

Church Cooperation in Evangelism:

Is it Scriptural for One or More Congregations to Send Money from Their Treasuries to Another Congregation for Evangelism?

Introduction

The subject of how churches may cooperate, especially in the area of preaching and spreading the Gospel has been somewhat mishandled for a good number of years by many preachers and congregations of the Lord's church even till date. Many have suggested that there is absolutely nothing wrong for churches of Christ to pool resources together and jointly carry out a mission work (e.g. nationwide broadcast; TV or Radio evangelism). Others believe that a congregation can "help" another congregation in doing her work of evangelism by sending money from their treasury to the congregation sponsoring that evangelism in support of such work; hence, the idea of the sponsoring church. Are these positions harmonious with or contrary to the teachings of the New Testament? A sponsoring church is a church which receives fund from another church or churches to oversee and control the spending of all in preaching the gospel (Willis, 1980). Usually, the work over which the sponsoring church have assumed oversight is a work which is much greater than it alone is financially capable of accomplishing, and one to which all churches assume some responsibility, thus, she appeals to churches across the nation to send money to her in order that they may finance the sponsored programme (Moore, 1968, p. 21). It is the aim of this writing to examine whether this practice is scriptural or not.

Origin of the Sponsoring Church

It would interest every reader to know that the idea of the sponsoring church did not originate from the Holy Bible. It started around 1867 and became prominent after the Second World War when some brethren in America desired a better way to preach the gospel in Europe; and they came up with a pattern other than what God has laid down in His Holy Book thereby circumventing the simple and perfect plan of God on church organization. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to state from the outset, that, ever since the emergence of the sponsoring churches sometimes around 1867 when the first one was birthed (Willis, 1968, pp. 48 & 71), faithful brethren such as David Lipscomb (1831 – 1917) have been opposing it because of its strangeness to the New Testament pattern on how congregations may cooperate in doing the work of the Lord. In the Gospel Advocate edition of March 24th, 1910, Lipscomb said;

"All meetings of churches or officers of churches to combine more power than a single church possesses are wrong. God's power is in God's churches. He is with them to bless and strengthen their work when they are faithful to him. A Christian, one or more may visit a church with or without an invitation and seek to stir them up to a faithful discharge of their duties. **But for one or more to direct what and how all the churches**

shall work, or to take charge of their men and money and use it, is to assume the authority God has given to each church.” (*emp. mine*).

Earlier in 1890, Lipscomb had referred to all such concentration of control of the means, money and power of many churches under the authority of the elders of one church as “destructive of the activity and true liberties of the church and degrade and dishonor those of the other” (Lipscomb, 1890, p. 295). Similarly, Srygley (1931), irritated by this whole idea of the sponsoring church noted that elders of a church has no authority to take charge of the money or means of any church except the one over which they were overseers. In his words, “Elders of one church should not try to get hold of money that has been contributed by others to direct for them in foreign fields or other places.”

Ever since then, countless works and scholarly materials have been churned out by other brethren such as G. C. Brewer (1884 – 1956), Nicholas Hardeman (1874 – 1965), Foy Wallace Jr. (1896 – 1979), Jefferson Tant (1861 -1941), Fanning Yater Tant (1908 – 1997), Roy Cogdill (1907 – 1985), Leslie Diestelkamp (1911 – 1995) with Billy Moore (two of the pioneering preachers who preached the gospel in Nigeria in its early years) and a host of others who hold to the Biblical position. While it is recognized and understood that these brethren are not our “authority” on what is right or wrong in religious issues, they have only been pointed out to show that:

- The idea of the sponsoring church came outside of the New Testament and
- Opposition to the sponsoring church did not start today; rather it started shortly after it was introduced.

In fact, G. C. Brewer stated in 1953 that the whole idea of the sponsoring church was born “because of a very sad condition which existed in the brotherhood forty or fifty years ago” (1953, p. 544). He also noted that the idea came from denominationalism. This shows that the idea did not originate with the early Christians. Little wonder why in his autobiography, written shortly before his death (but published afterwards), he lamented that “the greatest grief of my soul as I face eternity is the fact that brethren have seemingly almost universally denominationalised the church.” (Brewer, 1957, p. 119)

Again, the works cited above (and others that will be subsequently cited) are not presented as a standard to be followed on this subject. The Bible (New Testament) is **the only standard** to prove if a Christian religious practice is right or wrong. Hence the Holy Bible shall be used to substantiate the claim that it is unscriptural, inexpedient and sinful for one or more congregations to send money from their treasuries to another congregation for evangelism. This is because the only rule of faith that guides the Christians is the Holy Bible. The Socratic Dictum states that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Similarly, this writer believes that the unexamined faith is not worth believing. Thus, we shall extensively examine this pattern of congregational cooperation of the sponsoring church, using the New Testament. Any practice, no matter how popular or highly esteemed amongst men, if not found in the Bible and cannot

be justified with the Bible, is either the doctrine of men (Matthew 15:9) or doctrine of the devils (I Timothy 4:1) which is sinful and could lead one to hell. The way that seems right to a man may have a destructive end (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

How to Establish Scriptural Authority

It is important to grasp how scriptural authority is established before delving into the main subject as this would help us in understanding it better. Quoting Hardeman (1938, p. 52), Moore (1971, p. 31) posited that brethren have long recognized that there are three ways of establishing authority. They are direct statement, approved examples and necessary inference. In other words, if we have a direct command (e.g. Hebrews 10:27), an example (e.g. Acts 20:7) and a necessary inference from passages of the New Testament, they can serve as law or authority. Using the Lord's Supper as an example, Moore (1971, p. 32) affirmed that we know **what** to eat and drink by a **Direct Statement** (Matthew 26:26-28). We know **when** to eat and drink by an **Approved Example** (Acts 20:7) and we know the **frequency** of eating by a **Necessary Inference** (Acts 20:7, cf. Exodus 20:10). Any religious practice that we cannot provide a law backing such; either by command, example or necessary inference, we must conclude that such a practice is lawless and sinful because the Bible tells us that sin is lawlessness (I John 3:4).

