

Denominationalizing The Church

A Series Of Articles By

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH

ROY E. COGDILL

The church of the New Testament, designed by the God of heaven from eternity, built by the Lord Jesus Christ, and set forth in its identity by the Holy Spirit on the pages of New Testament teaching was not then, and is not now, if it exists upon this earth, any part of anything and in no sense was a denominational institution. It is distinct and separate from every human institution on earth.

This church for which Christ "gave himself" (Eph. 5:25) end over which he is the only "head" (Eph. 1:22) end of which he is the saviour (Eph. 5:23) was planned by the God of heaven in eternity, before time began (Eph. 3:10-11) and built by Christ according to that plan. (Matt. 16:18.)

The divine plan calls for a divine relationship (the church) separate and apart from every human plan and arrangement. Men have no right to lay their unholy hands upon it to change a single detail that divine wisdom has built into it. The religion that is pure and undefiled is from above and human modifications end arrangements adulterate and defile it and make it vain and void. (James 1:27; Matt. 15:7-9.) It must remain unspotted from the world, not only in character, but also in name, doctrine, organization, worship and work.

However, its undenominational character must be maintained and it can be done only at the price of eternal vigilance. (Acts 20:25-31.) Apostasy was imminent even in the New Testament day. (II Thess. 2:7.) Paul warned against this danger of becoming careless in respect for divine law and authority. (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 4:1-5.) But in spite of divine warnings apostasy came and with it sectarianism and denominationalism. The church was corrupted by human organizations end arrangements by which men sought to improve on God's ways. The apostasy culminated in the growth and development of the Roman Catholic institution that plagues the world even until today and that will continue to do so until the Lord comes again end destroys this mother of harlots with the breath of his mouth. (II Thess. 2:1-12.)

People do not often profit by history. The same mistakes are made over and over again in the religious world just like in the political and financial world. We allow world conditions to worsen and develop into war. Financial inflation is continued until the bubble bursts and depression and destitution comes. Human corruptions of the religion of Christ are tolerated until full grown departure and apostasy results in the sprouting of another denominational movement right out of the heart of the Lord's people. Some brethren talk of the "main stream" of the church. Well, this is the part that has always been corrupted and out of it has come unscathed the purified body of Christ stripped of human creeds, human organizations, and human wisdom. Indeed, history does repeat itself. (I Cor. 11:19.)

When the men of God married wives of Ashdod, their children grew up to speak the language of Ashdod and their identity was imperiled by this corrupted generation. God condemned and cursed them with severe punishment (Nehemiah 13:23-24.) A corrupted speech has always been evidence of a corrupted people. The language of spiritual Ashdod today among God's people indicates the peril of lost identity and a complete departure from divine law and authority. It is the ear mark of a new denominational body arising from among the churches of Christ. Such a corrupted speech is heard on every hand and in "high places" among the brethren. To call attention to it and warn against it will not correct the situation unless we can reach the hearts of those guilty and restore their respect for divine wisdom and authority. It is the spirit of "lawlessness" that lies at the root of the trouble.

Nevertheless, warnings are in order and they should be given earnest heed lest we let them slip. For as certainly as a corrupted speech is evidence of "the spirit of iniquity already at work" so along with it comes accompanying departures from divine wisdom in the corruption of the divine organization, doctrine, worship, and work. He that will disrespect the will of the Lord at one point will do so at any and every other point when it suits him or he thinks the time is expedient. (James 2:10.) When one breach occurs and continues, there is no way to keep out the flood. This has been demonstrated over and over again in the past.

We are hearing a language strange to the people of God in the years of the past when the spirit and determination to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent" was so evident in the effort to restore New Testament religion. It is common on every hand in the "high places" among brethren such as "Christian Colleges" to hear in use the terms of distinction among brethren that a few years ago would have been quickly condemned. "Doctor" So-and-So is quite the popular thing today. It is excused on the ground that such men have reached high educational attainments in the world. But is such to be recognized in the church? Are we to create an educated "clergy" set apart from the rest of the brethren of common and ordinary attainments? Is this in harmony with divine will? Who will affirm it? Yet it is covered up with subterfuge and deceitful hypocrisy and these learned great continue to be set apart in the church with complete abandon of both the spirit and teaching of the Christ. He refused all titles of distinction and applause and taught that they should be given only to God. (Matt. 19:16-17.) He taught his disciples to use no such terms of distinction among themselves and rebuked them when they sought distinctive seats and branded all such as hypocrisy and vain glory. (Matt. 23:5-12.) Is this instruction of the Lord out of date? Is it not our obligation to respect it? Why then all of this "doctoring" of the great ones among us? Do we not know that in our generation these great men would not have a place to teach in schools supported by Christians (and in many cases unscripturally supported by churches of Christ!) indeed, they would not even have a congregation to support them when they preach if it were not for the "undoctored" preachers who made the sacrifices of a generation ago to plant churches and spread the gospel of the Kingdom without any instruction at all except self-instruction? Men like J. D. Tant, Joe Blue, and multitudes of others that could be named, these were not ignorant men, except by the standards of the world. They were learned in the word of the Lord and unafraid to preach it. But the more "doctoring" a man gets these days, the less gospel he preaches and the less respect he has for the law of the Lord. Try to call upon him to respect divine law and he will

brand you as "simple-minded," "untrained, " " legalistic, " etc.

How long have you heard such terms as "responses, " "reconsecrations, " etc? Today huge numbers of additions are reported in meetings, (excuse me! "campaigns") all over the country - hundreds respond - many of them among the most faithful workers in the churches - reconsecrating themselves (whatever that is) and relatively few are baptized. Even many of those who are baptized are "rebaptisms," but they are responses and a great display made and the whole thing is propagandized in ridiculous worldly fashion. One out of five of the reported responses may render primary obedience to the requirements of the gospel but it sounds good and swells the appearance of the thing. It is good psychology and advertising.

And then how long have the churches of Christ been putting on "campaigns for Christ, " "youth forums, " "youth camps, " and "youth rallies"? How many years have "retreats" and "workshops" and "youth revivals" and "women's meetings" been around? "Youth fellowship" gatherings and "fellowship dinners" are newcomers on the scene also. These all have accompanied other departures that have marked the inter-marriage of many of the churches with "spiritual Ashdod" and characterize a generation of spiritual offspring that has lost its identity as the children of God. Rather than "glorying" in such things, we should rather be "mourning" because of defiling and corrupting of the Lord's church.

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH (II)
ROY E. COGDILL

The undenominational character of the church revealed in New Testament scriptures is easily apparent to unprejudiced minds. The simplicity of it is evident. The government of God's people can be set forth in a few simple sentences.

The church is the spiritual body of Christ and He is its head. (Eph. 1:22-23.) The same passage affirms that Christ is the "head over all things to the church." This simply means that he is the exclusive head - the only head - and that there is nothing which is any part of the church over which he is not head. The church is a realm where the authority and rule of Christ is absolute and complete. This eliminates Catholicism for the Catholic church claims two heads - Christ and the pope. That is one too many.

The scriptures also reveal that there are not many bodies but "one." (Eph. 4:4.) It is just as scriptural and right to teach that there are many Christs as to teach that there are many bodies. Yet this is the essence of protestant denominationalism. The entire denominational conception is that there are many bodies and one is just as good as another. This idea is as much a monstrosity as the two-headed body of Catholics.

Many brethren (or at least they were) today have the denominational concept of the church in their idea that the "churches of Christ" compose "The Church of Christ." This is being heard on every hand. E. R. Harper of the Herald of Truth has preached all over this country that the church is the army and the local churches of Christ compose the various battalions of that army. Carl Spain in an hour's recorded speech argued that there is an "organic" connection or relationship between all the churches of Christ on earth. That there is a spiritual connection in the relationship every Christian sustains to Christ would be undeniable but the idea of an "organic" connection tying all of the churches of Christ together is rank error and evident sectarianism. There is a film strip, with a record accompanying, put out by some of the brethren (the voice on the record is not identified) advocating that the church is the body - in a universal sense and that the members of the body, (the hand, for instance) represent the congregations. The recorder goes on to say that of course there are various members of the hand representing the individual members of the congregation. This is the attempted defense they make of the amalgamation and federation of congregations into the "co-operative" organizations that characterize the promoting liberal churches of today.

In one instance on a sign identifying the church as "The Church of Christ" there was a further point of identification - "The church with a complete scriptural program." By this they meant simply that they were having a part in all or at least all kinds of federated programs promoted among the churches of today. They make this a point of identity. In the publication fathered by Batsell Barrett Baxter and M. Norvel Young - "Churches of Today" - their questionnaire seeks to establish their identity as a separate body by asking the churches to signify whether or not they believe in and support the institutional orphan

homes (so-called) among us and the federated promotions in evangelism such as the Herald of Truth. These "Churches of Christ of Today" (reminding one of the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, " and one of these days they will identify themselves by some such distinctive title) have denominationalized themselves by this concept of the churches a universal body composed of smaller units (local churches) tied into the "main stream. " The church is the vine and congregations are the branches according to them. This is very little different to the concept that denominational preachers have contended for through the years, viz., Christ is the vine and denominations are the branches. One is just as scriptural as the other. The text (John 15) teaches, of course, that individuals are the branches not organizations.

