Restudying the Issues of the 50's and 60's

by Bill Hall

A Historical Perspective

INTRODUCTION

The following three lessons were first preached on consecutive Sunday afternoons for the Pepper Road church of Christ in Athens, Alabama. They have been repeated many times. While we have revised the original text somewhat, we have tried to preserve the wording and sentence structure that is characteristic of extemporaneous public speaking. Hopefully the reader will overlook literary flaws.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the problems that created so much division during the '50s and '60s. It is an effort to help people see the real issue in each of the controversies discussed, to briefly point out some of the arguments presented on both sides of the issues, and to do so in a fair and respectful way.

It is our conviction that churches of the 21st century can fulfill their God-given responsibilities in benevolence and evangelism without institutional boards or sponsoring church arrangements. Greater dedication is the need, not centralized oversight; greater sacrifice, not more complex organization.

May the Lord use this material to promote better understanding among Christians to His glory. --Bill Hall

"CHURCH-SUPPORTED ORPHAN'S HOMES:

WHAT WAS THE ISSUE?"

It was a difficult time. I don't know that I could in any way picture for you, if you didn't live then, just how difficult that time was. Back somewhere in the mid-50s, in the pages of the Gospel Advocate, a quarantine was called for against all those who preached the gospel who opposed any institutional setup. That was about the time I started preaching. Meetings were canceled, churches were divided, preachers were fired. I see one of Irven Lee's daughters back in the audience; Brother Lee was one of them who was fired. He was one of the best men I ever knew. Families were divided in sentiment. It was such a difficult time.

Oftentimes when we go through issues like that, people are not listening to one another. We're so anxious to know what we're going to say next, or how we're going to answer the person, that we really don't listen. And I really think that what happened

when we went through those difficult times was that many people had no idea what the issue was. And so, what I hope to do today, and next Sunday and the following Sunday, is clarify what the issues were. What were some of the arguments back and forth? My purpose is to help us to look back and say, "Is that really what happened?" I'm going to be as fair as I can be in regard to just exactly what happened.

Now this afternoon, we'll talk about the orphan's homes. What was the issue in regard to the orphan's home? I think it just blows a lot of people's minds to even think that any church of Christ would have thought that you ought not to support an orphan's home. What is the issue?

What Was Not The Issue?

Well, let's talk about what the issue is not. The issue is not whether or not orphans should be cared for. That's easily answered. **James 1:27:** "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Orphans and widows are to be cared for. That was never one of the issues.

A second thing that was not the issue was whether or not the church ought to take care of orphans. That may surprise some of you, but when these problems first began, very few people ever even questioned whether the church should take care of orphans. That question didn't even arise until quite some time after these things began to be discussed. When these issues first developed and people began to voice objection to the orphan's home, nearly every church thought that it would be all right to support and take care of orphans even from the church treasury. I think that's surprising to a lot of people. Now the issue shifted and we're going to see that this became an issue. But that was not where the issue really lay.

The third thing I think we need to say, and I believe everybody knows this, that this was not a question of who was loving and caring and who wanted to help orphans the most. That's not what it was. Now in the heat of the time there were those who looked at some of us and said, "These people are just uncaring people. They just don't believe in caring for orphans." Well, of course that wasn't true and history has shown that we who objected to orphan's homes supported by churches were just as caring and loving and wanting to help as those who stood in favor of the institution. That's just not where the issue lay.

What Was The Issue?

Well, somebody asks, just what then was the issue? Well, the issue involved what I'm going to call "A Middleman Organization" standing between the church and the work to be done. You know in business, sometimes we talk about eliminating the middleman. What do we mean by that? Well, by the time a product leaves the factory, you've got to pay the delivery man, you've got to pay the wholesaler, you've got to pay the retailer, and by the time all of them get their money, you have paid too much; so go to the factory, and eliminate the middleman. It doesn't matter about business. But basically, what God did: He did not arrange for any middleman, any middleman organizations.

The issue was basically this: You have the local churches -- if I may picture them as being circles here -- and then you had a board of directors. We'll just call it an institutional board.

Now, this institutional board is made up of Christians from many different churches. You might have two or three from Birmingham, you might have one or two from Jasper, you might have one or two from Athens. All of these come together as a board. And the money goes from the churches to the institutional board which in turn, then, provides housing, supervision, food, and whatever is needful for the care of these orphans. There's the issue: this institutional board that provides oversight for the work of churches of Christ.

Now somebody will say, "What is wrong with that?" The answer is: There is no authority for this institutional board as an overseeing body for the work of churches. And those of us who objected just raised the question, "Where is the authority for this board that stands between the churches and the work that needs to be done?"

Several passages come to mind when we talk about the necessity of authority. **Colossians 3:17**: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Now, if this has the authority of Jesus Christ behind it, then we can do it in His name. But if Jesus has never authorized this, then we cannot do this in the name of Jesus. We can say we're doing it in the name of Jesus, but the only thing we can actually do in the name of Jesus is that which He has authorized. You cannot do anything in anybody's name unless that person has authorized that which is to be done. Another passage that was pointed out was **2 Timothy 3:16-17**: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Consequently, if this is a good work -- to have this board of directors providing oversight for the churches -- then you're going to find that it's in the Scriptures. That's what we pointed out. Another passage oftentimes used was 2 John, verse 9: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son."

So the question we raised was: Is this institutional board in the doctrine of Christ, or is this outside the doctrine of Christ? If it's in the doctrine of Christ, we need it. If it's outside the doctrine of Christ, then we cannot have anything to do with it. So the obligation falls on the shoulders of brethren who support this to show the scriptural authority by which this could be done.

I'd like to correct something that I believe is a misconception. Every once in a while I hear people say, "Well, you know, these people just don't believe that you have to have authority for what you do." I graduated from David Lipscomb College in 1958. I sat in the classes of Batsell Barrett Baxter. Some of the best material I ever heard on how to establish Bible authority came from the classes of Batsell Barrett Baxter at David Lipscomb College. He said the same thing I say. Those people who differed with me on this -- most of them believed that you had to have New Testament authority. Now I know that there were those who said that we do a lot of things that we don't have authority for. That didn't come generally from men who were leaders in the institutional

movement. Generally, that came from people who just talked off the tops of their heads. Those who were leaders really were looking for authority when they gave their arguments.

The Expediency Argument

Now there were two basic arguments given in order to try to justify this board of directors. The one that probably was given most was: The Bible doesn't say how to do it. People would say, "Now, the Bible tells us to help orphans but the Bible doesn't tell us how to do it. So, it's just like when the Lord told us, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," He didn't tell us how to go. So we can go by car, we can go by train, we can go by airplane, we can go by whatever means we need to. He didn't say how. Similarly, the Lord told us to care for orphans and he did not tell us how, so this institutional board is just a method by which the church can take care of its needy." That was probably the argument that we heard most and it was put in the realm of expediency.

But it was pointed out: No, we're not talking about methods, we're talking about organization. Providing food, supervision, etc. has to do with the methods of caring for orphans. The institutional board is the organization. After the money gets to the board of directors, they have to still determine what methods to use in order to take care of the orphan children. So it's not a matter of how, it's a matter of whether the how is to be done under the oversight of the elders or whether the how is to be done under the oversight of the board of directors. That was the question. Let me ask all of you: "Which have you read about in your Bibles, a board of directors as overseers of the work of the local church, or elders as overseers of that work?"

So the money goes to the board of directors -- now let me pause to say this: there was this little quibble: it was sometimes said that the board of directors never saw a penny of that money. Well, I suspect; I don't know how you do it -- but it is possible that the elders of this church never see any of the money that is contributed; it's counted, there is a treasurer, but the oversight is with the elders. I don't know whether any of these boards of directors ever saw the money, but the money was spent under their oversight. Here's where the oversight was.

