

WHO CAUSED THE DIVISION?

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Most anyone who is acquainted with what is going on in churches of Christ today knows that there is a division. Thus, I think the question of who caused the division deserves our close attention.

There are only two ways that division comes about -- one is right, the other is wrong. Division comes about in the right way when God's people advocate that which God requires and others are opposed to the carrying out of the requirement. For example, partaking of the Lord's supper every first day of the week is required by God (Acts 20:7), and the faithful children of God must advocate it even if it should bring division. God's children must also oppose things men advocate which God has not authorized. For example, the use of instrumental music in worship is something Christ has not authorized, and faithful children of God must oppose it even if it causes division. Jesus said, "*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:*" (Luke 12:51). The way Christ brings division is by urging upon men the will of God and some obeying it while others reject it. Only in this way can His followers bring about division (in reality, Christ brings it about) -- by His authority or His word. No man is ever justified in causing division among God's people in any other way! If following God's word brings about division, then it has to come!

The wrong way division comes about is by men advocating something which God does not authorize or require. For example, the use of instrumental music in worship and the missionary society are both innovations which go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), and the man who advocates these practices to the dividing of God's people sins and is involved in sinful practices (I Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22: 18 - 19). When men begin to teach opinions, speculations, and innovations on any subject, they are causing division (Rom. 16:17). When they do this, the faithful are commanded to "mark them" and "avoid them" (Rom. 16: 17).

Who caused the division over the missionary society and the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship in the last century? Alexander Campbell, and men of like persuasion, formed the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849. L. L . Pinkerton, and men like-minded, introduced instrumental music into the worship several years later. Both of these innovations were met by strong opposition, and God's people were divided! Those who held to the innovations were known as the Christian church, and those who opposed their introduction were called churches of Christ. I ask, "Who caused the division?" Was it men who advocated the missionary society and instrumental music, or men who opposed it (like David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning)? You know the answer! Those who introduced the innovations (like Campbell and Pinkerton) caused the division!

Who caused the present division? We who have opposed the "bedding down" of man-made organizations in the treasuries of churches, or those who have advocated that these secular enterprises be supported by churches? You know the answer! The division was brought about by men who advocated putting these secular enterprises (like Freed-Hardeman, Abilene Christian, and David Lipscomb colleges; Childhaven and Tennessee Orphans' Home, and other institutions) in the treasuries of churches! These institutions are not methods, they are institutions that use methods.

Some tried for years to get colleges in the budgets of churches before they became successful (from 1935 to 1938 and again from 1945 to 1948). In 1947 the institutional fight began to turn from the "college in the budget" to the orphans' home. In 1947 N. B. Hardeman pointed out that the college and

orphans' home stand on the same ground: "If it is a serious issue to donate to a school -- a human institution -- why is it not a serious issue to donate to an orphans' home -- a human institution?" (Gospel Advocate, July 31, 1947). Batsell Barrett Baxter put them on the same ground in 1963: "Some who are agreed that the church can contribute to an orphans' home are not convinced that the church can contribute to a Christian school. It is difficult to see a significant difference so far as principle is concerned. The orphans' home and the Christian school must stand or fall together." (Questions and Issues of the Day, page 29). These men were right, the college and orphans' homes are both human institutions and they both stand or fall together. There is no scripture to justify the local church doing any of its work through a human institution -- whether it be a college, an orphans' home, or a missionary society!

Foy E. Wallace, Jr. said in 1931: "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 evangelism. But the question assumes the point to be provided -- Bible colleges and institutional orphans' homes cannot be made adjuncts of the church, scripturally." (Gospel Advocate, July 2, 1931, page 804).

So, it is clear that division was brought about by brethren who advocated the support of human institutions and sponsoring churches. A movement was spearheaded by the Gospel Advocate in December of 1954 to "quarantine" those who opposed these human institutions in the budgets of churches. Brother B. C. Goodpasture quoted a letter on the editorial page (with his approval) that suggested this be done: "I trust you will not consider me presumptuous if I suggest that perhaps the writers for the Gospel Advocate might wisely spearhead a movement to "quarantine" those preachers who today are sowing seeds of discord among the brotherhood and to thus prevent further divisions." (Gospel Advocate, Dec. 9, 1954, page 962). Thus, with great sadness we had the yellow tag of "quarantine" pinned on us because we opposed that for which no Bible authority could be found! We were forced from building we had helped build, divided from family and friends we loved dearly, and barred from pulpits where we were once welcome because the spirit of innovation (which is a fiendish and lawless spirit) had taken over!

Then in store buildings and school buildings we started over that we might follow the New Testament pattern in all things. Our only desire was (and is) to keep the church free from human innovations and all unscriptural movements -- to practice New Testament Christianity restored in its purity that we might please God and do His work in His way.

God will someday judge us with the New Testament as the standard. Brother, are you ready to stand before Him with the guilt of dividing the body of the Lord over human innovations? If not, won't you give them up before it is everlastingly too late?

(Taken from "The Voice", Feb. 1983)