Where in the Bible does anybody learn that the "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16) compose the "church of Christ?" Such teaching is not in the Bible and one who does not know the teaching of the Word of God better than that is incapable of teaching the truth to anyone.

Bible teaching sets forth each congregation or community of Christians in their own geographical locality as the church of Christ in the absolute and complete sense and if there were but one on earth instead of a plurality or multiplicity of congregations, it would still be the church of Christ in the exact sense in which the Bible uses that term. The church in a universal sense has no organic existence but is a common relationship that all the saved individuals on earth sustain to God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Some brethren in their ignorance are contending that one church of Christ can withdraw fellowship from another church of Christ. How can this be unless there are organic ties in some sense? You cannot sever what is not joined! The concept of universal federation and one church withdrawing from another grows out of the same error. One church might refuse to recognize another as a church of Christ, but this is as far as that can go scripturally. Brethren who are trying to stand for the truth against present day institutionalism need to see that they surrender their very ground when they contend for the right of one church to discipline another or disfellowship another.

The undenominational character of any church of Christ can easily be lost. Churches of Christ are undenominational in the fact that they have no denominational name, no denominational creed, and no denominational organization. Whenever any church made up of God's people adopts human doctrines, human designations, or forms human combinations and organizations, they have already denominationalized themselves and lost their identity as "churches of Christ" in reality.

The pattern of apostasy has always followed the same course. The devil infiltrated the Jewish nation with a corrupted idea of government. God was their King! But Satan planted in their minds the desire for another king, an earthly or human king, that they might be like the nations of the world. When they made this demand, although God let them have their way, they had actually rejected God as their king and corrupted their government. This led to their eventual ruin as a nation.

Moreover, when the church had been planted on this earth, and in Paul's day the "spirit of iniquity was already at work, the first thing Satan sought to do was to corrupt the organization of the church. Inter-congregationalties soon corrupted the equality, independence and autonomy of the churches and gradually human doctrines and human methods of worship led them into complete apostasy. The devil knows that if he can get control of the organization of God's people, he can have his way in all other regards.

In the great apostasy of the churches of Christ of the 19th century that formed the Christian Churches and their denomination, the procedure, once again, was exactly the same. Satan corrupted the simplicity that is Christ by introducing the missionary society among the churches. Wherever it was accepted, this principle of forming a separate human organization to do the work God commanded the church to do, resulted in the corruption of the worship by adding instrumental music and eventually led into complete apostasy and denominationalism. The same spirit of "iniquity" is at work today. Iniquity is simple lawlessness or disrespect for divine authority. Evidence of it is apparent on every hand.

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH III
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When the doctrine of Christ is adulterated with human doctrines and traditions by the people of God; when the mission and work of the church of the Lord is prostituted to serve human pleasure and will; when the worship of the church is corrupted; when the name and speech of God's people becomes unscriptural; and when the government God has established over his people is forsaken by the effort to remodel and modernize the church in its organization, the church is no longer undenominational. The church of Christ, God's dwelling place among his people (Eph. 2:19-22) can be defiled by bringing in any of these unholy things. Profane things cannot be mixed with those things made holy by the blood of the New Covenant without bringing upon ourselves God's judgment. (I Cor. 1:19. 25, 27-31; Rom. 1:16-18; Eph. 5:6)

Many churches of Christ today are being corrupted by federating themselves into "inter" congregational arrangements under the guise of "co-operation". No one likes the charge of being "non-cooperative". That is an ugly spirit and has become a dirty word in our vocabulary. We want to avoid it and sometimes we are willing to "co-operate" with that which is contrary to God's will rather than be given such a stigmatized label. We need to remember that it is possible to "co-operate" with Satan and fellowship him. We cannot do so and enjoy fellowship with God, however. (I Cor. 10:20-21) In this passage Paul was writing to Corinthian Christians who were trying to be "co-operative" by attending the idolatrous feasts of the heathen people of that city. But one cannot partake of the cup of devils and the cup of the Lord!

When any movement transcends congregational limitations and boundaries, it becomes "inter" congregational instead of "intra" congregational and is thereby federated into an unscriptural arrangement. There is no such thing as an "inter-congregational" function of the church in New testament scriptures. The man does not live who can find it. We have seen some of the experts try to justify such and always it has been by perversion, sophistry, and human reasoning and wisdom. God has authorized nothing of the sort and to engage in it is to corrupt the government of God's church, rebel against divine authority, depart from God's ways, and denominationalize the church. The church cannot remain undenominational when its government is corrupted and human arrangements set aside divine authority .

The "sponsoring church" method of federating the efforts of the churches is but an example of such "intercongregational" arrangements. The Herald of Truth radio and television broadcast by the Highland Church of Abilene is such an arrangement. There are many others but this is an outstanding one. Brother Harper in the debates with Brother Tant tried to defend it as a scriptural organization. He tried to make out of it a local church organization. But his defense was of the form of organization of the Highland Church and not of the Herald of Truth. The Highland Church has elders, deacons, and saints in it. He argued that this made the Herald of Truth scriptural. But in order to make this contention it

was necessary that he contend that the work of the Herald of Truth was exclusively the work of the Highland Church and this he did contend. Such a position, however, he and they found to be indefensible and they abandoned it. In the debate at Birmingham on this issue Guy N. Woods threw this contention out of the window in his first speech on the Herald of Truth and argued that the work of the Herald of Truth was the work of many churches and that one church had undertaken to take care of the details or manage it. This, of course, is the truth of the matter.

The Herald of Truth transgresses congregational boundaries. It has a brotherhood treasury; a brotherhood work; a brotherhood eldership. It is not a local church! It has its own treasury, its own name, its own address, its own employees, its own contracts, its own mailing permit, and its own program of work which cannot in any sense be identified as the program of a local church. This is so evident that it needs no argument to support it in the minds of the honest informed.

The very fact that such a work is "inter-congregational" in its scope, financing, promotion, and nature makes it an unscriptural undertaking. All of the propaganda in the world cannot change that fact. If it were doing all of the good that they claim for it, (and it is not!) it would not justify such a denominational organization. Mr. A. T. DeGroot of Texas Christian University refers to it as the Church of Christ Million Dollar Missionary Society. And he is right! That is exactly what it is! When any work or promotion crosses congregational boundaries it is a denominational affair.

This same thing is true of such promotions as the "World's Fair" advertising and evangelistic campaign. Under the direction of one group of elders, to whom God gave the right to govern and oversee only the program of work carried on by one congregation, they have amalgamated workers, and money from many churches. Many congregations have become very enthusiastic over such a program and have sent their preachers and other workers to have a part in this "inter-congregational" promotion. It is bigger in every aspect than a local church. The fact that the eldership of a local church in New York City is directing it does not do away with the fact that it crosses congregational boundaries with abandon. In their zeal, without knowledge or respect for divine authority, those participating have become "workers of iniquity" which the Lord will not own in the last day unless they repent. Iniquity comes from "amonia" which means without authority or contempt for Divine law. This they are guilty of and they cannot successfully deny it. They have even lost the courage to try to defend it by the scriptures .

The modern projects called "Campaigns For Christ" is another set up that claims to be accomplishing great things. But, suppose it is, does that establish the scripturalness of it. Does the end justify the means? Shall we do evil that good may come? Some brethren evidently think so. One congregation, and there are several engaged in the business, through their preacher or some other promoter solicits money from many churches, in order that they might engage a preacher of the "Billy Graham" type, take charge of the advertising and promotion, engage workers from many congregations in a "personal work" high pressure campaign and hold an evangelistic meeting for another "church of Christ". This is happening all around us. Of course, the faithful of the Lord are not counted in nor would

they participate. But a high-pressure campaign is promoted and it crosses congregational boundaries. It is purely and simply a missionary society and putting it supposedly under the direction of a local preacher and a local eldership does not change its complexion one whit.

These are just a few of the modern day promotions that are leading the churches of Christ, many of them, into denominationalism. Their identity is being lost and complete apostasy ensues. Out of these unscriptural practices a new denominational body is emerging just as certainly as the missionary society and instrumental music gave birth to one (The Christian Church movement) more than a hundred years ago! Deny it if you can, and give us a chance and we will prove that you can't do so successfully. Ugly epithets and a bad spirit will not answer the truth!

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH IV
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When Paul wrote the Roman Letter and said to the Roman brethren, "The churches of Christ salute you", he was talking about independent, autonomous, churches in their own locality. They were of the same faith and order. They had been planted by the preaching of the same doctrine, "The doctrine of Christ", and where the same seed had been sown it produced always the same fruit. The same gospel produced the same kind of Christians and the same kind of churches wherever it was preached.