Now, money is contributed and they have to decide how to provide for these orphan children. Now, suppose that we've got some children here -- let's just take it out of the realm of children -- let's make it any benevolent work of a local congregation. How is the local congregation going to provide for those that are in need? Well, if the people are mentally capable, then we might just give them a check. Do you know what else we might do? Let's talk about the Pepper Road church. Suppose you, for instance, had five "widows indeed". How would you take care of those widows indeed? Suppose they were not able to take care of themselves. You can give them a check, but they can't take care of themselves. Well, you might buy a house. You might find some good person to provide supervision. You might go to the grocery store and buy food every week. There are a number of methods that might be used. But these are provided under the supervision of the elders of the church. They do not give their money to an institutional board so that they can provide for these things. Do you see the difference between an organization and methods?

So it's not a matter of method whether it is done under the oversight of elders or whether it's done under the oversight of the board of directors. This is a question of organization. Either way, methods have to be determined. The methods need to be provided under the oversight of the elders, not under the oversight of an institutional board that stands between the churches and the work to be done. I hope that makes that point clear.

The In Loco Parentis Argument

Now there's another argument and it is quite an interesting argument, really. It's called the in loco parentis argument. Have you ever heard that expression? In loco -- in place; parentis -- in the place of the parents. Now, that wasn't just coined in regard to this discussion; that is an expression that you find in your dictionary. In loco parentis, in place of the parents. The argument basically went like this: You have an original home, and they say that the church can help that original home. Then the original home is destroyed. Parents were killed in a car wreck. Then you've got these little children. And they say that the orphan's home is a restored home. And the argument is: if the church can help the original home, why can't the church, out of its treasury, help the restored home? That was debated over and over in regard to this question. So that the institutional board becomes the in loco parentis. The institutional board becomes the parents, as it were, of this restored home. Do you get the argument?

Now, several things were said about that. First of all, it was pointed out that even those who argued this would not accept the logical conclusion of that argument, because they would say that if there was a Catholic family in the community, and that Catholic family was in need, that the church could help that Catholic family. Whatever you think about that, that was their belief. But now, wait a minute, suppose the Catholic home is destroyed. Mother and Daddy are out one day and an accident occurs and the Catholic home is destroyed. Then the Catholic church's orphan's home would be the restored home of that original Catholic home and therefore, by the very argument that is being made, if the church can help the original Catholic home, then the church can actually be making contributions to a Catholic orphan's home or whatever denominational orphan's home may be out there. Well, no, they were hardly willing to accept that, and you can understand that. The point was made.

Now, the second question that was raised: Is this really a home, or does this institution exist in order to build a home? One of the things that was done in some of this discussion was to read from the charters of some of these homes. For instance, the charter of the Schultz-Lewis Corporation. Here's what the charter says: "The name of the corporation shall be the Schultz-Lewis Children's Home and School." And then it goes on to say that "the purpose of this corporation is to build, operate, and maintain an orphan's home." Then it's not a home itself. This is not a home, the purpose of the board was to build a home.

Now, the third thing that was pointed out was that if these are really the parents (and many of these are reasonably wealthy men), are not the parents supposed to pretty well exhaust their own resources before they call on churches to provide financial help?

Now, the real key to me in all of this is that the church doesn't help "homes" anyway. Here is Jay Ogden down here and Litha; they've got twin boys. Suppose Jay and Litha were in need. They fall into some financial problems. Let me ask you a question: Who has the first obligation toward Jay and Litha? I'll tell you who, it's Jay's father and mother and Litha's parents; that's where the first obligation is. Now, suppose that Jay's parents and Litha's parents -- suppose they've done everything they can and the church then has a responsibility to help. What does the church do? The church doesn't make out a check to the Jay Ogden home. The church helps a needy saint named Jay Ogden. Now Jay Ogden can fulfill whatever his responsibilities are. But the idea of the church helping a home -- I don't read anything in the Scriptures about the church helping a home. What I do read is the church helping the needy saints to provide for their responsibilities.

Those were the two major arguments: the Bible just doesn't say how; and we tried to point out that no, it's not a matter of method, it's a matter of organization that we are saying is unscriptural. And the other is that the orphan's home is a restored home; the directors are the in loco parentis, and we pointed out, no that won't do. And those were the basic arguments.

The Shift In Issue

Now, in time there came a shift in issue. I do not know exactly when this took place. But somewhere down the way, somebody raised the question: Does the church really have the responsibility to take care of orphans in the first place? Doesn't the Bible talk about the church helping needy saints? Now, that was an issue that arose after the institutional issue had been fought for quite some time.

Now, in answer to that, let's get our Bibles and turn to Acts, chapter 2. I'm going to do this very quickly, but I want to point out how many times it's the needy saints, it's the brethren, it's any among them, who were being helped. Look at **Acts 2, verse 44** -- now, I'm just tracing the benevolent work of the church through the Scriptures. **Acts 2:44**: "Now all who believed were together, and had all things common." Go to the 4th chapter, look at **verse 34:** "Nor was there any among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet and they distributed to each as anyone had need" -- None among them that lacked. Go on to the 11th chapter of Acts. Read **verse 29:** "Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea." Go on to Romans, the 15th chapter. So far we've seen "among them", the "brethren". In **Romans 15**, look at **verses 25 and 26**: "But I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem." Go on to **1 Corinthians 16:1 and 2**: "Now concerning the collection for the saints [incidentally, that's exactly the same collection mentioned over in **Romans 15** - BH], as I have given orders to the churches in Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me." So the very passage that we talk about in our giving on the first day of

the week is in reference to the needy saints in Jerusalem. Go to **2 Corinthians,** chapter -- well, we could go to chapters 8 and 9 -- but go to **chapter 9, verse 1:** "Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you;" And we could just keep on going: it's the saints, it's the brethren, it's any among them. Those are expressions used.

And so the question was raised, "Here we've been discussing all this time about orphan's homes and whether the institutional board is scriptural, and really, does the church have any responsibility for the care of orphans anyway? Let me just say right here that there were differences among those who stood against church support of orphan homes. There were differences about this question. I'm not going to state a name because I don't have anything in writing to prove this and the man I am referring to is dead now. But one of the leading men among those who opposed institutionalism, one of the leading men said to me one time that he believed the church had an obligation to orphans and he made his arguments with me. I didn't agree with it, but at the same time it was interesting that he was in the forefront of the institutional battle, but differed on the other question.

And in some ways, this shift of issue was unfortunate. In other ways, it was fortunate. It was unfortunate in that it took the focus of the people away from the institutional issue and put it on something else. And as you would imagine, from that point on, most of those who were going to debate this question wanted to debate the limited benevolence issue instead of the institutional issue. So all of a sudden there was a shift. We'd had discussion after discussion after discussion over this institutional board, but all of a sudden there's a shift, and most of the discussion then focused on whether the church could help orphan children. But that was a shift in emphasis that a lot of people in this generation do not realize took place. And of course that was a more emotional issue. This shift of issue took the eyes of the people away from the institutional board, an unscriptural organization, and caused them to focus on whom the church should help from its treasury. This left the churches vulnerable to similar institutional arrangements that might arise in the future.

Now, it's fortunate that it happened in that it forced many of us who never had done it before to say: just whom does the church have a responsibility to help? And I'm glad that I was forced to do that. It forced me to go through the Scriptures, just as I have just now gone through the Scriptures, and to say, "Just who is to be helped by the church?" Anytime we're forced to look into the Scriptures regarding any question, that of course is good. But the issue changed. A lot of people never understood that shift of issues.

