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Comments are welcomed and may be emailed to Curtis.D.Byers@gmail.com.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

***A STUDY OF THE DIVISIONS
AMONG BRETHREN***

CURTIS BYERS

2000

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Introduction

The last broad division among brethren took place about 40 years ago. That particular division resulted over the issues of institutionalism and various types of cooperative arrangements between churches. But it has not been the only division among brethren. Since the beginnings of the Restoration Movement in the early 19th century there have been several divisions, primarily over the work of the church. Since one goal of the early restorers was to bring unity to the many “Christian” groups of that day, the very fact that divisions exist is seen as evidence by many that the whole notion of restoring the New Testament church is flawed. Such is not necessarily the case, and it is one of the objectives of this study to clearly define what “restoring the New Testament church” means.

The other major objective of this study is to learn the lessons that the previous divisions teach. Many Christians today have not experienced the agony caused by divisions between brethren (which is akin to that experienced by those who have to leave the religion of their parents in order to follow Christ), nor have they studied the fundamental doctrinal issues at stake. Consequently, we are at risk (1) of ignoring the dangers that constantly confront the people of God, or (2) of repeating past errors with the inevitable division that would result. It is hope that this study will yield an understanding of the differences that led to the various divisions and that an assessment can be made as to the relevant scriptural teachings upon these differences.

Most of us in this present study hold common conclusions regarding these differences (regardless of how we have arrived at these conclusions). Such is obviously the case; otherwise we would not be fellowshipping one another. Yet, we could be wrong. It is dangerous to approach any study of the scripture with the dogged conviction that we *already know* what is right. Rather, our conviction must be that we *can know* what is right if we submit our will to God’s and be willing to listen to Him as we study His word. Truth has no fear of examination. Significantly, it is this open mindset that has led brethren to publicly debate these differences. Truth is not a matter of private interpretation. Honest minds, unfettered by prejudice, should come to similar conclusions. It is in this spirit that I hope we each approach this study.

May God bless our study.

LESSON I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN BRETHREN

Beginnings of the Restoration Movement

“The American Revolution stimulated social changes every bit as dramatic as the political changes it brought about...What was true for America at large was no less true for its Christian churches...One of the practices that the American passion for liberty most affected was Bible reading. A principal reason that so many new denominations sprang to life in America between the War for Independence and the Civil War – Disciples and “Christians” of several varieties, Adventists, Mormons, Cumberland Presbyterians, offshoots of Methodists, and more – was the new opportunity for unfettered interpretation of Scripture. Americans in the early nineteenth century transformed an earlier battle cry of the Reformation, “the Bible alone,” into a distinctly American appeal – “no creed but the Bible!” ... This blend of Christianity and democracy created a Christian message specifically adapted to the shape of American social realities. That message was, in turn, brought to a wide circle of the previously unchurched by vigorous representatives of a liberated Christian faith. Leaders of the Restoration Movement, for example, such as Barton W. Stone (1772-1844), Thomas Campbell (1763-1845), and his son Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), sought to roll back the corruptions of the centuries and restore the purity of primitive Christianity. Their message was thoroughly imbued with an American spirit.” [Noll, p.148-151].

In the late 1700’s and early 1800’s, many religious leaders in Europe and America became dissatisfied with the religious structures of their day and many restoration movements began. But the American spirit was especially fertile for restorationist thinking. Men such as James O’Kelly (Methodist), Elias Smith (Baptist), Abner Jones (Baptist), Barton W. Stone (Presbyterian) and Thomas Campbell (Presbyterian) each sought to replace the religious practices of their day with those found only in the New Testament. These men struggled to reconcile what they were practicing in their respective denominations with what they understood the Bible to teach. Ultimately, each made a complete break with previous associations, declared Christ to be the only head of the church, the Bible as their only creed and took only the name “Christian”.

Whereas the path of most of these men went different ways, the movement led by Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, the son of Thomas Campbell, merged. The desire of these men was to unite all Christians together upon the Bible. Man-made religious structures such as creeds were seen as divisive. Thus, unity could only be achieved if all man-made practices were eliminated. To this end, these men sought to restore only those teachings and practices found in the New Testament. Thus, began the “restoration idea”.

Divisions Within the Restoration Movement

The early restorer’s goal for unity was not achieved. Within the past two hundred years there have been several divisions with the Restoration Movement. Of the many reasons that might be given for these divisions, doctrinal disputes, socio-economic differences, and competing allegiances are probably the three main grounds for the divisions.

Doctrinal Disputes Any group that seriously seeks to follow the Bible is susceptible to divisions. This, in part, explains many of the divisions that occurred within the Protestant Reformation. Similarly, the Restoration Movement with its emphasis on the “Bible only” was at risk of having

internal quarrels over interpretation. This should not be surprising; human reasoning has always fought against God's will and is not content to restrict itself to a "Thus says the Lord." In fact, division is inevitable when a contingent within a group has such strong convictions on an issue that they are not willing to compromise.

Social/Economic Differences Historically, divisions within the restoration movement have generally fallen along socio-economic lines with the more theologically conservative belonging to the lower classes of society and the more theologically progressive belonging to higher economic groups. Obviously, there are individual exceptions, but this has generally been true. The Restoration movement began and flourished on the frontier; it did not find a hearing in the wealthier cities in the east. The first major division resulting in the split between the Churches of Christ and the Christian Church was mainly sectional with the Christian Church being predominant in the wealthier North and the Churches of Christ in the poorer South. This too should not be surprising given the New Testament teaching as to the type of mindset that is receptive of God's will (Matthew 11:4-5; Mark 10:23-27; Luke 6:20-26; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; James 2:5).

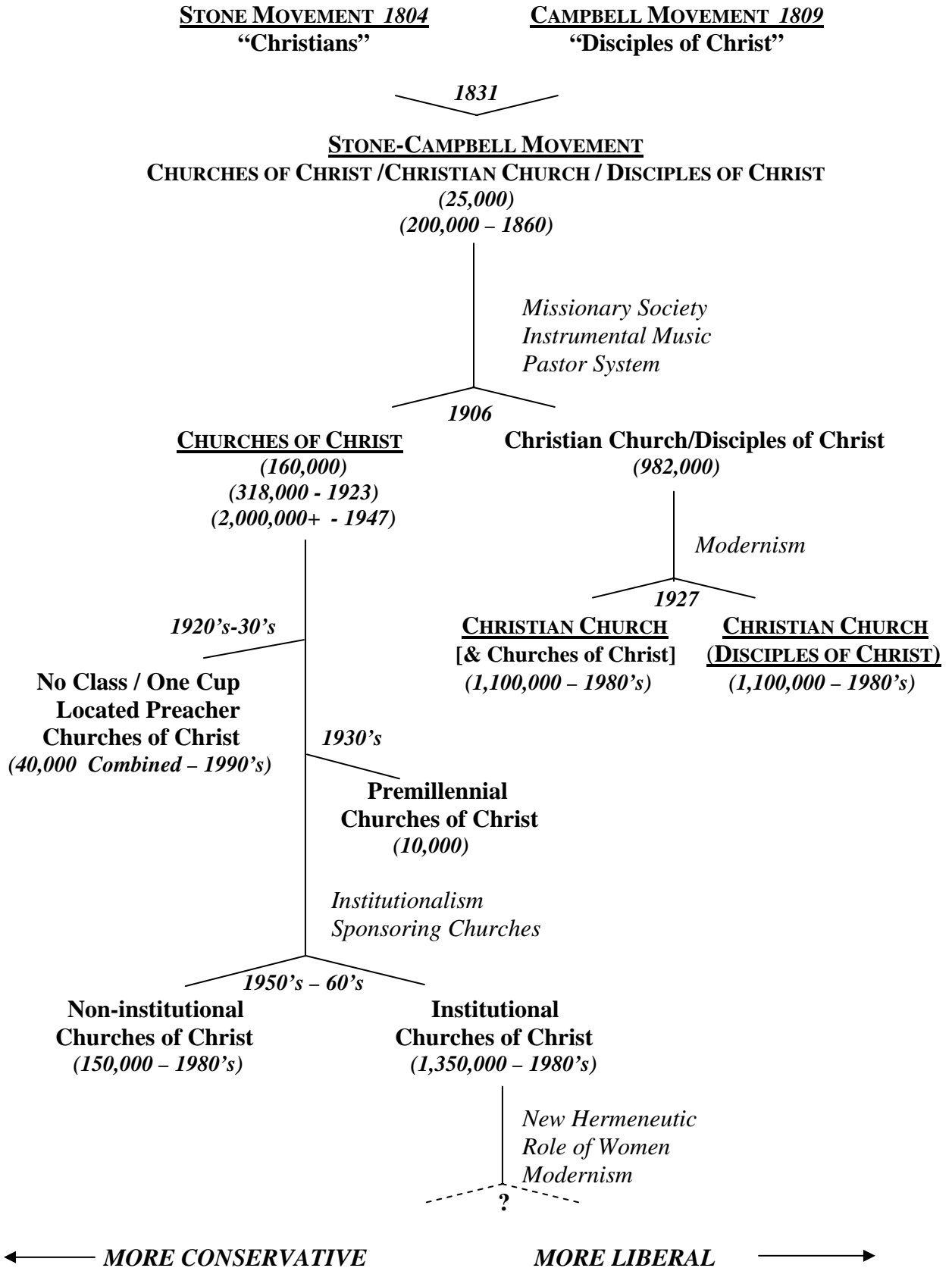
Allegiances One of the first divisions noted in the New Testament was over petty allegiances to certain preachers of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1-3). In a similar way, allegiances to religious structures have been a regular source of divisions. This was especially true among Protestant groups and has played a significant role in the Restoration Movement. Conventions, societies, personalities, colleges, publications, etc. have all had their promoters and cheerleaders, but none of them are worthy of supplanting our primary allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Less honorable motives, such as pride and envy, can also lead to division, but such motives, by their very nature, are often not discernable much less provable. Undoubtedly, some of the divisions within the Restoration Movement were the result of, or at least accelerated by, the ungodly attitude of some men. But as one brother has observed that to blame the divisions "on a bunch of cantankerous nuts who couldn't think straight, wanted to be big fish in a small pond, or were just plain mean...simply will not float as historical explanation." [Wolfgang, History (I), p.16].

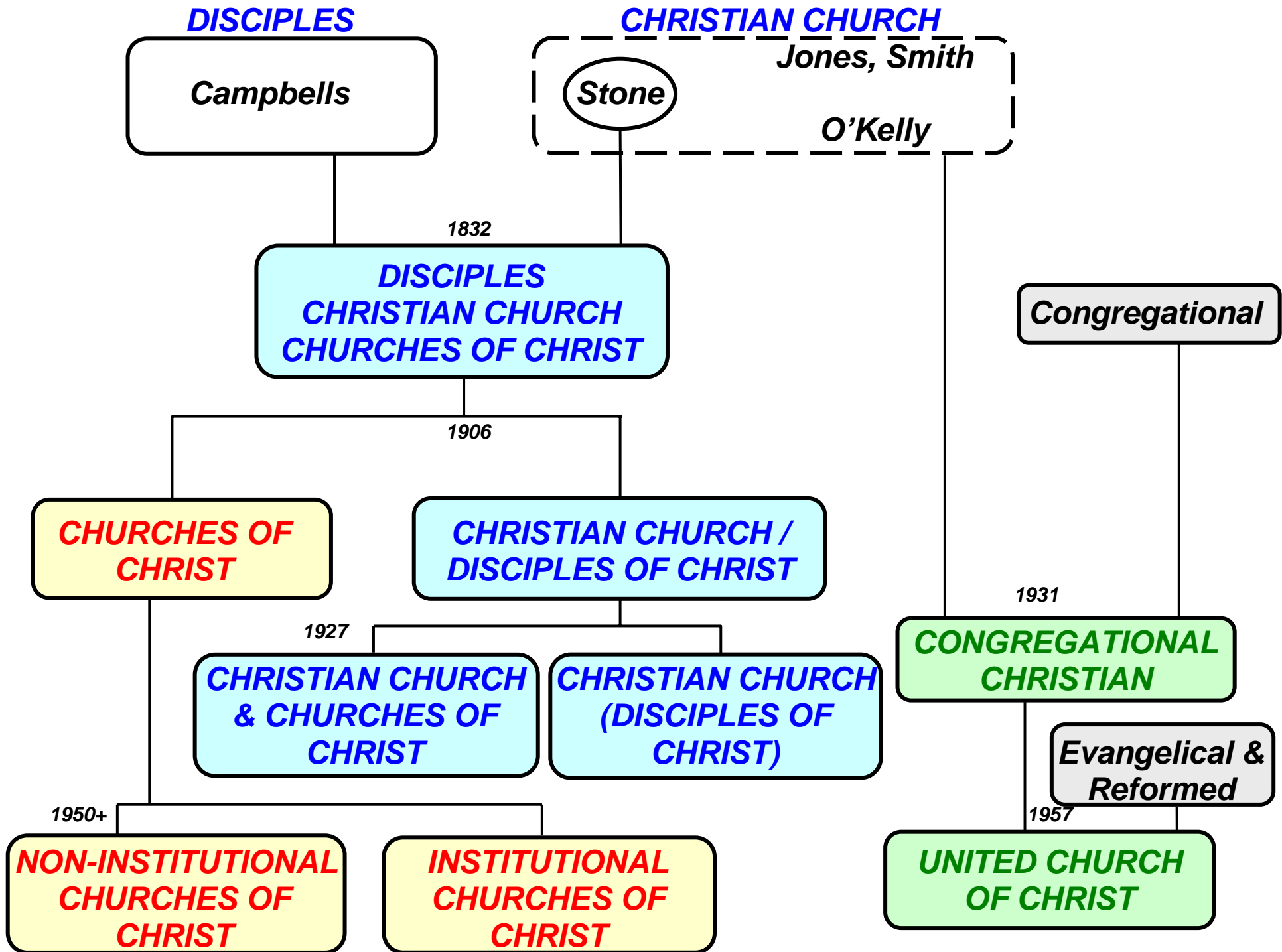
It should also be understood that "division" in this study does not simply mean "disagreement". There have always been, and will continue to be, disagreements between brethren over what particular passages mean, how Christians ought to act, etc. Within any given congregation, there will be disagreements over questions such as whether Christians can fight in war, is it appropriate for Christians to vote, is the veil of 1 Corinthians 11 binding on women today, etc. But the very fact that these disagreements exist within a congregation is evidence that not all disagreements lead to division, even though particular individuals may have left a congregation because of these questions. By "division" we mean when there were serious enough disagreements so as to lead to a break in fellowship in a significant number of congregations.

