? "The proper design (to produce equality of "churches as such." He expressed the purpose in another place as: "To benefit the receiving church `that there may be equality' (2 Cor. 8:14)."

Much of the controversy has to do with the church in an organized capacity and the Christian in an individual capacity. Evidently the brother used "church" in an organizational sense. It cannot be proved that the church as an organization was any more financially equal to the churches of Macedonia, Galatia and Achaia after distribution had been made to the poor saints than it was before help was sent. This would be true even if it should be granted that "the church as such" received the gift. Aid was not sent to help an organization, but for the relief of the saints.

"For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But that by an equality, that 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 Cor. 8:13, 14). Why did Paul say, "For I mean not that other MEN be eased, and ye burdened: But that by an equality"? Why not rather talk about "easing the church as such"? Someone may object that the word "men" is not found in the Greek text. The American Standard version reads, "For I say not this that others may be eased and ye distressed." "Others" is translated from *allois*, which is dative, masculine, plural. It does not refer to other churches since "church" is feminine gender. "The adjective agrees with the noun it qualifies in gender, number, and case." (A manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantley, p. 116.). Since *allois* is masculine, plural, it is not strange that the translators of the King James Version supplied the word "men." The question remains: If

the equality of which Paul spoke was an equality of churches, why did he not say, "I mean not that other churches be eased, and ye burdened: But that by an equality"? An inequality in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 had nothing to do with an inferior program of the church, but an inferiority in the personal circumstances of some of the saints in Jerusalem. If the attempt to bring about an equality concerned equality of churches "as such", to minister to the needs of the saints would fall short of the objective. It should be obvious that to render aid to the poor among the saints would not alter any inequality of the church "as such." The finances of the church as an organization would remain unaltered. If inequalities existed between "churches as such" before aid was administered to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, those same inequalities would remain after such relief was administered. Who will contend that the receiving church would have one mite more than it had formerly? How then can it be said that equality has been brought about between "churches"?

Gifts to a church to pay for radio network time are objected to on the grounds that such a church is not in want and when such gifts are received, they exalt the receiving church far above her sisters, thus producing inequality. By this reasoning, if the receiving church had enough wealthy members to make the offerings which otherwise come from sister churches, it would be wrong for them to give such offerings on the basis of exalting the church above her sisters, thus producing inequality. If it would be inequality in the one case, it would also be in the other. Actually, it is not a case of the receiving church's being in want, rather, the want (of the gospel) is to be found among those the church serves by such a radio program. Such gifts ARE to relieve want among those who know not the gospel. Such gifts do NOT exalt the receiving church above those who contribute. The money does not benefit the receiving church, it pays for radio time. This is true in the same sense in which one church may send money to another church to help support their local preacher. Perhaps they have not obtained the services of the preacher so much to edify themselves as to work among the lost of their community. In such a case, the support would not be primarily for the benefit of the receiving church, but for the lost of that community.

### **Summary**

Let us briefly notice again the "Divine Pattern" which some would impose upon the brotherhood. "To be scriptural, cooperation must have proper action (a gift from one church to another) between proper subjects (a church having abundance and a church in want) for the proper design (to produce equality)." Equality of churches "as such" is of necessity understood. Three qualifications are given before cooperation can be scriptural: Proper action, proper subjects, and proper design. "Proper action must be a gift from one church to another church." The Scriptures never give an example or command for such a gift. How can such be a scriptural qualification? "Proper subjects must be a church having abundance and a church in want." Not one case of New Testament cooperation was between such subjects. How can this be a scriptural qualification? "Proper design is

to produce equality between churches." The proof cases are not cases of inequalities between churches "as such," but, rather, help was sent for the poor among the saints. Some of the contributing churches gave out of deep poverty, those of Macedonia.

The cases which are supposed to furnish the "Divine Pattern" which the brother has given to the brotherhood do not meet any one of his three qualifications for scriptural cooperation. Since none of the examples furnish his pattern, nor the qualifications he gives, we are persuaded that neither his pattern nor his qualifications are scriptural. Until the essential elements of the "pattern" are found in such examples, we refuse to be bound by his "pattern."

The relief for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem was provided by congregations but there is nothing to indicate that such relief was received by a Jerusalem church. In fact, the evidence is to the contrary, indicating that Paul and his company intended to administer relief.

There is nothing to indicate that the church "as such" was in need, nor that all the Christians in Jerusalem were in want. The relief was for the poor among the saints.

The inequalities which existed were not between churches "as such" but in the personal circumstances of some of the saints.

In the cooperative work of relieving the wants of some saints, a number of churches made use of a common medium, or representative, in the person of a brother to assist in taking funds to Jerusalem.

A great deal of the cooperation controversy has centered around the relief for Jerusalem and many of the basic and fundamental premises have been assumed and cannot be proved.

### **Questions**

1. Was the relief for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem sent to any church(es) "as such"?
2. Was the church "as such" in need?
3. Does "saints" necessarily refer to Christians in an organized capacity?
4. What is the significance of Paul's statement, "this abundance which is administered by us"?
5. Did the Antioch church "as such" send relief to the elders in Judaea?

6. Is there a specific example of a gift from one "church" to another?
7. Is there a specific example of a "church" having abundance and a "church" in want?
8. Is there a specific example of an attempt to produce equality among churches "as such"?
9. Would the relief of individual Christians be a relief of the church "as such"?
10. When a church receives funds to pay for radio time to preach the gospel, who is being relieved, the church, or those who are hearing the gospel?
11. Since the "church" does not keep the money, but pays for radio time with it, is she being exalted above her sisters ?
12. If she were exalted by such and such exaltation is wrong, would she not be equally exalted if such funds were provided by local Christians?

# HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

## Chapter IX

### CHURCH AUTONOMY

#### Self\_Rule

Much of the opposition to current methods of cooperation among churches finds its basis in a misunderstanding of the nature of the church, its work and organization, and its limitations. One of the features of organization and function which has had a large share of discussion is that of autonomy.

Autonomy is defined as: right of self\_government. The self\_government of a church resides in the rule of the elders of a local church. It does not mean majority rule. We are all in agreement that each local church is separate and independent in organization from all other local churches. All of us are opposed to the destruction of the principle autonomy. We are not in agreement as to what constitutes a violation of that principle.

#### Church Autonomy Defined

We would like to appropriate another's definition of church autonomy: "Church autonomy includes and requires that the local church, under Christ, (1) control its own resources, (2) exercise the oversight of its own work, (3) manage its own affairs, (4) discipline its own disorderly members, (5) provide for its own worthy indigent to the limit of its ability, and (6) govern itself in all matters of judgment and expediency." This definition comes from one who strongly opposes "brotherhood projects" and "institutional homes."

Yet, there is not one of the six principles which we would deny. We do not believe that any of the six conflicts with the type of cooperation which he opposes.

#### Control of One's Own Resources

What is meant by "control of its own resources"? Surely no one would contend that any other church would have the right to wrest the control of another church's resources. No one among us would favor an attempt on the part of any local church to lay claim to that which belongs to another church. Does the necessity that a church control its own resources mean that it can never, under any circumstances, give any of its funds to another church and allow the receiving church to have complete oversight of the use of such funds? Would such action violate the autonomy of the giving church since it would lose control of its own resources?

