

## ARE YOU LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE?

We are living in some sad times for the people of God. We have seen, and are seeing, all kinds of innovations introduced into the church of our Lord. We are hopelessly divided into two groups and are growing farther and farther apart as the years come and go! This division boils down to two attitudes toward the Bible -- a conservative and a liberal attitude. The liberal attitude wants to go beyond the established order and enjoy liberties not authorized. The conservative attitude desires to hold to the established order, will not go beyond what has been established, and is opposed to taking liberties not authorized. Let us now examine these attitudes as they express themselves in our present-day problems:

### THE CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL VIEW OF BENEVOLENCE

CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL
<p>1. The Christian is to provide for his or her own family and not let the church be charged (I Tim. 5: 16; 5:8; 5:4).</p> <p>2. The Local church is responsible for its needy saints (Acts 2: 44- 45; 4:32; 6: 1 - 4; I Cor. 16:1 - 2). If a local church has more needy saints than it can care for, then other congregations can help in this time of need (Acts 11: 27 - 30; I Cor. 16: 1 - 2; 2 Cor. 8 &amp; 9; Rom. 15: 25 - 26).</p> <p>3. James 1:27 is written to the individual, and is an individual responsibility.</p> <p>4. The non-Christian's care is the duty of the individual Christian (Luke 10: 25 - 37).</p> <p>5. When the non-Christian's care is the duty of the Christian by virtue of his relationship, and the Christian is unable to meet his just responsibilities, he (the Christian) can be helped by the local church in meeting his duty to the non-Christian.</p> <p>6. The church is all-sufficient and must do none of its work through a human organization, benevolence or otherwise.</p>	<p>1. "So, God commanded churches to help saints that might be in need, and also non-saints who might be in need in Gal. 6:10". <i>Basil Overton</i> in <u>The World Evangelist</u>, Oct. 1977</p> <p>2. The local church can supply money to human organizations so that these organizations may perform benevolent work.</p> <p>3. "James 1:27 is not addressed to the individual..." "The truth is that James 1: 27 is addressed to the church and what is said in this verse to the church is about what each in the church should do, and that is to practice pure and undefiled religion by relieving orphans and widows." <u>The World Evangelist</u>, Feb. 1975.</p>

**LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION**

CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL
<p>1. He does not believe that just any kind of congregational cooperation is authorized. He believes that the congregational cooperation of the New Testament is specific.</p> <p>2. One congregation in the N. T. helped another congregation when the receiving congregation was in need (or want). (Acts 11: 27 - 30; I Cor. 16: 1 - 2; 2 Cor. 8 &amp; 9; Rom. 15: 25, 26)</p> <p>3. He believes that churches in N. T. times sent directly to the preacher in the field. (Phil. 4: 14 - 18; II Cor. 11:8).</p> <p>4. The sponsoring church is a violation of the autonomy (or self-government) of a local church. (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2; Acts 14:23).</p> <p>5. He does not believe churches can send their money to a human organization (orphan home, college, or nursing home) and in turn let it do the work God intended the church to do.</p> <p>6. He believes that each church is to do its own work under the oversight of its own elders, and that the elders' authority begins and ends with the congregation over which they are elders (I Pet. 5:2).</p>	<p>1. He does not believe that congregational cooperation is specific. "I would believe in the Herald of Truth if there were nothing in the Bible about church cooperation save the great commission." Guy N. Woods</p> <p>2. He believes in the sponsoring church arrangement of cooperation. This is the joint action of churches, where many churches send to church to do a work to which all churches are equally related. The sponsoring church becomes the agent for the contributing churches.</p> <p>3. He believes churches can send their money to a human organization (orphan home, college, or nursing home) and let it do the work God intended the church to do.</p> <p>4. He believes one church may assume a work to which all are equally related, and once a church assumes a work like world-wide TV or radio, then all churches can perform that work through one group of elders.</p>

### LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD ENTERTAINMENT

CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL
<p>1. It is not the mission of the church to entertain saints or sinners . . . The mission of the church is threefold: to preach the gospel to the lost ( I Tim. 3:15; Phil. 4: 14 - 17); to edify its members (Eph. 4: 11 - 16); and to minister to its own in time of need (Acts 2: 44- 45; 4:32; I Cor. 16: 1 - 2; Rom. 15: 25 - 27; I Tim. 5:16).</p> <p>2. Clean entertainment is wholesome, but it should be provided by parents and interested Christians, not by the church ( I Cor. 11: 22 ,34).</p> <p>3. That which has been built with money contributed on the first day of the week (meetinghouses to carry out the mission of the church -- I Cor. 16: 1, 2) should not be used for social or recreational purposes.</p>	<p>1. Believe it is the work of the church to provide entertainment.</p> <p>2. "The New Family Life-Educational Annex that the Madison church of Christ is building . . . "Large fellowship room, seating about 300." "Commercial-type kitchen with large pantry for fellowship dinners and "Meals-on-Wheels"; "Large Activities Room suitable for large Bible class and family activities and youth activities." <u>Madison Marcher</u>, Nov. 16, 1977</p>

### LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD PREACHERS

CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL
<p>1. The word of God set the pattern of action for the church ( 2 Tim. 3: 16 - 17).</p> <p>2. Preachers are not exalted above the Word ( I Cor. 4: 6).</p> <p>3. Questionable men are exposed and called upon to make correction in their teaching ( 3 John 9 - 10; Rom 16: 17 - 18; Gal. 2: 11 - 14).</p>	<p>1. Well known preachers set policy for the church.</p> <p>2. Preachers are exalted above the Word -- many are called "Doctor" ( I Cor. 4:6; Matt. 23: 8 - 12).</p> <p>3. Questionable men are accepted when they step in places of "power" such as being an editor of a paper of influence.</p>

### LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD AUTHORITY

CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL
<p>1. We must have divine authority for all religious acts and practices (Matt. 28:18). We do nothing for which we do not have divine authority (Eph. 1: 22 - 23).</p> <p>2. When the scriptures are silent, we must be silent ( 2 John 9 - 11; I Pet. 4:11).</p>	<p>1. We do many things for which there is no authority.</p> <p>2. There is no pattern for congregational cooperation.</p> <p>3. The silence of the scriptures is not respected.</p>

3. The scriptures teach three ways -- command, approved example, and necessary inference.	4. The N. T. examples are not binding unless there is a background command ( <i>This would rule out the Lord's supper on the first day of the week because there is no background command to eat it on the first day of the week. dt</i> )
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I hope this article will help point up the fact of the great difference that exists between conservative and liberal congregations. These are not all the differences between us by any means, but let no one deceive you into thinking that our differences are minor and few, because they are not! The sad part about it is that these differences will never be reconciled because we are going in two different directions -- we possess two different attitudes toward authority!

From time to time conservative-thinking people will leave the liberal ranks and come identify with the conservatives, and liberal-thinking people will leave the conservative ranks and identify with the liberals. The conservative churches will continue to grow and increase in number because our emphasis is on building churches. Liberal churches are putting their emphasis on bigness-- having a big church of several hundred is their goal in most places. Liberals are putting emphasis on building more and more human institutions and turning their work over to them. These big churches with human institutions doing their work is killing (and will kill in the future) the incentive of their people. Therefore, they will grow less and less numerically and establish fewer and fewer churches just as the Christian church did in the last century.

Friend, I hope this article will help you decide to take your stand with brethren who want to do all things according to the New Testament pattern.

Donald Townsley

(Taken from "The Voice", November and December 1977)