It is, however, instructive to observe the type of disagreements that have led to breaks in fellowship. Generally, speaking divisions have resulted over disputes concerning the proper work of the church. Missionary societies, instrumental music in worship, financial support of institutions, the use of Bible classes or multiple cups for the Lord's Supper all have to do with the functioning of the church together. Consequently, the objectors to these practices felt compelled to separate themselves if they were to remain loyal to their understanding of scripture.

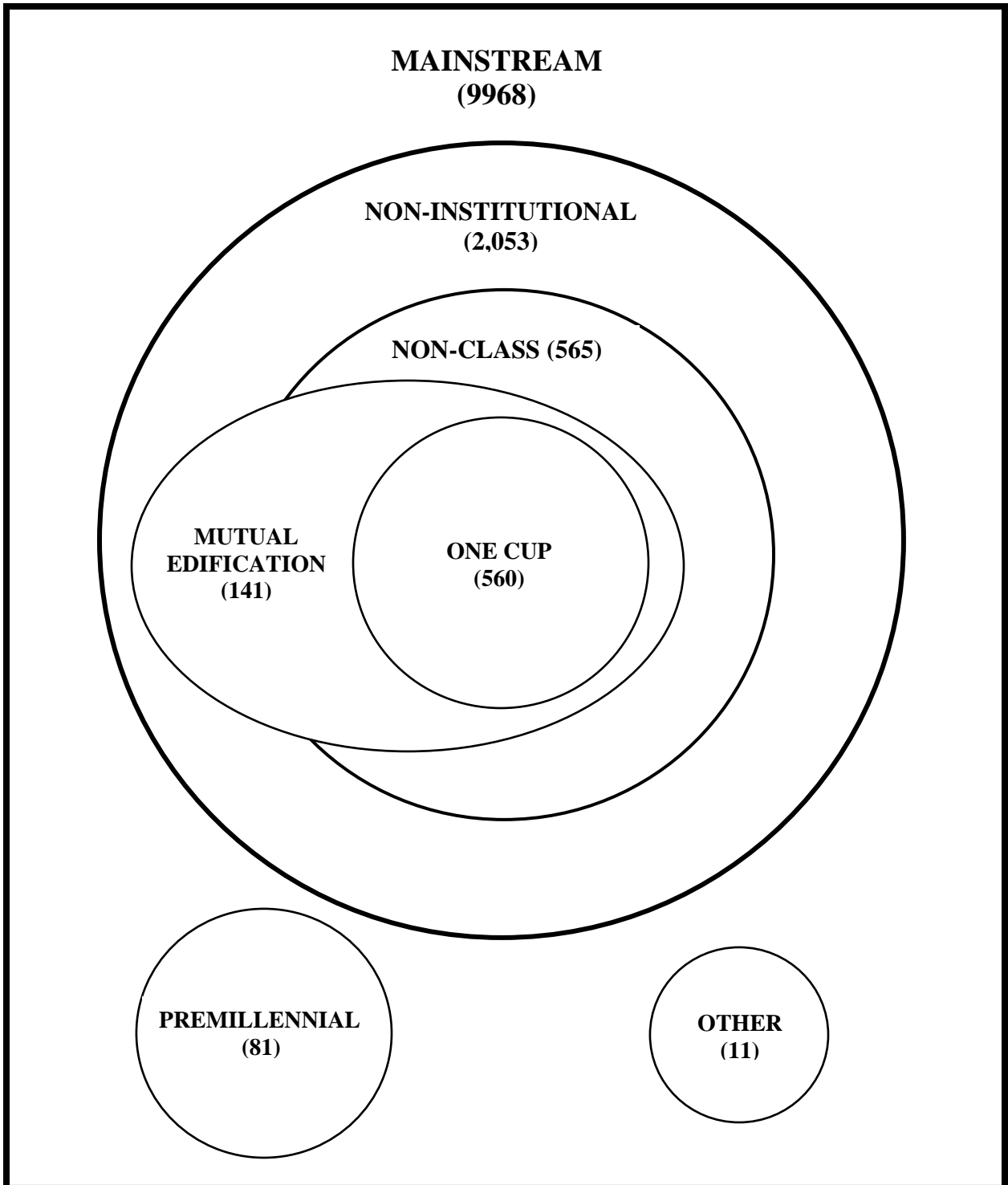
The following chart summarizes the major divisions within the Restoration Movement.



Note: The numerical estimates are approximations of the adherents in the United States.



CHURCHES OF CHRIST



The number in parenthesis is the number of congregations identified with the teaching indicated.
Source: Lynn, Mac. *Churches of Christ in the United States (and Its Territories)*, 1997. (21st Century Christian, Inc.)

LESSON 2

THE RESTORATION PLEA: IS IT VALID?

The Restoration Plea

“The leaders of the varied nineteenth-century restoration movements in American Christianity generally believed that they were a part of the quest for religious reform that began with the Reformation. They often called themselves reformers and set out to strip the church of the unscriptural additions of the centuries. They generally believed that the reformers of the past had gone as far as their insight would take them, and they honored them for their contributions, but they saw in the Protestant churches of their day countless perversions that had destroyed the unity of the Christian church. Successful reformation would have to be based on a return to the pattern of New Testament Christianity” (Harrell, *Restorationism*, p.845)

Each restorer had their own vision as to how to restore New Testament Christianity, yet there surfaced some common principles by which they proceeded. Consider the following:

James O’Kelly O’Kelly broke away from the Methodists in 1793 as a result of a conflict with the Methodist leadership in America. As many as 10,000 Methodists joined the newly formed group called the “Republican Methodists”. They had the following five principles as their guide:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ as the only Head of the Church.
2. The name Christian to exclusion of all party and sectarian names. (In 1801 they changed their name to the Christian Church.)
3. The Holy Bible, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament our only creed, and a sufficient rule of faith and practice.
4. Christian character, or vital piety, the only test of church fellowship and membership.
5. The right of private judgment, and liberty of conscience, the privilege and duty of all.

Barton W. Stone A conflict with the leaders of the Presbyterian Church over the nature of conversion led to his, along with four others, being suspended from the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky in 1801. In 1803, fifteen congregations formed the Springfield Presbytery, but within 10 months they dissolved and produced the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. (Please read the attached copy.)

Thomas Campbell Campbell came to this country in 1807 and joined the Seceder Presbyterians. Disturbed by the sectarian division between the various Presbyterian groups, he conducted a communion service that was open to all the Presbyterians in the area. Charged with heresy he was suspended by the Associate Synod of North America in 1809. That same year, he and some friends began meeting as the “Christian Association”. At its very first meeting, Campbell presented his vision for their association: “That rule, my highly respected hearers, is this, that where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” After the group accepted this rule, it is reported that one stated, “If we adopt that as a basis, then there is an end of infant baptism.” Campbell replied, “Of course, if infant baptism be not found in Scriptures, we can have nothing to do with it” (Hailey, *Attitudes*, p.52-53). Campbell was assigned the task of producing a written statement that explained the purpose of

their association. The result was the document entitled *Declaration and Address*. (Please read the attached copy of the *Declaration*; the *Address* portion is too long to be included.)

Questions

1. Each of the above statements of principles was a first attempt at restoring the New Testament.
 - a. Do you believe all five principles laid down by O’Kelly are consistent with scriptures? If not, which ones?
 - b. Why did Stone and others write the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*?

Several of the Items within the *Last Will and Testament* relate to the government of the church. What do these suggest about Stone’s view of the government within the Presbyterian Church?

Do you agree with all the sentiments of the *Last Will and Testament*?

- d. Campbell in opening his *Declaration* stated “we are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think, but also to act, for ourselves; to see with our own eyes, and to take all our standards directly and immediately from the Divine standard.” What is Campbell evidently reacting against in this statement?

What is one obvious (to us anyway) shortcoming of Campbell’s *Declaration*?

- e. Summarize the general points of emphasis within all three of these documents?

2. The “Restoration Plea” is simply the appeal to test all things by the New Testament. It has often been presented by the following slogans:

a. “*No creed but the Bible.*” Explain this in your own words.

The restorers saw creeds as being a primary barrier to unity. Why is this?

b. “*We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent.*” Explain this slogan in your own words. Give an example of both parts.

c. “*In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things love.*” Give an example of what is “faith” and what is “opinion”.

d. “*We are Christians only.*” What is the point of this slogan? How has this slogan of the restorers been misunderstood?

3. List any scriptural references that would lend support to the above slogans.

What difficulties, if any, are there in interpreting these slogans? In other words, is it obvious how to apply these slogans to all religious questions?

Considering all things, do you believe the Restoration Plea is valid?

4. What, in your view, needs to be restored of New Testament Christianity?

- *No Creed but the Bible*
- *We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent.*
- *In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things love.*
- *We are Christians only.*
- *Bible things by Bible names.*

LESSON 3

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Introduction The major divisions in the churches over the past two hundred years have centered on issues concerning the work, or mission, of the church. What exactly is the “*Work of the Church*”? Varying answers to that question is what has given rise to division.

The Church

Obviously, one can never understand what the mission of the church is unless one first understands what the church itself is. Yet, to study the nature of the church in this lesson would take us too far a field. Suffice it to say that the different metaphors used for the church in the New Testament (kingdom, body, house, vineyard, temple, etc.) suggest that the church is primarily a relationship between Christ and his followers. It is the collective body of those who have received the blessings in Christ by submitting themselves to Christ. But it is more than that. In first century usage, a church (Gk. *ekklesia*) was a called assembly. Thus, (1) Christians are those who have been *called* (by Jesus Christ, Romans 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:2; by God, 1 Peter 1:15), and (2) they have been called *together*. Implied is that their relationship to Christ also brings them into relationship with each other.

Augustine spoke of the Invisible Church and the Visible Church to highlight the truth that only God knows who are his and that there may be those believed by others to be in the church, but who aren't. Others distinguish between the Universal Church, the body of the saved of all time, and the Local Church, the body of the saved in any one location. The strength of this distinction as compared to Augustine's is that it correctly highlights that the visible church is local by its very nature (note that the Invisible Church = Universal Church). The weakness of this distinction is that it could suggest that since the local church is a functional (i.e., working) relationship then so is the universal church. Such an understanding not only gave rise to Catholicism, but also was a major component in Alexander Campbell argument for a Missionary Society (as we will study in a later lesson).

We can learn what the mission and work of the church is by reading (1) what the apostles taught and by (2) what the churches in the New Testament did. The latter is as instructive as the former.

I. The Work of the Church as Seen by the Gifts that Christ gave the Church: Ephesians 4

1. List the five “*gifts*” that Christ gave to the church as stated in verse 11 and describe briefly the primary function of each gift.

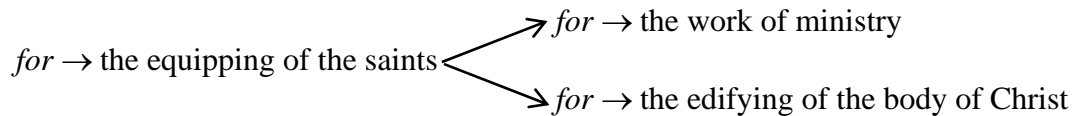
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

2. The reason Christ gave these gifts is stated in verses 12-16.

a. What three reasons are given in verse 12.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Each of these reasons begins with the word “*for*” which might suggest equality, that is, these are three independent reasons. However, the first “*for*” (“*for the equipping of the saints*”) is a translation of the Greek preposition *pros* that means “with a view to”, whereas the Greek preposition for the other two instances (“*for the work of ministry*”, “*for the edifying of the body of Christ*”) is *eis* that means “in order to”. This may suggest the following relationship:



In other words, the initial goal of Christ’s gift was to equip the saints which, in turn, enabled them to perform the work of ministry and edifying.

b. What are the two aspects of ministry (Gk. *diakonia*)?

- 1) [e.g. Acts 11:29; 12:25]
- 2) [e.g. 2 Timothy 4:5]

c. What is the ultimate goal of the work of ministry and edifying of the body of Christ as given in verse 13?

d. What is the measure of whether we have become the “*perfect man*” as given in verse 14?