Let us hear from the one who set forth those six principles of autonomy: "Many churches sent funds to elders of churches in Judea, during famines in that area (1 Cor. 16 :1\_4 ; Acts 11:27\_30; 2 Cor. 8 and 9 and many other passages). This was no violation of local church autonomy, because the receiving churches and the contributing churches sustained the same relationship to that work; but the churches in Judea, which received the funds, bore a different relationship to that work." "The only way that other churches could help the Judean churches in doing their work, was by doing just as they did; namely, send funds to the elders of the churches whose members were in need, and then leave the oversight of disbursement of these funds solely and completely to the receiving churches."

The writer assumed some things which may not be so, but the point would remain the same as far as autonomy is concerned. He does not consider that for a church, under some circumstances, to send funds to another church to be used at the sole discretion of the receiving church to be a violation of his first principle of autonomy: the local church must control its own resources. Notice his qualification: The contributing church does not lose its autonomy, though it loses oversight of funds, when it gives to a church to do a work to which the receiving church sustains a peculiar relationship. If both churches are equally related to that work, the contributing church loses its autonomy. Notice: "When one church sends its money to another church for a work to which they are equally related, then without exception the autonomy and equality of one of those churches is violated. If the contributing church retains any control of that money after placing it in the hands of the receiving church (as Brother Dixon claims), then the receiving church surrenders its autonomy by permitting another to oversee its work. If the receiving church becomes the sole authority over this work to which the contributing church and the receiving church are equally related, then the contributing church surrenders its autonomy "by simply turning its funds over to another for handling."

We believe the distinction is false. What would the matter of being equally related to a work have to do with the loss of control of resources? Equally or unequally related, when a church sends funds to another church to be used under the complete direction and oversight of the receiving church, how much more completely could a church lose oversight of its funds?

A church which contributes to any given work has not lost oversight of its funds when it makes its own decision to support a particular work. If one church sends aid to another to build a building, could the receiving church honorably and without sin use such funds for any other purpose? Does such a receiving church, even though she has a peculiar relationship to her building, lose her autonomy in receiving "ear\_marked" funds? She really has no choice as to the use of such funds. She should either use them for what the contributing church gave them, or else return the funds to the contributing church. If the plan to build the building is that of the receiving church, who would contend that such a church could lose its autonomy in receiving gifts to erect their building? However, if

another church should say: "You need a building. We know you are opposed to erecting one, but here is the money to build it, so build it whether you want it or not," to yield would certainly be a loss of autonomy. For a church to give to another for some particular work is not an actual loss of control of funds. Such a church has specified the work to be done with such funds. This does not mean they have specified all the details. If such were necessary, then for elders to oversee a church would likewise require them to specify all details of a work which they give any member to do.

None of us would favor a church's surrendering its funds to another church to be used in whatever way the receiving church sees fit. Such would be a loss of self-government and evident shirking of responsibility to use one's resources. There is a vast difference in sending aid to do a work which requires assistance and in simply asking: "We have money we don't know how to use. Here, you take it and use it in some good way." Brethren are mistaken if they think we are ready to defend shiftless and irresponsible churches looking for some escape from work. We favor cooperation to assist others and relieve them; we oppose with equal vigor a practice of sending to others to relieve ourselves. It is readily granted that cooperation can be abused and misused. Shall we abandon all cooperation because some would find it an excuse to shirk their responsibilities? Surely not.

### **Overseeing One's Own Work**

Notice the second principle: A church must exercise the oversight of its own work. Concerning the work in Africa, it has been rightly said: "The Johannesburg Church could not maintain its autonomy, if it permitted the contributing churches to retain any control in the disbursement of funds sent to it." At the same time, we believe the Johannesburg church would misuse its autonomy if it takes funds given for a particular purpose and applies them to other uses.

We most certainly believe that every church must exercise the oversight of its own work. We do not believe that a "sponsoring church" can properly oversee the work of a church in some mission field, or any other place. Neither would we believe it scriptural for any church to do so, even though it might be supporting such a work without any assistance from sister congregations. The question of autonomy for the receiving church would be the same whether such a work were supported by the "sponsoring church" method with many sister congregations assisting, or by one church unaided. Neither could scripturally oversee another church.

When a church sends money to another church to help support a national radio program, does it fail to exercise the oversight of its own work when the receiving church makes all the arrangements and directs the program in every way? Would this be any more a loss of oversight of work than to send such funds to a small church in a mission field for that church to conduct a radio program and for the receiving church to have complete control

of that radio program? It will not suffice to say both are equally related to a national program, but not to a program in a mission field. The fact remains that there is a loss of oversight in either case. However, the contributing church does not lose the oversight of IT'S OWN WORK. In both cases, the WORK of the contributing church is to supply funds. It has complete autonomy in such a work of supplying funds. It makes its own decisions as to where it shall send aid, how much aid shall be given, when it shall be given, how often it shall be sent, for what purpose such aid shall be sent, as well as the right to terminate such aid when it sees fit.

### **Managing One's Own Affairs**

The third principle: The local church must manage its own affairs. Amen? Simply because two churches may cooperate in a work does not give either the right to interfere in any of the affairs of the other. Each church must be free from interference as well as free from PRESSURE. Any church has the prerogative to point out the advantages or disadvantages of a program, to make suggestions, to provoke others to good works, but for any church to attempt to exercise any influence which amounts to coercion or domination is sinful and an encroachment upon the autonomy of the one so influenced.

### **Disciplining One's Own Disorderly Members**

The fourth principle: The local church must discipline its own disorderly members. To this all must agree. At the same time, Christian fellowship is not confined to a local church level. For this reason, whether or not a church has taken action against some unruly or ungodly brother does not mean that Christians in other congregations must continue to fellowship him until the local church of which he is a member takes action and disciplines him. Would any deny the elders of a church the right to encourage the elders of another church to do their duty? Surely we know of whole churches which were disciplined by sister congregations because of some error, or perhaps for harboring ungodly members. Attempts to discipline the members of another church are not limited to churches, sometimes "our papers" attempt to usurp the right to discipline others.

### **Caring for One's Own Worthy Indigent**

The fifth principle: The local church must provide for its own worthy indigent to the limit of its ability. To this, we must all agree. The controversy arises regarding HOW to provide for them. Also, there are sharp differences regarding the care of those not its "own."

There is no question but that help can be given to those who are not the particular responsibility of the contributing church. This occurs when one church sends aid to another church to care for the poor among the receiving church. No one objects to a church's helping some worthy needy person from another locality. Differences arise when

the receiving church accepts money to care for those who are not its peculiar responsibility. We are told that a church may scripturally receive help to care for those among its own, but not to care for those they receive from another locality. We are of the persuasion that one church may rightfully render needed assistance to another church to accomplish any work that church has a right to be doing if it did not require assistance. If it is not right for a church to accept and care for a person who is not its peculiar responsibility, then it would be self evident that it would not be right for another church to assist them in what is wrong. But is such the case? There may be those among us who oppose a church's care of such people, but it has not come to our attention. If it is right for a church to care for those not its peculiar responsibility, we see no reason why such a church could not receive needed assistance to care for such people.

