

## Institutionalism

➤ = next PowerPoint slide

### ➤ Intro:

- two previous lesson in church history: Denominationalism, The Reformation
- this lesson: **Institutionalism** – **unauthorized contribution to an institution from the church treasury**

### ➤ history

- **Reformation: 16<sup>th</sup> - mid18<sup>th</sup> century**, reform Roman Catholic Church
  - **the Missionary Society was created**, taking funds from churches, and doing missionary work
- - **Restoration: 18-19<sup>th</sup> century, USA**, restore denominations to follow the ancient paths of the NT
  - **Disciples of Christ:**
    - **1849 Alexander Campbell became president of the American Christian Missionary Society**, 1<sup>st</sup> missionary society of the Disciples of Christ, a post he held till his death on Mar. 4, 1866, **having changed his mind** having previously opposed such societies
      - **Alexander Campbell was leader of the Disciples of Christ, not the church of Christ**
    - **other institutions were created** by the Disciples of Christ, for various works including benevolence, Bible translation, education, caring for retired ministers, etc. (The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement)
    - **resulting in split of the Disciples of Christ, wherein 2,600 congregations withdrew** from the Disciples by **1906** (The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement)
      - **many members joined themselves to the church of Christ over the issue of institutionalism and instrumental music**
  - - **churches of Christ:**
    - **1907: there were 6,000 churches of Christ in USA that rejected missionary societies and instrumental music**
    - **1909: 1<sup>st</sup> institution supported by a church of Christ, Tennessee Orphan Home**
    - **1933: G. C. Brewer began a movement**, writing in the Gospel Advocate to convince churches of Christ to support human institutions, because **very few supported them at that time**
    - **1930s-1970s** brethren pushed institutionalism on other Christians which resulted in congregations splitting
      - **similar to years before, among the Disciples of Christ**

➤ **What is the issue?**

- Are churches authorized to donate funds to an institution, delegating the church's work?

➤3 - **chart:** churches, institution, work / arrows churches to inst. / arrow inst. to work

- - **no Bible authority** (command, example, inference), adds to the word of God
  - **different organization of the church than commanded by God** – not local elders
  - **results in unlawfully delegating the church's work, thus setting aside God**
    - delegate = commit and entrust the congregation's work to an institution

- **The issue is not**

- whether Christians can **relieve** widows and orphans, or **teach** the lost
- whether human institutions have the **right to exist**, operate, and do their work

- churches aren't authorized to **delegate (outsource) their responsibilities to a human institutions** by donating money to them – **Noah, apostles - covered in much greater detail in series on the church**

- **the church is not a "funder" organization**, that collects funds and disperses to other organizations to do the work (e.g., Bill and Belinda Gates Foundation)
- elders of a local congregation oversee the work, not an institution (organization, corporation, sponsoring church)
  - **1 Pet. 5:1-4** elders oversee congregation of which they are **members**
  - **1 Tim. 5:17** they **rule over** the church
- **local churches sent out, and supported missionaries – not institutions**
  - **Acts 11:22-23** church in Jerusalem sent **Barnabas to Antioch**
  - **Acts 13:1a, 2-3** church in Antioch sent out **Paul and Barnabas** on missionary journey
  - **2 Cor. 11:8-9** churches supported **Paul** to preach in **Corinth**
  - **Phil. 1:3-5; 4:15-16** church in **Philippi** supported **Paul** to preach **various places**
- **local churches relieved needy Christians – not institutions**
  - **Acts 4:34-35** Christians sold property, gave money to **apostles** for distribution
  - **Acts 6:1-2** church cared for disciples who were widows - **1 Tim. 5:16**
  - **Acts 11:27-30; 2 Cor. 8-9** individual churches sent financial relief to churches in **Judea**

➤ **The problem: desire to be popular – be like the denominations**

- **David Lipscomb, 1907, printed in the Gospel Advocate, regarding the 1906 census** to correct confusion in the numbers, because the Disciples of Christ counted some churches of Christ in their yearbooks, to inflate their numbers

- “As they (DOC, aem) **increased in number and wealth**, many **desired to become popular** also, and sought to adopt the very human inventions that in the beginning of the movement had been opposed – a **general organization of the churches under a missionary society with a moneyed membership**, and the **adoption of instrumental music in the worship**. This is a subversion of the fundamental principles on which the churches were based.”

- “While the progressives oppose and refuse to have conservative preachers in their houses and to their congregations, and seek to divide and break up the churches they cannot control, and gain possession of their property, yet, **for the sake of denominational show**, they **publish in their yearbooks all the members**, preachers, and churches of the conservatives as one with themselves.”

➤ - **many churches of Christ have departed from the church to become popular, becoming like the denominations**

- church sponsored entertainment, social gospel, instrumental music, Calvinism, institutionalism

- gymnasiums, life centers, camps, kitchens, recreational trips (some disguised as missionary trips), operation of businesses, contribution to institutions, organizing themselves under a mother church or sponsoring church or human institution, evangelistic institutions such as the “Herald of Truth”, schools and colleges to train people in their doctrines, etc.