Now to the question: Should the church be helping non-Christians? To me, there are only two disputable passages in regards to that. Keep your place here at 2 Corinthians, and go to Galatians, chapter 6. Here's the first of the disputable passages and I want to state again that I want to be as fair as I can be in this discussion. But **Galatians 6:10**: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." People read this and conclude that the church has an obligation to all people, but especially to those in the house of faith. But if you look back, starting in verse 1, I think it becomes very apparent that we're not talking about what churches do here; we're talking about what individuals do. Verse 1, for instance: "Brethren, if a

man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load. Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Notice the individual nature of all this down through **verse 8.** "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Now, here's a man, reaping and sowing, and the exhortation is not to be weary in doing good; in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore -- [What does therefore do? Sends us back to all that's been said, doesn't it?] "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

To what does the therefore point back? -- "as a man sows, he shall also reap." A man. We're not talking here about congregational action. But somebody says, "But the pronouns of **verse 9** are plural." Well, yes, they are plural, applying to a plurality of individuals. Consider a similar use of a plural pronoun: "We must all appear" (listen to this) "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad" **(2 Cor. 5:10).** We're not going to stand before the Lord in judgment as a congregation and yet he said "we" must all. We. Individual application. So it is in **Galatians 6:10.** The word "we" points back to the individual principle of a man's sowing and reaping. Church action is not under consideration.

The other disputable passage is **2 Corinthians 9:13**. Before reading this verse, we need to consider the context. Second Corinthians, chapter 9, is dealing with the contribution that the churches of Macedonia and Achaia are making for the poor saints in Jerusalem (we have already referred to this contribution). Contributions for whom? The poor saints. What poor saints? The poor saints in Jerusalem. Now, with this in mind, let's read verse 13: "While, through the proof of this ministry, they [the Jerusalem saints -- BH] glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them [the Jerusalem saints -- BH] and all men." But the word "men" in your Bibles is in italics. This means that the word "men" has been supplied by the translators. Several translations have no word there at all. These translations leave it to us to supply any necessary word. Considering this, you fill in the word: "and for your liberal sharing with them [the Jerusalem saints -- BH] and all _____." Do you not see the likelihood that Paul is thinking of "all saints"?

I was recently given a quote that should help us to see this point. The quote is from R.V.G. Tasher:

"The Corinthians' contribution is for the poor saints at Jerusalem only. But the fellowship which was expressed in it was, the apostle assures, felt for all Christians." (Tyndale Commentary, p. 129).

Pulpit Commentary provides an interesting quote concerning a similar passage, **Hebrews 12:14**: "All men -- that is, as required by the context, with all the brethren -- "When one looks at the context of **2 Corinthians 9:13**, he will be driven to the same conclusion, that "all men" refers to "all the brethren".

We surely agree that this would be at best a doubtful passage on which to base a practice within the church that does not have the support of any other scripture.

Somebody says, "But this is really more of a historical thing; we don't hear about orphan's homes anymore." I would suspect if I were to ask for a show of hands: how many people have heard anything very much about the church support of orphan's homes in the last ten years, there would be very few hands go up. There are still some churches that do it, but someone might be asking, "Why worry about all this?" While the orphan home issue is almost a past issue now, there are other institutions asking churches for help that function under an institutional board. This is true, for instance, of David Lipscomb University, Freed Hardeman, Mars Hill over in Florence, or other schools that we could name. Batsell Barrett Baxter, before his death, wrote a tract called "Questions and Issues of the Day", and here's what he wrote: "Some who will agree that the church can contribute to an orphan's home are not convinced that the church can contribute to a Christian school. It is difficult to see a significant difference. As far as principle is concerned, the orphan's home and the Christian school must stand or fall together." This tract argues for the church support of schools, based upon acceptance of church support of orphan homes.

If we lose sight of the institutional issue, and begin to see the whole orphan's home question as a question of whether the church should help orphans or not, then we leave ourselves so vulnerable to this kind of thing happening again. In the mid-1800s, it was a missionary society. How is a missionary society set up? It is with an institutional board providing oversight for the work of churches of Christ. Then we come to the mid-1900s and we go through a battle again and how were the orphan's homes set up? Exactly the same way. And then there's the battle about whether the church can support schools or not. How are the schools set up? In exactly the same way. If we don't keep our attention focused on the institutional board as the primary issue, it leaves us vulnerable to similar institutions that are going to arise. What will be the institution of the mid-2000s? I don't know! But let us understand that there is no authority for churches of Christ to do their work under the oversight of an institutional board. Churches of Christ do their work under the oversight of the elders of each local church.

So let's go back. Is the question of whom the church should support an important question? Yes, that's an important question. Any Bible question is an important question. But let's not allow that question to turn our attention away from this issue of an institutional board standing between churches and the work to be done.

I'm reading a book now (I haven't completed the book) called Reviving the Ancient Faith. I don't know whether any of you have seen that book or not. It was written by a man named Richard Hughes who is a professor at Pepperdine University. And this man makes no bones about it. He says the churches of Christ have developed through the years into a denomination. He doesn't question that, and he's a part of that denomination. And he writes from an historical viewpoint as to what has happened in

churches of Christ. He refers to the institutional battle that took place (that's in chapter 10 and I have read that). And one quote from it, which is an interesting quote -- (No, he's not infallible, but this is a historian who is writing as objectively as anyone could write. He uses terminology that I would never use. But he sure is writing objectively.) -- he says, "The mainstream churches of Christ, time and time again, characterized those who opposed institutionalism as unfaithful to the heritage. The truth is that the dissenters [that's us -- BH] stood squarely in one set of the footprints in the 19th century Churches of Christ. And by the time the battle over institutions was complete, it was the mainstream, not the dissenters, that had removed itself almost entirely from its 19th century roots." Now, I don't like to think of myself as having 19th century roots. I want to know that my roots are in the Scriptures. But what he is basically saying is, that really it was those who opposed the institutional arrangements who really stood for the old "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent" concepts that were preached so thoroughly back in the 19th century. To me that's a very interesting statement from a historian who would say he doesn't agree with me. But that's his analysis of what took place back then and what has taken place since then among churches of Christ.

Well, I hope that clarifies what the issue was. Now, you might not have been able to follow all the argumentation, but at least I think you know what the issue was. I hope so.

Now, next week we're going to look at the sponsoring church arrangement. We will consider the Broadway church in Lubbock that became overseers of all the German work. Also the Herald of Truth -- what were the objections to the Herald of Truth? That seems like a strange thing. Wasn't that a great program? Why would churches of Christ, any churches of Christ, have objections to the support of the Herald of Truth? We'll be talking about that next Sunday afternoon at 3:30 and hopefully we can have a good meeting then.

Let's turn in our songbooks to the number that Matt has chosen. Obviously our purpose in all of this has not been to talk about what a sinner needs to do to be saved. And if you ask me, "What kind of preaching do you like to do best?", I like to preach on the atonement; I love to talk about Jesus Christ and His death for us and the atonement He made with His own blood by which we can be saved. We have to get on some of these other things sometimes; but I love to talk about the grace of God extended through Jesus Christ our Lord and His death and suffering on our behalf. And today, you must believe in Christ, you must place your trust totally in Him. You put your faith in Him, repenting of your sins, confessing Him, and when you're buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him, you then are ready to walk in newness of life, forgiven in Jesus Christ with your sins remitted. And you certainly have that opportunity this afternoon as we stand and sing the song.