Let us illustrate with three churches: "A", "B", and "C". Let us suppose that there are some needy people in church "C", and that church "A" desires to render assistance. If for some reason it is deemed advisable and agreeable that these people should be cared for by church "B", would church "A" lose its autonomy in sending funds to church "B"? Would there be any more loss of oversight in sending funds to church "C"? If church "B" has accepted the task of caring for these people, can it be said that churches "A" and "B" are equally related to the work of caring for them? Certainly not. Someone may contend that a church has no right to accept people they cannot fully support. One might as well reason that no church has a right to accept a preacher to work among the lost of their community unless they can fully support him, therefore he could not be supported in their midst by outside help! By such reasoning, a local man could be supported with outside funds, but they could not "import" a preacher to be supported by help from other churches.

The brother is right in saying that a local church must provide for its own worthy indigent to the limit of its ability. However, that does not specify any particular manner for making such needed provisions, nor even that the needy ones must remain in that locality while such provisions are made. Neither does it exclude the possibility that a church may require assistance in caring for its indigent, nor that a church may be called upon to assist in caring for the indigent in some other locality.

The sixth principle: A local church must govern itself in all matters of judgment or expediency. This is much the same as the third principle, a church must manage its own affairs. No one, and no church, has the right to attempt to regulate another with reference to matters of judgment or expediency. In matters of faith, there is no room for liberty, but in matters of judgment or expediency no one has the right to legislate. This is true whether it concerns relationships between churches, individuals, or whether it concerns journalistic dictation in such matters.

While the autonomy of a church allows it great freedom in conducting its work, there are many instances when concern for the welfare of the Kingdom of God, Christian love and

consideration would restrain a church's exercise of all its freedom. For example, any church is within its right to attempt to spread the gospel of Christ in any geographical area, of the world. Who would deny any church such a right? However, who would recommend that a church exercise such a right by leaving its own building, erecting a tent adjacent to a sister congregation, and conducting a series of meetings? The action of the first congregation taken by itself would be commendable, but considered in the light of the effort of the sister church, it would show very little consideration. Suppose the first should cry: "It is right to preach the gospel anywhere, anytime." Would it lessen their lack of consideration?

Deference among churches is as needful as among individuals. Many will recall such a lack of consideration of a few years ago. A challenge for debate was issued to the churches of Fort Worth, Texas by J. Frank Norris. Before the churches of Fort Worth had time to negotiate such a discussion, having selected Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. as their representative, another brother exercised his "right" to sign propositions for a debate with Norris. Norris was more than happy to have an excuse to avoid another meeting with Wallace on the forensic platform. Norris accepted the debate with this brother in lieu of his challenge to the churches of Fort Worth. Taken by itself, no one would dispute the brother's "right" to engage Norris in debate, but to exercise such a right under the circumstances was most questionable. It is not always best to exercise our "liberties."

Churches are independent and autonomous, but love and consideration may require that a congregation not exercise its independence at times. For example, suppose there is no church in a certain city. It would be granted that it is no more the responsibility of church "A" than of church "B" to begin a church in that city. Either would have such a right. Suppose church "A" decided to rent a public building and send a preacher there to begin work, church "B" would have just as much right to do so as church "A". However, would "B" show Christian consideration if it learned of "A's" plans and hastily rented that public building and sent a preacher to begin efforts to establish the church? They could protest as loudly as they please that: "We are engaged in a great and good work. Who would deny us such a right"? However, who would approve of such an exercise of their autonomy? The right of self government and the right to manage one's own affairs and the right to govern one's self in all matters of judgment and expediency does not mean we should exercise such liberties to the utter disregard of all other churches and their programs. The saving of souls and glorification of God should always motivate us in whatever we do.

There are a number of other features of autonomy that need consideration. Some of them have no particular connection with each other and hence some of the following paragraphs will constitute an abrupt change of subject matter.

1. Cooperation among churches does not destroy the self\_government of those who cooperate.

"For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." Romans 15:26. Thayer defines this contribution as: "A benefaction jointly contributed." That the churches cooperated in sending help to Jerusalem will be further demonstrated in the next point.

2. For a plurality of churches to act jointly, or through a common medium, does not destroy autonomy.

Paul said Titus went of his own accord to Corinth, "And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace." 2 Corinthians 8:18\_19. Whatever else may be said of the cooperation here, this much is plain, there was one messenger which was the representative of a plurality of churches. It is not certain whether he was the unnamed brother of Titus, but it would not alter the circumstance. He was chosen to "travel with us with this grace . . . Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance." Some have protested that his duties were simply those of assisting in the collection and carrying of funds to Jerusalem. Even so, would the governmental aspect be altered if one man were used by a plurality of churches to carry funds or if he were used by a plurality of churches for some other task, such as disbursing funds? What would the nature of the work have to do with the autonomy involved? Also, what becomes of the "equally related" argument in this case? Would it not be reasonable to say that this brother was no more related to carrying the funds to Jerusalem than the members of the various churches he represented? The argument has been made that it is wrong to make use of a medium to do a work unless the medium sustains a peculiar relationship to that work. It has been argued that a church loses its autonomy when it makes use of a medium to do a work to which the church and the medium sustain the same relationship. Did these churches lose their autonomy in using this medium (a brother) to carry funds when he could not have been more related to that work than their own members? More than that, he was the common medium of a number of churches. Certainly, any number of churches can act jointly through a common medium without losing their autonomy.

3. Churches may make use of a medium other than another church to do a given work without loss of autonomy.

This is amply illustrated in the use of the brother to "travel with us with this grace."

Also, in assisting the sick, there may be needs which no member of the church can meet in caring for an ill person, so they send him to a hospital where he can receive the needed care. Since the hospital staff can render services which the church members cannot, they make use of the staff and pay for their services. Help for a poor person may consist of paying his grocery bill. It may be objected that such is nothing more than buying services. Call it what you will, the grocer supplied the food, the church supplied the funds

for that food. In the case of helping the poor in an orphanage, one church may supply the funds for care, another church may take those funds and furnish the care. In the first two cases the media used were a grocer and hospital, in the third, another church.

#### 4. Does a church lose its autonomy by placing something in its budget?

Evidently there are those who think so. Much has been said about the circumstances which must attend the sending of a gift from one church to another. It has been asserted that there must be a state of emergency on the part of the receiving church. It is contended that we have a divine pattern for assisting a church in dire need in order to bring about a state of equality. There seems to be a false distinction between what can be given occasionally, or temporarily, and what can be "placed in the church budget." We fail to find anything in the New Testament about church budgets. This does not mean they are wrong, for they are a means of doing things purposefully, decently and in order. If it is known that a need shall exist for quite some time, is it wrong for a church to make long\_range plans to help meet that need? Let us hear from a brother regarding this: "The church may care for the fatherless and widows. This can be done by supporting them in an institutional orphan home. Our brethren operate some homes of this character. The church may thus pay their bill of fare in such an institution, but the church has no scriptural right to put such a human institution in her budget." If the support from such a church is regular, would it not be in the budget? But someone says: "The church is not just sending the home a donation. They are paying the bills of particular people." By such logic, a church could put the home in its budget if it will just specify certain ones to be cared for by their funds. If to do so is to preserve autonomy and to fail to do so is to lose autonomy, by the same reasoning, the churches of Achaia, Galatia, and Macedonia would have found it necessary to specify the particular people to be relieved by their gifts for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem in order to keep their autonomy. If not, why? But who can believe it?

