

Reprints And Excerpts

FROM THE

Gospel Advocate

THE ISSUES ARE UNCHANGED; ONLY THE NAMES ARE DIFFERENT.

THE TRUTH BETWEEN EXTREMES

FOY E. WALLACE, JR.

(Relation to the GA: Editor, August 1930 - March, 1934. Also later edited The Gospel Guardian, Bible Banner and Torch. Author of God's Prophetic Word, The Certified Gospel, and Bulwarks of the Faith (2 vols.).

(ADDED NOTE: This article was reprinted September 28, 1939, as an editorial by B. C. Goodpasture with the following commendations. "The foregoing articles reflect our present sentiments on the matters in question.—Editor")

In establishing the identity of the New Testament church, the necessity of being Scriptural in doctrine, worship, and name has received due emphasis. While these essential features have not been overemphasized, there are some other points that have been more or less minimized.

The organization of the church, for instance, is vital, and Scriptural **work** is an essential feature of its identity.

I. THE DIVINE ARRANGEMENT

The organization of the New Testament church is simple, not complex. It is the local church with elders, deacons, and members. No other organization is known in the New Testament. The local church with elders and deacons is a complete and perfect organization through which to do everything God has commanded the church **as such**, to do. It, therefore, follows that any organization larger or smaller than the local church, designed to do the work of the church, is an infringement upon the divine arrangement and is unscriptural. The truth of this principle is so evident as not to require proof to one who is familiar with New Testament teaching.

II. METHODS OF WORK

In the application of the above principal, however, some have failed to discriminate between **METHODS** and **ORGANIZATION**. The church may use any expedient method of doing anything God has commanded so long as it is a **method only**. The protracted meeting is a method of saving souls. Class teaching, sometimes called "Sunday school," is a **METHOD** of imparting instruction, whether pursued on Sunday or some other day. But there is a vast difference between methods and organizations. It has been claimed that the missionary society is only a method of evangelizing the world. That is not true. The missionary society is an organization, an established institution, and uses methods of its own.

It is easy to encroach upon principles, and such encroachments are in evidence in some of the churches of Christ today. For instance, the Sunday school as a method of instruction violates no Scriptural principle. Quite to the contrary, it is the application of the Scriptures that enjoin teaching, but prescribe no method. But when the Sunday school becomes an organized auxiliary, functioning apart from the church, it ceases to be a method and becomes an organization. It is, not uncommon for Sunday school classes, young people's meetings, women's Bible classes, and other groups to function as organized groups even to the point of maintaining a separate treasury and doing certain work belonging to the church in the name of their group. If one

group has the right to so organize and function, other groups have the same right, and if followed to its logical end the congregation as an organized unit would be destroyed. Such is a perversion of an otherwise Scriptural work. When Sunday school classes and young people's meetings so organize and function, they differ from denominational B. Y. P. U. and C. E. societies only in name.

III. THE TRUTH BETWEEN EXTREMES

The autonomy of the church—the independent existence and functioning of the local church—is an accepted principle among all who oppose the missionary societies. But to what extent congregations can engage in cooperative work without infringing upon autonomous functioning of the church is a question not altogether easy to decide.

The truth is usually found between extremes. The extremes in this case are, organizations that usurp the functions of a congregation, on one hand, and an aloofness between churches that would prohibit all cooperation, on the other. The missionary society usurps the functions of the church. And when an individual does the same thing the missionary society does—namely, independently receives and disburses missionary funds for the churches—that individual usurps the functions of the church. On the same principle, if the elders of one congregation solicits the funds of other congregations for general distribution, then the elders of one congregation usurp the functions of the congregations whose funds they receive and disburse. It is the same in principle as if a society or individual should do so.

How, then, and to what extent, may churches Scripturally cooperate? Fortunately, we have a New Testament example. The prophet Agabus prophesied of the famine that should come over the world (the Jewish world, or Judea); and "the disciples (at Antioch), every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." (Acts 11:29, 30.)

The disciples at Antioch cooperated with the churches in Judea **THROUGH THE ELDERS** in relieving an emergency in Judea. For one church to help another bear its own burdens, therefore, has Scriptural precedent. But for one church to solicit funds from other churches for general distribution in other fields or places, thus becoming the treasury of other churches, is quite a different question. Such procedure makes a sort of **SOCIETY** out of the elders of a local church, and for such there is no Scriptural precedent or example.

There should be no infringement upon the local church as a functioning unit.

—May 14, 1931, page 580.

PURPOSE OF THIS ISSUE

The reprinting of these articles and items is for various purposes, not the least of which is the clearing away of some of the clouds of confusion left in the wake of ceaseless misrepresentations. Hardly an effort is made to defend centralization of funds or efforts in a single agency, either of an eldership, educational or benevolent board, through which churches are encouraged and pressured to work but what the contention is made that "no one" opposed such until "five or six years ago" ("in about 1950") except Sommerites and Ketcherside. In token evidence, old Gospel Advocate articles and excerpts are herein presented to expose this prejudicial claim untrue and unfounded. And though these articles illustrate the fact that the battles now current are not new, it is emphasized that the writers and dates of these articles are not being appealed to for Scriptural proof; only to refute the prejudicial claim that "everyone" approved institutionalism (that's what it is called in some of these articles) until just a few years ago. Such a claim is untrue. It is a lie.

