

Issues that Divide Us

Institutionalism

Part 2

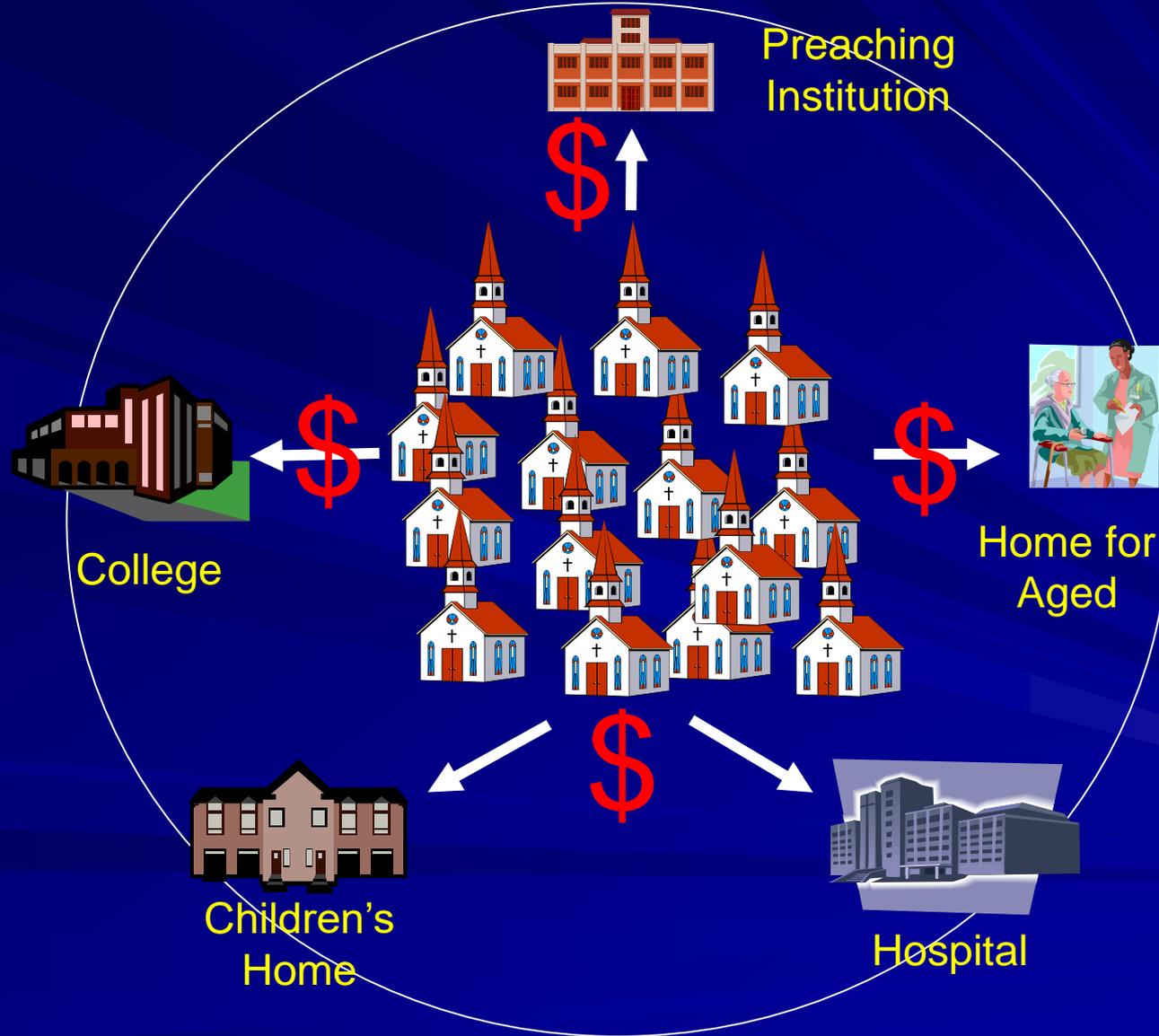
The Issues

- **Biblical Authority**
- **Social Gospel**
- **Human Institutions**
- **Unlimited Benevolence**
- **Sponsoring Church**



**Our Focus
Today**

Institutionalism



Presuppositions

- God's word is our all-sufficient **pattern** – 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3
- We must have **Bible authority** for everything we do – Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11
- All things must be authorized by **command, statement, approved example, or necessary inference.**
- We must **not deviate** from what God has written – 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19
- When God says **nothing**, He means **“No”** – 2 Sam. 7:1-7

Why is this Important?

A Review

Local Church Work

- Assemble for worship and edification – 1 Cor. 14:26
- Do benevolent work of helping needy saints – 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:26; Acts 6:1-7
- Preach the gospel – Phil. 4:15-16

Local Church Responsibility

- The local church must make decisions necessary to do the work and then do it – 2 Cor. 8:10-11
- There is no authority for these responsibilities to be given over to another organization.
- Can parents give their responsibilities to raise their children over to an institution and fund it to do their work?

**Institutionalism Denies
the All-Sufficiency of
the Local Church**

Local Church

All-Sufficient In Evangelism

- Local church **selected preachers** and sent them out – Acts 11:22
- Local church **defined the territory** of labor – Acts 11:22
- Local church **paid the preacher** and sent this support directly to him – 2 Cor. 11:8
- Local church **received report** from the preacher – Acts 14:26-27

**No man-made evangelism
institution was involved!**

Local Church

All-Sufficient In Benevolence

- Jerusalem church **relieved its needy** – Acts 6:1-6
 - They selected qualified men that cared for their widows.