II. The Work of the Church as Seen in the Book of Acts and the Letters

a. In what activity is the church engaged in each of the following passages in Acts?

2:42

2:44-45

2:46

3:32-35

6:1-6

11:19-24

11:27-30

12:5

13:1-3

14:27

18:26-27

20:7

- b. In what activity is the church engaged (or told to do) in each of the following?

Romans 16:17

1 Corinthians 5:4-5

1 Corinthians 9:11-14

1 Corinthians 11:17ff

1 Corinthians 14:1-19; 26-28

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

2 Corinthians 8:8-15; 9:1-15

Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16

Philippians 3:16-18

Colossians 3:16

1 Timothy 5:3, 16

- c. How would you categorize the work and mission of the church as seen in the above passages?

LESSON 4

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

Introduction The first major division among the churches resulted in the formation of the Disciples of Christ/Christian Church. The three doctrinal issues at the center of this division were the Missionary Society, Instrumental Music and the Pastor System. This lesson focuses upon the first issue, that is, whether it is scriptural to use Missionary Societies to evangelize the world.

Historical Setting

The religious world at the time of the early restorers was accustomed to a wide variety of ecclesiastical organizations: conventions, synods, conferences, councils, etc. The restorer's argued strongly against such governing bodies and it was their conflict with such bodies that gave impetus to their restoring efforts. The restorers were equally distrustful of the various non-governing organizations created by the denominations to accomplish a specific work, e.g., missionary societies, Bible societies, temperance societies, etc.

In his early years, Alexander Campbell argued forcefully against such non-church organizations. For example, in the first article of the opening issue of *The Christian Baptist* Campbell, writing about the first century churches, said:

Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies, bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world....They knew nothing of the hobbies of modern times. In their church capacity alone they moved....They dare not transfer to a missionary society, or bible society, or education society, a cent or a prayer, lest in so doing they should rob the church of its glory... [*The Christian Baptist*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1823]

Again, notice Campbell's response later that year to a reader of his paper about Bible Societies (the purpose of Bible societies was to distribute copies of the Bible):

With regard to bible societies, they are the most specious and plausible of all the institutions of this age. No man who loves the bible can refrain from rejoicing at its increasing circulation. But every Christian who understands the nature and design, the excellence and the glory of the institution called the Church of Jesus Christ, will lament to see its glory transferred to a human corporation. The church is robbed of its character by every institution, merely human, that would ape its excellence and substitute itself in its place....Let every church of Christ, then, if it can only disseminate twenty bibles or twenty testaments in one year, do this much. Then it will know into what channel its bounty flows; it will need no recording secretary, no president, no managers of its bounty. It will send all this pageantry, this religious show, to the regions of pride and vanity, whence they came. Then the church and its king will have all the glory. [*The Christian Baptist*, Vol. 1, No. 5, December 1, 1823]

Such was the view of all the early restorers including Stone. However, even as Campbell wrote these words he left the Redstone Baptist Association and joined the Mahoning Baptist Association (MBA). Apparently, Campbell saw no inconsistency between his writings and his practice. To increase its membership, the MBA hired Walter Scott in 1827 as an evangelist. Later, Scott became convinced that such an arrangement was unscriptural and was instrumental in seeing the MBA dissolved in 1830 even though Campbell would have preferred it continue.

In that same year, Campbell ceased his publication of *The Christian Baptist* and began a new publication *The Millennial Harbinger*. No longer a member of a formal association of churches, Campbell still strongly believed there was a need for church cooperation, and he wrote a series of seven articles in *The Millennial Harbinger* during 1831-32 entitled “The Cooperation of Churches”. He encouraged churches to cooperate through “cooperation” or “district” meetings. By 1840, state-wide cooperation meetings were being held in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, and Virginia.

Still believing even greater organization among the churches was needed, Campbell wrote a 16-article series in 1841-43 entitled “The Nature of the Christian Organization” in which he “proposed the establishment of a ‘general organization’ among the churches....He proposed that the churches hold a convention and devise a general organization. Such an organization, according to Campbell, would leave the churches free to manage their own internal affairs, but it would enable them to concentrate their resources in preaching the gospel, and it would have authority to ordain evangelists and settle disputes within a local church” [Humble, *Story*, p.38-39]. Along with these articles, Campbell included the following short article “On Co-operation” which gives the gist of his thinking:

Great need of a more rational and scriptural organization. 1. We can do comparatively but little in distributing the Bible abroad without co-operation. 2. We can do comparatively but little in the great missionary field of the world either at home or abroad without co-operation. 3. We can do little or nothing to improve and elevate the Christian ministry without co-operation. 4. We can do little to check the fraud committed upon the benevolence of the brethren by irresponsible, plausible, and deceptive persons, without co-operation. 5. We cannot concentrate the action of the tens of thousands of Israel, in any great Christian effort, but by co-operation. We can have no thorough co-operation without a more ample, extensive, and thorough church organization. These five points are enough for one lesson. [*The Millennial Harbinger*, Vol.6, No. 11, Nov., 1842]

Walter Scott, although an old friend of Campbell’s, was strongly opposed to Campbell’s plan for a “general organization”, believing instead that the church was already organized. Apparently, most of the brotherhood agreed with Scott at the time and no action was taken. However, in 1845, the first brotherhood organization, the American Christian Bible Society, was formed in Cincinnati with D.S. Burnet as president. Campbell was opposed to this society, not because he was against the principle, but supposedly because (1) the Baptists already had a Bible Society through which Christians could act, and (2) the society was formed by only a limited number of churches and therefore was not representative of the entire brotherhood. Others suggested that Campbell’s opposition was simply because he was not a prime mover behind the society. In addition to the Bible society, a Sunday School and Tract Society was also formed at this time.

In 1849, Campbell again pushed for a “general organization” by calling upon brethren to decide how it should be formed, who should attend, etc. After discussion in the various papers of that day, it was decided that a general convention would be held in Cincinnati on October 23, 1849 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Christian Bible Society. Ten states were represented and 156 in attendance. Campbell was absent, due to illness (or so he claimed), but was nonetheless elected president of the newly formed American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS) and continued to serve in that capacity until his death in 1866. The convention also called upon the churches to give support to the American Christian Bible Society, which remained a separate organization.

Opposition to the ACMS was immediate. Jacob Creath, Jr. charged that Campbell had changed his teaching from his early years. Various churches publicly objected to the missionary society saying that the church is the only missionary society authorized by Christ. Tolbert Fanning, generally considered the most influential preacher in the South in the 1850's and 60's, was elected vice-president of the society, but soon became convinced of its unscripturalness. In 1855, he started the *Gospel Advocate* with the express purpose of examining the issues of church organization and cooperation. Interestingly, Fanning attended the annual meeting of the ACMS in 1859 to voice his opposition. However, he concluded by saying, "But I am happy to say, that from what I heard on this floor, we are one people. With us all there is one faith, one God, one body, and one spirit." Apparently, no division was imminent over this issue.

However, it was the side effects of the Civil War that solidified the opposition to the ACMS. Prior to the war, abolitionists formed the Christian Missionary Society to protest the ACMS selecting a slave owner, Dr. James Barclay, as its first missionary to Jerusalem. And at its first annual meeting during the Civil War, the ACMS adopted a resolution (supported by James A. Garfield) calling on "brethren everywhere to do all in their power to sustain the proper and constitutional authorities of the Union." Fanning, a pacifist, took this as a call to arms. Others such as Benjamin Franklin (probably the most popular preacher in the North, editor of the *American Christian Review*, and also a pacifist), J.W.McGarvey, and Moses Lard were severely critical of the ACMS becoming politically involved. [Benjamin Franklin, after the war, began to oppose the ACMS on scriptural grounds, whereas McGarvey continued to give support to the society, and although Lard did not have scriptural objections to it, he thought it was a "dangerous institution".] Again, in 1863, the ACMS passed even a stronger resolution in favor of the North. The ACMS passed these to assure that it had no disloyalty to the Union, but the effect was to alienate the churches in the South. For example, after the war was over, Fanning called for a general consultation meeting of *Southern* Christians which was held in Murfreesboro in June, 1866. This was objected to by Northern Christians such as Benjamin Franklin. This sectional division in the churches was only to become more pronounced, so that by the time the formal division between the "Churches of Christ" and the "Disciples of Christ/Christian Church" was acknowledged in 1906, the southern churches were primarily "Churches of Christ" and northern churches "Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches".

The ACMS continued to have problems maintaining support. With Fanning's and Lipscomb's *Gospel Advocate* (which was suspended shortly after the war begun and restarted in 1855 with Lipscomb as co-editor) and Franklin's *American Christian Review* opposing the ACMS, a group of Northern brethren (including Garfield) started the *Christian Standard* with Isaac Errett as editor. Errett argued on behalf of the ACMS along with a northern perspective on issues involving the past war. Various modifications were made to the ACMS to make it more acceptable (even Franklin briefly supported it for a couple of years after the adoption of the "Louisville Plan"), but these simply crippled it in carrying out its primary purpose.

Among the "progressives", the desire for societies continued. By 1906, in addition to the ACMS there also had been formed the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, the Christian Women's Board of Missions, the National Benevolent Association, Board of Ministerial Relief, the Board of Extension, and the National Temperance Board.

Questions

1. There is basically only one positive argument that was given in support of a missionary society.

Alexander Campbell had argued that God had given to the church the responsibility of saving souls, but to what church – the church in the local sense or the universal church? His answer: the church universal had been given the obligation of preaching the gospel to save souls...but he did not tell the church the ways and means of preaching the gospel; therefore, it was left free to devise any kind of scheme in order to accomplish this work. [Earl West, “Learning a Lesson from History (II)”, *Gospel Guardian*, Vol.13, No.6, June 8,1961, p.2 (reprint of 1950 articles)]

Thus, it is on the grounds of expediency that the supporters of the missionary society claimed the right for its existence. What do you think of this argument? What strengths and weaknesses do you think it has?

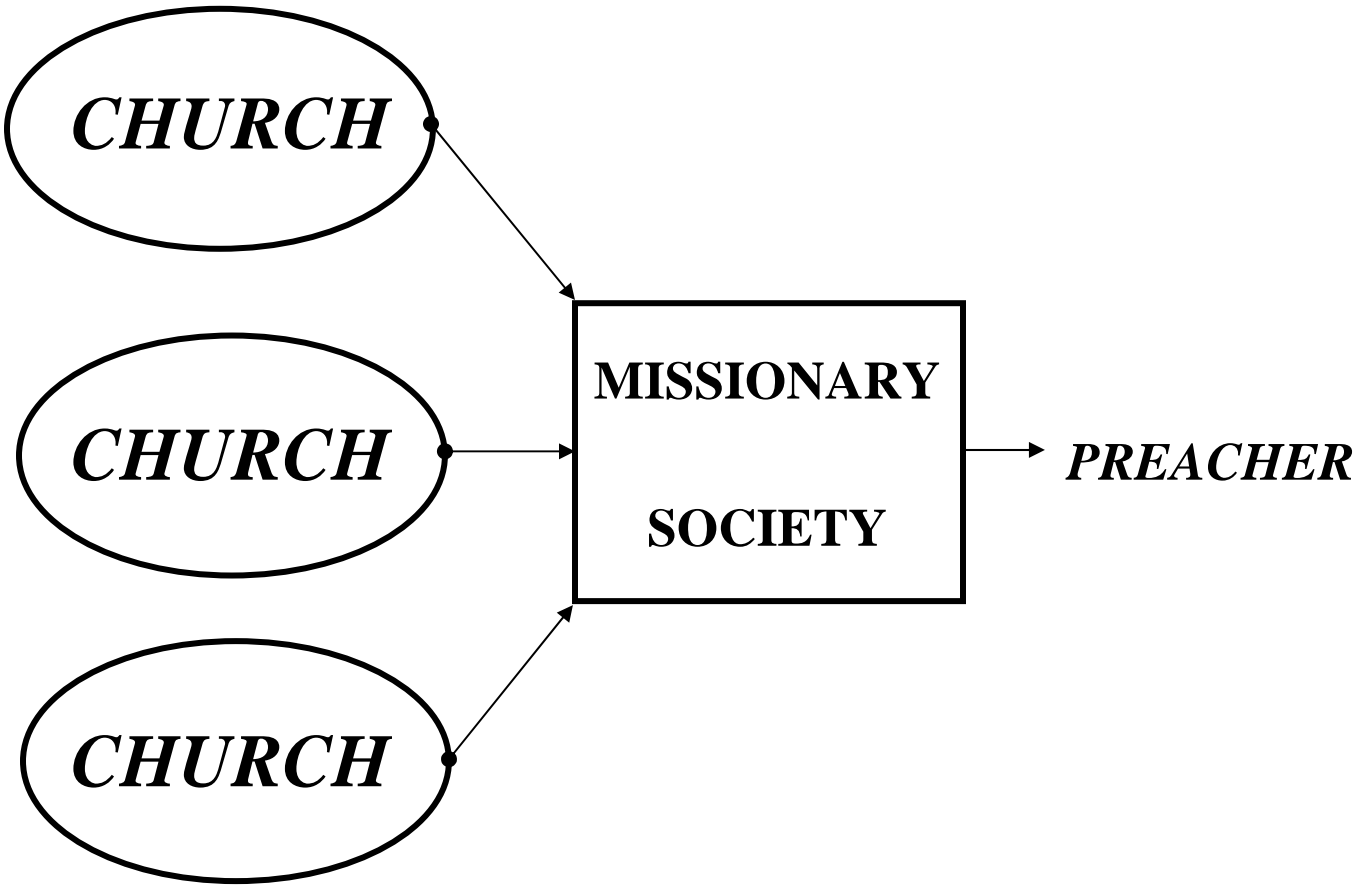
2. The thrust of this argument was to get around the need for finding specific scriptural authorization.