"THE SPONSORING CHURCH ARRANGEMENT:

WHAT WAS THE ISSUE?"

by Bill Hall

I can't say enough about the encouragement it is to me to see your continued interest in this effort that we're putting forth. Your willingness to come and study with us -- it means so much to me. When this was planned, I thought we could educate those who come as to what really look place back in the '50s and '60s. But I just didn't know how much interest there would be. Your presence truly means a great deal to me.

As has been suggested, we're talking about some of the differences that arose back in the '50s and '60s that brought about division among churches of Christ. Many people never knew what the issues were about. One of our problems, when controversies arise, is that we don't listen to one another. We're so busy thinking about what we're going to say next or how we're going to answer this person that we really don't listen to what he says. And consequently, a lot of people knew there were problems but they didn't really know where the real issues lay in regard to those problems.

It was a difficult time. I'm repeating what we said last week, but I think we need to do that. It was a terribly difficult time. Anybody that didn't live back in those days and didn't go through those things just could never imagine how difficult they were. A quarantine was called for by the Gospel Advocate of anybody who objected to institutions. I don't think I stressed that enough last week. That was not just a matter of somebody writing to the Advocate and saying, "Well, you know, maybe it's a good idea if we just quit using these brethren.'" It was more than that. It was a call for quarantine with the total approval of B.C. Goodpasture, who was the editor of the Gospel Advocate.

Last week I made mention of a book, Reviving the Ancient Faith, by Richard Hughes, who is a professor at Pepperdine University. He mentions this quarantine as being a very important event that took place among churches of Christ. Because of that quarantine, meetings were canceled, preachers were fired. I mentioned Irven Lee specifically last week as just one of the best men I ever knew. He was fired, and no longer could preach for that congregation. Churches divided. A lot of mistakes were made. I didn' say this last week, but I want to say it this week: I made some mistakes. I was so anxious for everyone to know as a young preacher, that I was sound; that I was among those ready to fight the battle for truth. I made some very serious mistakes. I look back and would change some things. Not anything I taught. But some tactics that I used. I don't know, but it may be that nearly every preacher back in those days looks back and says, "I wish I had done this different or that different." But it was a difficult time. Now we can look back with cooler heads in a more objective kind of a way, and ask the question, "What was that all about?"

Last week we talked about the orphan's home, and where the real issue lay in regards to the orphan's home controversy. The real issue lay within what I am calling "a middleman organization", a board of directors that stood between the churches and the work to be done. The money went from the churches, but the work was overseen by an institutional board.

That was the issue. A lot of people never knew that. They couldn't understand why anybody would object to helping orphan children. "How could anyone object to a church helping an orphan's home?" they would ask. The objection was to an unscriptural organization standing between the churches and the work to be done. If somebody should ask, "What was wrong with this?", the answer is: there just was no authority for that institutional board. You will remember that we discussed that last Sunday.

Now, today I want to get into the question of the sponsoring church arrangement. When you talk about the sponsoring church arrangement, you just erase the words "institutional board" and you put in here instead a "sponsoring eldership".

Now, many people who could see the error of the institutional board had a difficult time seeing the error of this. In fact, if I may make a personal mention, I remember my father, as soon as he realized what the organizational arrangement of the orphan's home was, immediately saw the error of that because he said, "The institutional board is an unscriptural organization; there's no authority for this institutional board." But then when he saw this, he said, "But wait, this is a scriptural body of people. How could that be wrong?" He understood when it was pointed out that, while this was a scriptural body of people -- that is, an eldership -- it was an eldership, a scriptural body of people, being put in an unscriptural role. The elders had become overseers of a work of many churches of Christ to which all of these churches were equally related.

Sponsoring Elderships At The End of World War II

Now I think in fairness we need to say that there had been sponsoring elderships through the years on a very small basis, more or less on a local basis. But right at the end of World War II, there was a tremendous interest in missionary efforts and especially missionary efforts in some of the very nations that we had defeated in World War II. And so the Broadway church in Lubbock, Texas, became interested in evangelizing Germany. And what they said to all the churches was, "You send your money here, and the elders of the Broadway church will take on the oversight of evangelizing Germany." Some of you may remember, Otis Gatewood was the man that was sent to Germany under the oversight of the Broadway elders in Lubbock. So the German work was done by churches of Christ, but overseen by the elders of one church of Christ, the Broadway church in Lubbock.

About the same time, there was interest in evangelizing Japan. And so one of the churches in Memphis, Tennessee, Union Avenue, took on the evangelization of the work in Japan. All the churches sent their money to that eldership and that eldership then for all of the churches took on the responsibility of evangelizing Japan. One eldership overseeing the work of many churches.

Somebody says, "What's wrong with that?" Well, the thing that's wrong with it is: there's no authority for one eldership to oversee the work of many churches of Christ.

Let me remind you of some scriptures we used last week. **2 Timothy 3:16 and 17**: "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." If this is a good work, then you would be able to establish it on the basis of Scripture, because Scripture furnishes us to every good work.

Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." You can't do anything in the name of anybody unless he's authorized it. You may say you're doing it in somebody's name, but you can't do it in his name unless that person has given his authority behind it.

2 John verse 9: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." If this is in the doctrine of Christ, then let's do it. If this is not in the doctrine of Christ, we must not go beyond the doctrine of Christ.

Now, let me add to that. Turn with me to **1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 1.** 1 Peter, chapter 5, gives us a very definite statement concerning the extent of oversight of elders of any one church. Begin with **verse 1 of 1 Peter 5**: "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." Now back to verse 2, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers." Overseers of what? Shepherding what? "The flock of God among you."

The elders of the Pepper Road church have no oversight whatsoever outside of those who make up this congregation and the work of this congregation. They have no oversight of anything beyond this. It's the oversight of the flock "among you". Now in keeping with that, I think most of us are familiar with Paul's statement to the Ephesian elders in **Acts 20:28**: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Now you have a flock. What flock do you think he was talking about? The Ephesian flock. The Ephesian elders were to take oversight of that flock, but the Ephesian elders had no oversight of anything beyond the activities and work and people who made up that flock.

Now, there's no way we can look at this arrangement and say that the Broadway elders in Lubbock, receiving funds from all of these churches of Christ and taking oversight for them for all the work in Germany, were limiting themselves to the work and activities of the flock of God which is among them. They become more than that when they do that. There's the objection. That's the issue. We need to make sure that we see what

the issue is. It was the same with the elders of the Union Avenue church in Memphis. They took on more than what God had given them as elders.

The "One Nation Under God" Campaign

The most recent really big program along this line was the "One Nation Under God" campaign. The Sycamore, and most of you will remember this, the Sycamore church in Cookeville, Tennessee wanted to send out literature to every home in the United States, and their original goal was to collect 17 million dollars. Do you remember that? Then they brought it down to 10 million dollars. Where was this 10 million dollars going to come from? Well, churches all over the country were asked to send so much money. I was living in Florence at the time, and the Shoals area really got caught up in this, and I think I would not be mistaken in saying that at least a million of those dollars came from the Shoals area. Then the next year they were going to evangelize Canada and the Caribbean Islands, and then the next year another and another.

Now, is that really an example of one church simply taking the oversight of the activities of that local church, or was it more than that? One thing I know is, I was down in Florida, and I passed by a church building that said, "Church of Christ, One Nation Under God". Now that's a city in Florida, that's not Cookeville, Tennessee. Obviously that church in Florida thought that the "One Nation Under God" ministry was a part of its work. They sent money to this Cookeville church for this work to be done. But all of this work being done, including their work, is being overseen by another eldership.

Somebody interestingly pointed out that if some of the evangelistic efforts of some of the churches can be done under one eldership, then why could not all of the evangelistic efforts of all the churches be done under one eldership? Why couldn't we just place all the evangelistic efforts of churches of Christ under one eldership? Why would we not be able to do that?

