

Liberalism and Institutionalism

Issues that Divide Us

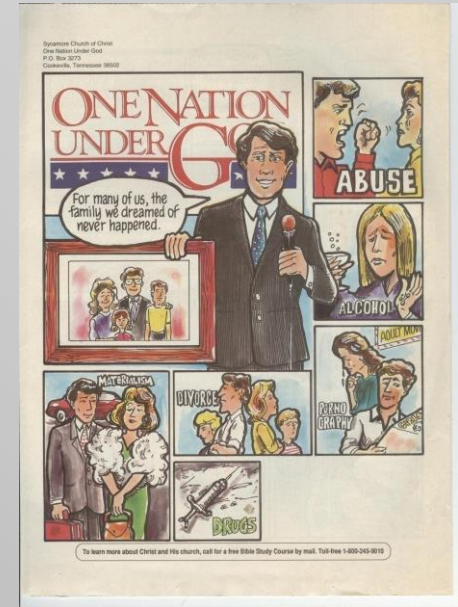
The Issues

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



Sponsoring Church Programs

- ONUG
- In SEARCH of the Lord's Way
- House to House – Heart to heart



House to House

Heart to Heart

www.housetohouse.com

Volume 13 Number 2

Elizabethton CHURCH of CHRIST
137 East "C" Street
Elizabethton, TN 37643
Phone: (423) 542-5131
Email: extret@charter.net

Elders:
George Ellis Dale Farr
J. D. Farr Raymond Harrison
Willie Holcomb Ken Skaggs
Alicia Vaughn

Deacons:
Quinton Adams George Adams
Don Bowman Mark Carter
Leland DeLoach Kenny Ellis
Clark Ellis Michael Houston
Mike Holaday Charlie Reeves
Steve Roberts Sam Taylor

Minister:
Rusty Ellis

Service Times:
Sunday:
Bible Study 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m. on WMEF
Evening Worship 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday:
Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Be Sure To Watch:
• *Proclaiming the Gospel*
Sunday at 7:00 a.m. on WMEF
• *In Search of the Lord's Way*
Sunday at 7:30 a.m. on WMEF
• *Religious Encounters*
Sunday at 8:30 a.m. on WKPT
• *T.P. Sunday School*
Sunday at 8:30 a.m. on WJOL

WE DO NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, SEX, OR ETHNICITY. We are an equal opportunity ministry and we welcome all who are interested in the gospel. We are dependent on your support to continue our ministry.

Worthy of Praise
Allen Walker

The preacher may make us laugh and the songs may make us weep.

The fellowship may warm our souls and the communion may give us a thrill, but if God does not enjoy the host, the service failed. The goal of worship is to make God "high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor" (Deuteronomy 26:19). "Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely" (Psalm 147:1).

A hymn that was likely composed in the Talmudic period expresses our sentiment:

If my lips could sing as many songs as there are waves in the sea,
If my tongue could sing as many hymns as there are ocean billows,
If my mouth could sing the whole dominion with praise,
If my face shone like the sun and moon together,
If my hands were as harp in the sky like powerful angels,
And my feet ran across mountains as swiftly as the deer;
All this would not be enough to pay you fitting tribute,
O Lord my God.

If we had the tongues of angels, we could not praise God in His greatness to be praised. If we were born speaking praise and had breath to never cease, we could never adequately praise His name in this life. If every rock could speak, it would praise God. If the stars could sing, their song would be as His home. If the animals could sing, their words would form new praise for their Creator. The very stones would praise Him if the wind rose, and a thousand legions of angels would leap to do His will. "Let the heavens and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein" (Psalm 69:34).



What is a Sponsoring Church?