These "churches of Christ" were not only of the same faith and order, they were equal and each of them perfectly, completely, and sufficiently constituted the church of Christ. They were identified, and can be today wherever the gospel is preached, by the same designation, teaching, worship, organization and work. But they were not federated into anything. They did not pool their resources and join themselves together either in a human organization or in an amalgamated relationship of any kind. No local church can delegate any part of its resources, work, or responsibility to another local church and have all of its independence, autonomy, and its sufficiency left. This is just as certain as the fact that it takes all of the parts to constitute the whole of anything. Give a part of the parts away and the whole does not remain. Even our "brain trust", Deaver and Warren, would have to agree with that.

The organization that characterized these local churches of Christ was as simple and unpretentious as all other elements of the scheme of redemption. God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound and bring to nought them that are wise, indeed! (I. Cor. 1:27) We do not have to presume or guess about the organization of the church anymore than we do about the plan of salvation or the simplicity of its worship.

In each congregation or church it was God's order that there should be elders, a plurality of them. (Acts 14:23) This divine order was for every church. If every church had an eldership in God's divine arrangement, then no eldership had the oversight of anything that belonged to more than one congregation. The only jurisdiction that God ever gave any eldership is the oversight of one church. This is abundantly established by the divine injunctions; "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"; (Acts 20:28) and "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you taking the oversight thereof". (I Peter 5:1-2.) This identified the elders who were to take the oversight and it identified the flock which those elders were to oversee. When elders act in any other capacity, they are acting without authority (*ultra vires*) and are therefore guilty of lawlessness-"iniquity".

Whenever any eldership anywhere plans a program of work, either in evangelism, benevolence, or edification, that involves in any way another congregation than the one

which they are to "oversee", they are acting without divine justification and therefore in defiance of divine authority. We believe with brother E. R. Harper, of the Herald of Truth, when he said a good many years ago in the Tulsa Lectures, which are in print, that no congregation has the right to plan any kind of a program of work for which it is unable to pay. He does not agree with

this now but it is still the truth none the less. All such programs as present day "area conferences" or on a still bigger scale "brotherhood conferences or lectureships" are inter-congregational activities and therefore bigger than God authorized anything to become. When congregations combine their resources, amalgamate their work, or centralize the oversight of their work under any arrangement, something bigger in the way of an organization than a local eldership is essential to direct it. Brethren may put it under an eldership, but when they do that eldership ceases to be a "local" eldership and become either an "area eldership" or a "brotherhood eldership". This is just as disrespectful toward divine authority as it could be to form a human organization to do the work of the church.

This means that such programs as those promoted by the San Fernando Church, viz., The Valley-wide "Teacher's Training Program", or the Valley-wide "Women's Meeting" are completely without New Testament sanction or authority. It means that any kind of "brotherhood wide" conference planned either by a local church or by a "Christian College" is completely unscriptural. There is nothing wrong with people attending the services of a meeting held by another congregation when they are invited to it. Neither is there anything wrong with a meeting in which different speakers do the speaking or preaching. But when plans are made for a program to involve either the membership, resources or facilities of other congregations, someone has transgressed, and is exercising too much authority. It means also that a "brotherhood wide conference of preachers and elders" such as that recently held by the Herald of Truth Missionary Society in Abilene is as unscriptural as an "interdenominational ecumenical conference", and for the same reasons. It means that a "city wide or county wide" conference among the elders or "workshop" for them goes beyond (transgresses) the doctrine of Christ and therefore leaves God behind.

Ambitious elders that promote themselves into any such position establish of themselves a "hierarchy" just as certainly as if they were Roman Catholic Bishops. Give them time and they will grow into it. It also is true that "promoting preachers" who lead elders and congregations into such activity are worse than denominational pastors, they are parish priests and do not resemble either in attitude or work a plain Gospel preacher. Brethren, we should either practice "speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where it is silent" or we should give up the claim and quit talking about it .

God's organization in form includes "elders in every church", "Saints, Bishops and Deacons" in the local church. In function it calls for the elders over the local church overseeing only the affairs of the local church and no more than that. When they take upon themselves any other function they pervert God's organization and that is just as sinful as changing the form of it.

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH V
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The church of the New Testament is undenominational for the reason that it had no denominational or human creed, and no denominational or human organization. When the church anywhere departs from this New Testament pattern either by changing its name, creed (belief and teaching) or organization, it becomes a denomination. Such a departure can characterize either just one congregation or a whole group of churches under the same leadership and influence. Perhaps the reason God in His infinite wisdom gave the church no other organization than the local body or congregation and authorizes no sort of federation of these local churches of Christ was in order to prevent wholesale apostasy. When churches are federated either in work or organization or by the pooling of their resources in some intercongregational project, it always means wholesale apostasy when a departure is made.

The simple pattern of New Testament church organization had as its salient features: (1) Christ as its only authority - "the head over all things to the church, which is His body" - Eph. 1:22-23; (2) Elders over every local church of Christ - Act 14:23; (3) Deacons as special servants - Phil. 1:1; (4) and was composed of saints - Phil 1:1. In the New Testament scriptures no man can find anything smaller, larger, or other than this simple organization. In any community saved people were added "together" to work together in Christian fellowship in accomplishing the mission God gave His church on this earth to perform. All that was accomplished in the New Testament day was done by Christians through and in this divine arrangement, unless it was purely individual action. When any other organization is formed, the church apostatizes and becomes a denominational or sectarian organization.

The church can be as truly apostate when it departs from the divine pattern of organization as when it corrupts the worship with human innovations, or its teaching and faith with the doctrines and commandments of men. In fact, Satan has always -started the people of God on the road to apostasy by corrupting/heir government. It was true when Israel wanted a "king" that they might be like the nations around them. It was true when the churches of the New Testament yielded to the spirit of iniquity already at work in Paul's day and departed from the principles of autonomy, independence, and equality of local churches of Christ. Out of this departure grew the "man of sin, the son of perdition", the Roman Catholic church. The same thing was true when in the later part of the nineteenth century churches of Christ on this continent began to form themselves into "co - operatives", later to merge these into the American Christian Missionary Society and finally to develop the Christian Church denomination.

God's plan is Elders, Bishops, or Pastors in every church. This means, as we have already pointed out, that each local church has its own elders or bishops to superintend and direct its work and that no eldership had the oversight of more than one local church either in its worship, work, resources, discipline or membership. The extending of the authority of elders is one sure way to corrupt the government of the church and lead the church into

apostasy.

It takes two things to make an elder in the church of the Lord. One is for a man to qualify to meet the divine standard required of elders and laid down by divine authority. These qualifications are found in I Timothy, chapter three, and in Titus, chapter one. No man perfectly possesses all of these qualifications, of course, but he must have all of them in a reasonable degree and there are none of them that can be canceled out by the authority of anyone. The second thing required is appointment. The record says, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church". (Acts 14:23) Other translations read "appointed". The apostle Paul and those accompanying him acted "for" the church in this appointing. It is implied that the church had some voice or right which was thus respected in this matter. It would be difficult for a man to act as an elder when the church did not approve or regard him as fit and qualified.

The New Testament nowhere indicates that men just grew into and assumed this work of being an elder in the Lord's church. This would leave the church at the mercy of a man who considered himself qualified when the church did not so consider. On the other hand the church might consider a man as an elder, thinking that he had sufficiently grown or matured into such, when he did not so consider himself, and would therefore be unwilling to serve. "Appointment" is therefore a part of the divine plan. Not the arbitrary appointment of one man's judgment but one approved by the church over which he is to be a bishop or overseer. This appointment which is a part of the divine plan for the governing of the Lord's church cannot be dispensed with by the authority of man any more than the qualifications set forth by the Lord.

When a church tries to operate without elders to oversee its work, it is disorganized, haphazard in its work and is like any other organization without anyone with fixed responsibility in which the business and responsibility of everyone belongs to no one. Only in their immaturity and until they develop qualified men did churches of the New Testament period carry on their work under such a handicap. How does a church operate without elders? God nowhere tells us. If he had, we would have an option or choice to carry on the work of the church either with or without elders. But God's plan calls for elders in "every church" and this expression is as definite and mandatory as it can be made. Compare "kata mien sabbaton", "kata polin", and "kata ecclesian". The first expression is found in the Greek New Testament - I Cor. 16:1. The second expression is found in Titus 1:5. The third expression is found in Acts 14:23. The first means "every first day of the week". The second means "every city" and the third means "every church". Those preachers who try by every kind of sophistry and conniving that can be devised to get rid of the scriptural organization of "elders in every church" had just well get rid of the idea of contribution "every first day" for one goes as easy and rightly as the other.

It is as scriptural for one eldership to be over many churches as it is for a church to set aside New Testament teaching and operate permanently without an eldership. Both represent a departure from the government ordained by the Lord for His church. In a district court trial in a law suit concerning the elders and the preacher of a local church of Christ a number of years ago, when the preacher on the stand was questioned by the district judge

end dented that the church either had any elders or needed any and was directly asked "who is in authority or has charge of the work of this organization?", the preacher replied "no one". Upon being given this answer the judge remarked, "This is the first thing that claims to be an organic body that I have heard of without any organization or without either head or tail to its organization". Unscrupulous men of ambition are left free to promote and direct the affairs of the Lord's church to their own satisfaction when there are no elders. Often - far too often these unscrupulous men are preachers who simply do not want the restrictions of working under an eldership. Such men are anarchists and spiritual bolsheviks at heart no matter how sound they may be otherwise.

DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH - (VI)
ROY E. COGDILL

In our last article we set forth the simple pattern of New Testament church organization: (1) Christ is the head over all things to the church - the only head it has and his authority the only authority in it. Eph. 1:21-23 (2) Believers who were saved by their obedience to the Gospel in every community where it was preached were added together to constitute the "church of Christ" in that community. Acts 2:41-47. Acts 4:4,32. Acts 5:14, Acts 6:7, Acts 9:31, Acts 11:19-26. Acts 14:21-23. Acts 16:4-5. Acts 15 41. Romans 16:4. Romans 16:16. I Cor. 16:19. II Cor. 8:1,19,23. II Cor. 11:8,28. II Cor. 12:13. Gal. 1:22. I Thess. 2:14. II Thess. 1:4. Rev. 1:4,11, 20. Rev. 2:7,11,17,29. Rev. 3:6,13,22. Rev. 22:16.

In all of these above passages the reference is to the community of saved believers who constituted the church in the particular locality or area mentioned. This means that repeatedly in the New Testament the arrangement made by divine wisdom for the church, as a body unaffiliated with any other in manner, except in a common faith, salvation, and relationship with deity, existed and carried on the work and worship of the Lord. This is all that is found in the way of an organic body in New Testament scriptures, that can be identified with the church of our Lord.

We have learned, further, that each of these "churches of Christ" had the same organization: (1) elders, bishops, or pastors in every church; (Acts 14:23) (2) that they were made up of Saints; (Phil. 1:1. I Cor. 1:1-2) (3) and that they had men who served in a special sense called deacons. (Phil. 1:1, 1 Tim. 3:8-13) Both elders and deacons were men chosen by a divine standard of qualifications and appointed to do the work ordained of the Lord for them to do. Both are essential to the maturity of the church, therefore, and to a proper respect for God's plan for the operation of the church in its fullest capacity. No man has the right to dismiss these divine appointments any more than any other in the church and it is just as much a matter of apostasy to teach there is no need for them today as to pervert this local organization to serve a brotherhood plan and purpose. Both evidence disrespect for divine authority.

The New Testament teaches concerning the work of elders, bishops, or pastors that they are to have the oversight of the church. These three terms are used interchangeably in Acts 20:17-28. They were the same men in the Ephesian church and doing the same work. The words come from three words in the original language of the New Testament: elder is from "presbuteros"; bishop from "episcopos"; and pastor from "poimenas". The word "presbuteros"; is defined as it is used concerning this organization of the church -

(3) in the Christian churches, those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches. To these the term bishops, episkopoi, or overseers, is applied (see Acts 20:17-28, and Titus 1:5-7), the latter term indicating the nature of their work, presbuteroi, their maturity of spiritual experience. The divine

arrangement seen throughout the New Testament was for a plurality of these to be appointed in each church - (An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by W. E. Vine.)

It is sometimes contended that the word elder means only older men. There can be no question that the term "presbuteros" is sometimes used to denote age, or a person advanced in life. But it does not always mean that and it never makes simply physical age a qualification of "elders" to oversee the work of the churches, except as physical age is required in order to develop Christian experience and maturity and to keep one from being a "novice" or a new hand. (I Tim. 3:6)

It is also contended that the work of elders or bishops belonged only to the age of miracles and passed away with that age and that God has not ordained that such should exist in the work of the church today. The men who ordinarily so contend think, however, that the work of an "evangelist" has continued and they have no hesitancy assuming such a work and even becoming officious in their very attitude as such. The fact is that no passage teaches that elders were to cease in the churches when miracles ceased or that the work of an elder in the New Testament day was dependent upon some miraculous endowment any more than any work of the church. In New Testament days all who were charged with special responsibility in the Lord's Church were distributed extraordinary endowments that they might under the direction of divine guidance perform their service and demonstrate to men the divine will. In this we see that the divine pattern of church government or supervision did not include the continuation of these extraordinary endowments but rather called for their discontinuation when revelation had been fully completed and the church had come to maturity through the knowledge of the divine will. (I Corinthians 13:8-13. Ephesians 4:7-16.)

Under these qualified men the churches of the New Testament day carried out their divine mission. This government was adequate to the fulfillment of God's purposes in His churches then and it is adequate now. When this divine pattern (elders in every church) is not followed, then the church is left without any plan or means of carrying out the will of the Lord and at the mercy of every novice, untaught, unscrupulous, self-willed, individual that aspires to "greatness in the Kingdom of God" through prominence or by the exercise of authoritative direction or control. The church without this divine pattern of government is "without form and void" like the earth was before God set things in order in the beginning. Majority control is the only alternative to dictatorial power in the hands of a few (sometimes only one) who assume the right to direct the affairs of the church, when the church has no organization after the divine pattern.

God has assigned the work of elders in the churches of Christ. They have no primary authority to exercise or residual right to direct the work of the Lord's Church by their own will. Like all other Christians who serve in any capacity they are prescribed, bound, limited, and restrained by what the Lord authorizes and can move only in harmony with his will. One of the qualifications laid down in the word of God is that they must not be "self-will" men. (Titus 1:7.) When any man uses the office of "bishop" to have his own way or follow his own will, he is not fit to be an elder for the reason that he is disqualified by such a

disposition. The fact that there are men who mistakenly are selected or appointed and have such disposition and abuse the privilege of so serving the Lord does not mean that we have the license or right to dispense with the divine plan. There are unworthy preachers too . Must we dispense with preaching the Gospel? There are also apostate churches, so shall we just dismiss the idea of having the church in existence today . There is no justification in running pest Jerusalem in trying to avoid Rome and knocking ourselves out on the walls of Jericho. One extreme is no more right than another.

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH - (VII)
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Men have as much right to alter the Word of God as to remodel and redesign the structure or function of the church of God. The same prerogative that grants to man the right to do one justifies the other also. But such right does not exist and to exercise it is to bring upon one's self the anathema of almighty God. Man has no right to change God's Word and he has no right to lay his unholy hands upon the church to change it in any way. God designed it from eternity. (Eph. 3:10-11) Jesus built it after the divine pattern, upon the divinely laid foundation. (Matt. 16:18-20) The Holy Spirit dwells in it to give it life, strength, power and vitality. (Eph. 2:19-22) It is in this body, designed by the wisdom and will of almighty God, sent from heaven and established upon this earth by the Lord Jesus Christ, and directed by the Holy Spirit that God is to be glorified. (Eph. 3:20) But this cannot be done by altering the divine pattern for the church any more than it can be done by changing the message of His Word. When men do one they signify thereby that they would not hesitate to do the other, if they thought it would be accepted by those with whom they are in fellowship. After all, a human creed is no worse than a human organization or a human program of work and worship! Why should it be so regarded? The same passage that teaches one God, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, also teaches one body! (Eph. 4:4-6)

We have pointed out the divine organization of the Lord's Church as it is revealed in the New Testament. The one and the only organization known to the New Testament scriptures is the local church! We challenge anyone to produce another. There was nothing larger, smaller, or other than the local church. Through it, all of the Lord's work was carried on by the people of God. When that organization began to be altered by the wisdom and unbelief of fallible men, apostasy ensued and out of that apostasy, human creeds and human denominational organizations grew. It is even so today!

Over each one of these local churches, God appointed that elders should "rule" or have the superintendence and oversight as bishops. This rule was not by their own authority, residual either in them as men, or in the "office," or work to which they had been appointed, but in the execution of the will of the Lord, the head over all things to the church which is his body, and therefore by his authority. It was not a delegated authority that made them "lords" over the churches. From the exercise of their own will, using the "office" to have their own way and follow their own judgement, they were precluded. A self-willed man is not qualified to be an elder. (Titus 1:7) Neither did their position of responsibility give them license to act as "lords" over the heritage of God (the church). The sovereignty belongs to the Lord and everything anyone does in the church of the Lord must be done by his authority. (I Peter 5:1-5. Eph. 1:21-23)

One extreme among brethren today, concerning the eldership, is the idea that elders or bishops constitute a sort of hierarchy that is almost, if not quite, infallible and that these men who must be have the God appointed rule have the right to determine truth for us all, lay down a prescribed rule by which we are to live, and steer the church on a course of

activity from which none have the scriptural right to dissent. The common conception along this line, which is used to excuse fellowship or participation in something admittedly without Bible authority in the activity of the church is that "when the elders decide must be in subjection to them and none has the right to refuse to follow them in such a course. The infallibility claimed for the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in their "interpretation for the scriptures" and in the authority exercised by them, even to the claim to be able to forgive sins, is no more absolute than that. The Bible teaches that we must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29) This applies to any kind of authority, governmental, parental, marital, or congregational. The individual that is willing to violate his conscience by fellowshipping what is not in harmony with the teaching of the Lord, just because the elders think it is all right, or for any other reason, is untrue to the Lord and disobedient to his obligation to recognize the Lord as the one and only sovereign of his heart and life.