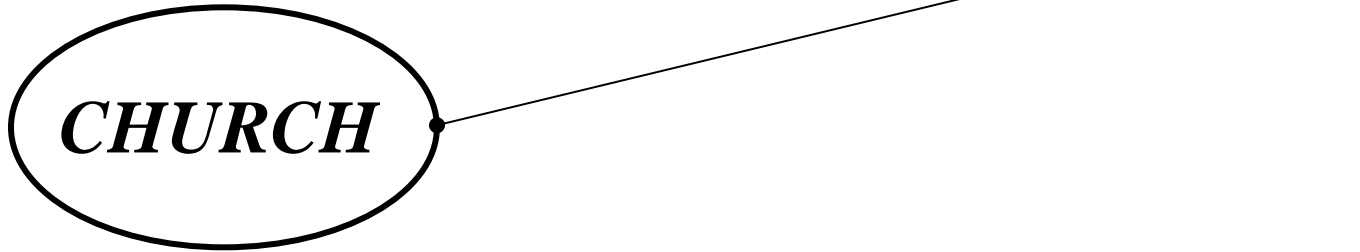
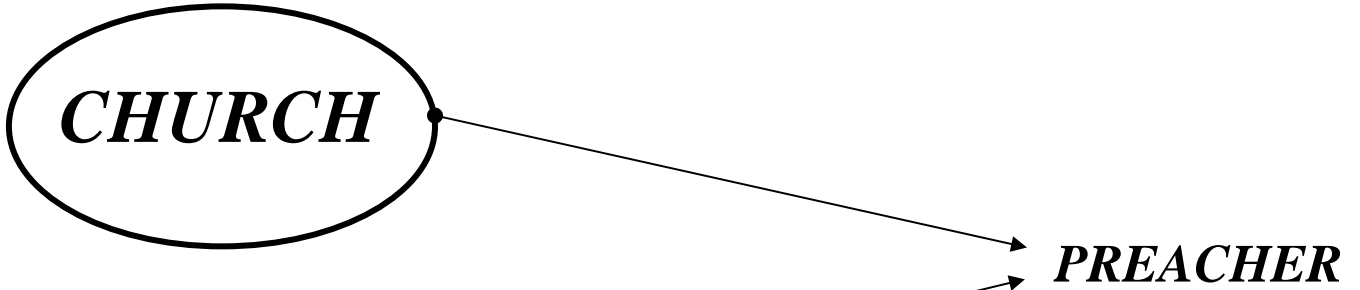
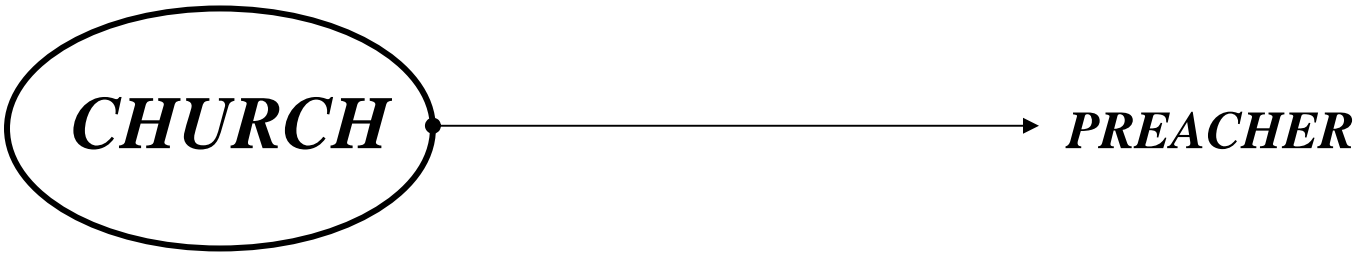
“You say, ‘Your Missionary Society is not scriptural’ – and you mean by this, that there is no special express precept in the Scriptures commanding it. We concede this without a moment’s hesitation. There is none; but what do you make of it? Is everything which is not scriptural therefore wrong?” [W.K. Pendleton, *Millennial Harbinger*, November, 1866]

Answer Pendleton’s question: Is everything which is not scriptural therefore wrong? (Be careful; give this a lot of thought)

What does Pendleton’s argument do to Thomas Campbell’s plea: “We speak where the Bible speaks, we are silent where the Bible is silent.”?

3. If the use of missionary societies were expedient (i.e. optional, but acceptable), on what practical basis do you suppose its supporters argued for their use?
4. How would you argue against missionary societies?
5. Some have argued against the formation of *private* organizations (e.g. the Cogdill Foundation) to carry out the work of evangelism on the same basis as they would argue against missionary societies. Can individuals jointly work to evangelize outside the church?
6. If churches cannot cooperate by means of a missionary society, then are there any legitimate means by which churches can cooperate in evangelism? (This question will resurface when we discuss the sponsoring church arrangement.)





LESSON 7

COLLEGES

Introduction From the earliest days of the restoration, Christians have formed schools to educate their young people. Consequently, two questions have arisen: (1) Can a private, non-church related school teach the Bible? And (2) Can churches support schools that teach the Bible?

Historical Background

The first institution of higher learning within the Restoration Movement was Bacon College. It opened in 1836 with Walter Scott as president and was initially located at Georgetown, Kentucky. In 1840 it moved to Harrodsburg, closed in 1850, but reopened in 1857 as Kentucky University. Transylvania University (the oldest university west of the Alleghenies and previously controlled successively by Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Methodists) and Kentucky University merged in 1865 and the College of the Bible was one of the colleges formed by this merger. The College of the Bible in essence became the first theological school among the Disciples. Robert Milligan was its first president, but it was J.W. McGarvey who was the backbone of the college for nearly 50 years (1865-1911). Upon McGarvey's death, it quickly succumbed to modernism. It is now called the Lexington Theological Seminary.

Alexander Campbell formed and financed Bethany College in 1841. Campbell envisioned the Bible as being the centerpiece of liberal arts education. Bethany College continues to this day as a college supported by the Disciples of Christ. Scores of other schools opened so that by the period immediately following the Civil War there were over 250 private or church owned colleges, seminaries, academies and institutes. Most of these schools were on the frontier and many ceased to exist after a few years of service.

After the division with the Christian Church, schools continued to be formed by those in the churches of Christ. The major schools still existing that were formed in the latter 1800s and early 1900s are Lipscomb University (originally Nashville Bible College, 1891), Abilene Christian University (Texas, 1906), Harding University (1924; moved to Searcy, AR in 1934), Freed-Hardeman University (Henderson, TN), and Pepperdine University (Los Angeles, 1937).

Following World War II, there was a tremendous growth in all colleges as a result of the returning veterans seeking entrance. At least ten junior colleges, including Florida College (1944), opened by 1960. At this time, there are 22 degree-granting colleges operated by members of the churches of Christ. In addition, there are numerous "schools of preaching" scattered throughout the country for the specific purpose of training preachers. Many, perhaps most, are the work of a local church.

Can Schools teach the Bible?

From the beginning, many were skeptical of colleges having a proper role in the teaching of the Bible. It appears that the primary concern was not the simple teaching of the Bible, but whether it was appropriate for colleges to train men for preaching. Some of the resistance can be attributed to the related concern among many Christians whether a man could be paid to preach regularly for a congregation. To these brethren, having colleges to train preachers was the first

step to a professional clergy. For example, Tolbert Fanning, who started Franklin College (Franklin, TN) in 1845, commented:

The church of God is the only authoritative theological school on earth; and it is the only one which Christians can consistently encourage.... We maintain the important learning is obtained in the Church, and if we are correct, each Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a seminary for instructing the members in the various departments of labor they are to perform. (*Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 2, 1856, p.299)

In a context of urging elders to bring out the talent in young men, Benjamin Franklin said:

The church must furnish the preachers of Christ. No other institution will ever do it. We need not look to our colleges to make preachers. They will never do it. We need colleges as much as any of our brethren have ever thought; but not to make preachers, but to educate our young men who want to preach or do anything else. (*Book of Gems*, p.476)

David Lipscomb observed:

We think the most fatal mistake of Alexander's Campbell's life, and one that has done much and we fear will do much more to undo his life's work, was the establishment of a school to train and educate young preachers.

We believe the whole principle of taking young men with undeveloped characters and unfixed habits and educating them for preachers, or any other specific work in the church, is hurtful to the extreme. It has a tendency to make merely professionals of them. They are educated for preachers. They often lose their first ardor and then think they are entitled to a living out of their profession and look to it more as means of a livelihood than of doing good. (*Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 17, 1875, p.345-46)

Yet, David Lipscomb and J.A. Harding started Nashville Bible School in 1891. They consistently refused to have special classes for young men seeking to preach. Nonetheless, Daniel Sommer was less than enthusiastic about the formation of this school. He commented:

There is a Bible school in Nashville, Tenn., which we presume is doing a good work, but if the brethren who have it in charge ever call it a college, and give the pupils a regular college course, and a diploma with titles, then we will predict that it will be an institution of mischief. Collegism among disciples led to preacherism, and preacherism led to organism and societyism, and these led to worldliness in the church. (Quoted by West, *Search*, Vol. 2, p.385)

Some brethren, like Daniel Sommer, have objected to the mere teaching of the Bible in a secular school. They reason that the church is the only authorized institution to preach the gospel, thus, any other institution that preaches the gospel (i.e. teaches the Bible) is unauthorized on the basis of the silence of the scriptures. In essence, the Bible department of a college is the same as a "missionary society".

Questions

1. What are the dangers of having Bible departments in secular colleges?

After answering the above question, consider these comments of Richard Hughes, a member of the mainstream (“institutional”) churches of Christ:

The progressive movement in Churches of Christ could never have arisen apart from the institutions of higher learning that Churches of Christ established earlier in the century. It is ironic, but scarcely unprecedented, that these colleges should have helped to produce a movement that in many significant ways undermined their original aims and intentions....In order to offer graduate programs in religion, these colleges had to secure significant numbers of professors with doctoral degrees in biblical and related studies....This was the beginning of a virtual host of aspiring scholars from Churches of Christ who would take up doctoral-level studies at prestigious institutions of higher education throughout the United States and abroad, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Union Theological Seminary...” (Hughes, Reviving, p.310-312)

Of course, these schools were also the very ones steep in modernism. Is it any wonder that the graduates of these schools led the progressive movement in churches of Christ?

2. Nonetheless, is it scripturally wrong to teach the Bible in school? Is a Bible department the same as a missionary society?

Can Churches Support a College?

G.C. Brewer...was perhaps the first influential leader among the Churches of Christ to encourage congregations to support colleges from the congregational treasury. He did so, first, in an important address at the Abilene Christian College lectureship in 1931 and again in a series of articles in the Gospel Advocate in 1933. Significantly, none of these appeals raised much opposition. It is true that throughout the 1930s Foy Wallace and others questioned the growing power of colleges, but it was not until the late 1930s and the early 1940s that the college-in-the-budget question became a burning issue in its own right. (Hughes, Reviving, p.231)

When this became an issue, all the colleges initially published a statement to the effect that it was not their practice to solicit contributions from churches, some even said that they would not accept such contributions. However, as Brewer later argued with some evidence, that most of these schools, including Bethany under Campbell and Nashville Bible School under Lipscomb, had accepted contributions from churches. [See Brewer, Contending, p.223f.] Whether Brewer argued correctly or not is a moot point at this time since all the colleges operated by members of churches of Christ now accept funds from churches, except Florida College.

Arguments to justify the church support of colleges include (1) the church is dependent upon the colleges for providing preachers, elders, etc., and (2) the schools do a “good work” in the education of young people and providing a wholesome environment for them.

Questions

3. Is the church-supported school parallel to a church-supported missionary society?
4. What do you think of the arguments put forth for churches supporting colleges?

LESSON 5

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC / PASTOR RULE

Introduction The major doctrinal issues at the forefront of the division between the Churches of Christ and the Christian Church were (1) the missionary society, (2) the use of instrumental music in worship, and (3) the implementation of the one-man pastor rule concept. Although opposition to all three was quite vocal, the introduction of instrumental music in worship probably was the primary act that openly fractured the churches.

Instrumental Music

The first church to introduce the instrument into the worship was in Midway, Kentucky in 1859 where L.L. Pinkerton preached. A melodeon was first brought into Saturday night gatherings designed to improve the singing with the intent of just helping to set the pitch. Soon it was used in conjunction with the singing, and then moved into the worship on Sunday.

Prior to this, little discussion about the use of instrumental music had taken place among the brethren. The question was briefly discussed in the early 1850's. Questioned about its use, Alexander Campbell commented on the instrument as follows: "And that all persons who have no spiritual discernment, taste, or relish for their spiritual meditations, consolations and sympathies of renewed hearts, should call for such an aid, is but natural....But I presume, to all spiritually-minded Christians, such aids would be as a cow bell in a concert" (*Millennial Harbinger*, Sept. 1851).

