

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

March 3

2024

## Beware of Institutionalism

Institutionalism can be defined as: “the practice of forming an organization for a religious, educational, social, or similar purpose.” Sadly, there are some local churches in our surrounding area today who call themselves a church of Christ, who are participants in providing money from their treasury to enable man made institutions such as missionary societies, orphan homes, colleges, and such; to spread the gospel, to care for the orphaned, to provide an education to those who desire one, and to provide entertainment and recreation.

Now, some may be thinking, this sounds like a good work to me, so what’s the problem with this? Well, the problem with this practice is a failure to make proper application of Bible authority, and a failure to make a proper distinction between the work of the church, and the work of an individual. You see, although some today fail to establish Bible authority, and they fail to make a proper distinction between the work of the church, and the work of an individual, we all must recognize, and understand, the need for Bible authority (Colossians 3:17), and that there is a distinction between the work of the church, and the work of an individual (1 Timothy 5:16; Galatians 6:10, James 1:26-27). Therefore, those who desire to please the Lord must abide in His doctrine, and they must not twist, add to, nor take away from His doctrine (2 John 9-11).

You see, it is not lawful for a church to practice something that is not authorized by the Lord (Colossians 3:17), and a true church of Christ will not! Therefore, no church has the authority to send funds from their treasury to support some kind of organization just because they deem it as being a good work. Knowing this, all churches who desire to

please the Lord must do as He says (Luke 6:46; John 14:15, 21), they must adhere to, and have a proper respect for Bible authority, and they must always seek to do God’s will, rather than their own will (Matthew 7:21-23).

Thinking about that, I challenge you to find authority in the Bible for a church to send funds to a human institution or organization. I challenge you to find authority in the Bible for a church to send funds to another church for the spreading of the gospel. I challenge you to find authority in the Bible for a church to provide dinners and entertainment.

By the way, while you are searching in the Bible for the authorization of the things mentioned above, I likewise challenge you to not allow your personal feelings to rule your thinking on this subject, but rather follow the clear teaching of the Bible on this subject, and if you find that the position that you hold on “institutionalism” doesn’t stand the test of finding Bible authority for such practices, then I encourage you to change your position, take a stand for the truth, and follow what the Bible says.

My friend, the early church that we read about in our New Testament was sufficient in the preaching, spreading, and supporting of the gospel without forming any kind of missionary society (Acts 11-22-23, 13:1-14; Philippians 4:15-16). The early church was able to provide for it’s own needy without the help of any kind of man made organization (Acts 6:1-6, 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-26; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9). Likewise, the early church was equipped to provide it’s saints with edification without the help of any organizations that was founded by men (Ephesians 4:11-16). So, just as the early church was sufficient in providing for the authorized collective work (i.e. evangelism, edification, benevolence for the needy saints) that has been placed upon it, so is the church today.

Therefore, my friend, beware of institutionalism! Do not participate in it, nor fellowship and uphold those who do (Ephesians 5:11; 2 John 9-11), and do not allow this unscriptural practice to rob the church of the work (i.e. evangelism, edification, benevolence for the needy saints) that God has designed it to do, to the glory of God. (Ephesians 3:20-21).

*✍️ Brad Phillips*

## Unjust Criticism

Abraham Lincoln said: "If I were to read, much less answer all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, then angels swearing I was right would make no difference.

Others have suffered unjust criticism. Hannah moved her lips as she was praying silently and the watching priest accused her of drunkenness. Ahab said Elijah was a troubler of Israel. Jesus was said of his enemies to have no regard for real religion or for the king.

So many Bible characters are said to have experienced unjust criticism. Have you? And what should you do when you've explained, yet the criticisms continue? Some of it may be vengeful "cheap shots" to keep you stirred up. What should you do?

"Honest Abe" may well be reminding us of the Bible answer -- just keep going. There's too much good to do to look back. It may be like Nehemiah told his enemies seeking compromise. He knew it was a trick and said, "I am doing a good work and cannot come down."

Frankly, there are some things we are just going to have to let the Lord sort out at the end, and He'll do it right - don't worry. Our business is to get on and keep on with life, doing the best we can.

*✍ Bob Hines*

## Does Christ Live in You?

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

What a wonderful statement! Paul could humbly and honestly proclaim that Christ lived in him. Paul had turned away from self to the Lord. He had given up his cause for the cause of Christ. Paul had come to learn it was not about himself, but rather it was all about Jesus.

What about you and me? Does Christ live in us? Are others drawn closer to God by our influence or are they led away? Do we brighten the day with truth, love and kindness, or are we more prone to be dishonest, unloving and indifferent?

Jesus loves us. He gave His life for us. May we always love Him and give our lives to His honor and glory. Then (like Paul) it can be true that Christ lives in us. What about it? Does Christ live in you?

*✍ David McPherson*

### Belleville church of Christ

5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258

[www.bellevillechurch.net](http://www.bellevillechurch.net)

#### Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study .....	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship .....	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship .....	4:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study .....	7:00 p.m.

#### Evangelist

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