#### 5. Does a church lose its autonomy by contributing to the support of a person who is not its particular charge?

Most people recognize the right of a church to support someone in another church, But what about furnishing the actual care? To accept one and reject the other is to say that help of one kind (money) can be given, but help of another kind (care) cannot.

Upon what basis can such a distinction be made? If care is given, does such become the "work" of that church? If so, can another church give needed assistance to that church to do "its work"? If so, what would you have but a church's caring for those not its peculiar responsibility and at the same time receiving aid from a sister church to do such a work? If it is wrong for a church to receive aid to care for someone not its peculiar responsibility, is it right for that church to accept the care of such a person and care for them even without outside assistance?

Mary of the arguments against current methods of cooperation indicate a belief that gifts from one church to another concern only monetary gifts. Service is a gift as surely as is money to buy such service. One is more direct than the other. Any argument which would deny a church the scriptural right to send money to another church would at the same time deny the right to furnish services.

6. Can a church preserve its autonomy by contributing directly to a needy person?

If a church loses its autonomy by sending funds to a home for the aged, could it retain its autonomy by contributing directly to some aged person and allowing the aged person to pay the home for his care? If so, loss of autonomy is not concerned with the loss of oversight of the funds of the church, because the same loss of oversight would be the same in either case, yet autonomy would be retained in one case and lost in the other!

7. Does a church lose its autonomy by receiving help from other churches to assist it in doing its work?

Let us hear from an opponent of the sponsoring church method of cooperation: "The Lord has made each independent congregation responsible for doing its own work to the best of its ability! If the five-talent man in the parable had reasoned like many churches today, he would have said to the others, 'I have greater vision and financial ability. Give me your talents and I will do the work for all of us.'" And if the other servants had reasoned like many churches today, they would have responded gladly, contributing their meager talents to him who had more." If this reasoning were carried to its logical conclusion, it would mean that each church should be content to do what it can unaided, whatever the circumstance. If "to the best of its ability" did not include the ability to erect a decent house in which to meet, then do without! If "to the best of its ability" did not include the ability to support a preacher unaided, then just do without a preacher. The brother will not accept these conclusions which are the natural result of his reasoning. He further said: "When a need existed, which the church in that locality could not meet, other churches came to its assistance." However, by his reasoning on the parable of the talents, the Lord actually just wants that church to do what it can "to the best of its ability."

He could have gone further with the parable and showed how one servant did not say to the other: "The Lord did not give me what I can actually manage and need. You have received more than you can personally supervise and need, so if you will just give to me in my need, I will do the work for both of us." Yet, he accepts the fact that there are churches which need and can manage more than God has given them, therefore other churches can contribute to them to compensate for their deficiency. We must be content with the teaching of the Scriptures and not read lessons into parables which they were not intended to teach. The parable certainly teaches responsibility and accountability, but we must recognize that part of our stewardship is helping those in need. Sometimes such

help may be through an intermediate, but it is help nonetheless. This is illustrated in the case of the Good Samaritan and his use of an innkeeper.

One editor informs us: "Each church is to provide for its own; for those who are its responsibility." In the same article we learn that a church does not necessarily provide for its own: "If one congregation is not financially able to care for its own needy, then, sister congregations may be asked for help and they may send the help to the church in such need."

Is this the only proper way to render aid? If the needy cannot be removed to another place and assisted by the contributing church, this would mean that it would be right to send the aid to where the needy person is, but would be sinful to move the needy person to where the aid is. You could move the help but not the one to be helped! It would mean, too, that a church could support those so in need, but could under no circumstances supervise such support. Certainly they could not supervise such support if it were sent to another church; to do so would violate the autonomy of the receiving church. If they could not receive the needy persons and thus supervise their support, then they could only help them by turning over such support to be supervised by someone else.

8. Does a church infringe upon the autonomy of sister congregations by planning a work bigger than it can do alone and then asking these sister congregations for assistance?

Let us hear again from a brother: "The first objection which may be raised to such cooperation is that there is no New Testament example in which a church ever planned a work beyond its local responsibility and received help from other churches to carry it out. No New Testament church ever planned a vast program of work and received contributions from other churches in carrying out the program. Yet today, such programs are planned, contributions are requested, and contributions are expected"!

Specific and detailed New Testament examples are required for practices which we disapprove but not for those which we approve. Where is the New Testament example in which a church planned a vast program of work beyond its local responsibility and carried out such a program without assistance? In the absence of such an example, shall we conclude that no church can conduct such a program even though perfectly capable of doing so without assistance? A specific and detailed New Testament example is not required for a church to conduct such a program because everyone approves of it, but a different kind of scriptural support is asked for a church to conduct the same program with the help of sister churches because there are brethren who oppose the practice. Truly, "The legs of the lame are not equal."

The brother's position, as stated, would not disallow a church's planning a "local" work beyond its ability to support and then calling for sister churches to assist. By other writings, we know that such a practice receives approval. Such is often done to support a regular preacher in a weak church, or to support a radio program for a weak church, erect

a building, etc., etc. Our brethren are in agreement in endorsing such cooperation. The inevitable conclusion is that a church may plan a local program beyond its ability to support and ask for help, but cannot plan a work outside its community and ask for support. Such a work would exceed "local responsibility." If there is a responsibility (in the sense the brother uses) other than local, could not aid be given toward its fulfillment? If not, we must conclude that one church can assist another church to fulfill one type of responsibility but not another!

We know that the church (or churches) of Judea did a bigger work than it would have been possible for them to do alone, for the disciples of Antioch sent relief. Acts 11:27-30. Is it wrong for a church to do a bigger work than it can do alone, or just wrong to plan it? This is reminiscent of the stand taken by brethren who appose the class method of teaching: They believe it is scriptural for members of the same congregation to discuss the Bible while in different groups, unless such had been PLANNED and orderly provisions made for such study. We have other brethren who believe that it is wrong for a church to PLAN a large program and then ASK for assistance in carrying it out. By such reasoning, some sister church would have to take the initiative in getting support for a church, which requires assistance. It would be wrong for the church to PLAN the program and ASK for the help!

We do not believe that a church has the right to demand the support of other congregations, but we do believe it has the right to point out its needs and opportunities and request the assistance of others.

9. Does individual activity and cooperation in teaching and benevolence violate local church autonomy?

It would be in order to quote two brethren regarding is matter: "I can pool my resources and talents with society, with the community in which I live for the accomplishment of any righteous cause, and it has to have nothing at all to do with the church."

"Individual Christians, any number, may scripturally engage in any worthy work, such as running colleges, papers, orphanages, and other individual Christians may properly assist them in every proper way; but no local congregation should be called upon, as such, to contribute a thing to any such enterprises."