Limited controversy was stirred over the instrument until the close of the Civil War. By that time, most of the first generation of reformers had died or were near death (Campbell died in 1866). Thus, the discussions were held between the second generation of restorers. Most of the major figures were against it: Franklin, McGarvey, Lard, Grubbs, Pendleton (Campbell's son-in-law). Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb was also against the instrument, but did not need to say as much about it in the *Gospel Advocate* because its use was rare in southern churches. (Even as late as 1890, no more than 5 churches in Tennessee had adopted the instrument [Hughes, *Reviving*, p.87].) Others such as Isaac Errett (editor of the *Christian Standard*) did not believe the instrument was wrong, but opposed its introduction because of the tension and strife it introduced in the brotherhood. Nonetheless, as time progressed, more and more congregations (particularly larger urban churches) introduced the instrument which usually resulted in those opposing the instrument being compelled to leave to form new congregations.

Interestingly, several of the men such as McGarvey and Lard opposed the instrument, but accepted the missionary society. This moderate position died with these men, so that ultimately the instrument and the society were either both accepted or both rejected.

Questions

1. Initially, the instrument was simply justified on the basis that it was an *aid* to the singing, in much the same way as pitch pipes, song books, etc. What is wrong with this argument?

2. Some argued that Christians could use the instrument in their worship since it was used by the Israelites in their worship. What say you?

3. The primary argument was that the Greek word *psallo* translated “sing” in Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; and James 5:13 and translated “making melody” in Ephesians 5:19 originally meant to “to strike the strings of an instrument, play an instrument”. Some in the late 1800’s carried this to its logical conclusion and said that the use of instruments was not just optional, but required. However, New Testament lexicons say that in the New Testament the word simply means to “sing”. If an instrument is implied as perhaps in Ephesians 5:19, what is the instrument?

4. Most of the attention has been upon whether the instrument could be used in the worship of the church. Differences still exist among brethren as to whether an instrument can be used by individuals in their *homes* in worship to God. Any thoughts?

Pastor Rule

In the early years of the restoration, it was generally the case that preachers provided for their livelihood through secular work, usually farming. This was the case, in part, because many of the restoration churches were in poor rural areas and there was universal opposition to the clergy system as practiced by Catholicism and the denominations. Alexander Campbell was so strongly opposed to the concept of a clergy that he did not think it right to pay a man to work with a church although he could be supported while preaching to the lost. This mindset was fairly universal for quite some time among Christians. Even as late as 1862, J.W. McGarvey noted that he was aware of only seven congregations in the state of Kentucky that were supporting preachers to work in their midst.

Gradually, more congregations supported preachers, but, in addition, other innovations were introduced. First, there was the desire to secure the services of an “educated” preacher. By default, this generally necessitated that the man be relatively young since many of the frontier preachers were not highly educated (of course, there were exceptions). Second, the concept of “evangelistic oversight” was introduced in the case where a congregation did not have elders. After all, it was thought, who would be better qualified than the preacher to see to the affairs of the church? This evolved into the idea of joint oversight of the evangelist and the pastors (elders), and then ultimately into the practice of the one-man pastor (evangelist) rule. This practice became pervasive among the churches that supported the missionary societies and used the instruments. The churches had gone full circle from opposing the clergy to fully instituting a clergy system. After the formal division in the early 1900’s, Ed Harrell commented that there were only 6 or 7 fully supported preachers among the churches of Christ.

Questions

5. Thus, several issues were intertwined with the development of the one-man pastor rule. Answer each of the following by citing Biblical precepts or examples.
 - a. Can a preacher be paid for his work as an evangelist?
 - b. Can a preacher work for a congregation for an extended period of time?
 - c. Does an evangelist have the obligation to “pastor” the congregation along with the elders?
6. Is there a danger that evangelists will:
 - 1) be treated like clergy by the brethren?
 - 2) considered themselves a “pastor” over the congregation?How can this be avoided?
7. Is the located, paid evangelist *necessary* in order to convert the lost and to strengthen the congregation?

The Root Cause of the Churches of Christ/Christian Church Division

As many have observed, the doctrinal issues of the missionary society, instrumental music and pastor rule were not the root causes of the division, but were simply the particular issues that revealed a fundamental difference in attitude toward scripture that was developing among brethren. If it hadn't been these issues, then some other issues would have given rise to division. This difference in attitude is often presented as a difference in how one understands the “*silence*” of the scriptures. What does it mean to say, “We are silent where the Bible is silent”? Either the silence of scriptures is permissive (that is, a thing is permitted unless the scriptures specifically condemn it), or it is prohibitive (that is, a thing is prohibited unless specifically commanded).

Questions

8. The prohibitive view of silence is often supported by appeal to Hebrews 7:14. On the basis of this passage, under what circumstances is something prohibited by the silence of the scriptures?
9. Do missionary societies, instrumental music, and pastor rule violate the silence of the scriptures?

LESSON 6

BIBLE CLASSES /ONE CUP /LOCATED PREACHER

Introduction Following the schism between churches of Christ and the Christian Church, other issues arose among churches of Christ. The initial challenges came from the right. Again, the contention centered around the “silence” of the scriptures.

Bible Classes

Issues: (1) Can the church divide into multiple classes for Biblical instruction? (2) Can women teach in any of these classes?

In the background of this issue stood the question of the Sunday School organization. Prior to the Restoration Movement, denominations formed independently organized Sunday School societies whose purpose was to educate the children. Thus, resistance was given to these organizations by many of the restorers on the same basis as they resisted the missionary society. Even though those within the churches of Christ after the split with the Christian Church did not form a separate Sunday School organization, some brethren resisted having classes formed and directed by the elders of the local congregation. (Incidentally, I remember those of my parents’ generation not being comfortable with the term “Sunday school” itself and would only use the term “Bible class”.)

The non-class brethren argue that the New Testament teaches that we are to “*come together*” into a common assembly for worship. Appeal is made to Acts 14:27; 15:30; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20,33; 14:23; Hebrews 10:25. It is believed that these passages only authorize a “common assembly”, therefore, on the basis of the silence of the scriptures, it is understood by these brethren that all other modes of assembly are not authorized. In addition, it is argued that a woman is not permitted to teach because (1) she is to be silent in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and (2) women are not permitted to teach in public (1 Timothy 2:12).

Questions

1. Consider the 7 passages above that allude to a common assembly. For what reasons did the brethren assemble in these passages, and do these reasons necessitate that there be a common assembly?

However, can there be other reasons to assemble which don’t necessitate a common assembly? If yes, why would such assemblies not violate the silence of the scriptures?

2. The non-class brethren acknowledged that a woman can teach in private (Acts 18:26; Titus 2:3-4; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). However, they understand 1 Timothy 2:12 to exclude all public teaching, even the teaching of children. Study 1 Timothy 2:12. What do you think is excluded by this passage? Be as specific as possible.

One Cup

Issue: Can multiple cups be used in the observance of the Lord's Supper?

Historically, one-cup brethren will argue that the early church used only one cup. It is doubtful that this can be established, but it is true that in recent history the practice of using multiple cups arose in the early decades of 20th century after the discovery of bacteria. For example, J.W. McGarvey protested:

“I have been a member of the church for 43 yrs, and it has been my good fortune to be acquainted with several of our most learned and influential ministers, Alexander Campbell among them, and it seems strange to me that they did not find a necessity for the individual cups. It is not at all strange; for such a necessity has not even yet been discovered. The desire for it has originated in the squeamishness of certain women with weak stomachs, and it is supported by the new fad among physicians about BACTERIA, those little bugs which hang on the lips of people, and stick to the communion cup, then cling to the lips of the next participant, and thence descend into the stomach of the latter, seize upon his vital organs, and eat away on them till some fatal disease ensues.” *Christian Standard*, Feb. 26, 1910.

Some brethren, such as David Lipscomb, initially opposed this “innovation”, but afterward endorsed it. However, although individual cups were not used until the early 1900's, it was not uncommon for two or more cups to be used as a practical matter.

The one-cup brethren argue that the use of *one* cup has spiritual significance. The relevant passages are Matthew 26:27-28//Mark 14:24 and Luke 22:20//1 Corinthians 11:25. [Usually they will argue that the loaf (bread) also has significance and that there should only be one loaf (see Matthew 26:26; 1 Corinthians 10:17).] Note the difference between the account given in Matthew and Mark with that given in Luke and 1 Corinthians. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus says: “This is my blood of the new covenant.” The object of “*this*” is not explicitly identified, but it is reasonable to assume that “*this*” = “*fruit of the vine*”. In Luke and 1 Corinthians, it reads “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*”. Note that the “*cup*” is identified with the “*new covenant*”. One-cup brethren therefore contend that the cup has significance all to its own (e.g. since there is only one new covenant, there should only be one cup), and thus, the Lord intended that we should thereby use just one cup.

Questions

3. The usual argument against the one-cup idea is that the “*cup*” is used figuratively to stand for its contents. Is there anything within the verses given above which would indicate a figurative use?
4. Of course, the point of the one-cup argument given above is to destroy this figurative identification of the cup with its contents. That is why the differences in the accounts is highlighted to show that the “*fruit of the vine*” = “*my blood*” and “*cup*” = “*new covenant*”. But are these differences over emphasized? Can they be reconciled as saying the same thing?

5. A larger question is: To what extent should we duplicate the precise action of the night Jesus instituted the Supper during the Jewish Passover? Upper room? Order of taking the elements? The use of *one* loaf? The use of *unleavened* bread? The giving of thanks *prior* to breaking the loaf? etc.

The use of unleavened bread is probably the most interesting for the purposes of this discussion. Nowhere in the Biblical accounts is the adjective “unleavened” given, only the generic word “*bread*” is used. [Similarly, the generic “*fruit of the vine*” is used, not the specific “grape juice”.] Unleavened bread is used since Jesus instituted the Supper during the Passover and we know that no leaven was permitted during the Passover feast. Similar thinking has led to a division between one-cup brethren as to whether “unfermented” fruit of the vine or “fermented” fruit of the vine (= wine) should be used. Those contending for wine argue that only juice that has fermented is free of leaven. Of course, the opposing brethren deny this.

Located Preacher

Issue: Can a preacher primarily work with one congregation for an extended period of time?

An essential component of the pastor system, which system was rejected by brethren within the churches of Christ, was the practice of having a located preacher. Probably most objected to the pastor system because of the authority that the preacher unscripturally assumed. Nonetheless, some brethren, such as Daniel Sommer (1850-1940), were opposed to the practice of having a located preacher by itself. They prefer that brethren be “mutually edified” with different brethren doing the teaching. Sommer recanted some of his views on this issue prior to his death, but his son, D. Austin Sommer, W. Carl Ketcherside, and Leroy Garrett continued to press the issue into the 1950’s resulting in a number of “mutual edification” churches.

Questions

6. What are some good reasons to have a “located preacher”?
7. What are some bad reasons to have a “located preacher”?
8. What are some good reasons to not have a “located preacher”?

LESSON 8

BENEVOLENCE

Introduction Christians in the New Testament understood their obligations to other Christians in time of need. We read of instances where Christians within a congregation supported others in need who were part of the same congregation. We also read of one congregation of Christians sending to another congregation that had widespread need.

Historical Background

Examples can be given in early restoration history of benevolent actions. Two widely publicized instances include the sending of relief to the British Isles due to severe famines in 1847 and 1848, and the sending of funds to churches in Kansas in 1860 due to a widespread crop failure. In each case, the funds were either sent directly, through a local church, or through a publishing office.

In the early years of the restoration, rejection of benevolent societies as a proper recipient of church support accompanied the general rejection of all other religious societies such as missionary societies. In it not insignificant that the first efforts at organized congregational cooperation in areas of benevolence were encouraged by leaders of wealthy urban congregations in Kentucky, such as David S. Burnet, John T. Johnson, Lewis L. Pinkerton, and John W. Parish.

Some brethren were unconvinced, however, that such benevolent actions were scriptural. For example, Tolbert Fanning said:

Hence I state in conclusion, that I doubt the policy of establishing orphan schools to bring up unfortunate children without trades and professions, and still more on the ground, that these orphan schools, to my mind, are attempting to perform, in part, the labor which it is the imperious duty of each congregation to do. (*Gospel Advocate*, Vol. II, October 1856, quoted by Harrell, Quest, p. 78)

The first orphan home built by the Disciples was the Christian Widow's and Orphan's Home in Louisville (chartered in 1872, operational in 1883). Six years later another opened in St. Louis.

After the division with the Christian Church, Daniel H. King has summarized the opening of orphan homes among churches of Christ as follows:

Among members of Churches of Christ the Tennessee Orphan Home is the oldest. It was established in 1909...by the West Seventh St. church of Christ in Columbia, Tenn. It was formally opened on Sept. 5, 1910. Other homes date after it: Tipton, Tipton, Okla., 1922; Potter, Bowling Green, Ky., 1915; Boles, Quinlan, Tex., 1926; Sunny Glenn, San Benito, Tex., 1936; Southern Christian, Morrilton, Ark., 1926. In 1939 only 6 "homes" existed, but by 1959 there were 21 others. By 1960, 1500 children were being cared for in 27 locations in 12 states. (*Institutional and Cooperational Controversy: An Historical Study*, Symposium)

Some early opposition to orphan homes did exist. For example, C.M. Pullias said, "...this way of a few getting together and saddling on the church of Christ orphan homes and schools or

anything else is a very serious thing, and will in the course of time prove to be a curse to the church...” (*Tidings of Joy*, July 1919). Nonetheless, Pullias, like most Christians in the early decades of 1900s, did not oppose the church supporting orphan homes. Those that did, however, generally sent relatively small amounts of money.