Some have objected to these natural and logical ways of establishing Scriptural authority by stating that the New Testament is not sufficient for us; they claim it is not a rule book and we may not need to have authority for all that we do, as we may use our "common sense" and/or situation to determine what is right or not. A Christian brother recently wrote;

"I find fault with the general idea used in establishing scriptural authority... Today, we think that the New Testament has all the answers to whatever there could be as regards our fellowship as a church, I do not agree with that. I believe that peculiar situations warrant peculiar solutions within the bounds of scripture and leadership under the direction of the Holy Spirit... Today we assume that we must find 'a - z' in the NT. That ought not to be, unless you say we can no longer be led by the Holy Spirit or that we cannot discern what God's will is." (Eveshoyan, 2018)

It is important to affirm here that the church is to **stand firm** and **hold fast** to the teachings (traditions, KJV) received from the apostles by word or by letter (II Thessalonians 2:15). The righteousness of God is revealed therein in the New Testament (NT) from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). We are to hold fast to the pattern of sound words (II Timothy 1:13). If we can do things as our situation or common sense tells us and without authority from the New Testament, why did some leave their various denominations in the first place and be added to church of Christ? Why do we still go out to tell the denominations to be converted into the church of Christ? After all, they are not 'evil people.' Some of them are very zealously religious, they believe in baptism by immersion, partake of the Lord's Supper and do a whole lot of things

that the Bible commanded in ways that their situation allows them. Some others have used situation to establish the practice of infant baptism. Instrumental music was of the same kind. If one can justify the practice of the sponsoring church that was introduced because of a *sad situation* which existed in the brotherhood, and another uses same situational ethics to justify the introduction and practice of infant baptism, does any of them have a right to correct another? They are the same! If one is right, the other is right.

The truth remains that, **all** that we need in the Christian religion is revealed in the New Testament (II Peter 1:3). To deny that the New Testament has **all the answers** to whatever we need and how the church may operate is to deny the statement of the inspired apostle that God's divine power has given to us "**all things that pertain to life and godliness.**" Some of the seven churches in Asia were judged (condemned) because they deviated from the pattern and did not hold fast to the teachings of Christ. You cannot judge someone without a law or a rule book. If there was no law that directed their affairs, they would not have violated any law and be condemned. The church in Pergamos was condemned because they have among them those who hold to a different doctrine which they felt was good for them and their common sense accepted it. But they were praised for not denying "The Faith" even in the face of persecution (Revelation 2:12-17). This "Faith" was once and for all delivered to the saints and we must earnestly contend for it (Jude 3). The pattern of doctrine, worship and work of the church is the same in all congregations (II Timothy 1:13; I Corinthians 7:17; I Corinthians 4:16-17; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 14:23; Philippians 4:9). Thus, the New Testament is all sufficient!

Basic Principles Taught in the New Testament on Congregational Cooperation

The New Testament is not silent about how churches may cooperate. Just as Willis (1968, p. 12) pointed out, a careful study of the New Testament will reveal the following about church cooperation:

1. Churches helped each other in time of emergency by contributing directly to the needy church (Romans 15:26; I Corinthians 16:1-4)
2. Many churches contributed to one church in its time of need (II Corinthians 8, 9)
3. Each church made up its own "bounty" as the Bible calls it, selected its own messengers and sent its "bounty" by its messengers directly to the church in need (II Corinthians 8, 9; I Corinthians 16:1-4; Romans 15:26.
4. A church with "power" or ability gave to a church in "want", or which was destitute in order to produce mutual freedom from want, or as Paul puts it, in order to produce equality (II Corinthians 8:13, 14).
5. Individuals and not churches served as messengers in the Bible (I Corinthians 16:1-4)
6. These messengers served only in the capacity of delivering the contribution from the contributing church to the intended recipient (Acts 11:27-30; I Corinthians 16:1-4; Philippians 4:10-18)

7. Insofar as supporting evangelists is concerned, in Philippians 4:15-16; II Corinthians 11:8, we learn that several churches sometimes worked in supporting one evangelist, but each church communicated directly with that evangelist.

This is the substance of what is taught in the Word of God on the question of congregational cooperation, and anything more than that which one might teach emanates from human wisdom.

Arguments Used In Support of the Sponsoring Churches

Since the inception of the sponsoring church around 1867, there are basically two arguments used by the brethren who are proponents of this idea. They are:

- (i) The Expediency Argument and
- (ii) The Silence of the Scriptures.

Lately, some have advanced some other arguments such as the Constituent Elements Argument since they discovered that the above do not hold water. It is important to examine each of these arguments to identify their flaws in relation to the sponsoring churches.

The Expediency Argument

On this argument, Briney (1908) said, "when a thing is commanded to be done, and the method of doing it is not prescribed, those commanded are at liberty to use their best judgment in devising ways and means to carry out the commandment and they are to act under the principle laid down by Paul in I Corinthians 14:40." This same expediency argument, according to Inman (1954, p. 2) was what wrecked the Restoration Movement and what led to the division in the churches and resulted in what we know today as the Christian Church denomination. In his very words;

"...Alexander Campbell and those of his days were progressing well on the way toward a full return to New Testament principles until Campbell set forth the idea that many things are authorized by expediency. When he set forth these ideas, many of those who were working with him in the effort to return to the Bible and the Bible alone reversed their field and rather rapidly fell away from their former position."

Many unscriptural things are practiced today under the umbrella of expediency. Our brethren say that we are commanded to preach but how to preach is not stated; therefore, we are free to utilize any method to preach or spread the gospel. Like Inman (1954) said, "When God did not specify, we could preach the gospel with the use of radio." Hence, they adopted the sponsoring church pattern. That is certainly not a very good argument because the issue is not *how we should preach*, but it is *how we should cooperate in preaching*. It is not about the pattern of preaching; rather, it is about the pattern of churches *working together* in preaching. If

the Bible reveals a pattern on how churches may cooperate in evangelism, then there is no point begging the question, we must follow that pattern.

Meanwhile, it is important to understand a few things about expediency. Expediency must not violate New Testament (NT) principles! Brethren, such as Willis (1968, p. 99) and Moore (1971, p. 42) have long pointed out that for a thing to be expedient, it must first of all be lawful (I Corinthians 6:12; 10:23). There must be a law; either command, example or inference for any religious practice to be called expedient. As far as the New Testament is concerned, there is not a law therein that permits a church to send money from its treasury to another church for evangelism or for churches to pool resources together and then centralize the control of these pooled resources in the eldership of a sponsoring church or for so many churches to work through one eldership.

Secondly, for a thing to be expedient, it must edify (I Corinthians 10:23). The word “edify” is from the Greek word, “Oikodomeo” which means to build up. All things must be done unto edification (I Corinthians 14: 26). The issue of sponsoring churches has divided so many congregations since its inception in 1867. It does not edify, rather it destroyed churches and caused dissensions and strife among them. Inman (1958, p. 2) posited that two churches have been divided over the issue of the sponsoring church. Willis (1968, p. 29) however affirmed that he knows of about one hundred and ninety eight (198) churches that have been divided over this same issue of sponsoring churches. In Nigeria, it is accepted in some parts and rejected in some other places. Yet, some of our brethren call this an expedient way of preaching the gospel. Since its proponents claim that it is just expedient (i.e. an option in the realm of human wisdom) for the sponsoring church to exist and this option is causing division among people, then such a practice is not helpful. In the words of Moore (1971, p. 43), “If a thing be a matter of choice or expediency, falling into the realm of human wisdom or judgment, and its practice causes division in the body of Christ, it is sinful and wrong.”

