

September, 2007

Pause Ponder Profit

Opposition To The Sponsoring Church And Church Support Of Orphan Homes By Great Preachers Of The Past

by Gene Lyles

The quotations given in this tract from great preachers of the past are not given to prove the unscripturalness of the sponsoring church and church support of orphan homes. The scriptures adequately take care of that. We only give these quotes to prove that opposition to such did not have its beginning in the 1950s by a bunch of so-called church splitting antis. Some of the greatest preachers in the brotherhood strongly opposed these things long before this writer was born.

It cannot be denied that the practice of the sponsoring church and church support of orphan homes was occurring to some measure prior to the 1950s. But to say that opposition to such did not begin until the 1950s would be a gross misrepresentation of the facts. Prior to the 1950s, an attitude of change toward the scriptures was in the wind, and the winds of change were mainly blowing from the so-called Christian Colleges that were operated by brethren. During this period of time we were

beginning to hear such statements as: we do many things for which we have no Bible authority, and such statements as where there is no pattern. So you see, brethren, this no pattern philosophy is nothing new. Since there was no scriptural pattern for the sponsoring church, or church support of orphan homes, then it was only natural that the no pattern argument was introduced. Now we are hearing a lot about the need for a pattern by some of the same ones who were wanting to do things where there was no pattern back then. Actually this desire for change, and the no pattern philosophy was what the fuss was all about back in the 1950s.

So without further comment, we shall now give some quotes as to what some of the great preachers of the past had to say about these matters. We shall start with brother David Lipscomb and what he had to say about the sponsoring church in the Gospel Advocate back in 1892, page 487:

“If one church asks all the churches in the state to give it all the funds they can give to general work, that the elders of one church may direct all the preaching and work in the state, then I say this is wrong, is subversive of divine order, and concentrates power in one church that God distributes to many.”

Concerning the sponsoring church in Henderson Tennessee back in 1910, brother Lipscomb said:

“Now what was that but the organization of a society in the elders of this church. The church elders at Henderson constitute a board to collect and pay out the money and control the evangelist for the brethren

(Continued on page 2)



of West Tennessee, and all the preachers are solicitors for this work. . . . All meeting of churches or officers of churches to combine more power than a single church possesses is wrong. . . . But for one or more to direct what and how all the churches shall work, or to take charge of their men and money and use it, is to assume the authority God has given to each church. Each one needs the work of distributing and using its funds as well as in giving them." (G.A., 1910, page 364).

Now let's hear what brother F. B. Srygley had to say about the sponsoring church;

"Churches should never be tied together, even in as good a work as preaching the gospel to the heathens. Elders of one church should not try to get hold of the money that has been contributed by others to direct for them in foreign fields or other places. No missionary society should be started by elders or a church or by an individual. We should have no one-man missionary society. Churches should not be tied together to support schools or homes for the aged or for any other purpose." (G.A., June 1931).

Now let us see what brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. had to say about the sponsoring church back in 1931. This is one position he never gave up before his death even though he did join forces with the advocates of change.

"For one church to help another church bear its own burdens, therefore, has scriptural precedent. But for one church to solicit funds from other churches for general distribution in other fields or places, thus becoming the treasury of other churches, is quite a different question. Such procedure makes a sort of society out of the elders of a local church, and for such there

is no scriptural precedent or example." (Gospel Advocate, May 14, 1931, page 909)

Next, we want to show that these same great preachers of the past taught that each local church should send their support directly to the preacher. This is also contrary to the sponsoring church arrangement, yet many brethren have used Phil. 4:15-18 to try to establish authority for the sponsoring church. Here is what brother E. A. Elam said in the Gospel Advocate, 1897, page 358:

"One church sent directly to the missionaries and directly to the poor independently of all other churches".

Now let us consider what brother C. D. Plum had to say in the Gospel Advocate back in February of 1937:

"Under the supervision of the officers of the church, mission work is carried on directly through the church. . . . The money for the missionary goes direct from the church to the missionary on the field. (Phil. 4:15) If there had been a better way than this, the Lord would have told us."

Here is what brother Guy N. Woods had to say in his Annual Lesson Commentary on Phil. 4:15-18 back in 1946, page 341:

"Here, too, we see the simple manner in which the church in Philippi joined with Paul in the work of preaching the gospel. There was no "missionary society" in evidence, and none was needed: the brethren simply raised the money and sent it directly to Paul. This is the way it should be done today. No organization is needed to accomplish the work the Lord has authorized the church to do. When men

(Continued on page 3)

become dissatisfied with God's arrangement and set up one of their own, they have already crossed the threshold of apostasy. Let us be satisfied with the Lord's manner of doing things."

Next, we will look at what the brethren of the past had to say about church support of orphan homes. This was the big emotional gimmick that really did the trick to get the changes that liberal brethren wanted. We will start off with brother C. M. Pullias:

"That which the church has not the power to do, then should not be considered. Besides this, we might say this way of a few getting together and saddling on the church of Christ orphan homes, and schools, or anything else is a very serious thing, and will in the course of time be a curse to the church." (Tidings of Joy, 1919, page 1).

And indeed such has been a curse to us. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. had this to say about orphan homes in the Gospel Advocate, July 2, 1931, page 804:

"If it were 'permissible' to have a Bible College as an adjunct to the church in the work of education, and an orphans' home in the work of benevolence, we quiet agree that it would also be 'permissible' to have a missionary society in the work of evangelism. But the question assumes the point to be proved — Bible colleges and institutional orphans' homes cannot be made adjuncts of the church scripturally."

Brother Guy N. Woods had this to say in his Annual Lesson Commentary back in 1939:

"The ship of Zion has floundered more than once on the sandbar of institutionalism. This writer has ever been unable to appreciate the logic of those who

affect to see grave danger in the missionary society, but scruples not to form a similar organization for the purpose of caring for orphans, and teaching young men to be gospel preachers. Of course, it is right for the church to care for the fatherless and widows in their affliction, but this work should be done by and through the church with the elders having the oversight thereof."

So you see, brethren, it wasn't the so-called antis that caused all the trouble back in the 50s and 60s, but rather those of you who wanted to do some changing from the way we had been doing things in the past. You were the very ones who started the winds to blowing in the wrong direction. Your index finger points to the so-called antis as being the troublemakers, but you don't see the three fingers pointing back to yourselves. It is high time you stop trying to blame someone else for the division you have created in the church of our Lord. So we plead with you brethren to come back to where we all once stood together, and let's fight this new digressive movement as united soldiers of our Lord. Please don't let your pride stand in the way and cause your soul to be lost.

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by James A. Brown

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*Wine is a mocker,
Intoxicating drink arouses
brawling, And whoever is
led astray by it is not wise.
Proverbs 20:1*

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