Concerning elders Paul wrote, I Tim. 5:17-20, "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear". This injunction was delivered to a Gospel preacher and was not idle instruction. A preacher that will not dissent and refuse to go along with even the elders under whom he labors, as well as any others, when they depart from that which is according to truth is a time-server and man pleaser, a hireling and unworthy of Christian fellowship. Every Christian has the obligation to determine what the truth is by his own study of the Word of God and honor it above all else. Elders, if there is any difference at all, are charged with special duty to follow strictly the will of the Lord and watch against any departure there from, either in theory or practice. (Acts 20:28-32)

That there is wide spread abuse of the eldership along this and many other lines is apparent to all who are in any wise acquainted with the true facts. Sometimes elders are jealous of their "authority" and will not take anyone, preacher, deacon, teacher, or member into their counsel, seeking their advice and help in settling even matters of judgment and expediency. They feel called upon to make every decision without considering or consulting those over whom they "rule". This is very unwise and will eventually breed rebellion. If a father of the family should feel that it is his right and obligation to make every decision - without the advice, counsel, or without even consulting the wishes and preferences of the members of the family, he will breed rebellion. Members, who are properly taught, know how to give their advice, counsel and help in such matters without trespassing upon the duty and responsibility of the elders. Elders who are competent to be recognized as elders should end will know how to keep inconstant touch with the members under their supervision without being "lords" and oppressive in the exercise of their duty to "rule".

The other extreme is the presently agitated theory among some, even of the "sound brethren", that elders have no "oversight" and cannot rightly rule except by teaching and example. There must be the right to "exercise the oversight, "to tend", "to take heed", "to watch", not by teaching or example only, but in admonition, restraint, discipline, and direction. Upon the elders this responsibility has been made to rest and their obligation to discharge it must be honored not only by them "for they must give an account unto God" for the souls over whom they watch; but it must also be honored by those under their "watch", "oversight" or "tending" by recognizing the subjection that is due them. To disrespect this or try to discredit it is not in harmony with divine authority any more than altering the

government of God's Church by enlarging their authority and jurisdiction. One is as much a departure as the other and both are spiritual anarchy against the God-given government in His church.

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH - (VIII)
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In previous lessons we have emphasized the Lord's plan for the government of the church by the appointment of qualified men as elders, bishops, or pastors over the local church. The divine plan is a plurality of these in every church. They have the "rule" of the church committed into their hands by the Holy Spirit. It must not be done by their own arbitrary will, or by forcing it over the church, but God has committed to them the "oversight" of the flock and charged them with the responsibility of directing its affairs in harmony with his will. We have suggested that it takes two things to make a man an elder in the church of the Lord, qualification and appointment. When men are thus selected, they are made "bishops" by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) just like men are made Christians and deacons or evangelists by the Holy Spirit; that is, through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit through divine truth, of course.

When elders are thus selected and appointed, what do they oversee? Frequently we come across someone who has the idea that the spiritual affairs of the church are under the oversight of the elders but that the deacons are to have charge and the oversight of the material affairs of the congregation. This puts the facilities of the congregation in the way of physical equipment and the financial affairs of the congregation under the direction of the deacons according to this conception. Such an idea is not found in the word of God. The scriptural arrangement is for the elders to have the oversight of the church in all of its work and worship. There is no part of the church that has not been given to the oversight of the elders. Deacons have the oversight of nothing in the church. They may be made directly responsible for some work under the supervision of the elders, but it must be under the supervision of the elders. The preacher as a special servant to do the work of preaching and teaching the Word of God, is in the same position as a deacon or any other member under the supervision or oversight of the elders. All are responsible, first of all, to the Lord, of course.

What then, do the elders oversee? First they have the oversight of the members and must watch for their souls as they who shall give account unto God. Heb. 13:17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Second, they are responsible for the teaching and safeguarding of the truth. This is taught in the required qualification for an elder, Titus 1:9, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Then again, Paul charged the Ephesian elders with the special responsibility of protecting the church - Christian for whom they were responsible - against false doctrine and every departure from the truth. (Acts 20:28-32)

Third, they were to oversee the distribution of benevolence to the destitute of the

congregation under their charge. When the disciples of Antioch sent relief to the "brethren in Judea", they delivered it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul into the hands of the elders. This gave the elders the responsibility for its distribution or the oversight of its distribution. Of course, our institutional and liberal brethren like Guy Woods, B. C. Goodpasture, and others contend that the elders cannot oversee a program of "relieving" the destitute and that such work necessarily requires a "Board of Directors" or some other organization which they incorrectly and deceptively call a "home". So they set themselves squarely against the divine pattern. In fact, they deny that there is one and thus invalidate, or attempt to do so, the plain teaching of the word of God. But do not other brethren do the same thing when they put the direction of the local church under a "committee", "preacher rule" or in the hands of a majority? What would be the difference? If we can set aside the oversight of elders in "every church" in any master, then by the same token we can set it aside in any other.

It is not difficult then, to see that the elders have the oversight of the work of the local church. To this fact we must add that the elders have the oversight of the edifying of the church. This is very definitely taught by Peter in I Peter 5:14. They are to "shepherd," "tend", "feed", or "pastor" the flock which they are bishops. They are responsible, therefore, for the instruction, sustenance, growth, security and development of the flock under their care.

Moreover, the elders are to take the oversight of the disciplining of the flock. This is definitely implied in the demand that members must be subject to them, that they must watch for their souls, that they must be able to convince the gainsayer, etc. All of this has to do with preventive discipline; and in the administering of corrective discipline as in Corinth (I Cor. 5) the elders would be responsible for taking the lead and having the oversight of this public action of the church in withdrawing from the ungodly.

This gives, by scriptural authority, the oversight of the members, resources worship, work, and discipline or fellowship of the local church into the hands of the elders of the local church. They can delegate none of these to another eldership for to do so would pervert the local nature of the organization God designed. By the same right that they could delegate one part of their oversight they would be able to delegate all of it and this would make elders or bishops over more than just one local church. It would likewise destroy the autonomy, equality, independence, and sufficiency of the local church. It takes "all of the parts to make a whole". When any of the parts are given away, the "whole" does not remain - rather a "hole" is left and a deficiency is created. Page the Fort Worth brain trust of Warren and Deaver! They must endorse this conclusion to their own argument!

The simple facts of New Testament Church organization are these: (1) Qualified men appointed as "elders" in every church. (2) These qualified men to have the "rule", or have the oversight of all the affairs of the local church. (3) Elders to have oversight of just one local church. (4) Elders to have the oversight of no other organization in their jurisdiction as elders. (5) Elders to have the oversight of no function that does not belong to the local church.

That is how simple God's plan for the government of His Church is and He will countenance no perversion or corruption of it. To depart from it is to apostatize and denominationalize the church.

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH - (IX)
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In our study of this theme we have seen some pertinent facts concerning the church revealed in the New Testament pattern of things: (1) there are elders in every church; (2) elders are given the obligation to oversee the affairs of only one church; (3) elders are to oversee all of the work of the one church over which they are elders; (4) elders are to oversee only the work of the one church where they are elders. They are not universal or brotherhood elders, but elders in the local church. Any assumption of the oversight of any of the resources, work, or affairs of another church is a violation of the authority of Christ. When any part is transferred, the whole does not remain. Hence the sponsoring church plan of co-operation fostered end thrust upon the churches by liberal and unstable men destroys the independence, autonomy, equality and sufficiency of the local church.

We are interested in this article in a fifth and just as important principle of divine wisdom revealed in this Gospel of Christ, viz., elders by divine authority cannot oversee, in their capacity as elders, anything but the local church and its work. There exists the wild idea among brethren that anything becomes scriptural, if it is placed under a local eldership. Reuel Lemmons, in his sober moments, when he is not engaged in his spiritual gymnastics, condemns the idea of a separate organization from the church to do its benevolent work. In this contention he stands identified with some of the rest of us and squarely against the position occupied by the Gospel Advocate and others. He has been plain and pointed in some of his articles condemning the churches of Christ supporting such institutions as schools and "orphan homes" under a board of directors. Of course, he is very guarded in this opposition because those forces controlling him and his editorial pen, as well as his voice, will not allow him to engage in a real scrap with the Nashville crowd. They have declared a moratorium on their differences, not in order to resolve them, but to keep any advantage from falling into the hands of those of us who have opposed all of their combinations, and machinations. They will fellowship one another in spite of their differences and continue to play together like good children keeping down their quarrel and clapping their hands to their mouths when it breaks out again, but neither of them will fellowship us when we oppose and differ with the promotions of both of them. Lemmons, if he is sincere and honest in his convictions, has as much in common with those of us who oppose both separate organizations doing the work of the church supported out of church treasuries and the federation of churches into societies by the sponsoring church method of carrying on the work of the church as he has with those in favor of both. But he cannot extend any fellowship to us or give us any encouragement because he will bring down on himself the wrath of Goodpasture and his cohorts. So he, like Peter at Antioch, is guilty of dissimulation. Out of one side of his mouth he agrees with us that churches of Christ do not have the right to build human organizations to carry on their work and out of the other side he hurls at us his ugly invectives and nicknames. This is what he means by the "middle of the road" policy - that is, he tries to be strong on both sides. But do not allow this group traveling in the middle of the road to deceive you. They are altogether opposed to the simple truth of the Lord that each congregation should do its own work under the supervision of its

own elders without any federation or human organization or plan to expedite, if indeed they do. They have the "voice of Jacob but the hands of Esau" and are deceiving themselves most of all and the Lord not at all.