Thirdly, for a thing to be expedient, it cannot be specified. When God specified, we have no option than to be obedient to His specifications. Indeed, God **has specified** that the oversight of and function of elders be restricted to the local church (Acts 14:23; 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4). This is the reason why we do not have a general overseer on earth who will generally oversee and/or control all the churches. Hence, for the elders of one church to oversee and control the monies or work of another church is not a matter of expediency. It is going beyond what God has specified. Moore (1971, p. 43) states that such a practice is not lawful as it does not come within the realm of that which the Lord has authorized elders to do; thus, it is unlawful and sinful.

Fourthly, for something to be called expedient, it must not lead another to violate his conscience (I Corinthians 8:12; 10:32, Romans 14:21). On this, Cogdill (1984, p. 20) posits that;

“If a method of doing the Lord’s work is a matter of expediency – God having not legislated but having left the selection of a method to human wisdom and giving us the liberty of choice – we cannot force upon the

consciences of others those things which our judgment may approve but which are contrary to their understanding and which, therefore appear to them to be wrong or sinful without sinning ourselves.”

Even when some of the proponents of these sponsoring churches claim that they only require voluntary donations from churches, yet, they still see churches that do not support them as “bad churches” and as churches that do not know the truth. They tag them so many names such as anti-cooperation brethren and brand their beliefs with so many names that are unbecoming of Christians. We have had cases where someone listens to a radio broadcast of a congregation and locates another congregation of the Lord’s church close to him. The congregation had to direct him back to the local church that has the radio broadcast, instead of telling him what to do to be saved and even baptized him if he so desires. The simple reason was that they actually wanted a sponsoring church pattern and the local church does not want such. They want you to violate your conscience. It is inexpedient.

Fifthly, one using an expedient must not condemn a brother who differs with him (Romans 14:3). As noted above, people who do not agree with the sponsoring church pattern are usually condemned by the brethren who believe in it. John Waddey, in his book, *Lawmakers and Judges* repeatedly calls them “antis, interlopers, lawmakers, judges, factions” etc. rather than provide scriptural justification for his position. Since they claim it is an expedient way to carry out the command of God, there is no reason whatsoever to be angry and to condemn a person who does not accept such as expedient.

Sixthly, unlawful things cannot be classified as expedient. Also, addition to or subtraction from the Word of God cannot be said to be expedient. When God commands something and the method of carrying it out is not specified, we may apply an expedient method to carry it out. For example, there is a command to teach (I Timothy 3:15; Matthew 28:18). **What** to teach is specified – the gospel of Christ. It excludes Physics or Mathematics. The organization to teach this gospel is specified – the church, which is the ground and pillar of truth (I Timothy 3:15). This excludes every other organization apart from the local church (Read more about “*The church and Human Organizations*” in the appendix at the end of this article). But the method of teaching is not specified. Thus, it follows that we have no choice as to what to teach and the organization to teach because they have been specified. But we do have a choice as to the method – we may use literatures in teaching, online correspondences, public preaching with the use of microphone or any other expedient means. However, if the early churches used one method exclusively for something (based on a spiritually discernable reason or an inspired directive) without variation in all cases despite the availability of other methods then, and we find that no other method is employed in achieving that command in the New Testament, then that example is binding.

We are commanded to pray (I Thessalonians 5:17) in Christ name (John 15:6; 16:24). This excludes every other name. But the posture to maintain while praying is not specified. Thus, we have the choice to maintain any posture but we have no choice in the name we are to pray. Also, we are commanded to assemble together (I Corinthians 11:18; Hebrews 10:25). We have no choice on whether to come together or not because it is specified; but we were not told whether we should sit or stand when we come together. We were not told where to meet, but we saw that the churches met from house to house (Acts 2:46). Furthermore, we have examples of brethren who gave and devoted their homes to the church for the purpose of worship. In Acts 12:5, 12, the church met in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. There was a church in the house of Pricilla and Aquila (I Corinthians 16:19; Romans. 16:3-5). The house of Philemon was of the same kind (Philemon 2). The church also met in the house of Nymphas (Colossians 4:15). We found out that, as some have suggested, brethren met in one school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). We also found that the church met in the temple (Acts 2). All these are varieties and a congregation is at liberty to choose any physical venue or known location where its members will meet or gather together in Christ's name; that is why we term such a "local church".

Let us take a look at the table below on things that are expedient as given by Billy Moore (1971, p. 49).

LAWFUL		UNLAWFUL	
	SPECIFIED (Matter of Faith)	EXPEDIENT (Matter of Choice)	NO AUTHORITY
1.	ASSEMBLE	Place – rent, own, build, buy, Sit or stand Heat or cool Light Time of day	*Virtual or online first day of the week worship, wherein a church service for members is via a website or WhatsApp without physical gathering.* (addition mine)
2.	BAPTIZE Who? Penitent believer What for? Salvation	Where? Baptistery or river Cold water or warm water Still or running water? Fresh or Salt water?	Sprinkling, Pouring Babies or unbelievers "Because of" remission
3.	SING Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs	Books or memory? Number of songs Sit or stand	Instruments of music Choirs
4.	LAY BY IN STORE Who? Every one of you When? First day of the week How? As God prospers	Cash or check? In basket or hat Beginning or end of service?	Raffling matches Chicken dinner Business enterprise Investments

5.	PREACHING What? Gospel of Christ Who? Disciples Organization? Church	When? How? Where? Anytime Pulpit, radio, TV, tracts Private or public	Another doctrine Missionary Society Human Colleges
6.	DRINK THIS CUP What? Cup When? First day of the week Where? In the Kingdom Who? Every disciple	Fermented or unfermented Morning or evening? How served? One container or many?	Coffee, Tea, coke Thursday night Once a year Outside the kingdom For "priest" only
7.	RELIEVE THE NEEDY Who? Needy saints	Money, food, clothing Provide facilities	Benevolent Society Orphan Home Old Folks Home
8.	TEACH Who? The taught What? The word	Arrangements: Time, place, size of group	Another gospel Another organization
9.	SUPPORT OF PREACHER What? Support Whom? Labourer	How it is given: Money, house, food, utilities Frequency	To refuse to support Beg public donations
10.	JURISDICTION OF ELDERS Where? Local church	How they oversee, the number and frequency of their meetings, teachers used, etc.	One elder Assume oversight of members, monies, work of another church.