Quibble

“Church Can’t Be A Home”



Benevolent Board



Not a Home!

Takes churches' money and makes same decisions and does same work as local church!

Local Church

All-Sufficient In Benevolence

- Jerusalem church **relieved its needy** – Acts 6:1-6
 - They selected qualified men that cared for their widows.
 - They “served tables”...but did not become a restaurant!
- Brethren at Antioch **pooled their funds** and **sent relief directly to churches** in Judea – Acts 11:27-30
- Churches **sent their relief directly** to needy brethren in Jerusalem – 1 Cor. 16:1-3; Rom. 15:25-26

No man-made benevolent institution was involved!

Institutions Not Needed!

- **James R. Cope:** “Each church can do every work God has commanded it to do and can do it effectively without subsidizing the so-called ‘Christian’ institution. There is no work which any human ‘Christian’ institution does *because it receives church donations* that each local church cannot do if none of these human ‘Christian’ institutions existed.” (“**May Churches of Christ Support Human Institutions,**” p. 6)

Institutions Not Needed!

- **Gene Frost:** “When men advocate that churches send contributions to a human society to enable it to do what God ordered the church to do, **the church becomes nothing more than a middle-man, a collection agency for the society.** The members could as well contribute directly to the society.” (“Old Issues Do Not Fade Away (XII),” *Gospel Anchor*, Jan. 1976, 2:5:137)

Institutional Defense:
Benevolent Institutions are
a Method of Doing
Benevolence

The Claim

Guy N. Woods: "When the Lord tells us to do a thing, but does not, in connection with the command, specify the way, then the way is in the field of expediency and is to be done in the *best way* that it can be at the time...There is not the remotest hint in the New Testament of any exclusive way or method by which this command is to be carried out." (*Cooperation in the Field of Benevolence and Evangelism*)

Same Defense For M.S.!

- Briney: After quoting 1 Cor. 14:40 argued, “...this general principle authorizes us to act systematically...the **method** of doing this work of preaching is not specified...” (Otey-Briney Debate, p. 165).
- Briney: “...the church was authorized to do mission work...but the question is **how**. **How** shall this work of evangelism be done...?” (Ibid., pp. 265-266).
- Woods and Briney sought to equate a **different organization** overseeing and doing the work with **methods** used by a local church to do its work.

Benevolent Institutions **are not** **a Method** of doing Local Work

Local
Church



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The Issue:

Who Will Use The Methods?

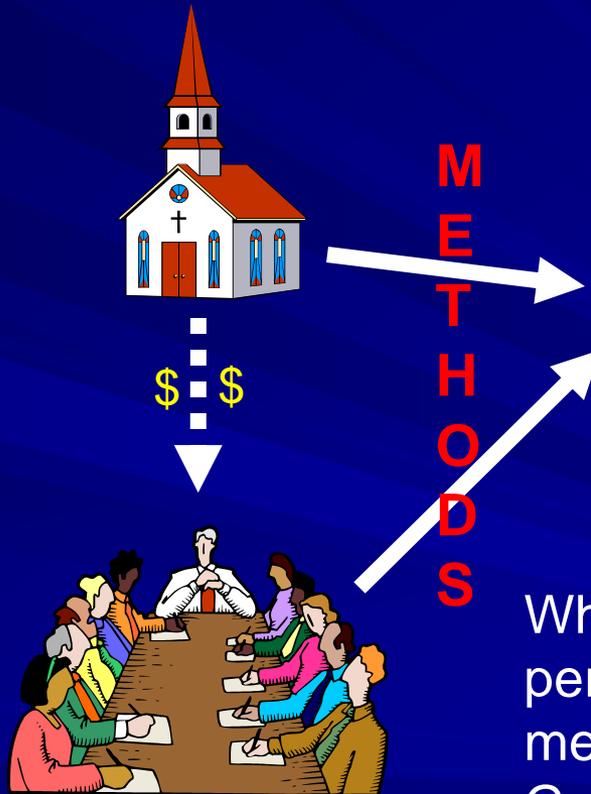
The Church

Divine Origin
Authority of Christ
Regulated by NT
Overseen by Elders

OR

The Institution

Human Origin
Chartered by State
Regulated by State
Board of Directors



The
Work

Which organization shall perform & control the methods used to fulfill God commands to the local church?

The Issue: **Not How, But Who?**

James R. Cope: “For years we have been hearing that all the fuss among brethren is over *how* the work God has commanded is to be done. *This is simply not true!* **The whole issue turns on the matter of who is to do what God commanded.** This necessarily involves the question of whether or not merely making a donation to a human institution is the *action* God commanded a local church to perform. The question to be settled is whether a local church shall do the work God commands it to do or surrender its God-appointed obligation to somebody else...*This is the issue.*” (“**May Churches of Christ Support Human Institutions,**” 3-4)

The Issue: **Not How, But Who?**

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.: “The organization argument has been concisely stated in one sentence, which is eminently true, and is a safe rule of action, namely: **Any organization larger than the local church or smaller than the local church is an unscriptural organization through which to do the work of the church.** Indeed, there are methods of doing what is commanded, **but they must be the church’s methods**, and within the scope of the thing commanded.” (*The Certified Gospel*, 134).

No Authority

- **No direct command** requiring or permitting local churches to build and support human institutions to do their work
- **No express statement** requiring or permitting it
- **No approved example** of local churches building and supporting institutions to do their work
- **No necessary inference** requiring or permitting it