The "middle of the roaders", while claiming that they do not believe in forming human societies to do the benevolent work of the church and insisting that it should be put under the eldership of a local church, will approve the elders of a local church making out of themselves a brotherhood agency to do the work of many churches. Furthermore, they will endorse the practice of these elders incorporating themselves into a society in which they are empowered to act as a board of directors in doing a brotherhood work in benevolence. This, of course, they will not allow in the field of evangelism because they think to form a corporate body to oversee the work of evangelism would be a missionary society and they are not ready yet to admit that this is scriptural.

Moreover, they will endorse a local eldership, when it becomes a brotherhood agency and incorporates into another form of organization, actually overseeing many things that are in no sense a part of the work of the church. To illustrate, Brother Lemmons and those who stand identified with his position, (that is, his technical position) believe that such an organization as Boles Home, Inc., with a general board of men from many congregations is not in harmony with what the scriptures teach, but they endorse Tipton Home, Inc., for this board is composed of the local elders of the Tipton Church. The charter of Tipton Home empowers these men to direct the affairs of that home, not as elders, but as trustees of the corporate body, formed under the laws of the state. They claim, however, to be acting solely as elders of the church at Tipton in their oversight of the "Home". This writer has a letter from them stating that the work of the "Home" is under their oversight in exactly the same way as the Bible classes of that local church are on Sunday morning. We would simply ask, "can they then scripturally incorporate themselves into a state organized board of directors to oversee the Bible school work?" If not, why not? Furthermore, could they organize and conduct a publishing house or book store or some other kind of business in order to help finance the Bible school work? Could they oversee the Bible class work of many churches? If what they are doing is right, why would this be wrong?

Then, another interesting angle is that in their oversight of the home and its affairs, they have the superintendence of a gigantic farming program, livestock and dairy program, and a lot of other things that are in no sense related to the work of the Lord's Church. If these elders can oversee an economic enterprise in the field of farming and livestock raising in order to do the benevolent work of the church, why could they not oversee any other kind of a business, real estate, insurance, oil, hardware, restaurants or anything else? And if they can engage themselves as elders, and the congregation where they are elders in an economic enterprise to do benevolent work, what is to preclude them from engaging in economic enterprises to do the evangelistic work of the churches? If churches can contribute to the Tipton elders to carry on a farming program, buying tractors, feeding hogs, etc., in order to do benevolence, why cannot they contribute to some church to buy some airplanes to run an airline in order to make enough money to preach the Gospel or do any other work of the church? We would like for some of the "middle of the roaders" to try to explain this tangled conglomeration characteristic of their thinking? We have no expectation that they can or

will even undertake doing so, but it would be interesting. They will denominationalize the church and lead it into apostasy rather than give up their idols.

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH - (X)

Many of the brethren are contending today that it is scriptural and right for the churches of Christ to build and maintain benevolent "organizations" to do the work of caring for the needy that God has charged the church to do. This proposition has been debated numerous times between brethren all over the country though its proponents have evidently decided that it is unscriptural to debate or that it is unwise, for they seem no longer willing to mount the polemic rostrum and try to defend their "benevolent societies". They have tried numerous methods of defending them and none have seemed to work.

They have asserted that such organizations as they have formed, viz., Ontario Children's Home; Boles Home, Inc., Tipton Home; Tennessee Orphans Home; Southern Christian Home; Sunny Glen Home; etc., are necessary because the law requires such organization in order that the church may care for its needy. This has been proven untrue and they have had to desert it. It is obvious to anyone with any conception of truth and right, that the requirement of it by the law would not make it scriptural, but it was resorted to when they had no Bible with which to defend their position. No federal or state law in this country requires the church to form a human organization for any reason. It would be unconstitutional if they did and it would still be unscriptural even if it were constitutional.

Then they tried the contention that such benevolent organizations were merely for the purpose of giving legal protection to those who directed its affairs and had the oversight of its work in case they are sued or prosecuted by someone. When it was shown that such corporate organizations were not merely for the purpose of holding title to property but were formed and actually functioned as the controlling and directing agency in the work being done and that the directors were empowered by their very charter giving the organization existence to control and direct its work and hence it was entirely removed from any supervision or control by any church, they had to surrender this contention.

They argued that it was "kingdom business", the actual work of the church being done by the church and that the organization was only a method employed by the church by which to do its work such as the Bible classes on the Lord's Day. It was shown in answer to this that an organization is not a method but that an organization employs or uses methods. It was further pointed out that if the church can charter a human institution to do its work of benevolence and such an organization was merely the work of the church in the field of benevolence, like the Bible classes are the work of the church in the field of teaching, then the Bible classes could be incorporated under a Board of Directors just like the benevolent organization and that such a board could be scripturally authorized to carry on and direct the work of teaching. This obviously got them in trouble with the brethren who charge that the Bible classes are a separate organization from the church and delivered these institutional brethren into their hands so they had to abandon that contention.

In the evolution of their attempts to defend these human benevolent societies they eventually got around to the argument that such institutions are actually and only "homes"

and that the "home" is a divine organization, separate from the church, and that its function cannot be a part of the work of the church and therefore elders cannot oversee such an institution or work. Therefore, it must be under a Board of Directors. They further argued that such Board of Directors were actually the parents, in fact, of the children cared for. But they have found this position just as indefensible as any of the others. In answer to this sophistry it has been clearly established that such institutions or organizations are not a "home" in any Bible sense even though they may be known by such names.

The English word "home" comes from different words in the original language of the Bible but in all of their usage there are only four senses: a. a place of residence; b. figuratively the family living in such a place of residence; c. the family plus the household servants living in such a place of residence; and d. the estate such as a family.

It should be easily discerned that any kind of a "benevolent organization" is not a "home" in either of these senses. The organization is not a "place of residence". The charters of every one of these institutions state that such organization is formed in order to "provide a home" or place of residence for orphan or destitute children. Surely in no sense is the organization or Board of Directors a "place" of any kind.

Furthermore, such an organization is in no sense a family. God, who ordained marriage and the family relationship, gave it form just like He did the church. That is the husband and wife relationship, out of which grows the parent and child relationship. This "benevolent organization" does not even generally resemble such a relationship. Who ever heard of a family with a "Board of Directors" organized into the form of "President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer", etc.?

When it was argued that under the law the Board of Directors of such an organization are "en loco parentis" and that such constituted a parent and child relationship - it was pointed out that such is purely a fictitious relationship. This board does not live with the children. They do not even live in close proximity to them. They have no common place of residence. More than that, the board only infrequently visits the children. They do not themselves provide for the children of whom they are supposedly the "parents". They beg others to provide for them. They do not teach, train, care for the children but hire others to do so. They do not perform the function of "parents" in any sense actually but are the "legal guardians" of these children and that is all. More than all that, by the very expression "en loco parentis" is meant not "parents" but in the stead or place of "parents". Many, in fact, most of these children have living parents who either have deserted them, refused to care for them, or in some other way have failed in duty.

Such organizations are not churches of Christ in any sense. Neither are they "homes" in any sense. What are they? They are humanly designed, state authorized, statute controlled, benevolent societies run by a Board of Directors. They have the same status with reference to the work God has given the church to do as the missionary society. If churches can build and maintain such benevolent organizations, there is no rule or reason that would make it wrong for them to build such organizations to do their work of evangelism. The missionary society is just as scriptural and for the same reasons that make the benevolent society

scriptural. It is a package deal - swallow one and you cannot "gag" at the other!

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH - (XI)
ROY E. COGDILL

The Catholic Church grew out of an organizing of the churches. In the debate between Harper and Tant in Lufkin, Texas, on the Herald of Truth, J. Early Arceneaux, veteran preacher and Bible scholar, wrote a note to Yater Tant, when Harper contended that the Herald of Truth was not another organization, reminding him that the apostasy that grew into the Roman Catholic Church was brought about not by forming another organization outside of the church but rather by an organizing of the churches.

The apostasy in the nineteenth century that resulted in the development of the Christian Church denomination began with an organizing of the churches but grew into a giant organization outside of the church - The United Christian Missionary Society.

The same thing is wrong with our benevolent societies today, such as Boles Home, Ontario Children's Home, Tenn. Orphan Home, etc., that is wrong with the missionary society. Many brethren do not know, however, what is wrong with the missionary society. Some of them do not know or believe that it is wrong. J. D. Thomas, for example, of Abilene Christian College Bible Department and School of Religion, states in his book, "We Be Brethren", that there is nothing wrong with the principle of the missionary society, but it is wrong because it usurps authority over the churches that support it. Of course, the missionary society president denies that the society controls the churches at all. The orphan homes, the Herald of Truth, and the colleges like Abilene and Pepperdine, deny that they control the churches, but they control all of them that they can, and would destroy the rest if they could. But it is not the control of the churches that make them wrong as church institutions. They are wrong because there is no Bible authority for their existence as church institutions.