Notwithstanding the difference in the positions of the current and past editors, policy changes are strikingly evidenced. In the twenties and thirties, in the same journal, articles appeared that defended and promoted institutionalism and that were diametrically opposed to those presented herein. But this only illustrates the fact that the editorial policy of the Gospel Advocate has completely changed, yes, wholly reversed itself, from a medium of open columns where even editorials could be challenged to a paper whose spirit is dictatorial, denying voice to anyone not given completely to her views. Doubtlessly, a revival of that departed spirit would be as healing balm to a troubled and strife torn Israel.

These men whose writings are quoted were (or are), almost without exception, giants of the faith. The memories of those who have parted these shores are cherished, and their works honored, but no appeal is to be legitimately made by a Christian to what any man believed or believes for his hope. The New Testament provides all the proof needed as to where we must stand, and only the New Testament. The testimony of men does not constitute proof for any religious practice. However, the understanding that these gallant champions had of divine truth as revealed in the Holy Book is manifest in these writings by their references thereto and declaration thereof. They are commended, in the interest of truth and the welfare of His church, to your serious consideration and sober meditation.

—JERE E. FROST
August 20, 1957.

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"If it (_____) Orphan Home is an organization other than a local congregation, and congregations of the church of Christ are functioning through it, why may we not have them function through that, or some other organizations as that, in mission work? . . . Brethren call me at times for debates, and occasionally the missionary society is brought into the discussion. It is an organization through which congregations function. On what ground am I to oppose such organizations, and then defend the organization of the _____ Orphan Home?"

—C. R. Nichol (quoted by James A. Allen) June 15, 1933, page 571.

ORPHAN HOMES

JOHN T. HINDS

(Relation to the GA: Editor, April 12, 1934, till death on January 1, 1938. Earlier wrote Annual Lesson Commentaries and edited the "Queries and Answers Department. Author of commentary on Revelation.)

In recent articles on Christian liberties and restraints the right of both individual and congregational efforts has been shown to be a logical conclusion. The distinction between these two classes of efforts has been especially illustrated as they apply to the work of publishing religious papers and the operation of schools in which the Bible is taught. It is probably best, before finally closing this discussion, to see if the principles and arguments will also apply to orphan homes. This is equivalent to asking if orphan homes are, under any circumstance, a Christian liberty.

In harmony with what has already been said on the right of individual Christian efforts there are two ways that such homes may be run without violating any scriptural principle—namely, as the direct work of the congregation under its eldership, and as independent efforts voluntarily undertaken by one Christian or a group of Christians. It has happened that orphan homes have been conducted in all these ways, being sometimes a failure and sometimes a success. In like manner congregations have published religious papers in their local work, and individuals and groups of individuals have published papers as independent efforts which they thought would indirectly do much good for the church by spreading gospel truth. Even those who condemn the schools and homes accept the papers as in harmony with scriptural teaching. This they do both by writing and subscribing for them. The support for religious papers and Bible schools, run by one or a group as an independent work, is a voluntary matter left to the choice of each individual. This is a necessity, for neither papers nor schools have any organic relationship to congregations as such; hence, can neither be controlled by congregations nor can they control congregations.

* * *

The legal or scriptural right to do a thing does not prove that it is always expedient to do it. Circumstances generally have much to do in deciding what is expedient, even of that which would be a good and scriptural thing to do, if the situation was just right. Circumstances often would make it highly inexpedient to start a religious paper, though the right to do so cannot be denied. But the inexpediency of a certain individual, a group of individuals, or a congregation starting an orphan home does not prove that it is unscriptural for one to be started by either class, if the conditions are right. The failure of one started may prove the lack of common sense in starting it, or the weakness of its management, but it does not prove that starting one was in itself sinful or unscriptural. The Gospel Advocate does not wish to endorse anything wrong in fact, nor fail, if possible, to make proper distinctions between things wrong in themselves and the proper use of things right in themselves. As it now appears, papers, schools, and orphan homes stand or fall together.

—September 27, 1934, page 923

"If a separate organization to own and operate a children's home is not unscriptural, then I do not understand why it would be unscriptural for the same board of directors to operate a missionary society, because the matter of preaching the gospel to the heathen and the matter of taking care of our orphans certainly are a similar work."

—George Pepperdine (quoted by James A. Allen), June 15, 1933, page 571.

CHURCH CO-OPERATION

H. LEO BOLES

(Relation to the GA: Editor, 1920-1923. Editor-in-chief of the Uniform Bible Lessons for sixteen years. Writer for forty years. Author of commentaries on Matthew and Acts. Also President of David Lipscomb College, 1906-1913, 1923-1932.)