But somebody says, "Didn't churches in Macedonia and Achaia send to the church in Jerusalem?" Weren't there occasions in the New Testament when funds went from one church to another church? Yes. In fact, we'll be talking about that more in just a few minutes.

There were funds sent from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to the church in Jerusalem. But the church in Jerusalem was in need. That's where the need was. Now the Broadway church in Lubbock wasn't a needy church; it was a big church. In fact, I suspect at that time it may have been the biggest church in the United States, with a huge contribution. The Union Avenue church in Memphis was not a needy church. They had all the things they needed. Jerusalem was a needy church. Now, if we're going to make Jerusalem a sponsoring church, then what you would have is: Jerusalem wouldn't have any needs at all. Jerusalem would be able to take care of all of their needy without any problems. But money would be sent to Jerusalem so the elders at Jerusalem could be the sponsoring church for all the needy in the eastern

Mediterranean territory. That would make Jerusalem a sponsoring church. The churches of Macedonia and Achaia were sending to a church in need.

Bible Cooperation

"Surely churches can cooperate", someone may be thinking. In fact, many referred to these issues as "questions about cooperation". Churches that objected to institutionalism were referred to as anti-cooperation churches. Yes, churches can and must cooperate. But there are two types of cooperation: collective and concurrent.

Let's illustrate these two types of cooperation. I live in Rogersville, Alabama in the Comer subdivision. Suppose things were to get somewhat unsightly in the area and an appeal were to be made to clean up the subdivision. There are two ways all the families could cooperate. They might all bring money to Jerry, my next door neighbor, and have him to clean up the subdivision. That would be "collective" cooperation. Or, Jerry could clean up his own yard; we could clean up ours; Steve, across the street, his; Dorothy, down the street, hers; etc. But next to Steve there is an elderly widow who is unable to clean up her own yard. She is needy, dependent. So we who are able and independent go over and provide help for the dependent widow. There is no pooling of funds. There is no central oversight. Each cooperates by doing his own work. This is "concurrent" cooperation. This is Bible cooperation.

The Herald Of Truth

Now, obviously the sponsoring eldership that created the greatest division was the Herald of Truth, where the elders of the Highland church in Abilene took the oversight of the Herald of Truth radio and television program. A huge number of churches sent to the Highland church. An interesting outgrowth of the sponsoring church arrangement that I had never thought of was brought to my attention recently in the book that I have already mentioned by Richard Hughes, Reviving the Ancient Faith. Whenever you centralize influence and control, you open the door for a lot of problems. Richard Hughes is a professor at Pepperdine University. He and I would be poles apart in our thoughts concerning how to use the Scriptures. But he made a point about the Herald of Truth that I never thought of. He said in his book that the anti-institution people missed this, and that the Herald of Truth people missed this; it was such a subtle thing that people were not aware of what was taking place. But he says that when the Herald of Truth began, the greatest influence among churches of Christ shifted from the brotherhood papers to the Herald of Truth. People all over the country were supporting it, and people all over the country were listening to it. He further says that a major change took place in the preaching on the Herald of Truth. He says that 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. It was convincing people regarding the idea of restoring New Testament Christianity. That was the first teaching on the Herald of Truth. But 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. Now, he said, all of the preachers of the country were listening to Herald of Truth, and as the Herald of Truth made that shift, the 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. You might hear the plan of salvation given, but that's about it.

And let me tell you something. There are some (I'm not going to say a lot. I believe most of the preaching I hear is good preaching) churches of Christ right now that are considered to be opposed to institutionalism that rarely ever get any sermons that are distinctive at all from what you could hear in denominations all over the country. And I want to make sure you hear me and hear me well. If you attend worship at some church where you never hear the question of instrumental music, or baptism for the remission of sins, or the Lord's Supper every Sunday, or the one true church -- if you never hear teaching along some of those distinctive lines, you need to get out and you need to go somewhere else. You'll lose your conviction. If you don't hear it regularly, you'll lose your conviction. We have to give our support to the kind of preaching that helps people see that we're different from the denominational world around us. Be sure you get that point. That was a shift, and the shift was led by a centralized program. This is not me saying this; this is Richard Hughes, a professor, giving a history of churches of Christ in America.

What Is The Pattern?

Now we ask the question: What is the pattern? When you read your Bible, the funds from churches always just simply went to where the need was. They never sent their funds to some "middleman organization", whether it was an institutional board or a sponsoring eldership. The funds just always were sent to where the need was. Now, let's get our Bibles and just take five minutes or so and look at that very quickly.

Go to **Acts, chapter 4**. Start with **verse 32**: "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." At this point there was only the church at Jerusalem. The apostles were acting apparently in lieu of elders (there were no elders mentioned until **Acts 11**). People were bringing their money, laying it at the apostles' feet, so distribution might be made within that local church. A problem arose, you remember, in **Acts 6**. Some of them said, "The

Grecian widows are being neglected in the daily distribution." The apostles didn't reply, "We need a central organization and we'll send our money to this central organization so they can see that this is done right." No. They appointed seven men, within their number, who could see after this matter. It was all done within the framework of the local congregation. The money simply went to where the need was.

On to Acts, **chapter 11.** We've already read this but we'll read it again. **Acts 11,** starting with **verse 27**: "And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders..." What elders? The elders where the need was. They didn't send it to some "middleman organization", some board of directors, or some wealthy large eldership somewhere. They sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. The money went to where the need was.

Romans chapter 15. Paul in **Romans 15** talks about his plans to go to Spain, but he says in **verse 25**, "But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem." Where did the money go? Churches of Macedonia and Achaia sent to the elders in Jerusalem. Somebody will say, "Now wait a minute. This doesn't say anything about the elders in Jerusalem." Well, go to **Acts, chapter 21**. A study of the chronology of the life of the apostle Paul helps us. This collection of funds from Macedonia and Achaia for the saints in Jerusalem took place at the end of the third missionary journey. Now keep that in mind. All this took place during the third journey of Paul. Now when we get to **Acts 21**, the third journey ends. At this point, Paul is coming into Jerusalem. What is he coming into Jerusalem with? The money that has been collected from these churches for the poor saints. Who's with him? Representatives from all those churches are with him. Now they're coming into Jerusalem. Look at **verse 15**: "And after those days we -- we -- Who's in the number? Luke? Yes, Luke's in the number. He must have joined them at Philippi. "We packed and went up to Jerusalem. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them one, Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. And when we had come to Jerusalem..." Who is this "we" that came to Jerusalem? Paul and his company with this money for the poor saints in Jerusalem. That's what the last of the third journey is about. So they came into Jerusalem. "The brethren received us gladly, and on the following day, [the very next day after they got to Jerusalem -- BH] Paul went in with us to James and all the elders were present." The day after they arrived in Jerusalem with these funds from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia -- the day after they arrived in Jerusalem, they met with the elders. Now look at verse 19: "When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry." What had God done among the Gentiles through his ministry? Numbers of things. But one of the things He had done is He had brought them to make this contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem, and

when they arrived in Jerusalem, they met with the elders. This money went to where the need was.

Philippians 4, let's go to it quickly. Look at **verses 15 and 16:** "Now you Philippians know also that at the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities." The church in Philippi sent to Paul. The money went to Paul where the need was. The money just always went where the need was. That is the New Testament pattern.

What should we do today? Find out where the need is and send directly to the need, not to some "middleman organization". If we do this, we might make some mistakes. We're going to err in judgment all along. But we will be staying with the New Testament pattern. What is the issue? The issue has to do with "middleman organizations" standing between supporting churches and the work to be done. It may be a board of directors, as with the orphan homes, or an overseeing eldership, as with the sponsoring church arrangement. But wherever you have a "middleman organization", you have left the pattern of sending directly to where the need is.

