

## *"The Fellowship"*

ROBERT H. FARISH

In his third article on TRUE CHRISTIANITY, brother Hall wrote: "To our materialistic immature thinking we have been led to believe that this local organization of Christians (a local church, R. H. F.) is the machine God has set up to do his work on earth, and it sounds very practical. Now about all that is required of us is that we attend the meetings fairly regularly, partake of the Lord's supper, spend a little time listening to a discourse about the Scriptures and above all, give of our means liberally so that the club may be able to carry on the work which God would have it do." He further comments: "nowhere do we read of a common treasury such as we have today, and around which revolved almost all so-called work of the church." Never have we been told of an incident where anyone, either as a church, gathering, or as an individual, ever hired a preacher or anyone else for any purpose whatever."

Truth is never advanced by the exploitation of connotation and ambiguity. The words, "machine," applied to the church, and "hired", applied to preachers, have a bad connotation in the minds of some people. If people accepted the word, machine, as meaning the organization which God gave for collective action, then it would be acceptable, but such is not the case. And, if hire were understood as meaning selecting or employing a preacher to do a Scriptural work which the congregation desired to do and was able to do, we would accept the word in that light.

Brother Hall denies the right of a local church of Christ hiring anyone "for any purpose whatever." This of course rules out a local church of Christ ever "firing" a preacher for this action is impossible without the action of "hiring" having been taken. In this view brother Hall differs from some who accept the hiring action by submitting to the elders' decision to

appoint them to work with a local church of Christ, but are unwilling to submit to the same elders' decision to terminate this connection. They submit to the elders in the "hiring" but rebel in the "firing." Why should "firing" be considered as "lording it over the flock" any more than "hiring"? In either case elders can blunder by failing to keep up the line of communication with the saints in behalf of whose souls they watch. It is possible for elders to be arbitrary in both "hiring" and "firing." However, neither action is within itself an exercise of improper authority. Abuses are possible in any action taken by elders.

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The connotation of the word "fire" is in some cases exploited to gain sympathy from the saints for the preacher. The word "fire" is more provocative than some other words that could be used. Its connotations do not "provoke unto love and good works"; but unto bitterness, strife and division. We are well aware of the fact that elders have in some cases sought to legislate and to bind their legislation upon the saints and evangelist and failing to get their way have "fired" the preacher. The word with all its bad connotations is appropriate in such cases; however, this writer still contends that indiscriminate use of the word will be avoided by faithful saints and gospel preachers.

The existence of "a local church of Christ" in the time of the apostles has already been established in another article; it has also been shown that this organization functioned as a group in furthering the gospel. This article will be largely devoted to showing that there was a "common treasury" of the local church of Christ and that preachers were paid wages, received their hire, out of this treasury. In Luke 10:7 the language of Christ is recorded which approves the practice of paying the preacher - "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Paul received wages from churches - "I robbed other churches taking wages of them that I might minister unto you" (II Cor. 11:8) - this did not make Paul an "hireling"! A highly approved brother was "appointed by the churches" as a messenger (II Cor. 8:19.) Christ approved paying the preacher - Paul received wages from the church, and messengers were appointed by churches.

#### THE COMMON TREASURY

How did a local church pay wages to Paul? This is answered in the Scriptures. The church of Christ at Philippi had fellowship with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:5.) The church sent to Paul. The fellowship (joint participation) was the giving by the church and the receiving by Paul. This is a case of a local church of Christ "as such" taking an action. The church had fellowship with an individual. How other than through a common treasury of the local church did the church pay wages to Paul?

"Where do we read of a 'church treasury' in the New Testament?" and "where is the example of a preacher being paid out of a common treasury? are two questions which Robert C. Welch answered in the October 22 issue of the Gospel Guardian. Here are his clear, Scriptural comments:

There is no commonly used translation of the text which employs the specific words "church treasury" or the word "treasury" applied to the church. But that which these words describe is authorized, being specified by other English words. Neither is there a commonly used version with the specific word SUNDAY. But there is no doubt that this same day is referred to in other words. There are occasions when words other than those of the common versions are used and people infer ideas which are contrary to the intent of the Scriptures. This has happened with such words as SACRAMENT, MISSIONS, AND CO-OPERATION. There is no violence, however, to the teachings of the Scriptures by the term "church treasury."

In its earliest days the church in Jerusalem "had all things common" from the sale of possessions and goods (Acts 2:44, 45.) It was used for distribution to those among them who had need (Acts 2:45; 4:34, 35.) In this instance of emergency there was extreme giving for extreme needs. In other instances there was that which is described as collections in the churches (I Cor. 16:1, 2.) These collections were described as a laying by in store by one (I Cor. 16:2.) Hence, if the church is to have a collection a laying by in store by each one, things common, and distribution therefrom; this is accurately described by the term TREASURY. It is not a treasury of some of the members, not an independent, private collection; but a collection of the church, a church treasury.

Paul, a preacher of the gospel (II Tim. 1:11) took wages from churches as he preached to the Corinthians (II Cor. 11:8.) Thus, by approved apostolic example, we have authority for churches to pay wages to preachers of the gospel. On one occasion the church at Philippi was specifically named as supporting him (Phil. 4:15, 16.) For a church to pay a preacher it must have funds. Where, or how can it obtain them? The only inference possible, the necessary inference, is that the funds were obtained from the collections, the laying by in store of each one, and that the pay was from this collection, store, things common or church treasury. We learn by express statement that those who preach the gospel are to be supported in their work (I Cor. 9:14.)