In 1947, N.B.Hardeman, desiring to increase the support given to colleges by the churches, linked the support of schools and orphan homes together:

I have always believed that a church has the right to contribute to a school or an orphanage if it so desired....The same principle that permits one must also permit the other. They must stand or fall together. (*Gospel Advocate*, October 23, 1947, p.844)

...Hardeman sought to force the issue by comparing congregational support of college to congregational support of orphans’ homes. The strategy backfired: he simply succeeded in making orphans’ homes the object of the same sort of dispute that already focused on the colleges. (Hughes, Reviving, p.233)

Consequently, from that time on most of the discussions centered on the right of churches to support orphan homes. Unfortunately, the discussions were not always honest attempts to understand what the Bible teaches. Prejudicial attempts were made, and often succeeded, in depicting those against church support of orphan homes as being “anti” orphan. Of course, that was not the case.

Coupled with this was a discussion whether benevolent acts of the church could only be directed toward “saints only”. All New Testament examples of church benevolence were directed toward *saints* in need (read Acts 2:41-45; 4:34; 6:1; 11:28-29). The application of this to the orphan home issue was rather straightforward. Most orphans do not come from Christian homes, thus to help such orphans with church funds would be to act without New Testament authority. This aspect was not, and is not, the central point of contention. However, it bolstered the contention that the “antis” were heartless.

Many congregations, to avoid supporting a *separate* organization, chartered the orphan homes under the oversight of the elders of a local church. Yet, this did not address the question of whether the church could support all orphans, and it introduced another point of contention. If that local church could not provide the full support for the orphan home, could it accept funds from other churches? This issue will be addressed in the next lesson.

Many written and oral debates were held during this time. However, in the December 9, 1954 issue of the *Gospel Advocate* it was suggested that a quarantine be placed against all preachers and congregations who opposed the church supporting institutions. This action in essence called a halt to any sincere study on the issue, and its enactment forced a division within and between congregations.

Interestingly, during the heat of the discussion, many claimed that orphan homes were even superior to private homes for the rearing of children. (See Grider, “Orphan Homes”, FC Lectures, 1982.) That such is clearly false is supported by the fact that even by the 1960s, orphan homes became less and less prominent in American society because of the widespread

recognition that orphan homes are inadequate in providing the needs of children. The mainstream churches support very few orphan homes today, but do support a host of institutions.

In any case, orphan homes were clearly not needed for the church to provide for its orphans. Christians have always been ready and willing to take orphan children into their own homes and adopt them when possible. It is terribly unfortunate that this “non-issue” was used as a wedge to divide brethren.

Arguments for Church-Supported Benevolent Institutions

There were three primary arguments that were used by those in favor of church-supported benevolent institutions.

- 1) It was claimed that using institutions to obey the command to care for those in need was simply a *method*. The Bible, it was argued, does not tell us *how* to care for the orphans, thus we are at liberty to select whatever method we choose.

Response: It is not a question of *how*, but *who*. *Who* has the obligation to care for the needy? If the church has the obligation, it cannot give that obligation to another organization.

- 2) It was claimed that an institutional orphans’ home was simply a “restored” home with the institution acting in place of the parents (*en loco parentis*). The argument ran as follows: The church can help a home in need. If the parents in that “original” home were to die, the orphans’ home is simply a “restored” home that is in need and therefore worthy of church support. (This argument was commonly made by Guy N. Woods in his debates.)

Response: The church does not help “homes”, but needy individuals.

- 3) It was argued that “whatever the Christian can do, the church can do”. Thus, if the Christian can support an institution, or if a Christian could support a non-saint, then the church could do either of these things.

Response: This clearly is a case of “what proves too much, proves nothing”. An individual could support the Red Cross, Catholic orphan homes, the Republican party, etc. Not many, if any, would agree that the church could support all these organizations.

Questions

1. There are three passages to which appeal is made to support the contention that churches can support non-Christians: James 1:27; Galatians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 9:13.

Study each of these passages. Are these instructions for the churches?

2. But those who argue that “whatever the Christian can do, the church and do” would say that even if some or all these passages are directed to the individual, the church could nonetheless do the same. But consider 1 Timothy 5:16 and its context. Does the individual have obligations that the church does not have?

3. How is the autonomy of a church violated by the use and support of institutions? [Realize that in supporting a benevolent institution, the decision-making authority as to who is worthy of support, the type and amount of support, etc. is not the church’s, but the institution’s.]

4. To help understand that the point of contention was not simply whether one could “send money to an institution”, answer the following. Can a church purchase the services of an institution to help needy saints? For example, can it buy groceries to give to needy saints? Can it rent an apartment for needy saints? Can it build a house for needy saints?

If yes to the above, then what is the difference between doing these things and sending money to some organization to do the exact same things?

5. Why is it that the church (i.e., a collectivity of Christians) has an obligation to Christians and not to all those in the world?

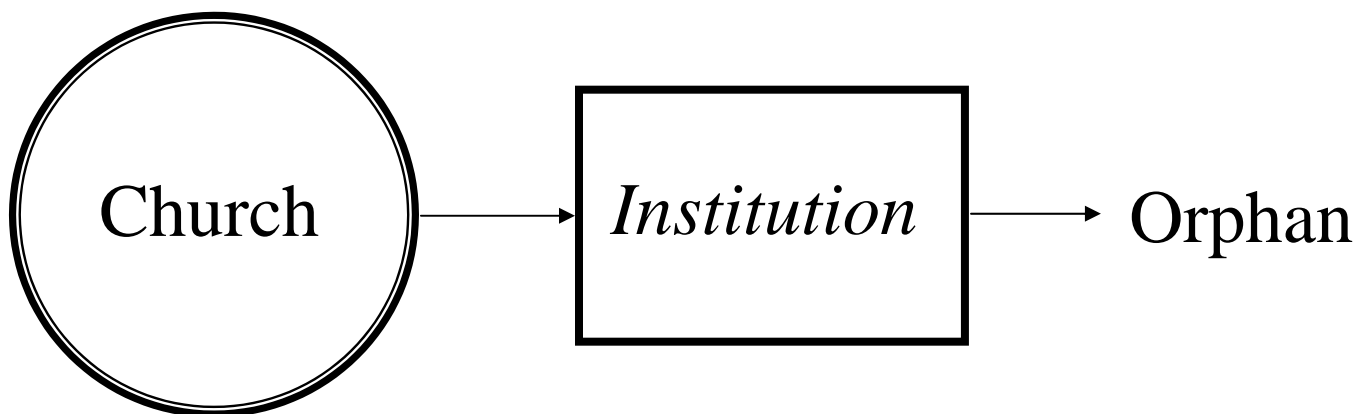
Consider the reason that Paul gives as to why the Gentile churches had an obligation to the needy saints in Jerusalem. Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 9:11.

6. Do each of us have obligations to help those in the world who are in need? (Better not answer “No” – remember the parable of the Good Samaritan.)

7. What, do you think, is attractive about simply sending money to an institution to care for the needy instead of either doing it (1) individually, or (2) directly by the church in the case of needy saints?

TWO ISSUES

- 1. Can the church provide support to non-Christians?*
- 2. Can the church accomplish its work by providing support to benevolent institutions?*



CHURCH SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONS

MISSIONARY, BIBLE, TRACT SOCIETIES

ORPHAN HOMES

SCHOOLS

BOARDING HOUSES

HOMES FOR WIDOWS

NURSING HOMES

SENIOR CITIZEN HOMES

HOSPITALS

DISASTER RELIEF AGENCIES

LESSON 9

SPONSORING CHURCH

Introduction Reluctant to form an independent organization to carry out an extensive work, some churches took on the work themselves and asked other churches to assist by contributing funds to them. Thus, these churches became “sponsoring churches”. Again, the question was asked, “Where is the authority for such an arrangement?”

Historical Background

At the time missionary societies were debated, it was suggested by T.M. Henley in a letter to Alexander Campbell that an alternative way to carry out the same work would be for a group of churches to send funds to a single church that would then carry out the work by employing an evangelist (see Humble, Story, p. 38). This arrangement was practiced on occasion, but it did not stop the ground swell in favor of a missionary society.

A similar arrangement was made in West Tennessee in 1910 when the church at Henderson (home of Freed-Hardeman College) accepted funds from neighboring churches to support a preacher to work in that area. David Lipscomb argued against this arrangement by making a comparison to the missionary society:

“Now what was that but the organization of a society in the elders of the church? The church elders in Henderson constitute a board to collect and pay out money and control the evangelist for the brethren of West Tennessee, and all the preachers are solicitors for this work.” (*Gospel Advocate*, March 24, 1910, p.364 quoted by Frost, Old Issues, p.27)

Following World War II, many returning servicemen became aware and sensitive to the world-wide need to preach the gospel. In the minds of many, the work was too big to accomplish by individual churches acting alone. Thus, the idea was conceived were one church would take on the task of evangelizing some foreign country and would solicit help from other congregations. In 1947, the Broadway church in Lubbock, Texas became the sponsoring church for the missionary work in Germany by sending Otis Gatewood there to preach. Likewise, The Union Avenue church in Memphis, Tennessee became the sponsoring church for the work in Japan, and the church in Brownfield, Texas took on the work of evangelizing Italy.

Such acts did not go unopposed. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., along with others drew a parallel with Roman Catholicism:

History is repeating on ecclesiastical organization. It comes now in the form of the little church working through the big church – which is centralization. It amounts to little elders turning their responsibility of their work over to big elders – which is diocesan in principle. Thus hierarchal and ecclesiastical centralization is growing – elders over elders – bishops over bishops. Remember, the pope of Rome is just an overgrown metropolitan bishop. With one eldership of one church taking over the work of many elders of many churches, and with this centralized eldership overseeing workers by the dozens who are not even members of the church were elders are supposed to elder, what will be left to the local autonomous organization of the New Testament church. (“The Issues Before Us”, *Gospel Guardian*, Vol.1, No.1, 1949, p.3, quoted by

Hoyt Houchen, "Sponsoring Church Arrangements: Herald of Truth (A Test Case), FC Lectures, 1982.)

Wallace later, like many brethren, changed his mind and began supporting the institutions he once opposed.

Probably the sponsoring church arrangement that helped bring the division to a head was that involving the Herald of Truth. Two young preachers, James W. Nichols and James D. Williford, conceived of a national radio broadcast. Nichols had started preaching on the radio in 1947 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In 1950, he was joined by Williford to link six stations together in a joint broadcast in Iowa and Wisconsin. They introduced their program with the announcement: "The churches of Christ salute you with a herald of truth". Presented with the opportunity to broadcast on a national network, they first contacted the College Avenue church in Abilene to sponsor the program. When they declined, the Highland church in Abilene agreed to assume the oversight of this project and the national broadcast began in 1952 and expanded to television in 1954. Not able to financially support the cost of the program, the Highland church solicited and received funds from other churches. By 1954, over 1000 churches sent support. This grew to over 2700 churches by 1964 (about 1 in 10 churches).

Earl West, a historian of the Restoration Movement, lamented at the time (although he also later changed his teaching):

So, a local congregation obligates itself to spend a half-a-million dollars in one year for a national radio broadcast, or a benevolent institution. Is anyone so naive to suppose that this is the work of a local church? A local congregation has obligated itself to become the agency through which the church universal can act. ("Congregational Cooperation", *Gospel Guardian*, Vol. 5, No. 17, Sept.3, 1953, p.265)

In the debates that later took place, the Highland church initially said that this broadcast was the work of all the churches contributing. When pressed that this meant that they were thus assuming the oversight for a multitude of churches, they then said that the work was their work alone. This, of course, presented problems to those congregations who sent funds to Highland, since they were then presented as turning their work over to another church. Either way, the arrangement was inconsistent with New Testament teaching. Organizationally, the Herald of Truth was an independent institution with its own officers, staff, facilities, and money.

Richard Hughes, a historian affiliated with the mainstream churches, argues that "the greater significance of the 'Herald of Truth' lies in the changes that occurred in the content of its preaching between 1952 and the 1970s" (Reviving, p.240). He demonstrates that the distinctive teachings of the church became less prominent under Batsell Barrett Baxter (the primary Herald of Truth evangelist from 1960-81), and that teachings on "spiritual growth and peace of mind, how to develop healthy family relationships, and how to cope with anxiety and fear or with the various stages along life's way" (p.241) became more frequent and dominating. These were themes common to many denominational, evangelical ministries. Consequently, the need for the Herald of Truth became less vital, so that today the Herald of Truth is less significant.

Other sponsoring church arrangements existed, particularly in the carrying out many evangelistic “campaigns”. In these efforts, a church would set about to put on the campaign, and would finance it by receiving funds from other churches. Attention was given in 1991 to the “One Nation Under God” campaign proposed and sponsored by the Sycamore church in Cookeville, Tennessee. That church sought contributions of individual Christians and churches to enable them to mail an evangelistic appeal to every household in the United States.

Arguments for the Sponsoring Church Arrangement

1. Like the support of orphan homes, a general argument was made that the sponsoring churches did a “good work” and therefore justified in seeking support of other churches.
2. New Testament examples of one church sending to another church in benevolence would also sanction one church sending to another church in evangelism.
3. Sponsoring churches are not able to completely support the work attempted, thus they are “needy” churches and therefore qualified to receive support from other churches.