This is the time for clear thinking and close study of this question. It is the time when we should review prayerfully the history of the churches of Christ as given in the New Testament. There are many people who are confused on this question, who have never given the question much thought. All the churches of Christ need to study just what the New Testament teaches on "church cooperation."

Let us draw a line of distinction between the New Testament teaching on this question and that which is taught by the denominations today. Church cooperation is one thing and a combination of individuals in their individual capacity is another thing. Brethren who worship with different congregations may form a company and do work, but this is not church cooperation. For individual members of the church to associate themselves into a body to do the work as assigned to the churches is to take so much of man's talent and efforts from the churches and to direct them in a way that supplants the churches

* * *

Now, then, can churches cooperate? I believe that the New Testament Scriptures teaches that churches may—yea, must—cooperate, if they fulfill their mission. It is sad to know that every effort made at cooperation in the work of churches among the Disciples of Christ has run in the same channel that has resulted in forming another sect. Church cooperation cannot exist with the individual members combining into a distinct organization to do the work of the church; neither can church cooperation exist through delegated representatives from the churches forming the organization. Both of these processes destroy the church. The one saps the life and activity of the churches, and the other helps to form a new sect or denomination. There must be churches before there can be church cooperation. These churches must be distinct, separate, equal, and independent of each other; and they must be independent so far as other churches or organizations are concerned. They must not only be separate, but they must be working churches.

To operate means to work, and to cooperate means to work together to the same end. There can be no working together of churches without the churches themselves working. Churches that do not work cannot work together; churches that do not operate cannot cooperate. Every church in the universe that operates or works according to the will of God cooperates or works together with every other church in the universe that is working according to the same rule. Churches which are fulfilling their mission separate and independent of other churches nevertheless are cooperating with all other churches that fulfill their mission. It seems that we ought to see this, that we ought to recognize this fundamental truth. This is the only church cooperation that is taught in the New Testament. When a number of churches undertake to work in or through an association or organization not authorized in the New Testament, or by a law or rule not of God, they place themselves out of harmony with all the churches operating under the divine law, out of harmony with the law of God, out of harmony with all the will of God, and out of harmony with God himself. Such churches cannot claim to be cooperating with other churches that are fulfilling their mission as God directs churches to do.

Churches can cooperate—yea, they do cooperate—if they fulfill their mission. It is not a matter or question as to

CHURCHES SHOULD NOT BE BOUND TOGETHER

F. B. SRYGLEY

(Relation to the GA: Staff writer for many years. Senior Staff Editor in early thirties of "Contending for the faith department.")

Every New Testament church was a complete body within itself and was independent of all other churches. No church had any authority over any other. The work of the elders stopped at the church in which they lived and labored. These elders had no authority to take charge of the missionary money or any other money or means of any church except the one over which they were "overseers." Each church was complete within and of itself. The Baptists talk much about church independence and then bind churches together in associations, conventions, and other denominational organizations unknown to the New Testament. It will be remembered that some time ago Mr. Freeman, of the Baptist and Reflector, made a great ado over the fact that he thought he had found a restaurant in the Central church of Christ here in Nashville—while it turned out to be restaurant in the church property, run by an individual without profit, for the benefit of the poor and needy. But if it had been, as he claimed, run by the Central Church and entirely unscriptural, it could have injured no church except the Central Church that was running it. This shows the wisdom of God in making every local church independent of all other local churches. . . .

This condition should show my brethren who are trying to be only Christians the evils of denominationalism. Churches should never be tied together, even in as good a work as preaching the gospel to the heathens. Elders of one church should not try to get hold of the money that has been contributed by others to direct for them in foreign fields or other places. No missionary society should be started by elders of a church or by any individual. We should have no one-man missionary society. Churches should not be tied together to support schools or homes for the aged or for any other purpose.

—December 3, 1931, page 1500.

"An individual can send his means directly to the preacher who is on the field preaching the gospel, and so can a church, provided it sends it directly to the preacher. If two or more churches put it into the hands of any kind of a board, though the board may be made up of elders of one of the churches, we have a very nice beginning for a missionary society to try to take charge of the churches."

—F. B. Srygley, January 11, 1934, page 44.

whether churches should cooperate; it is a necessity for them to cooperate in fulfilling their mission according to divine instruction. Churches that fulfill their mission are promoting the cause of Christ and the will of God; hence, as they are working to the same end, they are cooperating. Churches cannot cooperate and please God when they form new organizations through which to work. No organization is needed. Church cooperation cannot be done by selecting officers, committees, or associations to take charge of all the work of all the churches throughout the land. No one can give a reason why one church should attend to the business of another church. No reason can be found that will justify one church doing the work of another church when that church can do its own work.

—January 28, 1932, page 114.

A RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION

W. E. BRIGHTWELL

(NOTE: This is the first of a series of articles on institutionalism in general and missionary methods in particular.—W. E. B.)