#### THE FELLOWSHIP - THE COMMON TREASURY

The "treasury" is the divine institution through which the church had fellowship with needy brethren and in the furtherance of the gospel (Acts 2:44, 45; I Cor. 16:1, 2; I Tim. 5:16; II Cor. 8:1-4; II Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15.)

The church at Jerusalem "continued steadfastly in... the fellowship, etc." (Acts 2:42.) The term here rendered "fellowship" is translated "contribution" in II Cor. 9:13 and in Rom. 15:26. The context of Acts 2:42 determines that this is an act of worship and not the more comprehensive sense of state or relationship. The word has its more limited meaning of contribution here, as it does in II Cor. 9:13 and in Rom. 15:26.

Hackett's comments are clear on this point: "all the other nouns denote an act, not a state of mind or feeling... and because, as the contributions would naturally be made at their meetings, the several nouns relate them to a common subject, viz. their religious assemblies" (Commentary on Acts of the Apostles.)

The fellowship (contribution) is an act of worship along with the other acts of worship in which the church at Jerusalem continued steadfastly. The church "gave constant attention to" was "strong toward" these acts of worship. It is not a matter of "above all give of our means liberally so the club may be able to carry on the work..."; but is in order that the church may fulfill its mission of furthering the gospel and caring for the needy. This is not by any means "all that is required", but it is one act of worship

which is required by the Holy Spirit - "now concerning the collection for the saints as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by him in store as he may prosper, that no collection be made when I come." (I Cor. 16:1, 2.)

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Throckmorton, the present site of the First Christian Church.

The records disclose that in all of their religious undertakings, these early Christians were careful to govern themselves according to the simple New Testament pattern. After about 30 years, the church numbered around 400 persons. However, in 1885 the "Christian Standard" began to be circulated in the Bible classes. It contended boldly for the Societies



Entered as second class matter March 31, 1947, at Lufkin, Texas under the act of Congress, March 3, 1879. Published weekly, except the first week in July and the last week of December, at the office of the Gospel Guardian Co., 1422 North Timberland Drive, Lufkin, Texas. Owner and Publisher, Wm. E. Wallace, Editor, Fanning Yater Tant.

**RATES**  
\$5.00 per year in advance

(Churches sending the Gospel Guardian to every family earn the special \$3.00 per family rate, payable monthly)

## Editorial

FELLOWSHIP—  
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC—  
MISSIONARY SOCIETIES—  
SPONSORING CHURCHES—

ROBERT H. FARISH

Any unwillingness "to classify the institutional and sponsoring church issues in the same category as instrumental music in worship" is inconsistent and will lend comfort to the advocates of both the error of institutionalism and the error of instrumental music in the worship.

Fellowship with those who would pervert the organization and work of the church will encourage them to continue on their course; it will not encourage them to exert themselves to "understand what the will of the Lord is."

On the other hand, the advocates of "mechanical instruments in the worship" are not so dull as

to be unable to see the inconsistency and will justify their practice by the inconsistency of the opposition, rather than appeal to the "teaching of Christ" for justification of their practice.

A case in point is John W. McGarvey. McGarvey opposed the mechanical instrument of music with great vigor on "the silence of the Scriptures." The silence of the Scripture must be respected. For "whosoever (everyone that) goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). On the other hand, he was an ardent advocate of the "organized missionary work of the church" i.e., the missionary society. One can no more have the missionary society, or sponsoring church and abide in the teaching of Christ than he can have instrumental music in worship and abide in the teaching of Christ. McGarvey's influence went with those animated by the spirit of digression.

W. C. Morro commented upon this in his book, "Brother McGarvey." "McGarvey was always a loyal and thoroughly convinced supporter of the organized missionary work of the church. His opposition to the use in the worship of the church of musical instruments might lead one to expect opposition to missionary organizations also. A negative attitude to one is usually followed by a similar attitude in respect to the other. This was not true of McGarvey. In his mind there was no connecting link between the two . . . In his attitude toward missionary organization he carried his associates with him and how fortunate for the church that he did. Otherwise Lexington would have anticipated Nashville in becoming the center of opposition to the organization of the church for missionary service." (Brother McGarvey p. 218).

Lexington did not become the center of opposition to "the organization of the church for missionary service." Neither did it become the center of opposition to the instrumental music in worship—nor to liberalism either "classical" or "pop-

ular!" When I moved to Lexington in 1954, there was a small struggling congregation made up of people who were striving to "abide in the teaching" of Christ. There were many large churches — Christian Churches and Disciple Churches. In none of them was McGarvey "though dead yet speaking" in opposition to instruments in the worship.

When I disclaim any intentions of fellowshiping perverters of either the worship, work or organization of the church, let no one charge that I am refusing to love, be kind, considerate, fair. Refusal to fellowship should not be taken as endorsement of bitterness, hatred, unkindness, unfairness, prejudice, sectarianism and such like.

On the other hand, pleas for love, unity of the Spirit, kindness, fairness and such should not be taken as evidence of "softness." Jesus wasn't "soft."

I bring this to a close with the suggestion that brethren who agree that the sponsoring church is unscriptural are not exempt from the divine judgement — "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (Gal. 5:15)

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