Source: Billy Moore (1971, p. 49). A Study of Authority

Below are the Bible passages for each of the aforementioned points:

1. Hebrews 10:25; James 2:2; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 14:23
2. Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38
3. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16
4. I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 9:6
5. Mark 16:15-16; II Timothy 4:1; I Timothy 3:15
6. Matthew 26:26-30; Luke 22:18, 29-30
7. Acts 2:44; 4:32-35; 11:29; Romans 15:25-31; I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12; I Timothy 5:16
8. Matthew 28:20; II Timothy 2:2; 4:1
9. Galatians 6:6 II Corinthians 11:8; I Corinthians 9:14
10. Acts 20:28; 14:23; I Peter 5:1-4

Some have also used Philippians 4:8 as a proof text to justify the practice of the sponsoring church. They interpreted verse 8 of the text in isolation of verse 9 and so they claim

that whatsoever method they adopt in accomplishing the work of God is approved by Him. Such reasoning will permit so many things that are good in the eyes of men but contrary to the Word of God. A careful look at the passage would reveal that Paul enjoined Christians to do **only those things** which we have learned, received, heard and seen in him (Philippians 4:9). It follows that those are the things that are honest, true, pure, etc. and those are the things that will attract God's blessings. Doing anything from our own initiative that has no apostolic backing is to follow the path that seem right to us.

The Silence of the Scriptures

Another argument often used by our brethren who believe in the sponsoring church arrangement is that there is no pattern. These brethren claim that the Bible is silent about any pattern for the church to cooperate in evangelism, and so they are free to use and adopt any pattern that seems expedient to cooperate in evangelism. This is not true. Of course, there is a pattern. During his debate with Cecil Willis, Inman (1968) said;

“Now there are those who say that when it comes to broadcasting the gospel, there is a certain method enjoined upon us, by which one or more congregations may cooperate... If you say there is a certain pattern, there is a way that is enjoined, show that enjoyment from the word of God. If not, forever hold your peace.”

God has not left us without a pattern in anything we are to do. There is a pattern in worship; there is a pattern in organization; there is a pattern in work and there is a pattern in the way churches may cooperate. Thus we shall show from the word of God, His approved pattern on how churches may cooperate in evangelism. However, the silence of the scriptures does not authorize a religious thing; rather the silence of the scriptures prohibits such. For example, the Bible is silent about the date of Christ's birth. The Bible is also silent about the celebration of His birthday. Some sincere individuals have chosen December 25th as a day to remember Christ birth. They have claimed that this is an expedient avenue to preach Christ and get many converted and that it is a time to also praise and celebrate Him. Come to think of it, there is nothing wrong in preaching Christ and get many converted or even praise Him. But the way and manner they have devised to do this, is wrong. This is wrong because the Bible is silent about it. They have gone beyond what is written (II John 9). Many of our brethren have consistently preached against Christmas over the years using the silence argument. But when it comes to church sending money to another church for evangelism, which the Bible is also silent about, they try to use the same argument that prohibits Christmas to support the sponsoring church because they want to uphold a position and then, they hinged it on expediency. How sad! One can only use expediency on things that are **not specified**; once a thing is specified, one has no choice than to obey exactly.

On the silence of the Scriptures, it would be important to reiterate here that when God commands something and the method of carrying it out is not specified; we may apply an expedient method to carry it out. Any expedient method must meet all the criteria above. However, if the early churches used one method exclusively for something (based on a spiritually discernable reason or an inspired directive) without variation and no other method is employed in achieving such a command in the New Testament, then that example is binding. Meanwhile, on how churches may work together, the bible is not silent. We have an approved example on how New Testament congregations cooperated. This would then lead us to examining the pattern of congregational cooperation in evangelism.

Is there a Pattern on How New Testament Churches Cooperate?

There is obviously a pattern on how congregations may cooperate in the three works. This has been briefly explained above under the basic principles on church cooperation. However, in the area of evangelism, which is the main thrust of this discuss, the Bible reveals the following **independent** action of churches:

1. The local church supported a gospel preacher (I Corinthians 9:14; II Corinthians 11:8).
2. The Jerusalem church cooperated with the church in Antioch by sending Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22).
3. The local church may support a preacher while he preaches in another congregation or location. Philippi had fellowship in the gospel with Paul (Philippians 1:3-5; 2:25; 4:15-18).
4. Philippi sent to Paul while he was preaching in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:16) and at Rome (vs. 18).
5. A number of churches may cooperate in supporting the same preacher but each church must send directly to the preacher without centralization of pooled funds (II Corinthians 11:8-9; Philippians 4:18).
6. Brethren in Macedonia supported Paul while he was at Corinth (II Corinthians 11:9).
7. More than one church sent to him.

This is the simple pattern of church cooperation in the support of a gospel preacher to do the work of evangelism. We would violate the above pattern when we have **joint** action of churches. No church in the New Testament ever sent money through or to another church for preaching/evangelism. Notice how these funds were sent. The Philippian church sent **directly** to Paul by their individual messenger, Epaphroditus (Philippians 4:15-18; 2:25). This is the New Testament Pattern. We are to “build all things according to the pattern” (Hebrews 8:5).

If a Church Could Send Money to Another Church in Benevolence, What makes it Sinful to Send for Evangelism?

The simple answer is that such a practice is not in the New Testament, for churches to send money to another church for evangelism. Such practice is going beyond what is written (II

John 9; Galatians 1:6-8). Actually, there are only two instances in the New Testament where a church or churches ever sent money to another church for any reason at all (see Acts 11:27-30 and Romans 15:26; I Corinthians 16:1-4 and II Corinthians 8:9). In both instances, it involved a benevolent work and the churches receiving the money were destitute churches. Benevolence is just one of the three works of the church. There is no parallel between the events in these passages and the pattern of the sponsoring church. Let us notice some obvious differences between these events and the sponsoring church arrangement.