Questions

1. Elders are to be shepherds, overseers, and teachers of the church. Who do they have the oversight of? (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1)
2. The New Testament teaches that men who labor in the preaching of the gospel should be financially supported (1 Corinthians 9:6-18; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). Under what arrangement were men supported? (Philippians 4:15-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8-9)
3. Similar to the orphans’ home, how does the sponsoring church arrangement destroy the autonomy of each church?
4. Those in favor of the sponsoring church arrangement have tried to embarrass their opponents by stating that those opposed to the direct support of one church by another would logically be opposed to sending old song books to another congregation, loaning chairs for use in a gospel meeting, etc. What do you think? Is giving away old song books, or loaning chairs ok or not? And if so, is this parallel to the sponsoring church arrangement?

LESSON 10

EVOLUTION OF MAINSTREAM CHURCHES

Introduction Since the division with the non-institutional churches, members of mainstream churches have continued to introduce new practices and teachings that many of their fellow members reject. Consequently, another division is clearly in the making among mainstream churches. For now, there seems to be continuing discussion between some of the various factions, but, if history is any guide, the discussions will ultimately cease and the division will be final.

In the mid-1960's, Ed Harrell wrote a monograph on the "Emergence of the Church of Christ Denomination" in which he argued that the mainstream churches were well on their way to denominational status. That the Church of Christ denomination now exists among the more progressive element of the mainstream churches is not debatable and is one of the main theses in Richard Hughes' Reviving the Ancient Faith.

The 'Social Gospel'

The 'social gospel' is a message directed toward the social needs of mankind. It elevates the physical needs of man to the same level, or even above, the spiritual needs of man. While it is certainly true that disciples of Jesus Christ must have love and compassion for all men, it is not true that Jesus would have us more concern about one's physical needs than one's spiritual needs. The debate over support of orphan homes was, in part, a debate over whether the social gospel is true. But adherence to the social gospel concept resulted in other practices among mainstream churches of Christ.

- In the 1947, M. Norvel Young at the Abilene Christian College lectureship called upon churches to build new buildings and to provide for a "large fellowship room" and "cooking facilities near this room" (Hughes, Reviving, p.247). This did not 'catch on' immediately, but by the late 1960's and early 70's many churches built such facilities.
- The providing of homes for elderly. Initially, for those who required medical care, but now simply as a retirement community.
- The providing of meals for sick and the elderly, e.g. 'Meals on Wheels'.
- The providing of gymnasiums, team sports, summer camps, etc.
- The providing of classes, seminars, and services directed at the practical needs of members, e.g. financial and estate planning, single parent issues, etc.

Evangelistic Methods

- In the 1960's, a nationwide program called Campus Evangelism sought to evangelize the nation's college campuses. Led by Jim Bevis and the Broadway church in Lubbock the

movement began to teach and practice many things unacceptable to the majority of mainstream churches.

- The Crossroads Movement was an offshoot of Campus Evangelism, and the Boston Church of Christ sprung from the Crossroads Movement. The Boston Church of Christ founded churches in other major cities of the world which collectively is known as the International Church of Christ with the headquarters in Boston.

Doctrinal Issues

- The role of the Holy Spirit was hotly debated in the 1960's culminating with Pat Boone "speaking in tongues." The charismatic movement also effected many denominations.
- The acceptance of modernism (denial of miracles, etc.) by some like those among the progressives in the Christian church at the turn of the century.
- The preaching of Unity-in-Diversity of Ketcherside and Garrett led to serious differences within the mainstream churches (and, to a lesser extent, in the non-institutional churches).
- The preaching of a "New Hermeneutic" that supplanted the traditional understanding of scriptural authority had broad appeal.
- The preaching of a "core gospel" as the basis of fellowship is becoming widely accepted.
- The practice of having women teachers (of men) is becoming accepted. Undoubtedly, women 'preachers' will soon arrive on the scene.

Worship

- The use of soloists and choir groups is occurring (even women quartets).
- Some churches are practicing the observance of the Lord's Supper at weekday services.
- Already, some are accepting the use of instrumental music.

Conclusion

The mainstream churches have been subdivided into three groups: conservatives, moderates, and progressives. The conservatives still seek biblical approval for their practices using the traditional hermeneutic for establishing authority. The progressives, and the moderates to some degree, do not feel restricted by biblical teaching and are willing to accept all manner of new innovations. When the division is completed, there may be a three-fold division as was the case at the end of the 19th century.

LESSON 11

FELLOWSHIP

Introduction Christians of every generation since the first century have had to be concerned about the question of fellowship. The early restorers did not always agree and the history of the Restoration Movement has been one of differences and breaks in fellowship. Yet, brethren have not divided over many differences. So...Who can I fellowship? Who can I not fellowship? What is the basis on which we are to decide questions of fellowship? Surely these are crucial questions.

Fellowship with God

In the first instance, a Christian must seek to be in fellowship with God (sometimes called “vertical” fellowship). To do so, we must “walk in the light” (1 John 1:5-7) by living a life of faith and obedience to God. The New Testament passages that speak of a Christian “falling away” highlights the fact that fellowship with God is not automatic, nor necessarily permanent (Hebrews 6:4-6; 1 John 5:16). There must be constant attention given to how we conduct ourselves. God knows all who are in fellowship with him (2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Corinthians 4:5).

Fellowship with Other Christians

Fellowship with other Christians (called “horizontal” fellowship) is based on fellowship with God. In truth, we are to have fellowship with and have love for all those who are in fellowship with God. If we do not love our brethren (those in fellowship with God), then we walk “in darkness” and do not have fellowship with God (1 John 2:9).

Thus, it is incumbent upon all Christians to make a judgment as to the correctness of another’s claim to be in fellowship with God. If we believe their claim, we must extend fellowship to them. If we do not believe their claim, then we are not to “receive” nor “greet him” lest we “shar(e) in (their) evil deeds” (2 John 10-11; Ephesians 5:11).

1. Will Christians always make the right judgment?
2. Will Christians be accountable for their judgments?
3. Are there situations where a Christian’s judgment is wrong, but where he may not be liable?

The Basis for Fellowship

Simply stated, we are to fellowship those who are faithful followers of the teachings of Christ. Thus, if we can rightly determine Christ’s teachings, then we can judge whether another is a faithful follower of that teaching. However, therein lies two possible problems: (1) Can we

know, without doubt, Christ's teaching on all matters, and (2) Can we judge whether another person is a follower of Christ's teaching to the level God expects?

4. How would you answer those two questions? Give examples to illustrate your answer.

5. Is there a difference between being a "perfect" follower of God and a "faithful" follower of God? If so, what?

6. If one says that he cannot know for certain God's will on some particular matter, can he still know God's will with certainty on some other matter? Why the difference?

7. Reflect on the divisions within the Restoration Movement we have studied. Why did the questions concerning the missionary society, instrumental music, bible class arrangements, institutionalism, etc. give rise to division?

8. List other questions brethren have disagreed on?

Why have these not resulted in division?

Should they have resulted in division? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Our brethren to look upon all other brethren with whom they disagree as "false teachers"?

9. One brother has said "We enjoy fellowship with any brother in Christ, even though he may differ with us, so long as the fellowship does not: (1) involve us in wrong practice, (2) commit us to unscriptural doctrine, or (3) constitute an endorsement of his error." Do you agree with this statement?

The Nature of Fellowship

Fellowship, as used in the New Testament, means “a sharing, communion, joint participation”. Although one might argue that two Christians, unknown to each other, are in fellowship with each other simply on the basis of their sharing a common salvation in Christ, such a fellowship does not call for any action on the part of either Christian. Fellowship is used in scriptures in a more practical sort of way. Thus, Christians are in fellowship with one another if they jointly participate in some common activity. For example, the Lord’s Supper is a “communion” of those in fellowship with other.

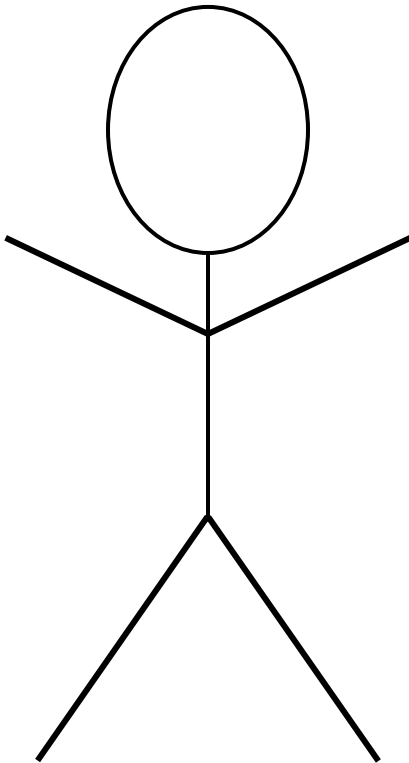
10. Is fellowship an individual matter, a collective matter, or both? (Consider the case of “withdrawing fellowship”.)

11. Can one church have fellowship with another church? How? (Give Bible example.)

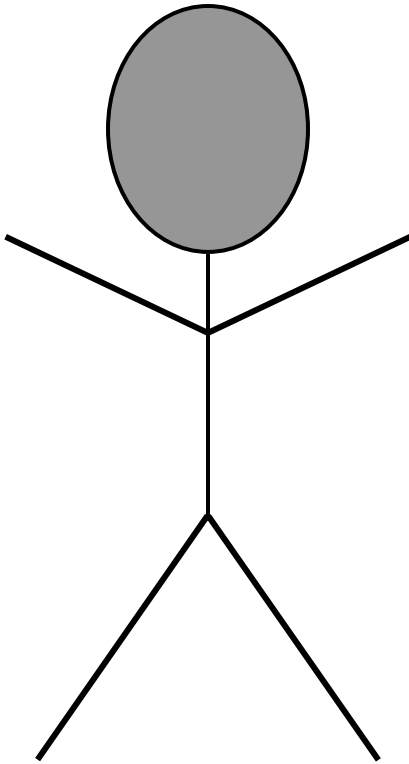
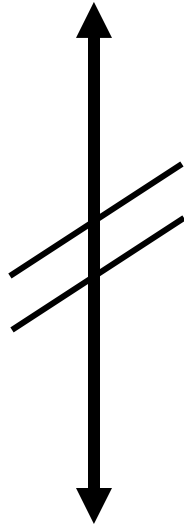
12. What is our attitude to be toward other churches with whom we have no joint participation?