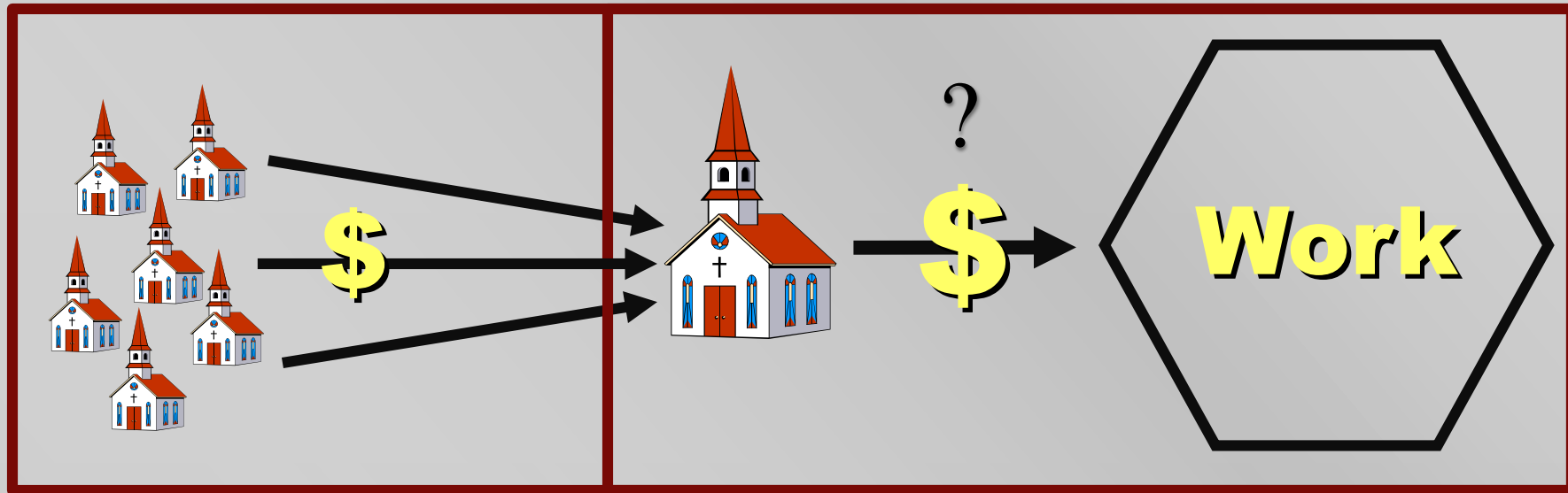
Defined: Lewis G. Hale

- “There are churches known as ‘sponsoring churches.’ Feeling that they are **not financially able** to carry on a certain program single-handedly, they **invite sister congregations to share the expense of that work**. They receive funds from other churches and add these to whatever funds they themselves provide for the work and they become **wholly responsible for the oversight of the work**.” (*How Churches Can Cooperate, God’s Work In God’s Way*, p. 3)

Defined: J. D. Thomas

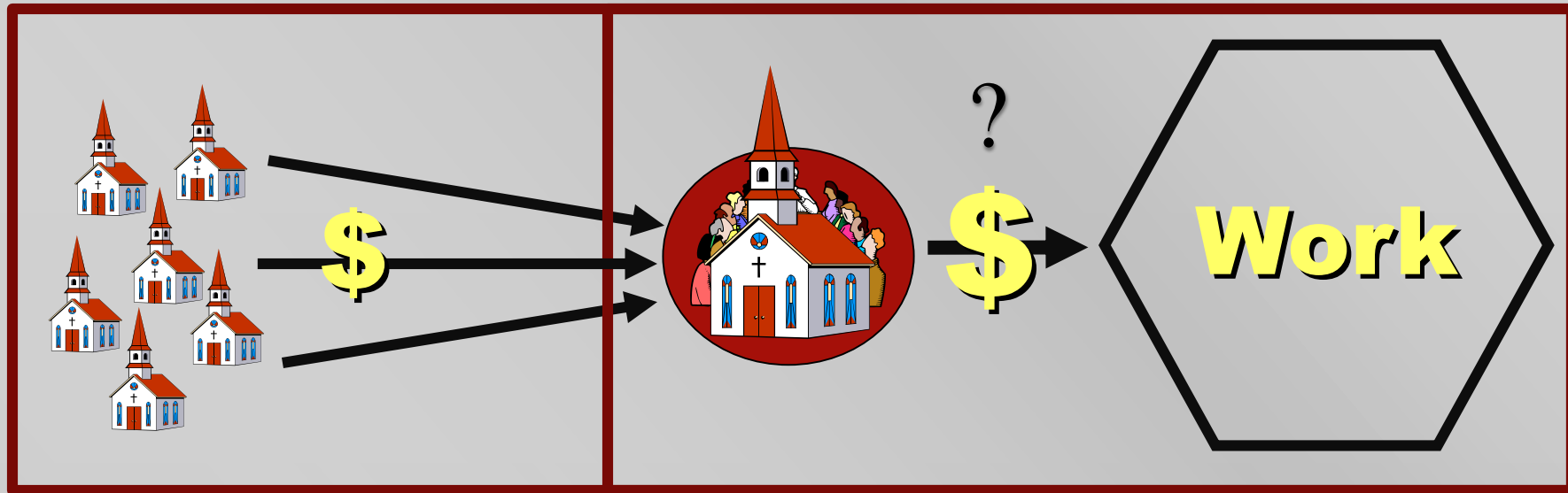
- “Sponsoring Church Arrangement: One congregation that especially **oversees a project**, such as a mission activity, in which other congregations **have an interest** and to which they **voluntarily contribute regularly**....The fact that **other churches contribute to a project that is overseen by the elders of one church** is the central idea.” (*We Be Brethren*, p. 255)