We are in agreement among ourselves that individual activity in teaching and benevolence does not infringe upon the rights of the church "as such" in these fields of endeavor. There is also agreement that individuals may cooperate with each other in "any number" in accomplishing these worthy works. There is not agreement regarding cooperation among congregations to achieve these same goals. Again, unequal proof is demanded. No proof is required for such individual cooperation, but specific details for congregational cooperation is demanded.

10. Is the question of autonomy any different when funds are sent or services are supplied?

Paul said regarding his support while at Corinth, "I robbed other churches to do you service." Yet, he described this church as having an abundance. Was the autonomy of the "robbed churches" violated by their supporting a preacher for a church "having abundance"? More than that, this church contributed to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Paul said that he was coming back to Corinth and that as he had done before, he would do again. Also, "I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." 2 Corinthians 11:8-12. Here was a church which contributed to a far away work (in Jerusalem) and yet did not support the preacher in their own midst! This is not a defense of their actions, but at least it must have been lawful or else Paul would have had no part in it. The realm of the lawful is much larger than the expedient. There are brethren who take it out of the realm of expediency and contend it is unlawful for a church to both receive assistance and send out relief at the same time. Let us beware lest we legislate where God has not.

There has been so much discussion concerning what we should not do, it would be well to give one of the very few suggestions as to how churches can cooperate. We would like to examine some of the concessions in a recent article.

A Good Opportunity When we consider the teaching of those who oppose the "sponsoring church" method of doing mission work, we are made to wonder if they really understand their own objections. Sometimes it becomes difficult to attempt to distinguish what they approve and what they disapprove.

In a recent issue of a paper which devotes a great deal of its space to opposition to "sponsoring churches" and "institutional homes," the circulation manager reprinted an article by Brother Guy Caskey "with the hope that brethren will be encouraged to support a worthy work." He strongly endorsed the present and proposed work. "Those who are laboring and sacrificing in this field know what the work of the church is.' They also know how the church is to function in making known 'the manifold wisdom of God'; they are interested in founding congregations after the New Testament order. While holding meetings, several elders have expressed to me a desire to do foreign mission work without funneling their money through the elders of some 'sponsoring' church. Brethren, here is a good opportunity to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way!"

Perhaps we have at last been given something definite in the nature of a program in which we can "do the Lord's work in the Lord's way." This is in no way intended to be a criticism of the program suggested by Brother Caskey, for we believe it to be a good one, but, rather, this is an attempt to examine an approved program in comparison with the condemned "sponsoring church" type of program.

What is the proposed program? "Brother Eldred Echols left Fort Worth, Texas, November 2nd, on his return journey to East Africa, to begin the long-planned work of establishing the church of Christ in that very promising field." "Brother Echols is now ready to begin training become preachers of the gospel to their own people. We do not propose to establish a school, the academic sense of the term. Young men will be taught the Bible several hours each day in an intensive course which will cover several years." "Twenty-five dollars (\$25) a month will support a student in Bible school, provide food and housing for himself and family. Two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250) a month will send ten young African preachers to this Bible school, and they in turn will take the gospel of Christ to tens of thousands of people in Central, East and Southern Africa. This is the WORK OF THE CHURCH, and that individual Christians and CHURCHES can help plant the cause of pure New Testament Christianity in this section of the world, there is no doubt." (Emphasis mine, L.G.H.).

Here is a Work which can be supported by both individuals and churches, such support having the endorsement of a paper which opposes "sponsoring churches," "brotherhood orphan homes," and the national radio program sponsored by the Highland Avenue Church, Abilene, Texas.

Since those to be trained are not a "local" responsibility, would such a church receiving funds and applying them to train young men from "far and wide" be a sponsoring church? Is it the "peculiar responsibility" of any church to bring in a number of young men and train them to take the gospel of Christ to thousands of people in Central, East and Southern Africa? What has become of the "equally related" argument which forbids a church to contribute to another church to do a work to which both are equally elated? Also, where have we heard reasoning like this: If a few churches can send funds to a church in Africa to train preachers which are not that church's own responsibility, then all churches could so contribute, thus you would have found a means for the universal church to function as a unit, a local church in Africa being that means! Also, if an African church can train preachers to evangelize Africa, why not train preachers to evangelize the World? Or, at least have one church in America train all evangelists who plan to work in America, another for Europe, etc., etc. Thus, you would have a church saying, "Send me your preachers to train, and also send me your money to train them." Does this type of reasoning have a familiar ring?

Brethren cannot justify their endorsement of this program while condemning the sponsoring church by saying this is an emergency: "These brick buildings, worth \$60,000.00, will be deeded to the church there (upon receipt of government recognition) to be used in the teaching of the word of God from now on." Does "from now on" sound like a temporary arrangement? Hardly.

Do you question that this program is to be a work of the "church"? "We propose to deed the buildings, and the land they occupy, to the church there for the purpose of housing the students and providing class room space for daily Bible study." Yet, a church in our country which conducts such a program of benevolence by the same methods is criticized as trying to do the work of other churches for them. Bear in mind that they "know what the work of the church is." Also, "They know how the church is to function in making known 'the manifold wisdom of God.'" "Brethren, here is a good opportunity to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way!"

Perhaps our brethren would cease to oppose the work of the Highland Avenue Church in Abilene, Texas, if she were to discontinue the national radio program, Herald of Truth, and instead, train preachers and send them out over America! Would not such a program be the counterpart of the proposed program for Africa? If a church in Africa can receive preachers who are not its own responsibility, receive assistance from sister churches, and train them to evangelize Africa, why could we not at least select some church in the Northeast, or Northwest, or both, to train preachers to evangelize those parts of our own country? If such is not in effect a "sponsoring church," perhaps someone will tell us what is required to constitute one.

On the other hand, perhaps our error has been in the selection of the wrong "sponsor." "Your contribution can be sent to: Tanganyika Fund, P. O. Box 356, Sweetwater, Texas, where it will be prepared for exchange into East African schillings and cents, or it may be sent directly to Eldred L. Echols, P. O. Chimala Via Mbeya, Tanganyika, East Africa." What has become of the contention that contributions must be sent directly to the church which is to use the funds? Is it permissible to have an intermediate, providing such a medium is an individual, or group of individuals? If the church "as such" never receives the funds, would the school be a "one man missionary society"?

Perhaps if an individual or group of individuals other than a "church as such" were to sponsor a missionary, contentions would cease! Better still, put the national radio program under the sponsorship of individuals and then "individual Christians and churches" could support it!

We are condemned for using the "sponsoring church" method of evangelizing, being told that help should go directly to the field where the funds are to be used. However, the proposed program for Africa would involve two intermediates: Tanganyika Fund, Sweetwater, Texas, and the church in Africa. The church is necessarily an intermediate since those it will train are to be brought in from another locality and are not its "peculiar responsibility."

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. . . Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself"? Romans 2:1, 21.

"Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

Romans 14 :22.

Let us be careful to do everything as God would have it done. At the same time, let us exercise caution lest we should impose on our brethren regulations and limitations which God has not. We may find ourselves contending for our way, meanwhile, believing it to be God's way.