- **once a church compromises the truth by using and supporting institutions, the barn door is open to anything**

➤ - **humility required to be a faithful church – to do things God’s way, not man’s way**

- **1 Pet. 5:5b-6** God **opposed to the proud**, must **humble ourselves** under the mighty hand of God

➤ - **Mk. 7:6-9** Jews, weren’t humble to do things God’s way – **set aside commandments**

- **result:** vain, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men, neglect commands of God to hold human traditions, set aside God’s commands

- **we can’t do things just because we want to be popular (like the denominations)**

- must be humble to do things God’s way – **not set aside commandments**

➤ **Tactics used by sinful brethren to convince faithful churches to begin supporting institutions** (Voices in The Wilderness by Cope)

- - **in 1933 G.C. Brewer wrote series on “organizations” in the Gospel Advocate**
  - **advocated** church support of schools and orphan homes
  - **little enthusiasm** by churches, few churches began to support the institutions
  
- - **1935 Brewer wrote articles on “The Budget System of Finance”**
  - **made strong** appeal for churches to accept this system
- - **appealed to human emotions, speculating** what could be done for schools if churches donated, **rather than appeal to God’s word for authority**
- - **set forth his plan in the Gospel Advocate, to convince churches (members) to change** and begin **supporting institutions**
  - **1 - convince** them the **budget system is Scriptural**
  - **2 - convince** it’s **right to have Christian colleges and orphan homes**
  - **3 - convince** it’s **right for churches to contribute** to these institutions
- - **made this observation: elders were the problem**
  - **members as a whole would readily** take hold of the work with little instruction from the elders
  - **but the elders were the problem:** “The elders are either not convinced on these things or else they do not know how to set out such a program. **The whole trouble lies with the elders.**”
- - **budget system as set forth by Brewer placed all responsibility on elders, members not responsible or accountable**
  - “When we have found that [the budget system] to be scriptural, **then what is placed in the budget will be left entirely with the local eldership.**”
  
- - **Bible warns about these tactics**
  - **2 Pet. 2:1** false prophets and teachers, **secretly introduce**
    - **convince the elders, use them** to lead the flock away
  - **2 Pet. 2:2** **motive is greed**
    - **greed: get money from church** treasury into treasury of human institutions

### ➤ 3 Sponsoring Church

- **chart** (same as above) - churches, sponsoring church, work

- **history: conservative churches adopting the sponsoring church arrangement (institutionalism)**

- not much of this occurred until after WWII

- after the war a number of churches adopted the sponsoring church arrangement to send out missionaries, some of the areas evangelized were those conquered during the war

- one church would take contributions from churches, and do the work, overseeing the evangelist

- **history institutional split: 1970s split among institutional churches of Christ**

- **some adopted the sponsoring church arrangement**

- **correctly** thought it was wrong abrogate (delegate) the work of the church to a human organizations not overseen by elders

- **incorrectly** thought okay to abrogate it to the elders of another congregation (sponsoring church, mother church, planting church)

- **the elders of one congregation can't lawfully oversee the work of another congregation; therefore, sponsoring church arrangement is unlawful**

➤ - **Herald of Truth**

- **chart: Herald of Truth**

- **this arrangement created the biggest division**, where the elders of the Highland church in Abilene took the oversight of the Herald of Truth radio and TV program

- **influence shifted** from the brotherhood papers to the **Herald of Truth**

- **when the Herald of Truth first began**, the preaching was focused on the one true church, baptism for the remission of sins, no instrumental music, the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, convincing people regarding the idea of restoring New Testament Christianity

- **by the late '60s and early '70s**, they had begun to realize that the radio and TV programs that were really attracting the audiences were those that's **emphasis was more on family relationships, finding inner peace for yourself, how to build a strong self-image**

- **eventually the preaching of the Herald of Truth shifted** from this more doctrinal, controversial type of teaching into this more "**finding peace for the soul and a good self-image**" type of teaching

- **preachers made the same shift**, so that by the '70s and '80s you could attend most churches of Christ for months and months and months and months and never hear a sermon on the one true church, restoring New Testament Christianity, or instrumental music (comments by Bill Hall, rf. book by Richard Hughes of Pepperdine University "Reviving the Ancient Faith")

- **beside the sin of unlawful organization of the church, institutionalism spreads the sinful teachings and practices of a few men through many churches, because control of churches become centralized**

- a little leaven, leavens the whole lump

➤ **Warning: history repeats itself**

- **A.B. Barrett, founder of Abilene Christian College (1930):**

- **“There were no ‘brotherhood colleges,’ ‘church papers,’ ‘church orphanages,’ ‘old folk’s homes,’ and the like, among apostolic congregations. . . . The churches established by the apostles did not contribute to any organization other than a sister congregation. All ‘church’ movements should be kept under the local congregation.**

➤ - **“History repeats itself.** Following the restoration of the ancient order of things, launched by Stone, Campbell, and others; **men of worldly ambition crept in among us. . . .** Individual Christians, any number, may scripturally engage in any worthy work, such as running colleges, papers, and orphanages, and other individual Christians may properly assist them in every proper way; but no local congregation should be called upon, as such to contribute a thing to any enterprise. **Such a call would be out of harmony with the word of the living God. And if any congregation so contributes, it transcends its scriptural prerogatives.”**

➤ - **institutionalism was repeated** by the Disciples of Christ following reformed churches, and repeated by churches of Christ following the Disciples of Christ, and a different flavor was repeated by other churches adopting the sponsoring church arrangement

- **because wanted to be popular, because of worldly ambition, because wanted to be like denominations**

➤ - **our desire: be a faithful congregation of the Lord’s church, faithful to God’s word - different** from the world  
- **not set aside God’s word to be popular, like denominations**  
- **be alter: evil men will always try to draw us away from God, often to get their hands on the church’s treasury**

➤ **Inv.**

- **inv.:** become a Christian, added to church, member of the Lord’s church to serve and worship in truth