Human efficiency has failed. Denominational machinery is falling by its own excessive weight. Institutionalism has destroyed the life and energy of the church today! These could be the words of J. Frank Norris in his thunderings against the regular Baptist machine. They could be the words of William T. Ellis, syndicate writer on the Sunday school lessons, anent general church conditions. For that matter, they could be the words of a score of minority leaders in various denominations. But the words are not quoted. Neither do they describe some far-away condition which does not concern the church of Christ.

The next religious war will be fought around the issue of institutionalism. We have a condition in religion analogous to the one which produced the economic depression. The church, speaking in a general sense, has lived too high, built too much machinery, trusted too much to human wisdom and human organization—it has become grossly inflated. . . .

But what has all this to do with the church of Christ? A plenty. Only those who have hid their brains in the sand like an ostrich are unaware of the danger to us. We are not as highly inflated as some of the denominations, to be sure. We were late in starting. But give us time, for we are headed right smack in the same direction. Church debts, institutions, and cooperative enterprises will as surely enslave and destroy us as it has enslaved and destroyed others. The curse of humanism plays no favorites. We cannot do the same things, for the same purpose, and in essentially the same manner as the denominations and hope to escape through the mere technicality of names. It is time to get our heads out of the sand.

RE STUDY AUTONOMY

The first step back toward sanity and Jerusalem is to restudy and reemphasize the autonomy of the local congregation. In plain American English, autonomy means the right to attend to your own business. It has been cleverly suggested that a man should spend half of his time attending to his own business and the other half letting everybody else's business alone. That is good as far as it goes, but it does not cover all cases. The local congregation will probably have to divide its time three ways—one third to planning its own work, another third to letting other churches do the same, and the last third to giving philanthropic meddlers and professional beggars to understand that they must let its business alone! If churches of Christ do not begin to assert their independence, they will soon have none to assert.

Every congregation is not only free and independent, but it has everything that is needed for its successful operation. It has all the organization, laws, and committees needed. It is composed of saints, elders, and deacons. The two latter represent its mild but efficient organization; the New Testament contains its laws and regulations; and every saint is a committee of one, clothed with power to act. Is any proof needed? If the Lord has provided the complete equipment for the local congregation to function, and has made no provision whatever for Christians to act in any other way, or through any other unit, is that not a sufficient hint as to how we are expected to work? But the history of the church for nineteen hundred years teaches us that the autonomy of the local congregation must be sacredly guarded if we would remain true and loyal to the teachings of the New Testament; for when men have departed

CENTRALIZATION OF POWER

F. W. SMITH

(Relation to the GA: Editor of several quarterlies, of one series for ten years. A page editor and regular writer for many years.)

. . . . The "centralization of power" in religious matters is **infinitely more dangerous** than such power in politics or commerce, because such power in religion leads to a rejection of the **divine** system, a **usurpation** of **divine** prerogatives, and the destruction of **religious liberty** vouchsafed to God's freemen in Christ.

CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

Divine wisdom has provided no religious institution other than what is termed the "local congregation" for the propagation of the gospel and for carrying forward all the work to be done in the service of Christ. These congregations of Christ were left independent of each other with no **organic union** or **federation** of any kind whatever. Each congregation attended to its own affairs in the raising and disbursing of its funds in all phases of religious obligations. This divine order was set aside by uninspired men filled with the ambition of religious leadership and a "centralized" organization was created, with "centralized power" vested in a few composing a "board of control," with its treasury. . . . It was this plan of a centralization of power in religion that brought into being the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and every Protestant denomination has, in this respect, patterned after the Roman Catholic Church to a greater or lesser extent. Mosheim's church history shows the successive steps leading the New Testament churches into such a combine, which, in the sixth century, culminated in the Roman Catholic hierarchy. . . .

THE SAME PRINCIPAL

. . . . When you hear men talk about "doing big things" in religion, they usually have something in mind **by which they hope to be glorified in the eyes of the world.**

Again, when men get the idea in their minds to build big things in religion, whether it be a big church, centrally or otherwise located, or to do big things in missionary work, they have in mind a centralized power to **direct and control** the machinery.

—August 18, 1928, page 778.

from that principle, they have not only violated the will of God in that particular, but it has led into all kinds of error and corruption.

HISTORY'S WARNING

The Roman apostasy came by degrees over a period of centuries. The first step was **simple cooperation**. Rome excused herself with the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope. Reformers did not attempt to tear down the ecclesiastical machinery which had been built. They merely sought to correct certain abuses and corruptions. The so-called "Restoration Movement" swept away all the rubbish of organization which had accumulated through the centuries, and built on the original foundation. But some were not content. Some entered the movement with the germ of distrust in the all-sufficiency of God's word and his plan still in their hearts. "We must have organization to have cooperation," they said. Despite their brave start from the old landmarks, they have built a denomination among denominations in the name of expediency! But we who have fought within and without for the all-sufficiency of God's word and for congregational autonomy, are we entirely free from the same delusion? Do we fully trust God? If so, then what meaneth the "bleating of the sheep" and the "lowing of the oxen" of institutionalism within our own ranks, which some of us—yea, many of us—can so distinctly hear?

—November 29, 1934, page 1161.