First of all, in those passages, benevolent works were under consideration, not evangelism. Secondly, both events were emergencies. In fact, one of them (Acts 11) was precipitated by a famine; but the situation of the sponsoring church is a self-planned, manmade project. The difference is clear! Third, it is clear that they sent to the Judean churches (Acts 11:30) and the Jerusalem church (I Corinthians 16:4) to enable them meet a local need of benevolence, **not evangelism**. The sponsoring church arrangement solicits for money to be sent from a church to another to meet a regional, national or worldwide need. The work of evangelism is equally given to each local church and individuals to do, not the universal church. Fourth, the sponsoring church arrangement is usually a continuous arrangement. They keep begging for money to sustain the programme. Fifth, the help in Acts 11 was sent voluntarily. They never solicited for money for evangelism or edification. But churches today keep soliciting regularly and prolifically begging to execute a self-defined project. Willis (1968, p. 100) observed that they are perpetual beggars!

Thus, it is sinful for a church to send money to another church for evangelism because the Bible is silent about such practice and doing such will transgress what God specified. We are to reject any strange practice even if it comes from an angel (Galatians 1:6-8). When Jewish Christians had famine and lacked in their land, brethren in Antioch and other places sent benevolence (money and/or relief materials) to poor Judaeans churches. When the new Antioch church needed exhortation, Jerusalem sent edification (a teacher and latter a letter) to the Antioch saints. It follows that if a church lacks evangelism, another capable church may send a **preacher with tracts** to such congregation for preaching in the recipient's local environment. Each local church should have its own evangelism program and not plan any outreach project beyond its ability. Hence, a preacher sent down from a capable congregation could also double as a teacher to groom an immature church who cannot yet evangelize their own locality. The sending church is only **doing its own work of evangelism** by supporting a preacher in a distant location. It is unscriptural for several churches to regularly send funds to one congregation to do evangelism work on THEIR behalf.

May a Congregation Help Another Congregation in Evangelism?

In his book, *"Lawmakers and Judges: Studies in the Doctrines and Practices of "Non – Institutional" churches of Christ and their Teachers"* Waddey (n.d., p. 24 & p. 41) said;

“Just as individual Christians can help each other in teaching the lost, so can congregations... The church of Christ on earth consists of all Christians everywhere (I Corinthians 12:27)... To say that one congregation of Christians cannot assist the other in doing God’s work is like saying that the right hand of my body cannot assist the left hand in carrying a load.”

Indeed, John Waddey’s comparison here is a straw man. The implication of his statement above is that a congregation of the Lord’s church in a locality is incomplete and handicap without having other congregations around her. A man may be incomplete without his right hand; but a congregation of the Lord’s church in a locality is *not incomplete* even if she is the only congregation in that environment. One may be forced to ask which congregation helped the Jerusalem church **in evangelism** during the early periods of her existence. Even the Bible passage he alluded to (I Corinthians 12:27) does not support his argument. In that passage, Paul was talking to a congregation of the Lord’s church which is at Corinth (I Corinthians 1:2) and emphasizing that *individual members* of the church formed the body of Christ which is the church. He earlier advised that each member (of the church) is to have same care for one another (verse 24). This passage is in reference to individual Christians and not local churches.

Evangelism is a work given to each congregation to carry out independently to the best of its ability (cf. Ephesians 4:12). Without mincing words, it is a misnomer to say that a congregation is *helping* another congregation in doing a God-given assignment. One can only help when a person cannot help himself or in a situation when someone is needy. Several passages that talks about providing help in the New Testament are in reference to helping the less privileged or the needy ones (see Matthew 25: 35-40; I John 3:17 James 1:27; James 2:15-16). In fact, in the both instances where money was ever sent from one congregation to another in the New Testament, the receiving congregation was needy, that is, **destitute** (Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:26; I Corinthians 16:1-4). Congregations that continue to beg for money to do an evangelistic work are not needy congregations. They are just not interested in doing the work *in their own capacity*. They are more interested in activating the universal church.

Paul spoke of the preachers working with him as coworkers and fellow soldiers in the kingdom (Philippians 2:25; II Corinthians 8:23). They were not said to be helping him in evangelism. This shows that even an individual cannot help another individual to do the God-given work of evangelism. An individual may use his own money to print tracts and distribute freely to people everywhere. Another individual may walk from house to house, at least two to three hours daily (Acts 5:42; 8:4). Another individual may have the ability to buy broadcast airtime to propagate the gospel. Some others may use the social media to bring members to Christ. These are various capacities in which people can do the work of evangelism and God expects everyone to work according to his/her ability. No one would be judged better than the other if they all do the work effectively.

Consider the parable of the talent (Matthew 25:14-30): the master gave all the servants similar or same thing – **talent**. However, they were given in different capacities. Each of them was expected to use the talent according to his/her ability. It was unwise for one of them to give part of his talent to another so as to *help* him use the talent effectively. It was only wise for each of them to use their talent *independently* to the best of their ability. Similarly, each congregation is given the work of evangelism. They are to do this work to the best of their ability until the second return of Christ. They are to utilize their resources under the oversight of their own elders (I Peter 5:2) to do this work. At no time it is the responsibility of one congregation to *help* another congregation in her work of evangelism. Hence, there is no room for *helping* another congregation to do a work that is given to both congregations especially when the congregation sending the money has not done theirs. A congregation of one hundred (100) members is expected to work according to their ability or in their capacity. If they can go on air, they should do so. A congregation of twenty (20) members is also expected to work in their own capacity. They should not think less of themselves and try to beg others to do a work that is more than what they can do. That is covetousness!

Sadly, some of the sponsoring churches are rich congregations who still beg for money to carry out a project that is more than what they can do. They are only interested in doing a work beyond their ability. Even when congregations sent wages to Paul while preaching, they were not *helping* him; rather, they were doing their own work of evangelism by supporting a gospel preacher to preach. Hence, they had fellowship in the gospel with him. (Philippians 1:5). While the support may be invaluable to solve the needs of the gospel preacher (Philippians 2:25), that is one way a congregation may do her work of evangelism. Indeed, a labourer is worthy of his wages (I Corinthians 9:13-14).

What is wrong with the Sponsoring Church?

There are so many things wrong with the idea of church sending money to another church for evangelism. Even if it appears good to some people, there are a whole lot of things that are unethical about it. Let us consider some of them:

The sponsoring church arrangement is injurious to the Autonomy of the Local church.

It is affirmed that when a church sends money to another church for evangelism, it sets the autonomy of the church in jeopardy. How? “Autonomy” simply means self-government. We are taught in the New Testament that each church is to have its own government and God appointed overseers for each church (cf. Philippians 1:1, Acts 14:23; 20:28; I Peter 5:2). That a congregation is autonomous simply means that they have the oversight and control over their own resources; that they do not have superintending conferences or conventions, earthly headquarters and the likes. But each church has the oversight of its membership, including the teaching of its membership, the discipline of its membership and the welfare of its membership.

