

## ***The Work Of The Church (III)***

*"History Repeats Itself"* – Thucydides

INTRO.: 1. 1849: ACMS. About ten years later: melodeon in worship, Midway, KY. 1906: U.S. Government recognized the division / existence of *Christian Church*. One of three great apostasies –

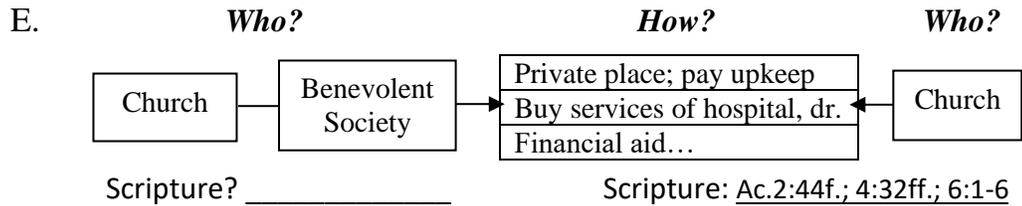
- a. Gradual formation of Roman Catholic Church. 1 Tim.4:1-3
  - b. 1800s, Missionary Society and Mechanical Music in worship. Col.3:16-17
  - c. Mid 1900s, division over Orphan Homes, 'Christian' Colleges, Sponsoring Church Arrangements, emphasis on Social Gospel. 2 John 9
2. Early to mid-1900s, unity in Lord's churches was rule, not exception – on the surface. G.K.Wallace on preaching in 1920-30s: "Most of the baptisms were from the denominations. In those days denominational people would come to our meetings ... Denominational people do not come these days to our meetings and if they did they would not, in most places, hear anything that would lead them out of false doctrine."
3. But other forces were at work. "Larger and more expensive buildings, the more affluent middle-class membership, the number of full-time ministers, the increasing emphasis on Bible schools and Christian education, and missionary outreach all reflect a gradual but impressive growth ... After World War II the church enjoyed a remarkable growth in urban areas. As its members climbed the economic and educational ladder, the church moved 'across the tracks'" (Bill Humble).

### **I. Orphan Home Issue**

- A. Tennessee Orphan Home, 1909: Spring Hill, TN. / Potter Orphan Home, 1915: Bowling Green, KY. / Tipton Home, 1922: Tipton, OK. / Boles Home, 1926: Quinlan, TX.
- B. At first, orphan homes were places where orphans could be kept temporarily; over time, they became great money-making institutions.
- C. "The ship of Zion has foundered more than once on the sandbar of institutionalism. . . . All such organizations usurp the work of the church, and are unnecessary and sinful." "There is being made a determined and persistent effort to prepare the mind of the brotherhood for changes, revolutionary changes, which will work ruin for churches of Christ if permitted to succeed" (*Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1946). "We should be highly suspicious of any scheme that requires the setting up of an organization independent of the church in order to accomplish its work." "When brethren form organizations independently of the church to do the work of the church, however worthy their aims and right their designs, they are engaged in that which is sinful" (*Abilene Lectures*, 1939) – Guy N. Woods.
  1. "The church is the only charitable organization the Lord authorizes or that is needed to do the work the Lord expects his people today to do" (*Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1946, p.340).
  2. "And yet he censors me for arguing for an additional organization or a different body apart from the church to perform that function" (Porter Debate, Paragould).

### **D. The Issue: which organization does the work?**

Benevolence	Church or Benevolent Society	1. Place 2. Personnel 3. Supplies
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- F. Some say the church may do anything an individual can do. But:
1. Mt.18:15-17. Plural pronouns, but not church (collective) action.
  2. 1 Co.12:14. One member cannot make a body.
  3. 1 Tim.5:16. Individuals compose a church but not all individual action is church action.
- G. Some misuse benevolence as form of evangelism (social gospel).  
 Jn.6:26; Ac.6:2; 2 Th.3:10; (2 Jn.9-11); 1 Tim.5:16.

## II. Sponsoring Church Arrangement

- A. Background:
1. Carroll Kendrick wanted all missionary work under one eldership (1867).
  2. Church in Henderson, TN wanted to evangelize Western KY.; they would *sponsor* a preacher for that area (1910).
  3. Mid-1900s: new tools (radio, cars, planes, etc.) helped spread gospel.
    - a. After WWII, returning soldiers stirred up interest in foreign evangelism. 1947: Broadway church in Lubbock, TX became sponsoring church for work in Germany; sent Otis Gatewood to preach.
    - b. 1951: two preachers pushed for national radio broadcast. 1952: *Herald of Truth* began; *sponsored* by 5<sup>th</sup> & Highland church (Abilene, TX). 1000 churches sent money to Highland church for this work.
- B. Each church must do its own work; limits elders' oversight, Ac.20; 1 Pt.5.
1. Why send donations to another church to do what each should do?
  2. How can this arrangement maintain a church's independence?
- C. Sponsoring churches seek to activate the church universal. Highland elders sought to become "churchhood" elders with an organization inside the framework of the church — worse than Missionary Society.
- D. There is no scriptural authority for one church to send funds to another church to preach gospel. A church has no obligation beyond its ability.
1. 2 Co.8:11-12, based on what one has (cf. Mk.14:8; Ac.11:29; 1 Co.16:2).
  2. 2 Co.8:14, a church sent to another church for benevolence; the goal was equality.
  3. Consequences: if pattern for evangelism is same as benevolence . . .
    - a. Church may offer benevolence to *anyone*. Ct. 2 Th.3:10.
    - b. Church may donate funds to a *board* (missionary society).
      - 1) Assumption: whatever actions we may do in one pattern may be adopted in other patterns. **E.g.:** Ac.2:38 = 8:22-23.
      - 2) Assumption: churches may use whatever 'means' help them to teach gospel. *The ends justify the means.*

CONCL: Proponents of sponsoring church arrangement use many of same arguments that proponents of Missionary Society use to justify their practice.