GENERAL FAILURE

JAMES A. ALLEN

(Relation to the GA: Editor, May, 1923-August 1, 1930. Writer since 1901. Also later edited The Apostolic Times for twenty years.)

. . . . In New Testament times every local congregation, under its own bishops and deacons, and with nothing of what the world today calls "organization," was all-sufficient to carry on its work, not only in holding forth the word of life, but also in every avenue of charity and benevolence.

The model, as given by the Holy Spirit, upon which the primitive churches were set in order and started to work, is the plan through which all Christians may labor together with God for the proclamation of the gospel and for the betterment of society. The early churches, although entirely without the worldly advantages of wealth and prestige, preached the gospel throughout the nations of the world; from imperial Rome to the humblest villages and hamlets of remote precincts they proclaimed the story of Jesus their Lord; and, without any kind of worldly or human organization, with an entire absence of institutions of every nature and kind, the care they bestowed upon the poor, the way they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, made provision for orphans and widows in their afflictions, was the wonder and admiration of the world.

* * *

The number of institutions and organizations that are now in existence is amazing, as well as confusing. Each one is created, and a drive is started to sustain it, upon a pretext that it is going to do this or that. And just as commercialism has protruded its selfish hand into everything and dared to desecrate even so sacred a thing as religious work, and just as begging is one of the big businesses of today, just so we are not surprised to discover that getting up and running such organizations and institutions is the business profession through which their promoters draw their exorbitant salaries, that these things are the channel through which they seek their wealth and fame. Machine charity is coldly and grudgingly dealt out to the poor, lest the "budget" be exceeded. Instead of congregations lending a helping hand to orphans and widows in their homes, and among their own relatives and friends, where they naturally belong, and where they have the greatest opportunity of helping themselves, these same orphans and widows are shipped off to far-away institutions, where they are herded together en masse and where each one becomes only a number, and home ties and home love, in the routine of institutionalism, become only a memory.

—October 24, 1929, page 1009.

GOSPEL ADVOCATE EDITORIAL POLICY (AN EXCERPT FROM DAVID LIPSCOMB)

We wish to say to all such that while we never expect to conceal our faith or principles on any subject of interest to the religious world, never expect to profess one kind of faith or principle to one man and a different kind to another; at the same time we have no disposition to color the character of the Advocate by our own peculiar impressions or convictions on any subject. Any Christian brother shall have the same freedom to our pages, on any subject that we may deem of interest, that the Editors themselves have. In one word the **Gospel Advocate** shall not be partisan for or against Missionary Societies, nor for or against Christians engaging in war or politics, but shall be open to as free, full and candid investigation of the matters from those occupying opposing positions on these and other practical questions as our space will admit.

1866, p. 717

THE EARLY CHURCH AND ITS METHODS

F. B. SRYGLEY

By a careful study of the Bible any one should be able to see that the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, banded the believers together in small groups and that these groups were called "churches of Christ." . . . When Paul said, "The churches of Christ salute you," he meant the localized body of Christ, or the body of Christ in different localities. These churches were independent of each other and of all other congregations. They were not bound together by any organization under the control of the eldership of any one of these churches, neither were they banded together under one board created by any State or national law. The single task of these local churches was to preach the gospel and save souls. They had no organization larger than their local churches. There was no discussion among them about how to build and control institutions such as orphanages, or homes for the aged, or hospitals for the sick. There is no more authority in the New Testament for the control of such things than there is for the control of a farm or a health resort. . . .

Some time after the apostles died (it even began to work in their day) men became dissatisfied with this simple organization and began to desire to do some great work. These simple organizations soon began to band themselves together through their eldership. No doubt they felt that they could do a greater work by a closer cooperation, and this led to a more extended organization, which eventually led to the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The Catholic Church then undertook to organize in a way to control schools, hospitals . . . We now have brethren that should know better trying to find authority for owning and operating such things under the overworked rule of expediency. Brethren have the right to own and operate newspapers, schools, homes for the aged, and farms; and they not only have the right to teach the Bible in and through anything they have the right to own, but it is their duty to do so. Preaching the gospel, by which souls are saved, is the duty of all churches and individual Christians as far as they are able to do so; but this is far from saying that they have the right to build anything in the way of a religious institution which is not authorized by the New Testament. There is nothing in the New Testament larger than the local church or smaller than the body of Christ. Such institutions as are here mentioned, if owned and operated at all, should be owned and operated by individual Christians and not by churches. Whenever churches leave their one task of preaching the gospel and saving souls to build up other institutions, they are likely to get into controversy over how to own and operate such institutions as they may build.

—May 14, 1931, page 572.

"If we speak freely and investigate subjects that others shrink from, we yet will do it in a nonpartisan spirit, and only wish to know and teach the truth on all subjects connected with practical Christianity. Will freely, gladly hear ourselves and let our readers hear both sides of every question we present."

—David Lipscomb, 1866, page 809.

"We are always glad to have objections made to our position. If they are not correct, we wish to change them for true and sound positions. We are always glad to exchange an unsound for a sound position."