It has the oversight of its resources and works. If it surrenders any of its control to another, it has forfeited its autonomy.

Now, here is how the autonomy is violated: if a church sends money to another church for evangelism, then the receiving church is not free to use it as she pleases. On the other hand, if the receiving church does have control of that money and the contributing churches have relinquished that control, then they have forfeited their autonomy. Either way you go, somebody in the sponsoring church arrangement has lost a part of his autonomy. One question that easily comes to mind is this: Can a church turn over its control of teaching and discipline of her members over to another church and still have its autonomy intact? If no, why do churches turn over the control of their own money and work of evangelism to another church?

It ties many churches together.

Another thing wrong with the sponsoring church arrangement is that it ties so many churches together. Should there be a mishap during the process, *all the churches* involved in such will face the music. Imagine five stones tied together with a single rope, and one of the stones falls into the sea, it would drag the remaining four into the sea with it. Throughout the New Testament, examples of church cooperation were always of concurrent and not joint actions. Have you noticed that the seven churches in Asia were judged independently? Their acts were independent of the other (Revelation 2 & 3). What does this suggest?

Churches that Collect Money From Other Churches for Evangelism Set Bad Example for Other Churches.

Christians are to be good examples (I Timothy 4:12). Churches are also to be good examples (II Corinthians 9:2; II Corinthians 8:1-2; I Thessalonians 1:7-8). One church ought to conduct its affairs in such a way that every other church could conduct its affairs in a similar way and please the Lord. Unfortunately, the churches that collect money from other churches for evangelism set bad example for other churches in the following ways:

1. **They are perpetual beggars:** If every church should become a sponsoring church and start begging for money to do evangelism, it would be terrible and shameful. In order to sustain the programme, they would continuously beg for money. They would become perpetual beggars!
2. **They obligate themselves beyond their ability:** The only reason why a church would need money from other churches to do a work of evangelism is because they have planned a work that is beyond their ability. Thus, they keep planning “big” projects and beg for money to execute such. Suppose you have a member in your congregation that plans a very big project beyond his or her ability and always come to the church for assistance. What would you do? Would you advice such a brother to continue like that or advise him to do things according to his ability? (Consider a typical working brother who wants to reside in

an exorbitant accommodation in an exclusive area (priced beyond his income/savings) and plans to always ask brethren to support him with the rent. Would he not be advised to get an apartment that he could afford? How about a sister who wants to feed the homeless and is always begging the church for money for her pet project? Is she to be indulged or counseled?)

3. **A Sponsoring church tries to get the oversight of other churches:** It has been repeatedly established that God wants elders of each congregation to have oversight of only matters in their congregation. Anything beyond this is going contrary to the commandments of God. For a church to collect money from another church or churches and centralize the control and oversight of such money is going beyond what has been revealed. Which true and God-fearing church would want to imitate this?

Willis (1968, p. 58) gave some 18 points as to why the sponsoring church pattern is wrong. In his words, "it is unauthorized... Therefore it is..."

1. Presumptive (Numbers 15:30; Psalm 19:13)
2. Lawless (I John 3:4)
3. Iniquitous (Matthew 7:23)
4. Transgressive (I John 3:4; II John 9)
5. Digressive (Galatians 6:1)
6. Not apostolic doctrine (Acts 2:42)
7. Not act of faith (II Corinthians 5:7)
8. Goes beyond (II John 9; Revelation 22:18-19)
9. Destroys perfection (II Timothy 3:16-17)
10. Desecrates God's silence (I Peter 4:11; I Corinthians 4:6)
11. Violates law of exclusion (Genesis 6:4)
12. Unholy (Hebrews 9:23; Luke 22:20)
13. Haughty (Romans 12:3; Jeremiah 10:23)
14. Not a good work (II Timothy 3:16-17)
15. Does not pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3)
16. Perverse (II Peter 3:16)
17. Renders worship vain (Matthew 15:9)
18. Divisive (I Cor. 1:10; 10:23)

Let us not forget that those who do not listen to, or abide in the apostles' doctrine are in error and the Bible says they do not have God (I John 4:6; II John 9).

What About Sending Tracts to Other Congregations?

In an effort to silence the criticisms against the practice of the sponsoring churches soliciting and receiving money from other churches, some brethren are alleging that sending a

religious tract to a congregation is the same thing as sending money to that congregation and so they conclude that a congregation is free to send money to another congregation for evangelism. They attack and accuse the brethren who do not believe in the sponsoring church arrangement (but see nothing wrong in sending tracts) of inconsistencies and hypocrisy. Indeed, this argument is a straw man as it lacks serious intellectual scrutiny. It is a weak scenario contrived to take people's mind off the issue. This argument is also more of an ad hominem; a fallacy in logical reasoning that tries to attack the person, rather than the person's position. This usually occurs when a person has no defense for what he believes. Much effort is then concentrated on anyone who preaches against such, and they point out the supposed inconsistencies and hypocrisies of the person *rather than provide scriptural justification for their practices*.

Tracts and money is not the same thing. If tracts and money is the same thing, why not contribute it every Lord's day during collection? As noted by Tim Haile, if work is money, then why pay workers? After all, they already have their labor! The book of James 5:4 tells us that wages and labour is not the same thing. Tract is a *work*; in fact, it is an already finished work and not a proposed work. Mission Printing has at the back of their tracts, "a *work* of Churches of Christ." Even though they may be wrong in collecting money from different churches to do that work, the point is that, they recognized that it is a work. Distribution is just a means of making the work go far (e.g. just like inviting a friend to a programme organized by another congregation). If a man reads any tracts from Mission Printing and he gets converted, regardless of the source through which he gets it, what convinced him in knowing the truth is the evidence presented in the Mission Printing tract and not merely the person who gave him such tract. Therefore, a man writes a tract with the intention that it would be distributed; thereby preaching to the world. He can send it to whomever he wills so as to foster its distribution. That is different from sending money for a planned work to be executed by a church. A church that sends money to another congregation for evangelism is sending that money for the work that is designed by another congregation. They have not done the work of evangelism. They are only sending money for a work to be done for them. (The funds may be diverted or used as the sender intends. Oftentimes the receiver gives periodic reports to the partners to assure all their joint project is going-on as envisaged by contributors). If however, a church receives tracts or soft copies of a radio broadcast sponsored by another church and decide to disseminate same thing, they are only disseminating a work of another church which is a different thing entirely.