Men like Gayle Oler have tried every device they could manufacture to satisfy the minds of the brethren and keep supporting the benevolent society of which he is the head. He used to argue that such institutions are "kingdom business", the work of the church, and should be supported by the church. Guy N. Woods has affirmed six or seven times that "The scriptures authorize the churches of Christ to build and maintain such benevolent organizations as Boles Home". He has had the support of Gayle Oler and others in such work. But out of the other side of their mouths, these same men contend that such institutions as Boles Home are not church institutions, but "Homes" and are no part of the church. They are insincere one time or the other and deceitful in their contentions for both could be true. The fact is, as we have pointed out in previous articles, they are not homes in any sense of the word, so far as the organization itself is concerned, but benevolent societies maintaining asylums or institutions to care for children and they are supported and function as church institutions. They have no scriptural right to exist in such status. There is no scriptural authority for the church to build, maintain, or do its work, through human societies.

It is immaterial whether such institutions are under a board of directors or under a brotherhood eldership. They are unscriptural either way and cannot be justified. The church has an obligation in the field of benevolence, but whatever that obligation is, it cannot be fulfilled through human societies. God specified an organization through which the church is to accomplish its mission and that organization is the local church with its elders. These local churches did their own benevolence without any human organizations outside of the church or organization within the churches. Each church took care of its own destitute, out of its own resources, and under the supervision of its own elders. (Acts 2:4, 6.) When there were more destitute in its membership than the local church could care for, other churches contributed to them to enable them to care for their own. These contributing churches made up their own contribution from their own members, they selected their own messengers - individuals - and sent their contribution by these messengers to the elders of the churches where the need existed. (Acts 11:27-30. II Cor. 8, 9. I Cor . 16:1-4.) There were no outside organizations involved in this work in any instance and there was no federation of churches, pooling of resources, or centralizing of authority in any way. What the churches today are doing cannot be defended by the Word of God. We will be glad to give opportunity for any of the liberal preachers in this area, that want to try their hand at doing so. Of course we will expect to help any audience upon such an occasion to see that they have utterly failed. They have not done so, they cannot do so, and they have even quit trying. They have divided the churches of Christ over their unscriptural promotions and now choose to no longer try to defend them by the Word of God and think it more profitable to ignore all opposition. This is the course of sectarianism. They are becoming another distinct denominational movement in the world and will take their place among those who no longer profess to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent"

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SIGN POSTS ON THE ROAD TO DENOMINATIONALISM
ROY E. COGDILL

One of the very evident indications of a sectarian attitude and a movement upon the part of liberal churches of Christ today toward denominationalism is a change of message or emphasis in preaching. This is as evident as the changes in organization and methods that we have been writing about. All of it is very definite evidence of a difference in attitude toward the Word of God.

The difference in the preaching that is heard now and that of just a few years ago is evident in the fact that there is very little actual preaching of the Bible. Fundamental doctrines have been laid aside. Denominational error is no longer condemned. Religious bodies are rarely ever criticized for what they do or say and even when they are, the name and identity must not be made known. The plain, positive preaching of a distinctive New Testament message is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Unity upon the basis of love, toward fellowship, that is the order of the day. Nice, eloquent speeches full of "sweet little nothings" that will emotionally stir up the people and bring responses to the invitation are the demand. "Hell Fire and Damnation" preaching is out of order, for so many do not believe in it any longer. Just a very few of the "ancient landmarks" are adhered to in the preaching that is being done now. How long has it been, my brother, since you heard the preacher to whom you listen, condemn the popular sins of the day dancing, drinking, gambling, etc.? How long has it been since you heard your preacher condemn denominational and sectarian organizations? How long since you heard the sectarian methods of money raising condemned by the teaching of the Word of God? Liberal preachers today are giving only lip service and sometimes not too much of that to such fundamental themes as "one Faith, one baptism, and one body". Such themes as "divine Authority" are forgotten. Instead we are being told on every hand that we need no authority! The undenominational character of the church is no longer emphasized and the old slogans, scriptural in principle whether in word or not, are no longer pressed upon the attention and consciences of the people of God - "We speak where the Bible speaks and we are silent where the Bible is silent" - "We call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways". Of course, if we are not going to practice them, we should quit preaching them!

In the slackening of opposition to denominational doctrines, organizations, and to the very spirit and core of sectarian religion, there is very strong evidence of our drift toward this same end. Protestant denominationalism is impotent in its opposition to Roman Catholicism today and has been all along because its heritage is largely Catholic in origin. There are too many of the "relics of Rome" in all of the Protestant bodies from them to militantly and successfully oppose Catholicism. They are non-protestant. Even so many of the preachers and congregations among the so-called "churches of Christ" today are disarmed before they start opposing denominational error because they have adopted too many of the things that originate therein.

Very few of the denominational bodies around us are giving any more emphasis to "social gospel" preaching and activity than many of the brethren. A few years ago - preachers like Foy E. Wallace, Jr., were crying out from one end of this country to the other against the demand for a "new and social gospel". In clear and ringing tones that still resound in the hearts of many of us who were inspired by him and others then, all error in and out of the church was condemned and the "perversion" of the Gospel of Christ into a "Social Gospel" was anathematized with all of the power and eloquence of the prophets of old when they cried out against the departures and unfaithfulness of Israel in the long ago. What a pitiful spectacle he is now, as he becomes the agent and tool of the liberal element among the churches and condones and endorses and seeks to build up that which he once destroyed. A recent paper from a "benevolent society" called an "Old Folks Home" stated that he had investigated its organization and its operation and endorsed it in every detail and that they were free to use his name and influence for their promotions in whatever way they wished. Now whatever name and influence he may have among brethren today will not mean much to those who remember him in days gone by. A sell out is too evident! Will he try to defend and justify such a change in attitude by the Word of God? No, he, along with the rest, knows that there is no scriptural justification for such a change in attitude toward God's Word. With faces set toward Home, they march on and choose to ignore those along the way who cry out against their unfaithfulness and their unbelief and warn them that "men-pleasers cannot be servants of Christ". Those who once rose up to defend what they preached and practiced, choose to withdraw from the field of battle and try to make themselves secure in the valley of compromise. They may fatten for awhile but eventually the "anathemas" of the Lord, which once they sounded out, will sweep them out of their "refuge of lies" and leave their pitiful plight exposed to God's righteous judgment. We find no delight in their condemnation, but grief. We would save them if we could, and we still love them, but when bitter resentment is the only response to every appeal that can be made, there is nought left to do but grieve and pray that they may see the error of their way.

We must remember,

"Tis the same old Gospel story,
Just as beautiful and true,
Just as full of Jesus power,
As it was when it was new. "

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THE LOCAL CHURCH PERVERTED IN
MISSION AND FUNCTION
ROY E. COGDILL

In former articles we have called attention to the fact that in present day promotions among brethren disposed to be liberal and modernistic in their thinking there frequently are arrangements that pervert the mission and function of the local church from its capacity as a local organization into a relationship with other local churches that makes out of it a "brotherhood agency" through which other churches perform their function. This is a very definite step toward denominationalism and apostasy.

The Highland Church in Abilene through The Herald of Truth functions in such a capacity. The Herald of Truth is not a local church in any sense. It is a brotherhood agency, doing a brotherhood work, with brotherhood funds. The Herald of Truth has its own offices, payroll, directors, employees, treasury, name, contracts, mailing address and permits, its own propaganda machine, and admittedly is doing the work of many churches. This means that it is a separate organization in spite of all the denials they make. The fact that it purportedly is under the supervision of the eldership of a local church does not change in status. It simply means that eldership functions in two capacities, directing the affairs of the Highland Church as a local organization, and in a brotherhood capacity in directing the affairs and work of many churches in this "missionary society" known as The Herald of Truth. A brotherhood work, a brotherhood treasury, under an eldership means a brotherhood eldership. This is not the mission or function of the eldership of a local church in God's plan and is therefore a perversion. Such a function by the elders of a local church is completely without authority - "ultra vires", unwarranted in the scriptures and as wholly unjustified and wrong as any kind of an organization could be. It would be like a sovereign state trying to take over the direction of the federal government or function as an "interstate agency". This, of course, cannot be done.

The same principle would hold with reference to benevolent work that is true of evangelism, or "missionary work" as it commonly is expressed. A local eldership trying to oversee a program of benevolence for many churches would be just as unscriptural and completely lacking in New Testament authority. Sometimes brethren trying to justify such "brotherhood agencies" charge that if a church can send money to another church to assist it in caring for destitute members but cannot send money to another church to enable it to carry out a program of preaching, then there are two patterns, one in evangelism and another in benevolence. This can be freely admitted for these two patterns can be found explicitly taught and practiced in New Testament Scriptures. However, these same liberal brethren should examine their own position. They very definitely believe in two patterns. They frequently incorporate their benevolent societies into chartered institutions directed by a board of directors but they have not and will not for some time to come incorporate such projects as The Herald of Truth and put it under a board of directors! Why? Not from any conviction to be sure, but for the reason that such an organization would be so close to the actual "missionary society" that there would be no room to establish the difference and

brethren in general are not quite ready to accept the actual form of the "missionary society" even though they have unwittingly accepted it in principle.