The Sponsoring Church



**Sponsoring
Church**
(Assumes
oversight)

Centralization of churches of Christ



**Sponsoring
Churchy
(1900s)**

David Lipscomb

- “All meetings of churches or officers of churches to combine more power than a single church possesses is wrong. God’s power is in God’s churches. He is with them to bless and strengthen their work when they are faithful to him...**But for one or more to direct what and how all the churches shall work, or to take charge of their men and money and use it, is to assume the authority God has given to each church.** Each one needs the work of distributing and using its funds as well as in giving them.” (**Gospel Advocate**, March 24, 1910)

1940s: The Sponsoring Church Takes Hold

- The SC became prominent after WWII.
- **Broadway church of Christ** in Lubbock, TX, assumed oversight of all efforts to evangelize Germany and sought funds from churches of Christ.
- **Union Avenue church of Christ** in Memphis, TN, assumed oversight of all evangelistic efforts in Japan.



Sponsoring Church Defended

- The Great Commission requires us to **preach the gospel to every person** in every place on earth
- There is no local church on earth that **can do this alone**
- Therefore, churches of Christ **must pool their resources** to fulfill the Great Commission

Sponsoring Church Defended

- Therefore it is the responsibility of each church to preach the gospel as far and wide as her resources will allow.
- There is no local church on earth that **can do this alone**
- Therefore, churches of Christ **must pool their resources** to fulfill the Great Commission

The gospel was preached to the whole world in the first century (Col. 1:6, 23) and the churches didn't pool their resources to do it.

The Issue Was and Is...

- Must we follow the N.T. pattern for preaching the gospel?
- May a local church choose to take upon itself a work larger than it can support, and to which all churches are equally responsible, and become dependent on other churches to fund this work?
- May churches do their work ***through*** a sponsoring church?
- May the elders of one church oversee any part of the work of other churches?



Biblical Problems with the Sponsoring Church



The Sponsoring Church

Seeks to Activate the body of
Christ under an Eldership

False Concept:

The Body of Christ is Composed of Local Churches



False Premise:

**The Body of Christ can Act as One
under a Sponsoring Church's Eldership**



False Concept and Premise:

The Foundation of Roman Catholicism

- **Roman** refers to the church located at Rome.
- **Catholic** refers to the world-wide body of Christ, believed to be made up of Catholic churches scattered throughout the world.
- The **Roman Catholic Church** is claimed to be the **body of Christ** functioning as **one** through the **oversight of the church at Rome**.

Truth: The Body of Christ is made up of
Individual Christians

Jesus



John 15:5-8; Ephesians 1:22-23



The Sponsoring Church
Is Not Authorized in the N.T.

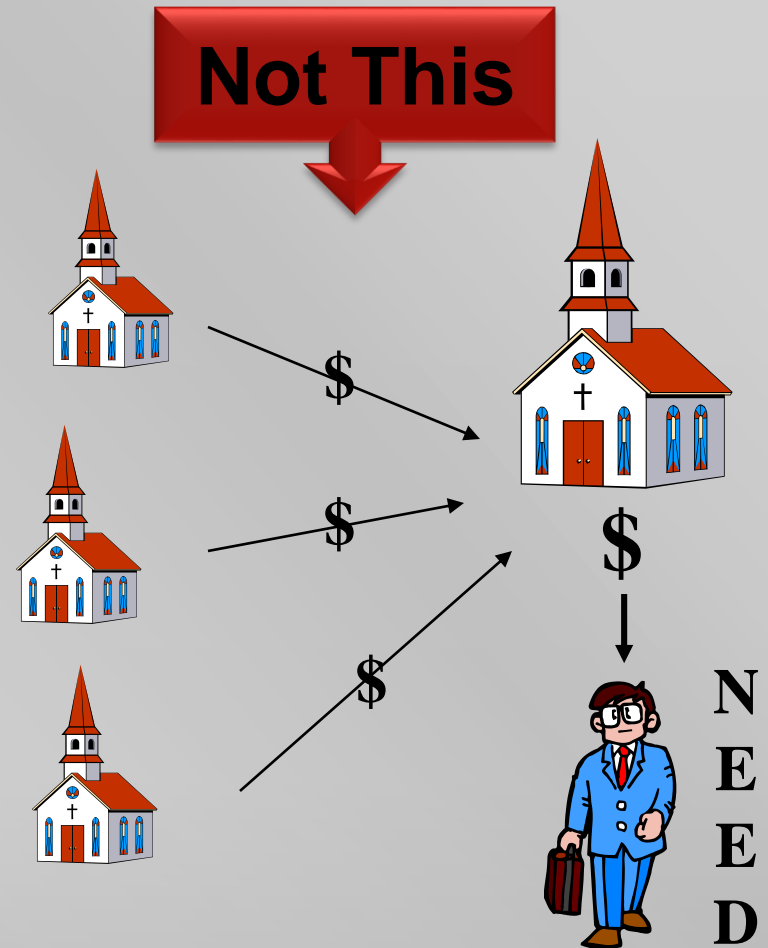
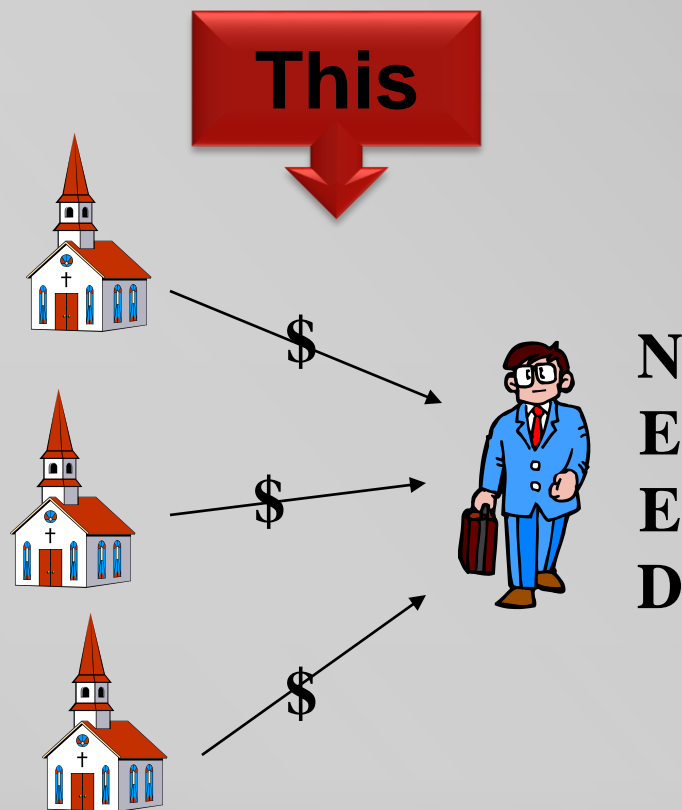
Without Authority