Furthermore, tracts are printed to be distributed *freely* to unbelievers and even unto believers but the Lord's money cannot be distributed on the street like that to all. Does it mean that when we share tracts on the street to unbelievers, we are equally sharing money? Not at all! That proves that distributing tracts and sharing money are not equivalent. If, however, this is still difficult to comprehend or be accepted by some brethren, it would be wise to send the tracts

and/or audio/video clips directly to a preacher just as the support was sent directly to Paul in the Scriptures and the matter will be laid to rest.

Conclusion

Any act of worship or service offered to God should be in harmony with the will of God revealed in His Word (John 1:17; John 4:24; Ephesians 2:10). To do something religiously which God has neither commanded nor forbidden is to do anything which God is silent about. To do what God has not authorized is to assume that God is not capable of knowing what He wants.

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QUESTIONS TO THOSE WHO HOLD TO THE SPONSORING CHURCH POSITION

1. Can every congregation attempt to accomplish within its ability, the work that God has given to the church to do?
(A) Yes
(B) No

2. Is Benevolence the same as Evangelism?
(A) Yes
(B) No

3. Was money ever sent from one church(es) to another church(es) in the New Testament?
(A) Yes
(B) No

4. If yes, how many instances can we read of such in the New Testament?
(A) One
(B) Two
(C) Many times

5. If yes to (3) above, money sent from churches to other churches in the New Testament was meant for-----
(A) Evangelism
(B) Edification
(C) Benevolence
(D) All of the above
(E) None of the above

6. Did Paul mention how he received the support sent to him by the Philippian church in Philippians 4:18??
(A) Yes
(B) No

7. If yes, who did the Philippians church sent?
(A) They sent it through another church close to Paul to give it to him.
(B) They sent it through Epaphroditus.

- (C) They sent it through the congregation where Paul was preaching at that time to give it to Paul.
- (D) None of the above.
8. Does the New Testament reveal a pattern by which churches of Christ must cooperate in evangelism?
- (A) Yes
- (B) No
9. If it is scriptural for some churches to send some of their money to another church some of the time for evangelism, **would it be sinful** for all of the churches to send all of their money all of the time to that same church for evangelism?
- (A) Yes
- (B) No
10. If yes to question nine (9) above, please cite the Scriptures the practice would violate.....
11. Where is the command, example or necessary inference for one church sending money to another church when the receiving church is not destitute.....?
12. Does every church have a right to become a sponsoring church and to solicit for money from every other church, or is this a special privilege belonging to some kind of churches?
13. If a church should send her money to another church for evangelism, whose work is such programme?
- (A) The sponsoring church's
- (B) The contributing church(es)'
- (C) All of the above
14. Can a congregation turn over the control of its teaching and discipline of members to other churches?
- (A) Yes
- (B) No

15. If no, why will it be right to turn over the control of her money and her work of evangelism to another church?
16. What does the letter addressed to the seven churches in Asia suggests?
(A) Each has and does its own works
(B) They jointly own/fund/execute their works
17. Is it good stewardship and counting the cost or rather high-mindedness and bad-planning for a congregation to plan a work beyond its ability and solicit contributions from other churches to execute it, given that the initiator is not destitute and under an emergency situation that such work **must** be accomplished in a limited time frame?.....

Anyone who dissents and wishes to write a rejoinder must first state his response to the seventeen (17) questions.

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APPENDIX

How Scriptural is the Church Cooperation in Evangelism with Human Organizations: A Study of COC Lagos Youth & Abuja Christian Youth Forum

Citing Hailey (1956, p.22) Cogdill (1984, p.52) defines an organization as a body of persons formed into a whole, consisting of independent and coordinated parts, especially for harmonious action. Also, he defines a human organization as a body formed by man, governed by man, apart from divine origin or authority.

Lately in Nigeria, since the emergence of some mini human organizations within and among the brethren, there have been some form of cooperation between some churches of Christ and these human organizations. Actually, some brethren developed the desire to preach the gospel and came up with plans on how they are to do it. They formed themselves into an organization and along the line; they hijacked the work of the local church and took it upon themselves to do it. For example, the Abuja Christian Youth Forum (ACYF) prides itself in claiming that they “champion the cardinal *work of the church* collectively irrespective of our local congregation” (ACYF’s Facebook Page). It is interesting to note that these people recognized the fact that the work they are doing is **not their own work**, rather, the work of the church. In some cases, they work in conjunction or in collaboration with a local church and jointly carry out an evangelistic mission work. They contribute a part by financing the programme and the local church they are “helping” will contribute its own part. Each of these organizations has its own name, purse, holds conferences, appoints its officers, etc. and some churches now hire them to come and ‘help’ them in evangelizing their locality. In some other way, these human organizations collect money from churches and use it to sponsor their own evangelistic projects. As noted by Asaolu (2011, p. 14), “the Bible has no account of organized bodies such as ‘Preachers Forum - Macedonia, Elders Forum of Asia, Galatian Churches Youth Forum, Achaia Singles’ Forum, Judea Church Leaders’ Wife Forum, etc.” However, there are a number of such organizations in some regions in Nigeria but the activities of just two prominent ones will be examined here.

The Church of Christ Lagos Youth (COCLY) is an organization that started sometimes around October, 2015. It is a conglomeration of youth leaders from various congregations in Lagos with their aim channeled towards preaching the Gospel (evangelism). The Abuja Christian Youth Forum (ACYF) is also a similar organization made up of Christian youths in Abuja and its environs, whose stated mission is “to preach the Gospel and restore pure Christianity” (ACYF’s Facebook Page). As said before, they also claim that they champion the cardinal works of the church collectively regardless of the congregations that their members belong to.

In 2017, the COC Lagos Youth organized a mega evangelism rally at Mowe, Lagos in conjunction with the church of Christ Mowe. On 28th October, 2017, the church of Christ, Araromi hosted the Lagos State Youth Evangelism Rally tagged “Ajegunle/Olodi for Christ” organized by the COC Lagos Youths. On the 11th of November, 2017, the ACYF organized a programme titled “Mobile Evangelism” *in conjunction with the churches of Christ, Abuja* at Lugbe, Abuja. Can you imagine how mini human organizations like the ACYF, organizing a programme and calling upon churches with elders to come participate in, and execute such programme? What insolence! Are these elders not supposed to guide the flock? (Acts 20:28) Why is it then, that it is the flocks (from different congregations) that are guiding the elders? What a swap of authority. How can churches of church in Abuja (with elders) relegate themselves to the background and allow an organization to conjure and conjunct their own functions? The church of Christ, Ogombo, Lagos on the 27th of December, 2018 has also come up with a mass evangelism programme in conjunction with the COC Lagos Youth. The congregation has circulated a letter soliciting for money to execute the programme and directing all monetary support to COC Lagos Youth account. These are some of their programmes. Just like the sponsoring church arrangement, which originated from the mind of man, this idea of Youth Organizations *helping* churches or cooperating with local churches of Christ to do the work of evangelism is strange to the New Testament and it is sinful. How?

