

THE REFLECTOR

BULLETIN OF CHURCH OF CHRIST, FULTONDALE, ALABAMA

"Church" (Gr.-EKKLESIA) is an assembly called out for a purpose. It is more than just an incidental gathering, as some have tried to make it. The idea of a deliberate calling for a set purpose seems to be inherent in the very word--if scholarship and contextual evidence can be trusted. Even the "assembly" (EKKLESIA) of Acts 19 that turned into a riot was called together by Demetrius, a silversmith, later to be dismissed by the townclerk. The "church of God" is God's assembly called out for a purpose.

The Work Of The Church

"Church" (Gr.-EKKLESIA) is used of God's people at three different levels: (1) ALL of God's people EVERYWHERE (Heb. 12:23; Mt. 16:18); (2) God's people at a given location (1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11); and (3) a physical assembly of Christians (1 Cor. 14:28,34).

Jack obeys the gospel, thus is saved. This makes him one of God's called out ones. That assembly of called out ones is called "church" (Acts 2:47). This assembly never physically meets together nor do representatives from around the world or even nation meet on their behalf. It has no organization nor function.

Jack, as one of God's people, is obligated to join with other Christians in his vicinity (if such there be) to jointly work and worship. This arrangement is called the "church". Paul joined himself to such an arrangement in Acts 9:26 ff. This local arrangement is overseen by elders (as soon as men are qualified and appointed) who are a part of that local assembly. (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 1:5). This arrangement has a common function with a common fund to support it. (1 Cor. 16:1,2).

Jack and others of the local church arrange for the "whole church (to) come together into one place" at various times for various purposes. It must arrange for the church to meet every Sunday for the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), as well as to collect funds for its work on that day (1 Cor. 16:2). They may meet at any time to teach, sing, pray. They come together at times to discuss business (Acts 6:1-6), to discuss controversies (Acts 15), to discipline a brother (or sister) (1 Cor. 5:1-5). Each of these meetings may be

called "church". (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:28,34; 15:22).

WHICH DO WE MEAN?

When we talk about *the work of the church*, we are talking about the collective work of God's people at a given location--THE LOCAL CHURCH. The church, meaning God's people everywhere, has no such work. Only the local church is given work to do and a means of doing it. The church is restricted in what it can do (Cf.- "Let not the church be charged" - 1 Tim. 5:16).

RESTRICTED TO SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

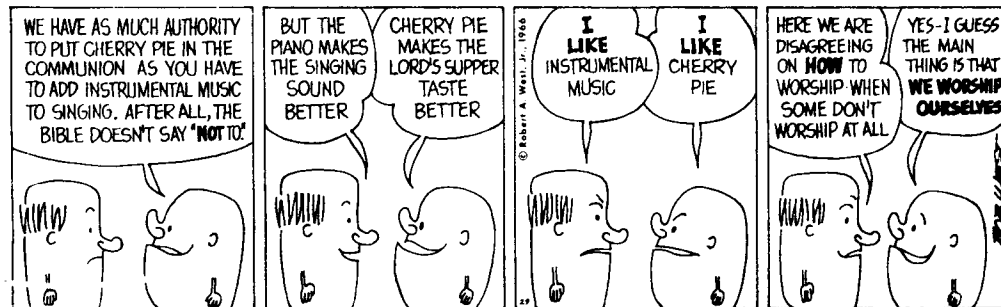
The local church exists by divine decree and is governed by divine authority. Divine authority is exhausted in the Scriptures. They are complete (Jn. 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; Jude 3). They are restrictive (1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:8,9; Col. 3:17; Rev. 22:18; 2 Jn. 9; 1 Tim. 1:3).

Authority is expressed in *generic* and *specific* terms. God's command to Noah to build an ark of gopher wood had both specific and generic elements. It was specific as to the kind of structure (ark), kind of wood (gopher), overall measurements (300 x 50 x 30 cu.) and number of stories. No other structure, wood, measurements nor number of stories would have done. But, as to tools, means of gathering materials, length of individual boards, etc., the authority was generic.

God told Abraham to "take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen. 22:2) No other offering, land, nor mountain would do. Verse three tells of Abraham's obedience. He "saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son..." Now, neither the ASS nor the YOUNG MEN are specified in God's command, but were authorized by generic authority. God, in a generic way, authorized SOME MEANS of getting the offering to the place to be offered. There was not "just as much authority" for offering a red heifer on that occasion as there was for the ass simply because neither of them were specifically

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8,9; 1 Tim. 5:16).



RESTRICTED FROM CERTAIN INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

God makes a distinction between individual work and church work. (1 Tim. 5:16). There is a difference between money that is "thine own" and "in thine own power" and that which has been contributed in- to the common fund (Acts 5:4).

There is a difference in one's "own supper" and the "Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:19,20,22,33,34). There is a difference in how one raises his own funds and the way the church raises its funds (Eph. 4:28; 1 Cor. 16:1,2).

mentioned. One was within the scope of the command, while the other would have been an addition (heifer)--another kind of offering.