All right, you've listened well. Next week I want to get into the question of the fellowship halls, kitchens, other things that churches of Christ are doing now that they were not doing when I was a young man. I am amazed at some of the things that are going on now, at some of the practices taking place among many churches of Christ. But you have listened well; we'll talk about that next week. And if you can come back and study with us that question, we would appreciate your presence very much.

And please, let's all have the best attitude we can have. I'm certainly not wanting to just cram something down people's throats and I hope you can see that. I do want to reason with you and help you to see why I take the position that I take in regards to these things.

Maybe there's somebody that needs to obey the gospel. What we've talked about this afternoon and last Sunday afternoon is trying to keep the local church free of anything for which there is no authority. Surely that appeals to you. We want to stay with Christ. We want to stay with His Word. And if you want to be a Christian, then what you need to do is pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ. Put your trust in Him, believing in Him, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Christ, being baptized, buried with Him. And then become a part of a local church that is determined to pattern itself according to the teaching of the New Testament. Then serve the Lord faithfully unto death. We invite you to come. Come to Christ and obey the gospel as we stand and sing.

"KITCHENS AND FELLOWSHIP HALLS:

WHAT WAS THE ISSUE?"

by Bill Hall

I don't know how to thank you enough for the opportunity to come and deliver these lessons on these Sunday afternoons. It has been a very challenging experience for me, and I hope the lessons have been challenging to you. To see the number of people who have come each Sunday afternoon to visit with us, to listen to these lessons, and to study them and consider them has been an encouragement to me. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

We are on our third of these lessons. Two weeks ago we talked about the question of the orphan's home, what was the issue? And then last Sunday, the sponsoring church. We included in that study questions concerning the Herald of Truth and the more recent "One Nation Under God" campaign. What was the issue?

This one is a little different in some ways from the other two in that this one has gained acceptance for the most part in my own lifetime and in my own memory. There were church-supported orphan's homes when I was born. There weren't many of them, but there were a few. There were some sponsoring church arrangements when I was born. They occurred on a rather small scale, but they existed then. But the general acceptance of dining areas and kitchens in the buildings owned by churches of Christ has come, not only within my lifetime, but within my memory.

In 1947, M. Norvel Young, on the lectureship in Abilene, encouraged churches to build new buildings, to build them in good locations, and to include in their buildings, among many other things, a large fellowship room and cooking facilities that would be near this large fellowship room. He followed that up with some articles in some of the papers that were circulated, lending his encouragement to the idea of building fellowship halls and kitchens. Now, that didn't catch on very well. I remember when I was in high school, one of the churches in the city where we lived built an addition on their building, and indeed, they put in it a place for eating. But they felt a little pressure about this and defensively said, "We're also going to have a Bible class in this room." That's the way they excused themselves. But they felt pressure in doing that. And I just couldn't believe that a church of Christ would do that.

In 1954, I went to school in Montgomery. I attended meetings in churches all around Montgomery. To my knowledge, there was not a church in Montgomery in 1954 that had a fellowship hall and kitchen in its building. Now, such might have existed, but I didn't know it if it did. For a number of years while I was in college and after I graduated from college, I would indiscriminately either lead singing in meetings or preach in meetings for churches that supported institutions. I was not aware of it if any of these churches had a fellowship hall and kitchen in its building. Few churches had them in those days. But toward the end of the '60s and on into the '70s, churches that planned new buildings would include a fellowship room and kitchen in their plans. It became an accepted practice. But that is something relatively new among churches of Christ, and I think many people are not aware of that.

Now we raise the question, what was the issue? On what basis did many object to this practice?

What Was Not The Issue?

Let's first of all ask the question: What was not the issue? The issue never was whether one could eat something in a building owned by the church. There were people who said, "Why, if these people are right, a mother couldn't even give her baby a bottle of milk in the building." Well, of course we never said anything like that. That was never the issue.

Second, the issue was not whether or not the building is sacred. Now, I'm not sure how we are using that word "sacred". The building is certainly built to be used for spiritual purposes. If it is not to be used for spiritual purposes, then it has no right to exist in the first place. But at the same time, if we're talking about the brick and mortar, the roof, the carpet, and other materials that go into the building - No, they are not sacred. That was never the issue.

Let me say again, that when differences arise, and it doesn't matter whether it's over these things that we've been talking about, or over divorce and remarriage, or whatever, one of our problems is we don't listen to one another. We either already have our minds made up, or we are thinking about what we are going to say next, or how we're going to answer this person, that we really don't listen. And consequently, a lot of times, we try to answer an argument before we even know the argument. We try to answer an issue before we even know what the issue is. And we make a very sad mistake. I may have been guilty of that. Any of us may have been. But we need to listen to one another.

What Was The Issue?

What was the issue? Well, here basically is what the issue was: Is there New Testament authority for the local church to plan and provide materially for social activities in its program of work? There's the issue. Let's read it again. Is there New Testament authority for the local church to plan and provide materially for social activities in its program of work? Now there's the issue.

I want to emphasize what we have emphasized throughout this series of lessons: Is there New Testament authority? Is there authority for that institutional board that stands between the churches and their work with the institutional board taking the oversight of the work for the churches? That was our question two weeks ago. Is there authority for one eldership to take the oversight of the work of a thousand churches? That was our question last week. We keep coming to the question of authority.

We've quoted all these Sundays **2 Timothy 3:16 and 17:** "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." If it is a good work, you're going to find the authority in the Scriptures. If you cannot find the authority in the Scriptures, it's not a good work no matter how good it looks to us.

Consider **Colossians 3:17**, which we have just sung: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." But you can't do anything in someone's

name unless that person has authorized it. **2 John, verse 9:** "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." Is it in the doctrine of Christ? Can we do it in the name of Jesus? Is it authorized by the Scriptures? Those are the questions that we must constantly ask.

I have before me a list of activities that brother Franklin T. Puckett gave in the Arlington meeting concerning what a local church, a local congregation, ought to do. And I've just borrowed that. I have looked over it and agree with it, and I don't know of anything else myself that a local church is to do. Let me just give you some of the things that a local church is authorized to do.

He says, **first of all**, to have an assembly of the saints. And he gives us a Scripture, **Hebrews 10:24 and 25**. I might add **Acts 20:7.** The local church is to provide an assembly for the saints. Now, in keeping with that, the Pepper Road church has a comfortable and commodious building. Where is the authority for this in which we're sitting right here today? Well, it is in the fact that the church is to arrange for assemblies of Christians.

Then he says, **number two**: In such an assembly, the saints are to observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week; **Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 11:33.** All right, in keeping with that, the church here has provided a table, bread plates, a tray with glasses, and buys bread and fruit of the vine. Why? Because that's one of the things that the church is to do.

Number three: They are to sing psalms unto the Lord and with spiritual songs teach and admonish one another; 1 **Corinthians 14:23, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16.** All right, in keeping with that, the church here has furnished song books. Where?s the authority for the song books? We answer: One of the things the church is to do is to arrange for singing. They arrange for Tony to lead the singing. Where's the authority for that? The church here is providing for singing.

Number four: They are to pray together.

Number five: They are to preach and attend to the teaching of God's word; **Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:26**. In keeping with that, a pulpit is provided and an overhead projector as an aid for our teaching. There is a board here and a public address system. What's that for? To enable us to efficiently teach the word. Over on this other side there are some classrooms with various types of equipment there to help in the teaching of the word. Where is the authority for these classrooms? It's in the fact that the church is to provide for the teaching of the word, and so this church has furnished an auditorium that is comfortable and commodious and classrooms where the teaching of the word can take place.