For every organization, there is a mission. A university is set up to educate people. A hospital is built by people for the purpose of taking care of the sick ones. So also is the church setup, *designed and licensed by God* to glorify Him (Ephesians 3:21) via true worship (John 4:24, Philippians 3:3) and by performing the functions of Evangelism as well as edification and benevolence (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12). It was designed by the wisdom of God and was built by the Lord in fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose to declare His manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10-11). Each local church is the pillar and ground of the truth in its community, not any human organization (1 Timothy 3:15), the word of the Lord is to sound out from each congregation via its Evangelists and/or members (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, Romans 10:14-15, Acts 8:1-4). Any group of individuals cannot just lump themselves together and set up a university *without meeting the criteria and given the license* to start and/or operate a university by the government. Even as miniature as a print or broadcast station is (when compared to a university), one cannot set up a media house and operate it without getting a license from the appropriate quarters. Similarly, God has not given **any human organization** the license to do the work of the church and no human organization even meets the criteria as the local church, and they have no authority to do such work.

If one reads the Bible carefully, can one imagine that there was any human organization apart from the local church that performed the work of evangelism? Certainly not! We have seen how the churches in the New Testament did its work of evangelism by sending out evangelists (Acts 11:22; 13:1-5) and supporting a gospel preacher (Philippians 4:18). The

congregation was the only medium through which the New Testament church functioned in the performance of its mission as each did its own work under the supervision of its own elders. There was no room for collaboration with a human organization. To allow a human organization to plan evangelism for a local church or for a local church to support a human organization is to surrender its right of doing a God given assignment and forfeit the blessings therein; thereby destroying the autonomy of the church. Such a church has buried its talent.

Actually, some sincerely believe that we are in the 21st century and no longer in the 1st century and so we should not bind ourselves by the first century pattern. As some would call it, we are in the era of globalization and we must not continue in the ancient ways. While it is true that we are no longer in the first century and indeed, things have changed, we must not forget that the Ancient of Days has not changed, the grace and truth that came through Jesus has not changed (John 1:17). The Gospel of Christ *that is the power of God unto salvation* to everyone who believes, has not changed (Romans 1:16). Let us remember that the command to hold fast to the pattern of sound words has not changed (II Timothy 1:13; II Thessalonians 2:15). The One whom we diligently seek has not changed (Hebrews 11:6; 13:8). If we know all these, why do we want to remove the ancient landmark which the apostles have set? (Proverbs 22:28)

Let us take a close look at some of the pitfalls in their programmes:

- (1) Inviting churches to a mega evangelism rally.
- (2) Using the bank account of an organization to receive money for the work of a local church
- (3) Planning a programme in conjunction with a local church or churches.

Some may be startled and wonder what is wrong with any or all of the above. The truth remains that throughout the New Testament, there was no record even of a church inviting churches to come and *help* them in preaching the gospel – a work equally given to each church to do. Individual evangelists or Christians may be invited or sent by a congregation to another for the work of preaching and teaching the Word of God (Acts 8:14; 9:38; 11:22; 13:1-5). However, for a human organization to control several churches in different areas and bring them together for evangelism is going beyond what is written and it renders those churches useless (Galatians 1:6-9; II John 9; Revelation 2&3). Is it not strange, how many brethren are flooding evangelism organized by human organizations and find it hard to attend evangelism organized by their local church? These believers who form parallel organizations have now added wearing of uniform (aprons, T-Shirts, etc.) during the evangelism – an idea they copied from the denominations during a denominational crusade. Do not forget Christ's exhortation that many ply the broad way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

Secondly, every congregation has its own treasury from which they execute their works. No congregation saves money in another congregation's account. But the idea of a congregation, saving money into the account of an organization from which her own work will

be financed is strange to the New Testament. God expects each congregation to work independently under the supervision of its own elders or where such are not yet in place, under the tutelage of its preacher and/or teachers. (Read more about this in the article above on "*Church Cooperation in Evangelism*")

Thirdly, we have been told to do all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17) and to do anything outside the New Testament is to disrespect the authority of Christ. It has been established that churches cannot tie themselves together and jointly carry out an evangelistic work. In like manner, human organizations have no right or authority to collaborate with a church, highjack the spiritual work of the church, or tie churches together with their programme. For an association of youths from churches in a region to collaborate with the church is to destroy the autonomy of the church. Jesus Christ is the head over all things to His church and a local church has no right to partner with a human organization that He has not authorized her to collaborate with. It is a pity for those churches who ignorantly accept such offer and invitation from a human organization. Where are their preachers? Where are their elders? Let each congregation learn to support preachers and let preachers labour effectively and watch if there will be no increase. Paul planted, Apollos watered and God gave the increase (I Corinthians 3:6). These were preachers of the word preaching the gospel and not human organizations. Once we deviate from the pattern of God and we fail to the given pattern (Hebrews 8:5), it constitutes disobedience that will incur divine punishment sooner or later if we do not repent.

Some have justified their actions by saying that these human organizations convert more people than the church does. Like it was reported in the World Radio News of 1975, regarding human organization, it is stated that "We are convinced that it affords the greatest of all opportunities to preach Christ to 80 million in Nigeria." Perry (1986) also avers that "Nothing compares with it in our world." The implication of the above statement is that a human organization is better than the church in executing the work of evangelism. This is to disparage and make lite of the plan of God to save souls. However, as Egharevba (2005, p.2) posits, the bible teaches that nothing can be compared to the Lord's plan for reaching the lost (Ephesians 3:9-12, 20, 21). Let it be noted here, that because a practice *seemingly* produce results is not a yardstick to determine what is right in the religion of Christ. For example, God has specified that for children to be produced, a man must be married. But if a man produces children outside marriage through fornication, the children produced are good but the parents must repent of the process through which they produce the children. Shall we begin to preach that fornication is right because it is a method of producing children? Certainly not! Paul says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (I Corinthians 9:27). In order for the members of these human religious organizations not to be cast away at the end, for usurping and seducing the church, they must repent of the method they are using in converting souls. Such Christians are

actually doing the right work in a wrong way, through an unauthorized association and that makes everything wrong. Let us respect God's Word as our aim is to please Him, not ourselves. Do not risk eventual disqualification. Carefully participate in the race wherein the reward is eternal life unto those who run according to His rules.

-Osamagbe Lesley EGHAREVBA

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