The autonomy of the church is sacred, let us not violate it. God's order must not be altered. We must not close our minds to investigation, nor even criticism. Let every practice be examined in the light of God's word. As yet, we fail to see how local church government has been corrupted by our practices and until we do, we shall continue to promote the cause of Christ by whatever means deemed to be both lawful and expedient.

### **Summary**

Each local church is independent and autonomous. Its self-rule resides in its eldership. Each church has the control of its own resources, but has the right to dispense funds to those it considers worthy of assistance. It may give funds with a full understanding that such funds are to be used for designated purposes without violating the autonomy of the receiving church. However, the actual administration of such funds would be at the discretion of the receiving church. No church should surrender its funds in an attempt to escape the responsibility of using them.

Though a church may cooperate with others in a given work, each cooperating church maintains the oversight of its local program without interference. No church has the right to oversee another church, with, or without, assistance.

A church may properly assist another church in any work that church has a right to be doing.

A plurality of churches may act jointly, or through a common medium, without destroying the autonomy of any. This is true even though the church and the medium sustain a like relationship to the work being done.

A church does not violate its autonomy even though it contributes to the support of someone who is not its particular charge. Such support may consist of money and/or care.

There would be no essential difference in a church's supporting an unspecified worthy person in a home and in paying the bill of someone specifically designated. Neither is there a~y real difference in moving the funds to the per- son, or moving the person to the funds.

### **Questions**

1. Does a church lose its autonomy by sending money to another church to help support a national radio broadcast?
2. Does a church lose its autonomy by sending money to a church to help support a local program?
3. Does one church ever have the right to oversee another church? Would your answer vary as to whether or not the overseeing church wholly supported such a work or were a "sponsoring church" with the assistance of sister churches?
4. May a church provide funds to support the needy who are not its "own"? May it provide care? May it receive assistance for such care?
5. When a church is caring for its "own," must those cared for remain in the vicinity of that church?
6. Is it always wise or charitable for a church to exercise all its rights?
7. When two churches cooperate in a work, does either necessarily lose its autonomy?
8. Does a church lose its autonomy by using a. medium? By a plurality of churches using a common medium?
9. Does a church lose its autonomy when the church and the medium sustain the same relationship to a work?
10. Must the medium always be another church?
11. Is there any difference, in principle, in bestowing an occasional gift to a cause and in putting that cause in the church's budget?
12. May a church care for someone not its peculiar responsibility? If so, may it receive assistance to provide such care?
13. Is there any essential difference in supplying funds or services?
14. Is it right to move the funds to where the needy are, but wrong to move the needy to where the funds are?
15. Is it wrong for a church to plan a work bigger than it can do unaided? If not, may it ask for assistance?

16. Is there any responsibility other than "local" responsibility? If so, may a church accept assistance for one but not for the other?

17. Since many object to a church's planning a work bigger than it can do unassisted and then ask for assistance, and since we know a church can with assistance do a bigger work than it could unaided (Acts 11), would not the wrong (?) be in planning it? Or, would it be in asking for assistance? (It is obvious from the case of Antioch and Judaea that it was not wrong to do the work nor to receive aid. If there is a wrong, it must be in planning and/or asking aid.)

# HOW CHURCHES CAN COOPERATE

## Chapter X

### **ELDERS AND CONTROVERSY**

When differences arise, as they often do, there are usually a number of attendant evils. Seldom does trouble confine itself to the original points of the issue. The proponents of both sides of the present controversy must not lose sight of the scriptural teaching regarding the organization of the local church. We can not afford to become so absorbed with the aspects of cooperation among churches and its effect upon church organization that we overlook other influences which undermine local church organization.

#### **Subjection to Elders**

The self-rule of a local church resides in its eldership. In the midst of controversy, when matters do not go to suit us, we must be careful lest we find ourselves in rebellion to those who are ordained of God to oversee the church. In matters which violate God's a word, no Christian is bound to submit to elders. However, we have no right to array ourselves against them in matters of judgment and expediency. Moreover, as long as there is room for doubt, one should not array himself against the elders in what he considers to be a matter of faith. This includes all members of the congregation, including the preachers and deacons.

#### **Extent of the Rule of Elders**

Some have taken the position that elders can rule only in matters of faith. Actually, the realm of faith is the one place where elders cannot exercise rule. When God speaks, that is the end of the matter for one who respects His authority. Elders may teach the faith but they cannot exercise rule in matters of faith. They exercise rule according to the faith. The erection of buildings, arrangements for Bible studies, hiring and firing of preachers, time and place of meetings, etc., are matters of expediency. Shall the decisions regarding such matters be turned over to a majority rule? Certainly not. There is nothing in the New Testament which indicates that decisions of any kind are dependent upon majority rule. There are many serious implications to the doctrine of majority rule which shall be pointed out later. Spiritual guidance, as well as control of material affairs, are the responsibility of the eldership.

Regarding the proper place of elders in the divine scheme, the deem it fitting to submit part of an article written many years ago by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., entitled: "Law and Order in the Church Versus Majority Rule and Chaos." This is not intended in any way to imply that Brother Wallace endorses any particular view set forth in any other place in this book, but he stated so well the scriptural teaching regarding this subject that it seems

fitting to give you his exact words. The article was written as a result of a faction in one of our sister congregations. It might be harmful to bring up past troubles and parade them before people who are unaware of such past woes; therefore, all names and places are omitted. The principles involved are eternal and the article is as timely today as when written. Only those parts pertinent to our study shall be quoted.

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### **Law and Order in the Church Versus Majority Rule and Chaos (F. E. W., Jr)**

"When the devil possesses people to such an extent that they will start a sit-down strike in the church building at seven o'clock on Sunday morning and occupy the building through the day in order to keep the elders of the church out; exactly as the labor strikers have occupied certain industrial plants; rope off the pulpit and the space around the communion table as a 'no trespass zone' in order to bar certain ones from leading the service; they should not feel libeled when charged with such a little thing, in comparison, as changing locks to the doors of a building they had already seized. Things as bad and worse were done. But if any statement of the case varies to the slightest degree or in some minor detail, it is played up as a misrepresentation, though it changes not the case as a whole.

It would be difficult to misrepresent the spirit that has imbued the \_\_\_\_\_ church strike unless it should be to call it Christian.

"As a shield to criminality these strikers seek refuge behind 1 Cor. 6, which they insist means that the elders should submit to this seizure of property and surrender their rights under the deed to these strikers without civil action to defend their title to the property held by them as trustees. If it violates 1 Cor. 6 for elders to petition the court for their legal rights under the deed, it is an equal violation of the passage for those who hold the property by seizure to answer to the petition. If it violates the passage for the elders to appear in court as plaintiffs, it is equally wrong for the faction to appear as defendants, for they are in court with their brethren when they could have stayed out of court by doing the thing they demanded of the elders by relinquishing their claims. Their own construction of 1 Cor. 6 would force them to do this rather than violate the passage by appearing in court as defendants in such a case as theirs, for in so doing they are also going to law with brethren. Did not Jesus say, if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also? While they apply 1 Cor. 6 to the elders, why not apply this passage to themselves and give up the building?