—David Lipscomb, 1843, page 160.

(Relation to the GA: A contributor of articles. Also the founder and president of Abilene Christian College and later the president of Southwestern Christian College, Denton, Texas.)

The word "church" is used for the body, the kingdom, as a whole; for congregations in a district, as Judea, Macedonia, and Asia, and for a local congregation in any place. In our study of New Testament congregationalism, I mean what we might term church or congregational autonomy, or self-government.

The New Testament knows nothing about "church organization" in the sense of organizing the body as a whole. There can be no such church government. Neither can the church universal be called upon to function as a unit. It can neither sue nor be sued. There can be no church organization in this sense. The general church has no head but Christ.

We read nowhere in the New Testament that the churches, or congregations, of a district ever combined for any purpose. Each individual congregation of the seven churches of Asia was separately addressed through its own particular angel, or messenger. And yet everything said to one congregation was equally applicable to all like congregations. Rev. 22:16.

The only church organization that the New Testament reveals is the organization of a group of disciples in a given locality into a local congregation, composed of baptized, penitent believers, with Scriptural elders (presbyters, bishops, overseers, pastors shepherds whose duties are clearly defined, and no one is the superior of the other) and Scriptural deacons. Every church of Christ is thus divinely constituted so as to function independently of all other like congregations. There is no New Testament authority for combining two or more such congregations for any purpose whatsoever. If any such combination is accomplished, it is wholly without the place of New Testament teaching, hence unscriptural and sinful.

All such congregations assembled on the first day of the week for worship and services; "and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching," the breaking of bread, fellowship, and in prayers. Each member did what he could do, contributing of his means, time, and talent to the edification and the building up of the church. There was no other cooperation among such congregations than that of one congregation sending messengers to other congregations for assistance in charity and in missions; and when their mission was accomplished they returned and reported to the home congregation, and their responsibilities ceased. There were no "brotherhood colleges," "church papers," "church orphanages," "old folks' homes," and the like, among apostolic congregations. . . . The churches established by the apostles did not contribute to any organization other than a sister congregation. All "church" movements should be kept under the local congregation.

This divine plan of congregationalism continued till wicked men crept in and led brethren into apostasy. . . . Such apostates from the truth soon induced churches to organize societies of their own devising, to contribute their funds to other such organizations. . . .

History repeats itself. Following the restoration of the ancient order of things, launched by Stone, Campbell, and others, men of worldly ambition crept in among us. So now we have "delegates," "brotherhood colleges," "orphanages," "brotherhood publishing houses," and "literature," all of which is just as foreign to New Testament teaching as were the corruptions of the congregationalism of the churches

. . . . Whatever the church, as such, is commanded to do can be done only through the church. And the only way to do anything through the church is to do it through the local church, which is the only organization known in the New Testament. The missionary society performs the functions of the church. It stands between the church and the work being done. Its organization supercedes and usurps the organization and work of the church. The missionary society, therefore, supplants—displaces—the local church.

But individuals have certain rights and privileges. Individuals may publish papers or establish schools. They do not have to bar the Bible and religion from such in order to have the right to operate them. But such endeavors thus conducted are private enterprises, and the individuals conducting them have no right to "adjunct" their own enterprises to the church.

If it were "permissible to have a Bible college as an adjunct to the church in the work of education and an orphans' home in the work of benevolence," we quite agree that it would also be "permissible" to have a "missionary society in the work of evangelization." But the question assumes the point to be proved. Nothing is "permissible" as an auxiliary of the church which is not Scriptural. And it is not Scriptural for the church to delegate its work, either missionary or benevolent, to boards and organizations other than the church. Bible colleges and institutional orphans' homes cannot be made adjuncts of the church, Scripturally. The only way the church could Scripturally run a school or a home would be for the local church to undertake such work through its local organization—elders and deacons—in which case it would be the work of THAT congregation.

Institutionalism has been a menace to congregational independence as taught in the New Testament. It has wrought havoc to the church in the past, and growing tendencies present hazards for the future. The truth of this has been seen by the more conservative element in the Christian (digressive) Church. They are trying to swing back. But they cannot "swing" without swinging all the way back, and the spirit of digression which led them away forbids their return. But not until complete reformation can there be restoration.

We should study more carefully and fully the simplicity of the work and worship of the New Testament church and resolve to follow apostolic teaching and example.

—July 2, 1931, page 804.

(This article, an editorial, was written in response to the following question which was asked by W. H. Thorpe at the conclusion of the same criticisms and reasonings:

"If, then, it is permissible to have a Bible college as an adjunct of the church in the work of education and an orphans' home in the work of benevolence, why not a missionary society in the work of evangelization?"

"It seems to me the same principle which allows the one will allow all."

of the early centuries of Christianity. Individual Christians, any number, may Scripturally engage in any worth work, such as running colleges, papers, and 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 a call would be out of harmony with the word of the living God. And if any congregation so contributes, it transcends its Scriptural prerogatives.

Churches of Christ work only with individuals and with other congregations.