God tells Christians to sing. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Hence, God specified the kind of music to be used to praise and worship Him. No other music will do. Instrumental music is another kind of music. But, at the same time, the command is generic as to the number of verses, number of parts, how many songs, how to get the pitch, written or memorized, etc.

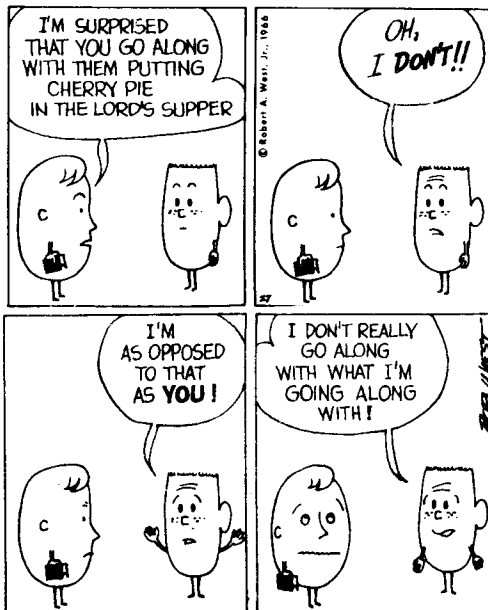
Both generic and specific authority comes to us in three forms: (1) Direct statement or command, (2) example, (3) necessary inference. Jesus appealed to all three forms: (1) Command -- Matt. 4:4,7,10; (2) Example -- Matt. 12:1-6; (3) necessary inference -- Matt. 22:31-33. In the Lord's supper we have all three illustrated: (1) Command ["This do... - 1 Cor. 11:25]; (2) Example ["Upon the first day of the week when the disciples...- Acts 20:7]; and (3) Necessary Inference [EVERY first day is inferred like EVERY Sabbath was inferred in the O.T.]. Some have tried to avoid the binding force of examples by finding some that are not binding today. But the same can be done with commands. There are direct commands given in the N.T. that are not meant for universal application ("Tarry ye in the city..." - Lk. 24:49). Hence, one use sound methods of interpretation and application to determine the binding force of passages -- regardless to the form they take. Just because one may find a command or an example that is obviously not meant for universal application does not mean that none were so intended! In fact, one should be prepared to show some compelling reason why any New Testament passage is not for universal application. But, the form of the passage (command, example or inference) has nothing to do with the question of its universal application.

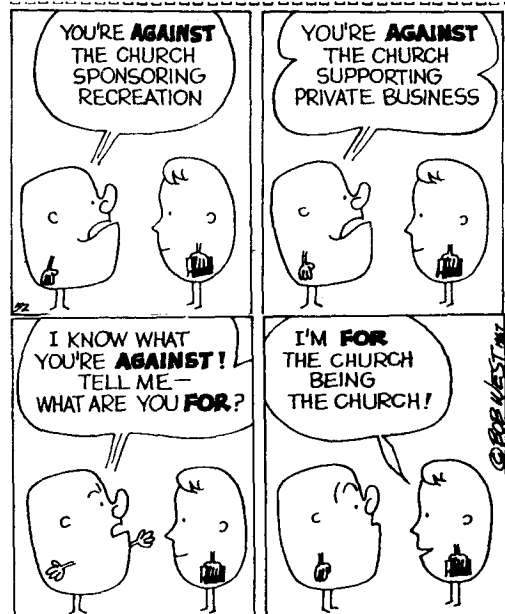
RESTRICTED TO SPECIAL INTEREST OF SAINTS

The local church engages in the work of MAKING SAINTS, or preaching the gospel. (1 Tim. 3:15; Phil. 1:5-7; 4:15-16); EDIFYING SAINTS (Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 14:13-17; 14:26); and RELIEVING SAINTS (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 11:29; 2 Cor.

God sanctions other arrangements for man in the world other than the church. When one becomes a Christian he does not lose his needs and responsibilities in those other areas (cf. 1 Cor. 7:31). Jack, a carpenter, a husband and father, an American, a good neighbor, a golfer and a Moslem obeys the gospel. Jack can still build houses, attend to family needs, be a good citizen, socialize in the neighborhood, play golf with the boys -- but he has a new spiritual relationship. He is a Christian, a member of the church. He can no longer be a Moslem. That relationship must be severed. However, his new relationship (church) is not designed, by the Lord, to consolidate all of Jack's other activities under the church. He should continue to be a good father (family activity) without getting church involved in child-rearing and/or discipline. He should continue building houses (economic activity) without involving the church. He can continue to be an American (civil activity) without involving the church. He can con-

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tinue being a neighbor (social activities) without getting the church involved. He can continue to golf (recreational activity) without getting the church into that business. The church is Jack's spiritual relationship. He must understand that the church was not intended to replace the state, the home, the business, the community, nor his golf team nor vice versa.

God authorizes certain areas of work for the church, including all the aids needed to carry them out. We do not have to have specific mention of a church "meeting house" -- but we do need the scripture that would include it as a place to meet. (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7). We do not need specific mention of a "baptistery", but we do need the passage that would include it as a place to baptize (Mk. 16:16). We do not need specific mention of charts, chalk boards, or projectors--but we do need the scripture to teach or preach which includes tools of teaching.