"Does 1 Cor. 6 shield criminals in the church? Does it protect anybody in or out of the church in the seizure of property that belongs to others? A warranty deed, deed of trust, vendor's lien, chattel mortgages, legal foreclosures, and other forms of legal action could

not be executed between brethren, for there would be no basis of civil rights and problems. If this is the meaning of 1 Car. 6, no church has a warranty deed to property- they just think they have a deed-for they could not petition a civil court in defense of their title against seizure by any person or group of persons who happened to be brethren. Any individual or faction in the church could claim the property and take it! If that is the force of 1 Cor. 6, let it be known, so that all the digressives in the church may disregard the restrictive clauses in the deeds, and all other factionists as well, and let them walk in, sit down, and take possession of the property with no legal action to Binder them. The faction in \_\_\_\_\_ would not apply their own argument to a digressive element in the church, should such insist on taking over the property.

"Civil law in Rom. 13 is set forth as available to Christians when its protection is required. The civil court is refined to as an officer to protect Christian citizens against law violators and evil doers. Paul said that he (the civil law) is a minister to thee (the Christian) for good. How could this be true if the Christian could not avail himself of the protection of personal and property rights which the civil law affords? Why not a restrictive clause in a church deed if the elders of the church could not defend the deed against any element in the church that would seize the property? Why have a deed at all, if that is the meaning of 1 Cor. 6? As a matter of fact, a deed defines the owners of the property; and when the property is held in trust by elders of the church, it must be proved that said elders are disqualified, unfaithful, and do not hold the property for the purpose set forth in the deed, before they can be legally dispossessed. This the rebels could not do. so they staged a sit-down strike, seized the property, forced the elders to become the plaintiffs in the court in stead of themselves, and inconsistently ran to 1 Cor. 6 for shelter crying: 'in the spirit of Christ' it is unscriptural for the elders to take it to court! But it was their own action that put it in court-and after all, since the men the elders have taken court action against were all previously withdrawn from, how does it violate 1 Car. 6?

### **Preachers Versus Elders**

'The history of these cases is nearly always connected with preacher trouble. A preacher comes to 'take charge' of the church. But when the elders insist on having charge, it becomes a case of a young preacher versus the older elders. For wisdom the old elders would be the best choice by far. But the young preacher is fresh out of college and has some late ideas about things. The elders do not take quickly to his modern notions (thanks to the elders), so the elders are referred to as 'antiquated' and the young preacher proceeds to modernize the church. When the elders decide that he has gone far enough, they call his the blessings of salvation to the Gentiles without their becoming converts to the Jews' religion. The brethren at Jerusalem took Peter to task for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, but he convinced them that it was right to preach to the Gentiles and to baptize them. But the extreme Jewish Christians, having to admit that it was right to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and baptize them, contended that they could not then be saved unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses. To them Christianity was

just another sect of the Jews' religion, or a sort of extension of that religion. Some of these agitators came to Antioch, where there were many Gentile Christians, and greatly disturbed the church by contending that these Gentile Christians must be circumcised and keep the law, or they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas knew these disturbers were wrong, and contended with them. However, the Judaizers never did recognize Paul as an apostle of the Lord, and what he said had no authority with them. To settle the disturbance, and to satisfy the minds of the members at Antioch, it was necessary that the matters be passed on by those whom no one questioned. It was, therefore, appointed that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the local brethren "should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question"-not to the church, but to the apostles and elders. It was revealed to Paul that he should go. Paul and Barnabas did not go to Jerusalem to learn what the will of the Lord in the matter was, for they knew. But it had become a serious question, and was likely to destroy all the work Paul had done or could do. Hence Paul says of the trip: "And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain" (Gal. 2:2). If this agitation was to be kept up, and all the churches he had established, or should yet establish, were to be torn up, or brought under the law, then his work in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was all in vain. This private talk Paul here mentions is that mentioned in Acts 15 :6. Hence, after Paul and Barnabas told the church about their work among the Gentiles (verse 4), and the Judaizing teachers had made their demand (verse 5), then the apostles and elders gathered together to consider the matter (verse 6). They evidently came to a full understanding as to what the will of the Lord was in the matter, but it was necessary to quiet the church by bringing it to a correct understanding of the matter. They, therefore, went before the whole church, and the logical and orderly arrangement of the speeches that were made to the church

shows that the apostles and elders had agreed on the order of the speeches. Peter had been the first to preach to the Gentiles; he, therefore, spoke first, giving evidence to show that God had accepted the Gentiles. Barnabas and Paul then spoke of their work among the Gentiles, and showed how God had approved their' work by the signs and wonders he had wrought through them while they were establishing churches among the Gentiles. Their speeches, as well as Peter's were devoted to giving evidence that God had accepted the Gentiles. Then James spoke. He gave no evidence and made no argument, as the others had done, excepting to call attention to the fact that carrying the gospel to the Gentiles was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos. Instead of arguing the question, James told what was to be done concerning the matter. Peter, Barnabas, and Paul had given all the evidence needed; James delivered the judgment, OF the decision.

"Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God" (Verse 19). To argue that the church passed on this question of circumcision is to argue that a vote was taken to see if the church would indorse what this inspired apostle said should be done. If so, I suppose it was fortunate that they voted to sustain this inspired utterance of James! The decision voiced by James was put into writing for the benefit of all churches that had Gentile members, and it bore the signature of the apostles

and elders, and not of the church. It contained the decrees of the apostles and elders, and not of the church. Some time after this Paul and Silas visited the church Paul and Barnabas had established. "And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4).

" This matter of circumcising the Gentiles and requiring them to keep the law of Moses, or allowing their churches to be free from any such entanglements, was fundamental. If that question was decided by a majority vote of the church, then any other matter can be so decided.

" If the church voted as to whether the decrees announced by this inspired apostle should be enforced, then churches can vote as to whether any other thing taught by an apostle should be binding.

" If the matter was to be settled by the church, why was it not settled at Antioch, where the trouble arose?

" If the church at Jerusalem could establish decrees by majority vote that became binding in all parts of the world, then any church today can pass decrees that are binding on all other churches.

" The meeting at Jerusalem has been used in support of Methodist conferences, general assemblies of the Presbyterians, and conventions; and now I have heard at least two gospel preachers use it in support of their contention that the church en masse should pass on everything with which it has to do. And we berate the sectarians for perverting the Scriptures!

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"The foregoing from the pen of this man of God and Bible scholar seems to me to be final on the Acts 15 argument. Only innovationists and factionists will persist in perverting these scriptures to justify their wickedness, which as Peter said, "the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction."

### **Fallibility and Incompetence**

"But, interposes one, are the elders always right? If not, how can a church get rid of an undesirable elder? Personally, I never knew of all the elders of the church going bad at the same time. If an elder needs discipline why not follow divine instructions? If he does not need discipline perhaps it is not as important to remove him as an elder as some imagine. I dare say that a preacher of ordinary personality can visit among the members of any congregation and dissatisfy enough of them with its best elders to cause trouble.

But granting that the case is against the elder and that he should be disciplined-why not follow 1 Timothy 5 :19 and then proceed as in the case of any other member? This way of having all the elders to resign in order to get rid of one elder is about as sane as withdrawing from all of the members in order to discipline one disorderly member. Could we not just take all the members back-except the bad one? Great procedure that! It's about the size of the idea, some little pastor has when he propositions the elders that he will resign if they will. Yet they were elders of the church, and it was doing well, before he was born!