—March 13, 1930, page 247.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT—ALL ALIKE

H. LEO BOLES

The church as God's divine institution should be studied from every angle that is revealed to us in the New Testament. We need to know all that is revealed concerning it, or God would not have revealed it to us. The fact that we find this institution, with its government, mission, and worship, in the New Testament, is sufficient evidence that we should study it. How does God govern his people today?

What is the relation of local organizations to one another? They are all on equality before God. The size of the group or the number composing the group has nothing to do with determining the blessings that the church shall receive; neither will the number great or small, prevent it from fulfilling its mission. The local congregations stand before God on equality. There is no first church, in the sense of superiority or in the sense of receiving special blessings from God. No church is central in the sense of superiority or in the sense that other churches must depend upon the other church. There is no authority above the local church to which this church must bow in submission or pay homage, save that of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the local churches are organically separate from each other. There are no churches after the New Testament pattern whose organization makes it dependent on some other church. One church is independent of all others; that is, the local congregation can function and fill its mission without being dependent on any other congregation. It is independent in its organization, which means that its organic functioning can be done without the authority or assistance of any other congregation. It matters not whether the church be in Japan or America, if it is patterned after the New Testament order, then it is like all other churches in organization that are patterned after the New Testament order. That is to say that whatever it takes to constitute the full and complete organization of one church, it takes that same organization to complete the organization of every other church. The churches are one in organization, as well as one in faith, in hope, in mission. Whatever may be the officers of one congregation that is patterned after the New Testament order, these officers will be found in every other congregation that follows the New Testament pattern. All the congregations have the same mission; all have the same order of worship; all are guided by the same law.

There are no organizations of churches. The only organization that is taught in the New Testament is the organization in the local congregation. There are no officers of any kind that may make laws or govern any group of churches. If the church follows the New Testament order, there will be no organization within the church that in any way hinders the free functioning of the church as ordained in the New Testament. The simple, independent functioning of the congregation must be left free to act as directed by the word of God. The only organization that the New Testament teaches is the organization of the local congregation with its elders and deacons. It was physically impossible for all Christians scattered over the earth to meet in the same place for worship; so it became necessary to localize the church for the convenience and development of its members. It was necessary for the church in the general sense to take the form of local congregations in order that God might govern the members of his body. We are impressed with the extreme simplicity which God has given to the local congregation. Whatever authority Christ left with the church was vested in the elders. There is no higher earthly authority in the churches than that found in the eldership, if authority it may be called.

The elders neither made the laws by which the church

CHARITY WORK OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

W. CLAUDE HALL

(Relation to the GA: Regular contributor of articles. Also an educator, the head of the English and Speech Department for many years and president one year of Freed-Hardeman College.)

When Paul went up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles, one among the very important things he told them was, "Remember the poor." Paul, in commenting upon this, said: "Which very thing I was also zealous to do." There is a splendid example given to us as to how this work of caring for the poor is to be done. The funds were gathered from the churches which were able to contribute to the poor saints at Jerusalem. This money then was sent to the elders of the church at Jerusalem and thus distributed to the ones who were in need. There was not another organization formed to take care of this work, they did the work through the means that the Lord had determined. Hence, it was done without any extra cost, and every cent the people of Corinth and Phillippi contributed went into the hands of the distressed. It didn't take one-third or one-half of it to "grease the machinery" for the organization which handled it.

Not only was it a "pleasure" to make the contribution to the poor saints at Jerusalem, but Paul says: "It hath been the GOOD pleasure of Macedonia an Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints that are at Jerusalem." Those who are able, then, should count it a good pleasure to give to those who are not so fortunate in this world's goods. It is our duty to be zealous in taking care of the poor.

* * *

In view of the fact that nothing must be used but the church as an organized body, how can the charity work of a community be best accomplished? During this period of distress possibly the church cannot be expected to take care of all the poor and unemployed in a large center of population, but it certainly can be found doing the best possible under the circumstances in which they are living. Any congregation of a few hundred members can, by working in harmony and in earnest, make a profound impression upon the community and show other organizations how much better real charity work may be done and at how little cost. Every cent contributed for the purpose goes to the end for which it was given, when the distribution is done through the church. . . .

—November 10, 1932, page 1210.

"But the brethren sometimes argue that the church can organize anything it feels that it needs. I do not grant this, but it is my observation that individuals start these things for churches to support. Who is to say how many and what kind of institutions the churches need? I do not think the church as a divine institution needs any of them, but some of them do need the church, or churches, to support them. As was said by another: "If the organization of institutions continues, the church will be little but a peg on which to hang institutions."

—F. B. Srygley, January 11, 1934, page 45.

is to be governed, nor can they unmake these laws. The members of the body did not and cannot enact the laws by which the church of our Lord is to be governed. The elders, as servants of the church, just simply execute the law of Christ. They rule by the word of the Lord. They dare not assume any authority not delegated to them by the Lord. They must not manufacture any expedient nor substitute anything for the government of the church, save that which is found in the New Testament.

—May 19, 1932, Page 609.

