

# The Church And Human Organizations

**Introduction.** In this lesson, we wish to examine other organizations than the church; that is, organizations apart from the church or bodies designed and established by the will and wisdom of men and controlled by human authority to do the work of the church.

Institutionalism has become epidemic not only within denominations but within our own brotherhood as well. Every Christian ought to know the answer to the question, "Can churches of Christ establish organizations and maintain them with money from the Lord's treasury as a means of doing its work?"

## I. ***The Lord's Church Contrasted With Human Organizations***

- A. The church is a divine organization for several reasons.
  - 1. It was designed by divine wisdom, fulfills a divine purpose, and is built upon a divine foundation (Matthew 16:16-19; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 3:10-11).
  - 2. It is made up of saved men and women redeemed by the blood of Christ and added together by God (Acts 2:47; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 5:25-27).
  - 3. It is ruled by divine authority (Ephesians 1:22-23).
  - 4. It has a divine plan or arrangement and has been given a divine mission to accomplish (1 Corinthians 12:18-28; Ephesians 4:11-12).
  - 5. It recognizes the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice (Hebrews 9:15-17; 10:9-10, 19-22).
- B. No human organization possesses any of the above characteristics.

## II. ***God Gave His Church Organizational Form To Govern Its Function***

- A. Just as God did not leave the world "without form and void" but gave to it system and order in the creation by natural laws (Genesis 1), so God has not left His church "without form and void" but has given to it system and order through spiritual laws.
- B. There is one divine arrangement for the Lord's church (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:20, 27; Ephesians 4:4).
- C. The local church is the only organization or government God gave to His church and each congregation is subject to the will of Christ (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- D. The line of distinction has been drawn by divine will between what is human in origin and what is divine whether in matters of faith, worship, or organization (Matthew 15:1-14; 16:13-20; 21:23-27; Hebrews 9:6).

- E. Our building for God must agree with the divine pattern (Psalm 127:1; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Hebrews 8:5).
- F. The pattern of doctrine, worship, and work of the church is the same in all congregations (1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 7:17; 16:1-2; Philippians 4:9; 2 Timothy 1:13).

### III. ***No New Testament Church Ever Supported A Human Organization***

- A. The Lord never gave the church authority to build anything but the church. Many today believe that authority for the church to build and maintain human institutions is as inherent within its structure as the federal government's authority to build and maintain the postal department. However, the basic fallacy here is that Jesus Christ is head over His church and it has no right to build anything that He has not authorized it to build.
- B. When the church today preaches the same gospel preached by the church in New Testament times, it will build only the church as it did then free from all human institutions and arrangements. There is no trace of their existence in the New Testament scriptures to do any work of the church; therefore, there is no authority for them now.

### IV. ***New Testament Churches Were Sufficient In Carrying Out Their Work***

- A. Each church had its own organization through which to function (Philippians 1:1).
- B. Each congregation raised its own funds by the contributions of its members (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- C. Each congregation supported evangelists to preach the gospel according to its ability as the Lord ordained (1 Corinthians 9:14; 2 Corinthians 11:8; Philippians 2:12-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8). In every instance recorded of Paul's receiving this help, it was sent directly to him (Philippians 1:5; 2:25; 4:18).
- D. Churches sent preachers to strengthen, edify, and help weak churches (Acts 11:22-24).
- E. Congregations provided for their own needy (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6).
- F. Churches cooperated with other churches who had a greater need among their own members than they could supply by sending money to the elders of such church through selected messengers (Romans 15:25-28; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9).
- G. Each congregation was edified through the strength supplied by its own members (1 Corinthians 12:22-27; 14:26; Ephesians 4:14-16).
- H. Each congregation carried on its own work through the organization God gave it. There is not an instance in the scriptures where churches

of Christ ever used any human organization as a medium through which to function in doing its work. It would be interesting for someone to point out anything that God gave the church to do that cannot be done through the divinely ordained local congregations.

V. ***Scriptural Objections To Human Organization Doing The Work Of The Church***

- A. Human organizations that are used to do the Lord's work reflect on the wisdom of God.
  - 1. Since the Lord's church has been designed by the wisdom of God, it is sufficient to accomplish His purposes.
  - 2. When men build human organizations as an aid or substitute for God's organization they demonstrate their lack of faith in the sufficiency of what God has provided. We have the same right to write a chapter and add it to the Bible as to build or support a nursing home from the church treasury.
- B. Human organizations supplant the church, usurp the functions God gave it, and ignore the divine pattern.
- C. Human organizations defeat the purpose of God that each congregation has by functioning according to the divine plan will be built up to God's glory and honor.
  - 1. When human organizations are built to do the work of the church they rob the church of the strength that would be received by it proper functioning.
  - 2. These activities leave the congregation only the privilege of worship and raising money to subsidize the human institutions that are doing its work.
- D. Human organizations are an addition to God's divine arrangement and to His word and do not classify as an aid or expedient in the divine plan.
  - 1. Instrumental music is not an aid but an addition because there is no authority for its use. It does not come within the scope of what God commanded.
  - 2. Human organizations add just as certainly to what God ordained or authorized as church organization or government. They do not come within the scope of God's commanded organization -- the local congregation.
- E. Human organizations to do the work of the church or as a medium of cooperation for the churches are without divine authority and are therefore sinful because they violate the principle of walking by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).

1. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Since God's word gives no authority to justify human institutions, they cannot be matters of faith (2 John 9-11).
2. They furthermore ignore God's silence and the lack of divine authority and thus violate the will of God by presumptuous sinning.

**Conclusion.** Since God has given by divine wisdom an organization to the church, the congregation, and has made it sufficient to accomplish His purpose, it is the only medium of work and worship through which the Christian can accomplish His purpose and we must be satisfied with His will, His way, and His word.