"A point which has been too much overlooked in all the discussions of competence, the church government and majority rule question is the question: "who is competent to rule the church?" We hear it said that certain elders are not competent to rule the church. Well, who appointed them? Does not the fact that a church appoints incompetent elders become prima facie evidence of their own incapacity to administer the affairs of the church? A church that has incompetent elders, would certainly be incompetent itself to run its affairs through its members rather than its elders. If they were so incompetent as to select incompetent elders, it looks as if the incompetency is general and not confined to the eldership. Majority rule would only aggravate such a condition and create more incompetency instead of relieving the situation.

"As for 'majority rule' it is seldom majority rule, but. preacher rule. The preacher gathers his voters; he con. troIs them and they vote like he tells them to vote. True, he stays in the background-but so does a general in the battle. The preacher, nevertheless, is the general, anc] but for the preacher it would be difficult for a church to have a division-they would hardly know how to go al;out it.

A Recapitulation "Some demand 'chapter and verse' that condemns majority rule and voting in the church, even if they cannot find authority for their majority rule system in the New Testament. For their sake, and information, the following summary is presented.

"First: Majority rule does not discriminate between experience and inexperience, nor regard knowledge as anything. It violates the New Testament principle that some by experience are more capable of discernment than others; should teach, and others be taught; should rule, and others submit. 'For when by reason of time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilled (without experience) in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil' (Heb.5:12-14).

"Second: Majority rule makes elders subject to the church instead of the church subject to the elders and reverses the New Testament principle: 'Obey them that have the rule over

you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief' (Heb'. 13 :17).

"Third: Majority rule is the parent of the ballot, or vote method, and becomes the occasion of politics, electioneering, instructing children and young people 'how to vote,' all of which results in division of sentiment and is contrary to the New Testament injunction: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, by 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 perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment' (1 Cor. 1:10).

"Fourth: Majority rule encourages preachers to disregard and ignore the elders and cater to the wishes of the majority in the church. A preacher of ability and personality can work up a sentiment in the congregation against the elders, and with his majority-rule doctrine divide the church, in flagrant violation of the New Testament command to 'know (recognize) them which labor among you (the elders), and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves' (1 Thess. 5:12, 13).

"Fifth: Majority rules breeds anarchy in the church; leaves the church in a state of uncertainty, without permanent leadership; and is against the New Testament command to the elders to 'take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers (bishops), to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood' (Acts 20:28). Any argument against unqualified elders cannot apply here for that same contingency exists, and is even more likely to exist, in cases of congregational rule. That is not the cure for the condition.

"Sixth: The demand for majority rule always comes from an uninformed and unruly element in the church; not from pious, consecrated people who are content to worship God in spirit and in truth, or from preachers who think that to be 'the minister of the church' is to hold office of high authority and who do not respect the authority of the elders over them. It is strange that preachers who want majority rule will recognize the authority of the elders when the elders engage them, but refuse to recognize the authority of the elders when they deem it best for them to leave. Such preachers take the work of the church upon the authority of the elders, but insist on keeping it by the majority vote of a personal following. Most any preacher, who is a 'good mixer' can put such a thing over with young people, indifferent members whose interest has been revived to 'take sides,' and with the uninformed in general. This is a perversion of everything the New Testament teaches on the duty of members of the church to the elders. 'Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yes, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility' (1 Peter 5 :5).

There is no possible way to harmonize congregational majority rule with the foregoing and many other New Testament instructions to elders and members of the church in their respective duties and relations one to another and to the church.

## **The Cure for Conditions**

"Is there any cure for these defections? Yes. The return to the New Testament order of elders that rule, deacons that serve, congregations that obey, members that work, and preachers that proclaim the word."

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The foregoing was from the pen of Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and it would be difficult to render a more devastating blow to the doctrine of majority rule in the church. Members in general, as well as preachers, should take note and take their proper place in the church by submitting to those that watch for their souls.

Its Relation to the Cooperation Controversy You may wonder about the propriety of devoting so much space to a discussion of these matters when we are primarily concerned in this book with the subject of cooperation. Sometimes in the heat of controversy, tempers flare and ill-will prevails. That is not as it should be. We must remember that "we be brethren." The love of God must rule our hearts and lives while we discuss differences as well as at all other times. Brethren on both sides of the controversy must exercise extreme caution lest they create factions .in the congregation where they worship. Even though I believe in the cooperation as defended in this book, I would most strenuously oppose imposing it upon the consciences of those who do not see their way clear to so practice. The same stand is occupied as i.t is with reference to those who do not find it possible to conscientiously use the class method of teaching. We do not insist that they adopt such methods, but, are perfectly willing to recognize them as brethren and enjoy their fellowship. The troublesome truth is: they will not recognize and fellowship us.

## **Liberty, Not Compulsion**

We do not insist that any church must assist in the support of an orphan home, national radio program, or assist some "sponsoring church" in a good work. We believe they are at liberty to do their work by other methods. However, these brethren are not content to avoid the use of these methods, but insist that we also desist from using them.

Regardless of which view you hold, do not agitate dissatisfaction with your elders who may be of the contrary view. It seems that if a brother cannot conscientiously support the program being conducted by the elders, rather than create a faction with its attendant ill-will and other evils, it would be best for that brother to quietly and in love move his membership to a church whose program he can support. Brethren have been vocal in assuring us that they have no intention of making this question a test of fellowship. Let us pray earnestly that such is true. If it is not a test of fellowship, let all beware of making it so. God forbid that brethren should be divided for a matter of judgment or expediency.

We do not desire unity at the expense of truth. We cannot sacrifice one item of faith to have unity. If brethren are willing to base their opposition on the ground of faith, it will not be long until they will make it a matter of fellowship. This makes it .all the more desirable, yea, imperative, that we resolve our differences. When differences exist, surely you can see the need of reemphasizing the relationship of elders and members, for in the midst of controversy we are liable to the influences of Satan to undermine respect for and submission to those who exercise a God-given rule, our elders. In fleeing from what you believe to be error, do not plunge headlong into another as bad or worse.

### **Questions**

1. To what extent must one be subject to the elders?
2. Are preachers subject to the elders?
3. May elders exercise rule in matters of faith? Expediency?
4. Is majority rule a scriptural doctrine?
5. Do elders exercise rule in the material affairs of the church?
6. Does the majority (or elders, either) have the right to vote regarding whether or not they will obey a command?
7. Was the "Jerusalem Conference" a case of majority rule in the church?
8. How would a church rid itself of an undesirable elder?
9. What are some of the evils of majority rule?
10. How is respect for elders related to the question of controversy regarding cooperation?
11. Does liberty to make use of a method imply that one is obligated to use it?
12. Are differences regarding methods of cooperation a test of fellowship? Would such a test be found in methods which are contrary to faith?
13. Is one ever safe in making a test of fellowship in matters of expediency?
14. Is it safe not to make a test of fellowship in matters of faith?

15. In view of the latter two questions, it only remains to inquire: Do our methods of cooperation involve matters of faith or of expediency?