A MIXED SERVICE

W. E. BRIGHTWELL

(Relation to the GA: Editor of "News and Notes" in the early thirties and staff writer.)

It is a rather long word, and unless we have devoted some thought to the subject it may be somewhat indefinite—this institutionalism—but the issue itself is simple. The case might be styled "pure religion vs. mixed service." A very large per cent of so-called "Christian work" is worthless in the sight of God, because it has been mixed with human wisdom, selfishness, and complacent reserve. Mixed service becomes formal, impersonal, and professional. Incidentally, it often involves, especially among the denominations, the organizing of something, or the building of an institution. So religious writers, seeing the churches groaning under a load of denominational machinery which they cannot bear, have come to use the term "institutionalism" to cover the whole system of artificial religion.

* * *

An illustration will make the difference plainer. James says that pure religion is to "visit" the fatherless. The best way to visit the fatherless—those who have no place to stay—is to adopt them into Christian homes. If the home of every Christian were a real Christian home, there might not be any need of an orphan home. There might be enough Christian homes without orphans to receive all orphans without Christian homes. I am sure this is the better plan, for I have noticed that it often takes a whole church just to clothe one orphan in an institution; whereas a Christian home can adopt, feed, clothe, educate, and completely care for one orphan without it being any burden at all. It is no burden, because if the orphan is taken early enough and trained well enough, it will be a greater blessing to that Christian home, if possible, than the Christian home will be to the orphan. Here, as elsewhere, the law applies: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." You have seen homes transformed by the entrance of a child, whether by birth or adoption.

This way is far less expensive and far more effective than building an orphan home; but these considerations sink into insignificance when we think of the natural right of every child born into this world to be reared in a home, not an institution. An institution is a home in name only. However much we strive to make it homelike and wholesome, it still smacks of regimentation. It is not the natural way. I am glad Christians are willing to support orphan homes, but it is unfortunate that we have to have them . . .

An orphan home is a walking cane. We have learned to lean upon it, and we will have to keep on leaning on it until we have fully regained our health. But if we never reach the heights of spiritual development, so that we can forego the use of the cane, it will still be merely a cane, and nothing more. And we cannot afford to become so attached to the cane that we would be unwilling to give it up. . . .

The Charlotte Avenue Church, in Nashville, is doing a good work without anything being said about it. It owns some residences in which widows and their children are housed and supported. Once these homes were paid for, every cent has gone directly into the work of relief. There is not one cent paid out for postage, publicity, management, supervision, solicitation, or any other expense usually incurred by an orphan home. . . . It keeps the original home intact.

—February 14, 1935, page 159.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

F. B. SRYGLEY

. . . In the days of the apostles there were needy people, widows and orphans, just as there are today, and the apostles taught the churches to care for them, and there was no organization or institution by which the churches were tied together in supporting them. Paul directed the church to care for the widows that were widows indeed, and there was nothing said about any institution except the church through which it was to be done. There were famine sufferers in Jerusalem, and their needs were supplied without anything in the way for an institution except the church in Jerusalem.

This is no new thing with people who have read the Gospel Advocate in the past. Missionary work and benevolent work was done in the early church without any organization except the local church. Brother Lipscomb said with reference to Brother McCaleb when he went to Japan: "Four churches in Tennessee and one in Kentucky agreed to support him, and their support was to be sent direct to him." (See Gospel Advocate, 1892, page 628.) Again, he said: "If one church asks all the churches in the State to give it all the funds they can give to general work, that the elders of one church may direct all the preaching and work in the State, then I say this is wrong, is subversive of divine order, and concentrates power in one church that God distributes to many." (Advocate, 1899, page 487.) Brother McQuiddy said: "There is no Scriptural authority for one church directed the 'affairs of another.'" (Advocate, 1910, page 487.) Brother Elam said: "The New Testament churches not only communicated directly to the missionaries they supported, but when they helped the poor they sent the help directly to those needing it. This we have clearly seen in Acts 11:30: 'Which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.' And in the case of the Corinthians: 'Whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem.' (I Cor. 16:3.) One church sent directly to the missionaries, and directly to the poor independently of all other churches." (Advocate, 1897, page 358.)

I make these quotations from the older brethren who have gone to their reward, not as proof (the New Testament furnishes that), but to show that I stand with them, and in doing so I stand in good company.

—July 9, 1931, page 828.

TENNESSEE ORPHAN HOME

J. W. FRY

(President and Treasurer When This Article Was Written)

Inasmuch as the Tennessee Orphan Home places children in family homes, in addition to caring for them in the Home, we desire to give brief information of that part of the work. We consider the Orphan Home a substitute home for orphan and dependent children, where they can be cared for until suitable family homes can be found for them. We know that no institution can offer as good a home as that of a Christian family, for God instituted the family home, and no other can take the permanent place of a God-fearing family home.

—November 6, 1924, page 1072.

"The columns of the Gospel Advocate have always been open to full and free discussion of all practical questions. Friend and foe must admit this."

—E. A. Elam, 1909 page 749.