- There is no **express statement, direct command, approved example, nor inescapable conclusion** authorizing the sponsoring church arrangement.
- **Mark Roberts:** “The most basic objection to this sponsoring church arrangement was, and remains, that there is simply nothing said in scripture of churches ever being pulled together into such an arrangement. There is no pattern for this harness, no provision for how it is to be managed, or who is to oversee it. There is no ‘book, chapter, and verse’ for the sponsoring church arrangement.” (“Mutual Fund Christianity,” *Abundant Life*, Oct., 1996, 29:10:4)

The Creation of Man

- No church ever **assumed oversight** of a work **beyond its ability**.
- **Opportunity** (Gal. 6:10) + **Ability** (Acts 11:29) = **Responsibility** (2 Cor. 8:12)
- **E. R. Harper**: “A congregation has no right to build anything larger than it is able to support. It has no right whatever to bind any other congregation to any program of work of its own selection. Each congregation must retain its autonomy. Any effort that destroys the independence of a local congregation runs straight toward sectarianism, if not Romanism.” (via Britnell, “The Sponsoring Church,” p. 2)

No Church worked *through* another Church





The Sponsoring Church
Violates God's Limitations of Elders

Biblical Elders

- Every local church is to work to appoint elders to oversee its affairs.
 - Elders are to be established in **every** church – Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5
 - Each eldership must meet the **same qualifications** – Titus 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7
 - Each eldership's oversight is **limited** to the **flock of God which is among them** – 1 Peter 5:1-3
- **All elderships are *equally qualified* and *equally limited* in their scope of oversight and responsibilities.**

Larger than a Local Church

- A sponsoring church eldership assumes oversight over a work **larger than the local church**.
 - This is the point and design of the sponsoring church. It unites churches together to do a work far larger than one local church can do!
 - A **One Nation Under God** flyer proved this when it claimed, **“Christians deserve the opportunity to participate in something bigger than a budget, larger than the local work.”** (“Four Months Until the Deadline”)
 - Who is biblically *qualified* to oversee this? – 1 Pet. 5:1-3

A Work of “churches of Christ”

- **The Herald of Truth** was the work of hundreds of churches acting under the oversight of the Highland church of Christ eldership.
- **James W. Nichols:** “It is the largest radio efforts ever attempted by the *churches* of Christ. The entire work is under the supervision of the elders of the Highland Church, Abilene, Texas.” (*Preachers of Today*, 1952)
- **Where does the N.T. give a local eldership the right to oversee the work of more than one church? – Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:1-3**



Conclusion

- The sponsoring church arrangement has no biblical authority.
- There is no authority for...
 - A local church to **sponsor** a work beyond its ability to support and seek money from other churches to pay for it
 - Many churches **working through one church**
 - Elders **overseeing** the work of **more than one church**