Number six: They are to lay by in store on the first day of the week as they have been prospered to finance their collective responsibilities; 1 **Corinthians 16:2.** I don't see them, but somewhere around here I guarantee you there's a hat or something that can be passed around to collect some money. Where's the authority? It is the command to give of our means.

Number seven: They are to support the preaching of the gospel. I suspect you've got a treasury, and you not only support Bruce, you support men in other places. I think I know some of them that you support. Where's the authority for that? Well, that's exactly what the church is to be doing.

Number eight: They are to provide for the fulfillment of needs of certain destitute saints; A**cts 4:34, 35, 2 Corinthians, chapters 8, 9** -- we went through all those two weeks ago. And we made the point two weeks ago that in keeping with the care of destitute saints, the church, under the oversight of its elders -- let me emphasize that -- the church under the oversight of its elders, could buy a house, pay somebody to supervise, buy groceries. Where would the authority for that be? It is in the command to care for the destitute saints. Now, they wouldn't send it to a board of directors, who in turn would take the oversight, but under the oversight of the elders they could furnish such things. Are you getting the point? When we see what the Lord has authorized the church to do, then that gives us the authority for providing whatever is needful for the efficient carrying out of what God has told the church to do.

Now, if we could just find the Scripture where the church is to plan and provide materially for social activities, then, in this building, we need to provide a room for eating together with a kitchen nearby. How did Norvel Young say that? A large fellowship room with cooking facilities near this room in order to facilitate this particular activity. But if the authority is not there for this activity, then the authority is not there for building the nice fellowship room and the kitchen to go with it. There's the problem. So in order to have our kitchen, and in order to have the large fellowship room, what we've got to find is the authority for the local church to plan and provide materially for social activities in its program of work. That's what we've got to find. The issue is simply this: Do we add a ninth activity to the eight we have just listed, the ninth being that the local church is to plan and provide materially for social activities? If so, we have authority for kitchens and dining areas. If not, there is no authority for them.

The Water Cooler

Well, somebody says, "Surely somebody came up with some arguments that would favor that." Yes, that's right. Now let me just say that, as far as I'm concerned, at least the first argument should never have been taken seriously. But some tried to compare the fellowship halls and the kitchens with a water fountain. Those of us who were living back at that time will remember an article, and it was circulated widely, on "Willie the Water Cooler". Does anybody remember "Willie the Water Cooler"? It was a satire type of thing. Willie the Water Cooler in this article was getting very concerned because Willie had learned that some of the people thought it was wrong to eat in the church building, and if some of the people thought it was wrong to eat in the church building, they might decide it was wrong to drink in the church building, and therefore Willie the Water Cooler might be moved out of the church building. That was the argument they made. They missed the point.

The point is not whether we can drink some water in the church building. The point is: Can we plan and provide materially for social activities as a program of the local church's work? Lynn Headrick, my brother-in-law, who, of course, passed away a little over a year ago, made a very astute observation when he said, "When we find the

church planning social activities around the water cooler, then we'll take the water cooler out." Now that gets right to the issue.

May I make another point with you: Nothing is right (and let me make sure we say this right) -- nothing is right because it is consistent with something we're already doing. A thing is right or wrong on the basis of whether it agrees with this book. Do you know how churches get into apostasy? They don't go into apostasy in one giant leap. They take just a little step, sometimes it's only a half step, in the wrong direction. And then the first thing you know, they get to thinking, "Well, I don't see any difference in that and this." And so they take another step. "And I don't see anything different about this and this." And they take that step. "Well, what's the difference in this and this?" And the first thing you know, each thing they do, they justify on the basis of something they have already been doing. That is not how you establish authority for anything. Everything we do in the Lord's work must be established on the basis of what the Scriptures teach, not on whether it's consistent with something we've already been doing. If the water cooler argument proves anything, maybe it proves that the water cooler ought to have gone out. But I don't think it is the issue. That was not a serious argument.

Love Feasts

Now, there were at least two serious arguments that were made.

One had to do with the love feasts that the Bible talks about. If you have your Bible, turn to **2 Peter, chapter 2.** You remember that the book of 2 Peter is written to a great degree to combat false teaching that had arisen, and apparently these false teachers were just as corrupt as men could have possibly been. And in describing them, Peter says, **verse 13 of 2 Peter 2,** they "will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you." While they feast with you. Now turn to the book of Jude. The book of Jude is almost a repeat of **2 Peter 2**. Look at **verse 12**. In **Jude verse 12,** the writer says, "These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves." Now, some looked at that and said, "Now, here are love feasts that people had back in the first century, and that's basically what we have in our fellowship halls, so here is the authority for it -- it is in the love feasts."

In the first place, I don't know that anybody knows what these love feasts were. It's interesting to me that Albert Barnes just says it's the Lord's Supper. And he makes his argument as to why this just has reference to the Lord's Supper. I don't know that that's correct. Others have said that they were dinners that wealthier people in the church gave for the sake of the poorer people in order to show their love for those who were poorer in this world's goods. That may be correct. I don't know what these love feasts were. The one thing I know is, there is nothing in **2 Peter 2 or Jude** that suggests that they were activities planned by the church. And I seriously question that they were the same thing that's taking place in the typical fellowship halls and kitchens of our day. But that is one of the arguments that was made. One thing is certain: We do not have enough information concerning love feasts for them to serve as authority for kitchens and dining rooms in our buildings.

Fellowship

Probably the argument that most of us who are sitting here are wondering about is simply: "What about fellowship?" Doesn't the Bible teach that the church is to have fellowship? Indeed!

The Bible does teach that the church is to have fellowship. But what a lot of people have overlooked is the fact that the word "fellowship" in the Scriptures has to do with spiritual activities. I have before me a photocopy out of a book that I have which contains every Scripture that uses the Greek word for fellowship, koinonia. An interesting thing about this is: not one time does it have reference to social fellowship. Here really we're getting to the basics: fellowship. What does the word fellowship mean? Sharing, communion, participation in, joining together. The very definition itself suggests that we have to decide what we're "joining in", what we're "sharing".

One interesting thing is the word "fellowship" in the Scriptures -- that is, the Greek word -- is used for a business partnership. Turn to **Luke, chapter 5.** Let me show you this usage. Do you remember the time that Jesus told Simon to launch out into the deep, and let out the nets for a catch -- "a draught", I believe the King James version says -- and they caught so many fish that their nets began to break? Now look at **verse 10 of Luke chapter 5**, "and so also were James and John the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.-- Partners. This is the same word that is translated "fellowship" in other places. Business partnership. They were having fellowship in the business of fishing.

Now, another usage of "fellowship" is social fellowship. This is where we smell the doughnuts and coffee. Friday night a bunch of us got together and had some elk stew, and I tell you it was all right. We had a good time together. We socialized together. We shared in the eating of elk stew and a few other things that some of the people brought. Are you aware that the Bible never uses the word "fellowship" in reference to such social activities?

Now, another use of "fellowship" has to do with spiritual things. Every time, every time the word is used in regards to the church's activity, it is always this. And to my knowledge, there is not one Scripture in the Bible that uses the term "fellowship" in regards to eating elk stew, or whatever socializing we do together. Not one Scripture that uses the word "fellowship" like that. Let me show you, for instance, **1 Corinthians 1:9** (We'll not turn to these). We were "called into the fellowship of His Son." In **Philippians 1:5**, Paul commends the Philippians for their "fellowship in the gospel." Fellowship in the gospel. He says in **Philippians 2:1**, "if there is any fellowship in the Spirit..." **Philippians 3:10**, he wants to know the "fellowship of the suffering of Christ." Notice none of that has anything to do with having a good time together. It has everything to do with our relationship with God and our relationship with one another as Christians.

