

Congregational Cooperation for Evangelism

Introduction:

- A. "Non-institutional" Christians are often accused of being opposed to "congregational cooperation."
 - 1. In the famous Harper-Tant Debate, E.R. Harper alleged he had proven the Herald of Truth was scriptural by affirming congregational cooperation was scriptural.
 - 2. At the Nashville meeting in 1987, "non-institutional" brethren were referred to as "anti-cooperation."
- B. I believe that local churches of Christ may cooperate with each other in evangelism. - 2 Corinthians 11:8-9
- C. But I believe there is a New Testament pattern for congregational cooperation which we must follow.
- D. What is the New Testament pattern for congregational cooperation for evangelism?

I. Terms Defined:

- A. "pattern": "the pattern placed before one to be held fast and copied, model" (Thayer. 645; cf. 2 Timothy 1:13)
- B. "cooperation": "joint operation: common effort or labor" **Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language**, Unabridged. 501.; e.g., city clean-up campaign
 - 1. "joint effort": collective cooperation
 - 2. "common effort or labor": independent, concurrent cooperation

II. Autonomy is the New Testament pattern for the local congregation in all its activities.

- A. Elders are to be appointed in every church. - Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5
- B. The elders oversee only the work of the church where they are members. - Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3

III. The principle of autonomy specifically applies to cooperation among churches for evangelism. (independent, concurrent cooperation)

- A. A church may send teaching to other churches. - Acts 11:22-23; Colossians 4:16
- B. A church may send teaching anywhere. - 1 Thessalonians 1:8
- C. A church has the right and obligation to support its own preacher(s). - Romans 1:7,15; 1 Corinthians 9:11,14
- D. A church may act alone in supporting a preacher in another place. - Philippians 4:15-16
- E. Several churches may independently and directly send wages to a preacher working in another place. - 2 Corinthians 11:8

IV. The pattern of autonomy applied to cooperation among churches for evangelism necessitates independent, concurrent cooperation.

- A. No church acted as an agent for another church (Agency necessitates subordination.).
- B. No church assumed the oversight of any part of the evangelistic work of another church/or other churches.
- C. The equality of each congregation relative to oversight was maintained.

Conclusion:

- A. Gospel preachers through the years have correctly pleaded, "We must do God's work in God's way."