13. What is the benefit of each church being autonomous?

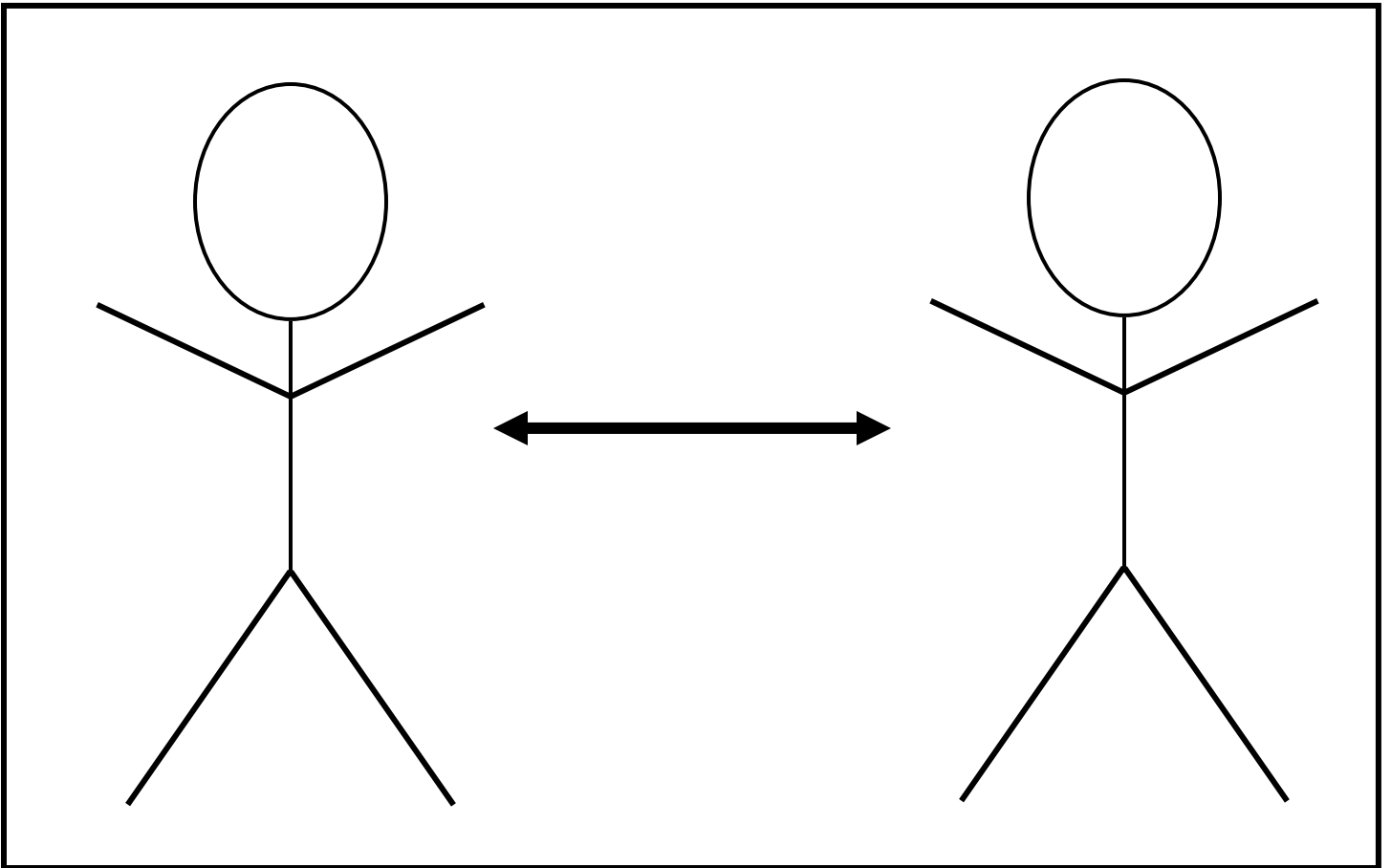
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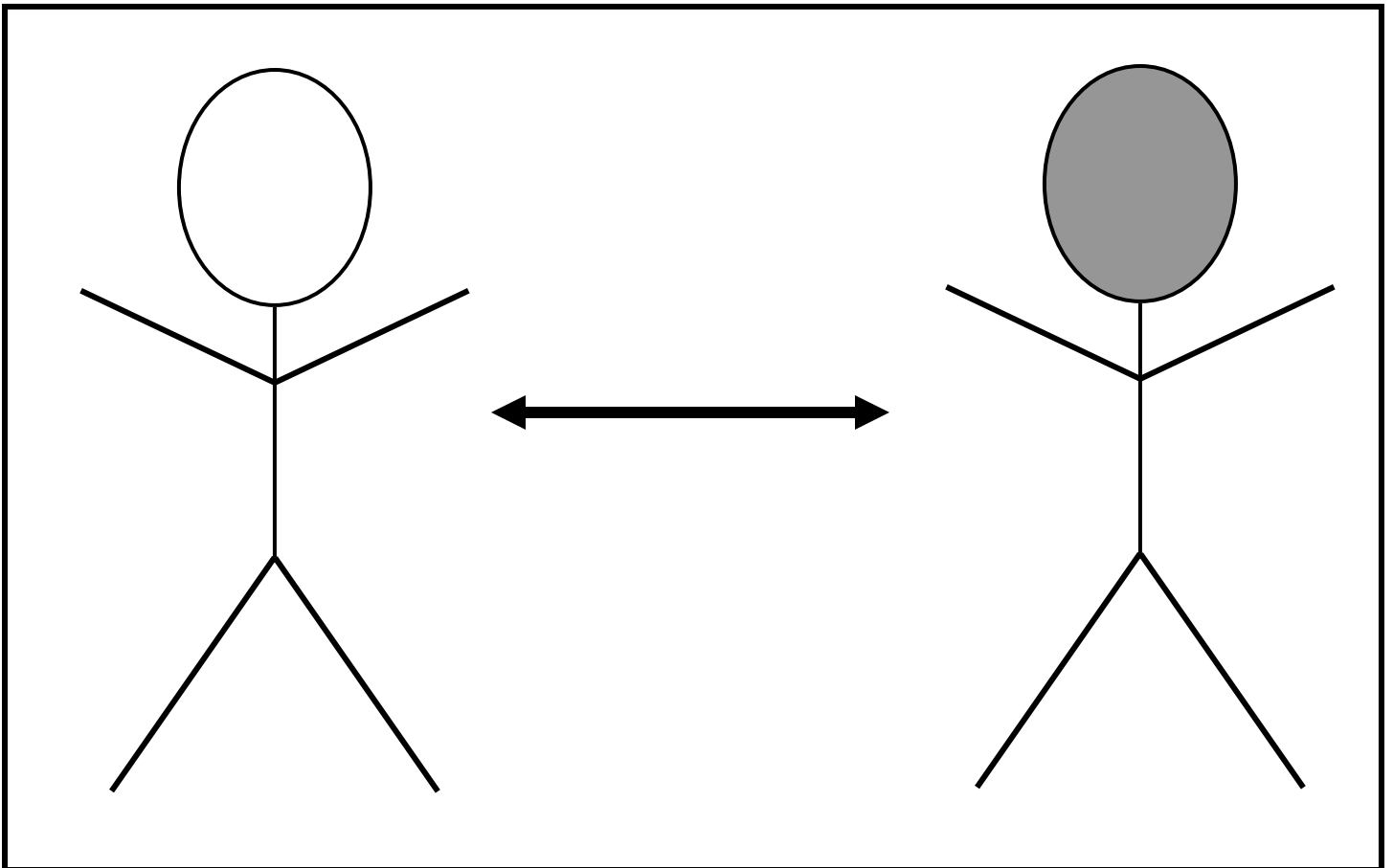
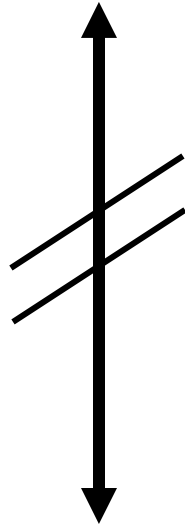
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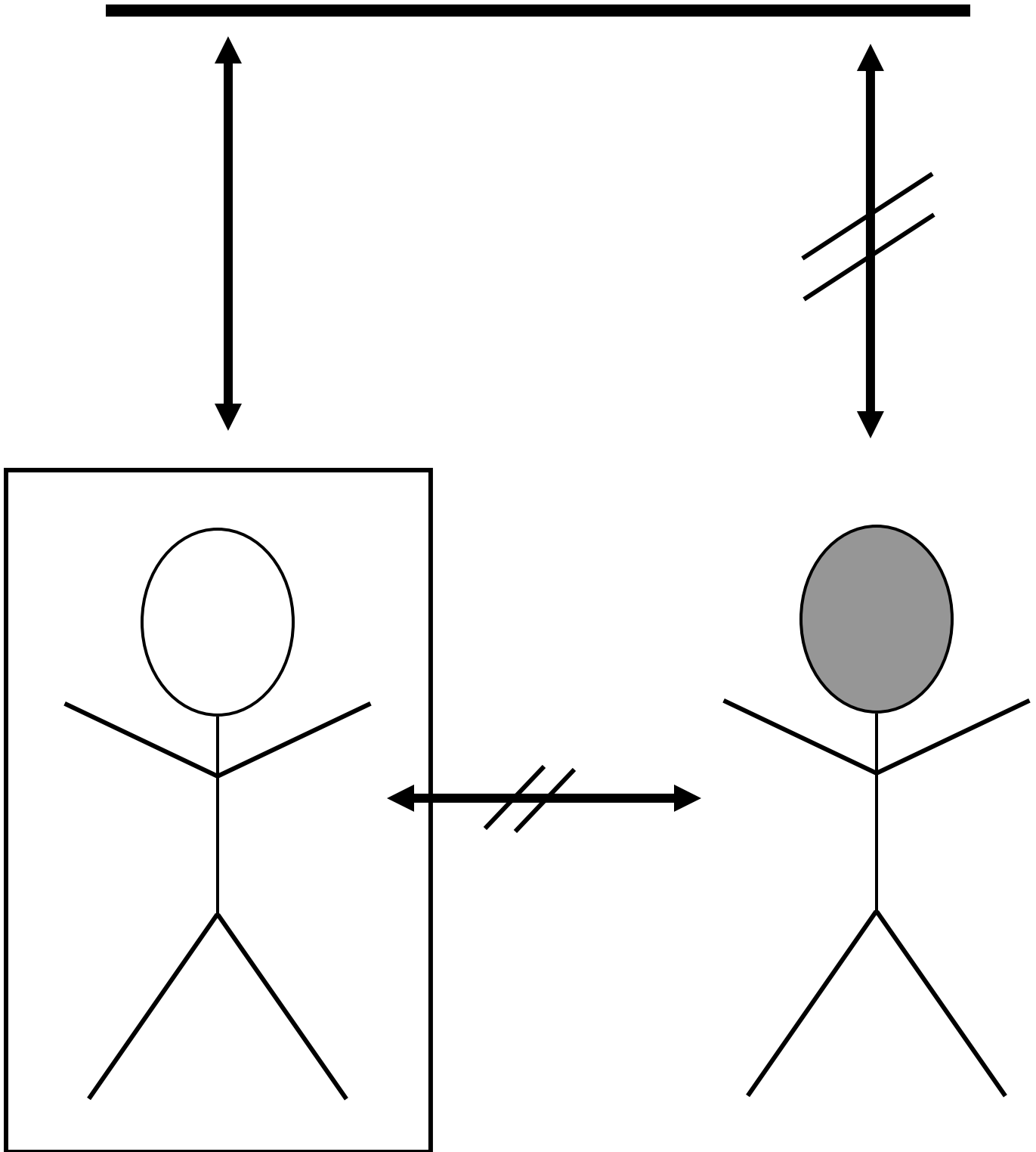
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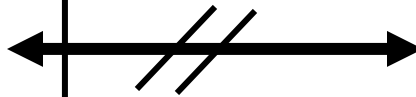
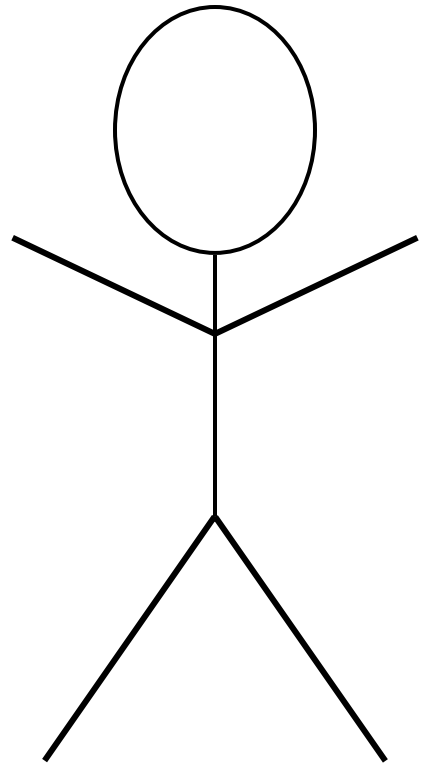
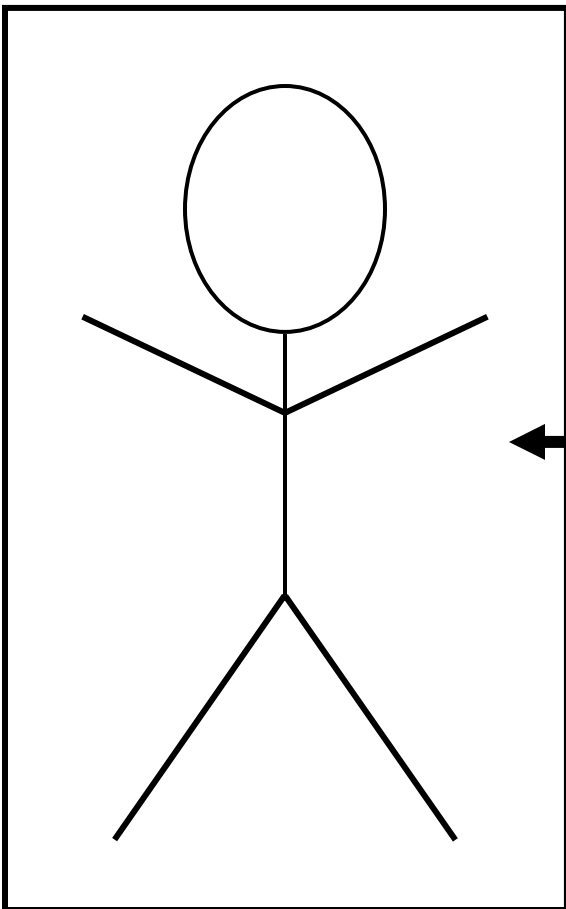
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Review Questions

1. Who were the two primary leaders that started the Restoration Movement in this country?
2. What is the “Restoration Plea”?
3. What were the two primary objectives of the early restorers?
4. What words are descriptive of the character and nature of the church?
5. What effect did the Civil War have on the churches in the north and south?
6. What were the issues in the division between the Christian Church and the churches of Christ?
7. Which issue was discussed first: the college or orphan homes?
8. What were the issues in the division within the churches of Christ in the 1950’s and 60’s?

Lessons Learned

1. If the Restoration Plea is accepted and understood, then the history of the Restoration Movement becomes less significant.
2. Creeds are inherently divisive.

3. Three mindsets displayed within the history of the Restoration Movement:
 - 1) Restore New Testament Christianity in all particulars.
 - 2) Restore New Testament Christianity by limiting oneself to New Testament teachings.
 - 3) New Testament teachings and practice are not restrictive.

4. Divisions result due to different mindsets; particular issues simply highlighted differing mindset.

5. Generally, significant divisions occur only when the issues relate to the work or worship of the church, and they are multi-issued.

6. Brethren have tolerated a good deal of diversity in individual beliefs and practice.

7. Brethren are quick to differ, but divisions don't happen quickly. The autonomy of each church helps to insulate it from outside influences.

8. Generally, colleges have been vehicles of progression. (Don't read into this more than it says. One could also say that preachers have been vehicles of progression, but that does not mean we should stop encouraging men to preach.)

9. Privately-owned journals have had both good and bad influences.

Final Question: What does all this mean? Do we despair thinking that unity is never possible, or is there a proper course of action suggested by all this?

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