We do not ask out "liberal brethren" for a specific mention of a kitchen, gym, baseball team or a general welfare office -- just the passages that authorizes the AREA OF ACTIVITY for the church that would include such things. If one finds the verse for the church to furnish social activities, then the kitchen or "fellowship halls" would be included. If one finds authority for the church to furnish recreation, then a gym and/or baseball team would be included. If one could find authority for the church care for the needy of the world at large, then a general welfare office would be fitting. But until someone comes up with the

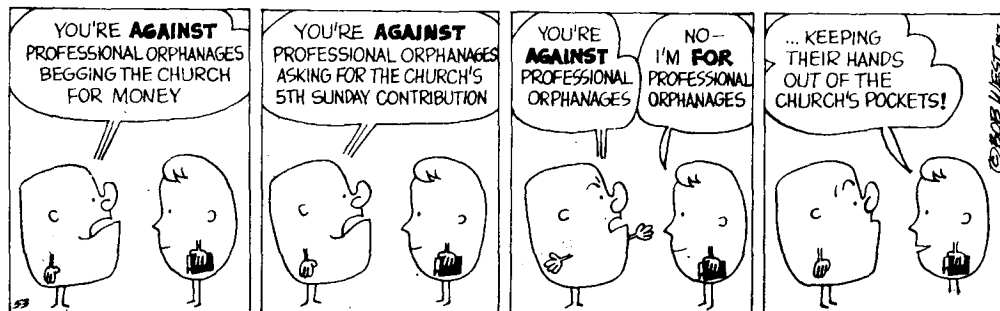
authority (command, example, or necessary inference) that would include these things, we must limit the church to those things for which we have authority. Furthermore, we must oppose all efforts to inject into church work anything not either specified in a passage or can be included under a generic term.

IS THE LOCAL CHURCH EQUAL TO THE TASK?

The local church is adequate organization to do those things it has been authorized to do. It is the only organization to do the things it should do. It is just as wrong to inject another kind of organization to do the work of the church as it is to inject another kind of activity into its work. God gave the local church particular works to do and a particular organization to do it -- the local church itself. I had just as soon add another kind of music (a piano) to worship, or another kind of activity (politics) to the work as I had to add another kind of organization (either for evangelism, benevolence, or edification) to do the work. The local church is God's authorized organization to do the work He has assigned the church to do. It is equal to the task. --Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.



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Marginal Notes

It seems that about the worst sin that one can commit against society these days is secrecy. Maybe it is a reaction to the Watergate cover-up, I don't know. Anyhow, It seems that folks are bringing their vices out of the back alley on to Main Street. Just about any sin, short of murder is accepted -- just so long as one doesn't hide it. Of course, no sin can be hid from God, but we kind of wish that some of those characters would spare me and mine some of the details. After all, there are some things that are done in secret that are shameful to speak of (Eph. 4:12).

So you don't agree with what the preacher says. Now that is fine, IF he needs disagreeing with. No one should accept what a preacher (or teacher) says just because he says it. Preachers can be, and often are, wrong about things. But, we need to be careful that we do not use our right to disagree to feed our vanity. There is a kind of "independence" that is born of arrogance--an attitude foreign to the character of a Christian. (read 1 Pet. 5:5). It causes a fellow to disagree just to show his independence of thought. One can love being his "own man" to the point of arrogance. It is not enough to say, "I don't agree with that", one should know why he disagrees and be prepared to tell why. True, one may hear something that he is not ready to accept, but he does not either have to commit himself to agreement or disagreement until he has had an opportunity to study the matter closely. Be careful lest, "I don't agree", just becomes an escape valve for ignoring a matter that you had rather not seriously consider in the first place.

All of this reminds us of an incident reported to me several years ago, while in a meeting the the Texas panhandle. It seems that the "liberal" brethren didn't want folks in town to get them mixed up with the "anti" brethren. So, they bought a spot at the end of the "anti's" radio program which said something to the effect that "the views expressed on the preceeding program do not necessarily express the views of the church of Christ meeting at _____". So, after about a week of this the brother on the radio program came on, not with a sermon, but with nothing but the reading of Scripture without introduction or comment. Yep, you guessed it, they came on with "the views expressed on the preceeding program...."

We have little respect for the fellow who will test the winds to see what brethren think before taking a stand on a religious issue. There are those who are afraid of going against "orthodox" and/or "traditional" views. It is easier to drift with the flow than to swim against it. On the other hand, we are afraid of brethren who seem to love to swim up stream. If a position is considered "orthodox" or "traditional" they will take the opposite view. They even pride themselves in being free of "orthodoxy" and "traditionalism". Truth is not determined by who or how many hold it. It is not determined by "orthodoxy" or a lack of it. It is not determined by "traditional" concepts (that is, what brethren have generally believed, taught, or practiced for years) nor non-traditional views. It is determined by "what saith the Scriptures". --Editor

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