1 John, chapter one. I want to turn to that one with you. Look at **1 John, chapter 1.** Here is the fellowship that the Bible emphasizes. If we could ever learn this, then we're going to realize that this term "fellowship hall" is really a misnomer. It may be for social fellowship, but it's not for the fellowship that the Bible talks about. Now, **1 John 1**,

beginning with **verse 1**. John says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life -- the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us -- that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." John says, I am writing these things concerning Jesus Christ that you might have fellowship with us. I want to tell you, there's not a thing in the world you can read in 1 John that has anything to do with doughnuts and coffee and elk stew. It has everything to do with our sharing together in spiritual things. And then he says our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

What has happened to us, brethren, when every time we hear the word "fellowship" we immediately think in terms of fun and games and eating and drinking together? What has happened to us that we see that, every time we see the word "fellowship", when it's never even used in the Bible that way?

No, you cannot find the authority for a local church, as a part of its program of work, planning and providing materials for social activities in the word "fellowship" in the Bible, because it doesn't use the word "fellowship" for that.

May I make this point? The church at Pepper Road has a fellowship hall. Let me say that again. The church at Pepper Road has a fellowship hall. You're in it. We're in it right now. We are sharing in worship to God, in the study of His Word. We are learning what John wrote to us, that we might have fellowship not only among ourselves, but that we might have fellowship with the apostles. And indeed, our fellowship is with God and with Jesus Christ. We must learn that this is the kind of fellowship that the Bible talks about.

May I make another point? The Pepper Road church has a fellowship meal in this fellowship hall. It's called the Lord's Supper. Turn to **1 Corinthians, chapter 10.** Look at **verse 16**: "The cup of blessing which we bless, it is not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" What is the word communion? Same word. You know, sometimes we just refer to the Lord's Supper as the "communion". I don't know how we got started doing that. That's the same thing as saying "I'm going to go prepare the fellowship for Sunday." That's what the word communion means. And what that passage is saying is when we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine, we are having fellowship, communion, with the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Now, let's read further, **verse 17:** "For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." Oh, now, that's not just communion with the body and blood of Christ, but there's communion among all of us within the one body. And let me tell you, that one body is not a local church. That one body is God's people. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are having not only communion with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but we are having fellowship around a fellowship meal, if I may use that term, with all of God's people, all over the world, who can legitimately eat of that bread and drink of that fruit of the vine. There's one bread and one body, and we all partake of one bread. You may have five or six

pieces of bread. At New Georgia, we may have four pieces of bread. But there is one bread, one bread, and all of us partake of that. What a fellowship!

One of my favorite passages in the Scripture is that passage that talks about us all sitting together in the heavenly places in Christ **(Eph. 2:1-7).** It is as though this building were one huge building that is constantly expanding, and we look over here and we see Paul and Peter and Stephen and Barnabas and Lydia and Dorcas, and we see faithful Christians we've known in our lifetimes who've already passed on, and there are the faithful of our present generation, and all of us are sitting together. And the central figure with whom we sit is Jesus Christ. And we have a fellowship meal; it's called the Lord's Supper. And what a fellowship! And then somebody comes along and every time he sees the word "fellowship", he thinks in terms of having a good time. What we have done is just missed the whole principle of Bible fellowship. But somebody says, "Doesn't the Bible talk about people eating together and enjoying one another?" Yes. Before the church was ever established, I remember Jesus went to a feast that Levi gave -- Matthew. A great feast. Publicans and sinners were present. I remember another time when Jesus went to a feast, and apparently Martha gave the feast. Lazarus sat at the table, **John, chapter 12.** You might want to look at **Acts, chapter 2.** Here were Christians eating together. In **Acts chapter 2, verse 46**, we read concerning the activities of some of those early Christians. We are told, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." May I pause to say that the term "breaking bread" may sometimes refer to the Lord's Supper, while sometimes it may refer to eating a common meal. You have to let the context determine. In this case, we're talking about a common meal. But notice they broke bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. But nothing here would imply that it was part of the church's program of work to provide for that.

Consider also **1 Corinthians, chapter 11.** The church at Corinth was not observing the Lord's Supper as Jesus had instructed. It seems that there were two problems. First, they had turned the Lord's Supper into a common meal, and, second, in their divided state, some were eating while others had nothing to eat. There was total disregard for the poor among them. In dealing with this problem, Paul writes, "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you." You have houses to eat and drink in, Paul said. "But Paul is correcting abuses of the worship", someone may be thinking. That's right. But he did not say, "You should wait until after the worship for the church to provide for eating and drinking." He said, "You have houses for these activities."

Turn with me to **1 Timothy 5:16.** Let's bring all this, hopefully, to a conclusion. **1 Timothy 5:16:** "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows." Now, I'm going to take that and enlarge on it. I've got a widowed mother. Now, whose responsibility is that widowed mother? Well, I'll tell you what, it's not the church's responsibility. It's my responsibility, and my two sisters' and Sewell's to take care of my widowed mother. Charlotte has a widowed mother. Whose responsibility is Charlotte's

widowed mother? Not the church's responsibility. It's the responsibility of me and Charlotte, and Charlotte's three sisters. Let me do this so the church won't be burdened.

May I just enlarge on that a little bit? Suppose that I want my children to be educated in math and English. Let me provide for the education of my children. Don't let the church be burdened with that, so the church can do the wonderful work that God has given the church to do.

Suppose I want my children to have recreation. Suppose there are not only my children, suppose there are other young people within the group, and I want them to have good wholesome recreation. Let me provide recreation for my children. Don't let the church be burdened with that, so the church can do those things that God has given His church to do.

Is there a place for social activities? Indeed. I enjoyed that good elk stew we had the other day. I wouldn't want to eat it every day, but that was good! But let me provide for hospitality. Let me provide for social events. And if others want to join with me in that, that's fine. But let not the church be charged or burdened with providing for social activities, so the church can do the things God has told His church to do. It's just that simple. And nowhere in the Scriptures is there anything to indicate that the church is to provide materially and plan for social activities. That is the issue. That's where it lies.

Let me close this series of lessons with this. We are either going to take this matter of restoration of New Testament Christianity seriously or we're not. We are either going to take the idea of "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent" seriously or we are not. If we are not going to take the concept of restoring New Testament Christianity seriously, then by all means let's quit giving it lip service. Let's just forget the whole thing and do anything we want to do, whether we have Bible authority for it or not. But, on the other hand, if we are really serious about restoring New Testament Christianity -- if we are really serious about making the local church according to the pattern given in the New Testament -- then let's rid ourselves of these things that have been introduced into the church for which there is no New Testament authority. Let's go back and become what the Lord intended His church to be. It's one way or the other. We can't have it both ways, talking about restoring New Testament Christianity while accepting all kinds of innovations for which there is no New Testament authority. It just won't work.

You have listened well. I appreciate it. And I hope you've understood where the issue lies. That's been our goal. I hope you have been able to focus on the issue, two weeks ago, last Sunday, and today, to know what really caused all the divisions that took place in the '50s and '60s and created so much trouble among families and among churches -- preachers being fired, churches being divided; it was a sad time.

If there's someone in the audience who's not a Christian, another thing this church has provided is a baptistery -- a place where you can be baptized -- and clothes that you can change into so that you can obey the simple command of baptism. If you have repented of your sins, and will confess your faith in Christ, and be buried with Him in

baptism, you can be forgiven of sins, and you can go home a Christian rejoicing in the Lord. Or, if you've fallen back, why not return to the Lord today as we stand and sing.