

## WHY IT IS WRONG FOR CHURCHES OF CHRIST TO SUPPORT HUMAN INSTITUTIONS

### INTRODUCTION:

1. There have been two major divisions among God's people in the last 150 years over human institutions being supported from the treasuries of churches.

(1) The first division was over the missionary society that was formed in 1849 to preach the gospel to the world.

1. The restoration movement of the 19th century was an effort to restore --to bring back-- the true church of the first century.

2. The years between 1832 and 1849 were years of great growth; the people of God had grown to one-half million in this country.

3. During these years two attitudes were developing among disciples:

(1) There were those who believed the church should adapt itself to changing conditions of the times.

(2) The other attitude was that the New Testament revealed a fixed pattern for the church for all time, and that it is the business of Christians to hold to that pattern regardless of the consequences.

4. With these two attitudes developing, a conflict was inevitable.

5. The development of a liberal interpretation of the scriptures culminated in the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society in October of 1849 in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio with Alexander Campbell as its first president.

6. The formation of the missionary society in 1849 and the introduction of instrumental music in the worship in 1859, brought a great division among God's people.

(1) Churches that went with the missionary society and instrumental music took the name "Christian church".

(2) In 1906 the U.S. Bureau of Census listed "Churches of Christ" as a separate and distinct group from the "Christian church".

(2) After the division over the missionary society and instrumental music, there was a period of harmony, growth and unity among churches of Christ.

1. By 1926, the religious census reported that there were 433,000 members in churches of Christ; some estimated the number at one-half million.

2. In this period of time churches were having to contend with R. H. Boll's false doctrine of premillennialism. This doctrine was met head-on by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and others, and was soon stamped out. The premillennialist churches became separate from churches following the New Testament pattern.
3. The seed for another apostasy (falling away) began early in this century.
  - (1) The first human institution to be built for churches to support and work through was Tennessee Orphan Home in 1909 (it was first at Columbia, TN, but was moved to Springhill, TN in 1935).
  - (2) In the thirty (30) years to follow, five (5) other human institutions were started to take care of children:
    1. Potter Orphan Home in Bowling Green, KY in 1915.
    2. Tipton Orphan Home in Tipton, Oklahoma in 1922.
    3. Boles Orphan Home in Quinlan, Texas in 1926.
    4. Southern Christian Home in Morrilton, Arkansas in 1926.
    5. Sunny Glenn Home in San Benito, Texas in 1936.
  - (3) In 1940 there were seven (7) "homes"; by 1950 there were ten (10); by 1960 there were twenty-seven (27). Between 1950 and 1960 seventeen (17) institutions were set up, and they grew to more than thirty (30) institutions.
  - (4) Through the years some brethren had opposed these institutions, but they were no great issue among churches.
  - (5) They became an issue in the late 1940's when brother N. B. Hardeman, president of Freed-Hardeman College, introduced the Orphan Home issue into the discussion over colleges being supported by the churches.
    1. In 1947, N. B. Hardeman pointed out that the college and the orphan's home stood on the same ground when he said: "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 orphan's home -- a human institution?" ( GOSPEL ADVOCATE, July 31, 1947)
    2. Thus, brother N. B. Hardeman very cleverly changed the battle from the "college-in-the-budget" (which had very little emotional appeal) to the "orphans-home-in-the-budget" (which was loaded with emotionalism).
  - (6) The Orphan Home issue was used as an emotional tool to break down the opposition of the brethren to separate human organizations through which to do the work of the church.

(7) After the battle was fought over this emotional issue (the orphan's home), they have had no trouble getting the college in the budget of churches.

4. After this background, now let us look at why it is wrong and sinful to support human institutions from the treasury of the church.

#### I. SOME TRUTHS THAT MUST BE FACED ABOUT HUMAN INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE FORMED TO DO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH.

1. Human organizations created for the purpose of doing the work of the church originate in the minds of men, reflect the wisdom of men, and reflect upon the wisdom of God.

(1) The church and its work is a manifestation of God's wisdom (Eph. 3: 9 - 11).

(2) Man in his wisdom cannot direct his steps (Jer. 10:23).

2. They ignore the divine pattern for the church.

(1) The pattern is the local church ( Acts 14:23).

(2) We are to "hold fast the form (or pattern) of sound words" ( II Tim. 1:13).

3. They are organization unauthorized by the word of God.

(1) There is not command, example, or necessary inference for such organizations.

4. Human organizations usurp the functions of God's organization, the congregation under its own elders.

(1) God had charged the church with a specific mission:

1. The evangelizing of the lost (I Tim. 3:15; I Thess. 1:8).

2. The edification of the saved (Matt. 28:20).

3. The relief of needy saints (Acts 4: 34 - 35; I Cor. 16: 1, 2).

5. Human organizations are predicted upon an unscriptural concept, namely, the activation of the church universal.

(1) The church universal has no mission.

(2) The church universal has no earthly organization.

(3) The church universal has no function.

(4) The church universal is a spiritual relationship with God (Matt. 28: 19; I Cor. 1:9).

II. IT IS WRONG FOR A CHURCH TO DONATE FUNDS TO HUMAN INSTITUTIONS BECAUSE THE CHURCH ITSELF IS SUFFICIENT TO DO EVERYTHING THAT GOD COMMANDS THE CHURCH TO DO. THE CHURCH IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON HUMAN INSTITUTIONS TO FULFILL ITS MISSION.

1. What are the essentials involved in the work God has assigned the church to do?

(1) Supervision

(2) Administration

(3) Provisions

2. The local church has all three of these:

(1) Supervision -- Elders (Acts 14: 23; 20: 28; I Pet. 5: 2, 3; Rom. 12:8).

(2) Administration:

1. Deacons -- Rom. 12:7; Acts 6: 1 - 4

2. Teachers -- Rom. 12:7; Acts 13:1; II Tim. 2:2; Eph. 4:11 - 12

3. Evangelists -- Eph. 4: 11

4. Members -- Eph. 4:16

(3) Provisions:

1. Christians providing the means by their contributions -- I Cor. 16: 1, 2

3. The local church can do every work human institutions do.

(1) A school begs churches for funds because it claims to train church leaders.

1. The local church is equipped to do everything the school claims to do.

(2) A benevolent society begs churches for funds that it might render service to the needy.

1. There is not a single service which a benevolent society can render that the church cannot render.

### III. HUMAN ORGANIZATIONS VIOLATE THE LAW OF UNITY

1. The law of unity is stated in I Cor. 1:10.

(1) Unity of mind and judgment are requirements of the gospel.

(2) This unity is brought about by following the same standard (John 17: 20 -21).

2. Men are not divided over what the Bible does say, but what it does not say!

3. Examine the principle of unity:

(1) There is unity where there is authority.

(2) Illustration: All can agree we are to SING ( Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3:16).

1. Instrumental music brings division because there is no authority; it must come in by human opinion.
4. There is unity with the Local congregation (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23).
  - (1) Human organizations must be used by human opinion.
  - (2) When human organizations are brought in, division comes because they violate the law of unity.
  - (3) They come in without Bible authority.