It has been repeatedly pointed out that in such an arrangement as The Herald of Truth, the directing elders (Highland Church elders) sustain no relationship to the Highland Church in directing the affairs of The Herald of Truth that they do not sustain to every church that contributes to it. This has not been successfully denied and it has not yet been pointed out just what relationship is different and distinct, if it exists.

This perversion in the functioning of a local eldership does not only apply to Highland Church elders in their relationship to The Herald of Truth, but to many other promotions among brethren also. Of course, The Herald of Truth and the sponsoring church plan of preaching the Gospel as carried on by the Broadway Church of Lubbock, Brownfield, Texas, Union Avenue of Memphis and many others, has given rise to many unscriptural arrangements which only a few short years ago would not have been acceptable to anybody much. We have in mind such arrangements as the "evangelistic agencies" of such local churches as Vandalia Village in Lubbock, and 25th and Geraldine in Oklahoma City. The elders of these churches have been promoted by their ambitious preachers into "evangelistic boards" to oversee the congregations. They have a rather complex setup. These local elderships plead for contributions as well as workers from all other churches that they can influence. They have their supervisors and co-ordinators, etc. They may not capitalize the names of these officers but they are officers with distinct functions just the same. The advertising is planned, the preacher is selected, the supervisor of personal work campaigns, with trained workers, is elected, and the money is raised to carry out the "campaign". This undeniably makes out of the local church and its elders, who are supposed to supervise such a program, a brotherhood agency for evangelism. Why do they not form a corporate body of such an arrangement and make the eldership of the local church supervising such a program, the board of directors? It would be just as scriptural as the elders of Tipton, Oklahoma Church, serving as the board of directors of Tipton Orphan Home.

Such a perversion of local churches in both organization and function would have had much opposition a few years ago that is now silenced by the spirit of compromise and self interest. Witness the following from a powerful pen that now itself has been prostituted to serve the very thing that formerly it condemned:

"Truly we need to learn all over again what the work of the church is, and how to scripturally do it."

"There is yet another phase to this discussion. What about small churches that desire to have part in 'missionary work' but are unable to support a preacher alone, or a 'program' of their own? The answer to this supposed difficulty applies to the preaching of the gospel at home as well as abroad, there can be no difference in the principle involved. Let us make the application. There are scores of small churches in the State of Arkansas that cannot support an evangelist to preach the gospel in their own county. So the eldership of a church in Oklahoma City (another state) proposes that all of these Arkansas churches send their limited contributions to the elders of this Oklahoma church, who in turn select and oversee

an evangelist to do the preaching in Arkansas for all of these small churches in that state. That is an example of what's being done by some missionary sponsoring churches among us. (bro. Wallace's own emphasis).

"Still another application. The state of Texas needs evangelizing. There are scores of small churches that cannot support a full-time evangelist. So the elders of one church Dallas or Fort Worth (sic) propose to all the churches to concentrate their funds in one eldership which in turn will oversee a "state evangelist. " That is another example of what is being done in principle by the sponsoring missionary churches with their centralized elderships (bro. Wallace's own emphasis).

"The deductions set forth in the foregoing examples are the exact argument used by the digressives years ago to justify their 'state evangelists.' The only difference is that they appointed a board of missions in the eldership of one church. In either case it destroys the autonomy of the local church in doing its work, and develops elders of a local church into diocesan bishops.

"When we criticize these deviations from New Testament principles in the organization of the church it does not mean we oppose the work. All of the effort to foment feeling and plant prejudice against men who plead for adherence to 'the stipulated conditions of the New Testament' by charges that we are anti-foreign-missionary, anti-Christian education, and anti-cooperation will not prevail in the end. Many sober-minded brethren are already seeing the light on these issues, and many others will as we shall continue to set forth these principles. It is the same battle over the same issues that had to be fought fifty years ago.

"If elders of a local church can function in a general administration of the affairs of many churches in one thing, what bars them from doing so in all things, benevolent, missions, discipline? That being the case Presbyterians, Methodists, and Catholics can all justify their ecclesiastical forms of church government, and we will have surrendered the whole ground on the Organization of the church of Christ" (from TORCH, Vol. I, No. 2, August 1950, pages 30-32, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., editor).

That brethren cannot see these principles and recognize their violations in the present brotherhood arrangements is amazing but it is even more amazing that Foy E. Wallace, Jr., would align himself with the very things which he formerly so clearly condemned. Such arrangements as condemned in the above article are still "deviations from New Testament principles" and still "surrender the whole ground on the organization of the church of Christ" and these principles have not changed but someone has! That is sure!

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DENOMINATIONALIZING THE CHURCH
ROY E. COGDILL

In a campaign newsletter dated January 1966, there is abundant evidence of the fact that there is emerging from among Churches of Christ a denomination known as "The Church of Christ."

A local church, Easton Road Church of Christ, 984 Easton Road, Warrington, Pennsylvania, has become ambitious to do big things in the "Greater Philadelphia Area" and hence are amalgamating Churches and funds to have a "Campaign for Christ" in Philadelphia in 1967. They have big plans and will put on a big show if some one will furnish enough money.

From their newsletter we learn a number of things concerning their proposed arrangements for such a Campaign.

1. They have a Missionary Society Organization. "The Easton Road Brethren joined by the members of the Advisory Board and Executive Committee certainly do appreciate the wide reception accorded the Greater Philadelphia Campaign for Christ. "

"Philadelphia's Historic Convention Hall had previously been announced as the location for the Greater Philadelphia Campaign for Christ in August of 1967."

"However after much prayer and deliberation, brethren composing the Advisory Board and Executive Committee decided to look for another facility in which the Campaign could be held. "

We would like chapter and verse giving the authority for such a set up in the Church of the Lord to anything. We do not expect the brethren to make any effort to give it. They would probably say they do not need authority for such an organization. They would say as they do in other matters - "Jesus Christ commanded 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' and he did not tell us 'how' to do it or 'The New Testament is a book of principles and not patterns and we are at liberty to determine for ourselves how to apply these principles. "

Of course, all of these liberal brethren bent on denominationalizing the Lord's Church today that offer such a spineless defense of their efforts are "Johnnies-come-lately" in such pleas. The Christian Church denomination made all of them over a hundred years ago when they decided to become a denomination by building a "Missionary Society".

2. They employ other Denominational machinery to promote their schemes.

"The Fidelity Advertising Company in Abilene has been selected to handle the advertising and publicity for the Greater Philadelphia Campaign.

"Mr. Paul Delaney, accounts supervisor for Fidelity has visited in the Philadelphia area and has prepared an estimated budget for our advertising the Campaign. "

You are not surprised that these professionals advise the spending of \$50,000 for the advertising alone in this Campaign. Concerning this we find the note:

"This certainly seems like a tremendous sum of money. This because we generally have been satisfied to advertise (?) our meetings with a small notice in a local paper and handing out a few mimeographed announcements."

Well it certainly does seem like a tremendous sum - but when you consider the fact that these brethren intend for someone else to pay for it and have hired a professional advertising organization to do the job - probably on a percentage commission, we are not surprised at the size of it.

But again:

"We are indebted to Brother Alan Bryan and to his Company, Campaign, Inc. (listed as paid \$1,750.00) for helping to raise the funds. (Parenthesis mine, R.E.C.)

Such men as Alan Bryan and James Walter Nichols have actually become money changers in the Lord's Temple, if indeed they are in it. They are making a business of running and promoting such unscriptural arrangements.

Most of us who have been preaching the Gospel for any length of time have held a good many meetings, and some pretty good ones too, and none of them aggregated in all that was spent as much money as these brethren paid these professional money raisers. But we have been operating in a small way with each congregation making its own arrangements and paying its own bills. If all this high-powered promoting is scriptural and right, the preachers and churches of other generations have been a bunch of "suckers".

3. They have a Personal Workers Organization.

A series of smaller campaigns in 1966 by congregations in the area is urged in order to build up and support the "Big Campaign".

"The success or failure of the Greater Philadelphia Campaign for Christ, like every other similar effort, will be determined in large measure by the success or failure of the personal work program that supports the campaign proper. "

So congregations in the area are urged to hold local personal work campaigns this year - not to teach and reach people with the truth this year - mind you - but to build up a big prospect list to respond in the big meeting next year.

Congregations every where are urged to send personal workers and if they won't do

that, then send money to support personal workers from some other congregation - professional teams of personal workers trained at such places as Harding College, of which the Owen Olbricht team is one. This team of 160 students picked at Harding spent the summer going from Campaign to Campaign and there are others.

With the money contributed by others, and hired advertisers, money raisers, personal workers, coordinators, and a Church of Christ Billy Graham to make the speeches and put on the pressure and shed the tears, there will be big days in the old City of Brotherly Love come next summer.

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