“OFF-SHOOTS” OF INSTITUTIONALISM

By
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My wife and I studied our way out of the sins of liberalism some time ago. What a joy it is to be free from such non-biblical nonsense. Once we really started looking to the scriptures – rather than to preachers and preaching schools; e.g. The Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver or The Memphis School of Preaching – one of the aspects of liberalism that we quickly noticed was blatantly at odds with God’s Word was the concept of institutionalism.

In case you don’t know, institutionalism, in a nutshell, is a sinful system conceived by man, whereby the churches outsource their God-given responsibilities to human institutions like any number of “Brotherhood” Orphan Homes, The Gospel Broadcasting Network, Preacher Training Tanks, Church of Christ Disaster Relief Incorporated, etc. These human institutions are overseen by a select group of people (usually a board of directors or an educational staff) who solicit funds and take charge of funds collected.

What a mess. Try finding any of that in God’s Word. My wife and I looked and looked and simply saw no authority for such. Thus, we put it behind us.

Now, listen carefully! The sole point that institutionalism is unauthorized is reason enough to back away from it. To engage in things unauthorized is sin. Yes, you heard me right: institutionalism is a sin! All churches and individuals who support the concept are sinning and must repent (**1 John 1:6**).

Once I realized the error of my ways, I decided to look a little more closely at just what some of the “off-shoots” of institutionalism might be. I was living in Colorado at the time so I scheduled a meeting with the “Executive Director of the Mountain States Children’s Home” (a “Brotherhood” Orphan’s Home in Longmont, Colorado) for the evening of September 14, 2005. The man’s name was Randy Schow.

Having my questions prepared in advance, I took copious notes of Randy’s answers. The meeting was insightful, but afterwards it brought drama my way. In the days to follow, I was labeled as a “trouble maker” and one “who had problems” by Randy. I have not heard from him since. I pray he will repent of his sins.

What follows is a transcript of said meeting. If you know the truth, and live it, I am quite certain you will be absolutely “sick to your stomach” by the time you get through with the material. It demonstrates that many sins come about when one departs from the Lord’s arrangement. Pitiful. The answers which I found most revolting are in red. I pray this helps all truth seekers. Grab a “Tums” and start reading.

Q: Is the work overseen by an eldership?
A: Yes.

Q: Which eldership?
A: The elders for the Longmont church of Christ -1351 Collyer Street.

Q: How many men comprise that eldership?
A: 2.

Q: Where do the kids worship and attend Sunday school?
A: Longmont church of Christ.

Q: Where do the kids attend midweek Bible Study?
A: Longmont church of Christ.

Q: Can I have a copy of the curriculum used?
A: He did not know what curriculum - if any - was being used.

Q: Which version of the Bible are the kids encouraged to use?
A: The New International Version (NIV).

Q: What are the children taught concerning Marriage, divorce and remarriage?
A: He did not know.

Q: What are the kids taught about the uniqueness of the church?
A: He did not know for sure.

Q: What are the kids taught about the role of women in the church?
A: He did not know what was taught in the classrooms or from the pulpit about this issue.

Q: What are the kids taught about original sin?
A: I suppose whatever the mainstream churches of Christ teach.

Q: What are the children taught about how the Holy Spirit works?
A: Through the word, but also in other ways we do not understand.

Q: Does the Longmont church use "praise teams" at all?
A: No.

Q: Does the Longmont church clap hands during song service?
A: Yes.

Q: Not a prepared question - You do?
A: Well, some do, but it is discouraged by the elders.

Q: How does it happen if the elders do not approve?
A: They just try to not make a big deal out of those who clap.

Q: Are the kids taught that people in denominations will go to heaven?
A: No.

Q: Does MSCH have any fellowship with denominational churches?
A: Yes, from time to time for projects, but not in a biblical context. (I noted that fellowship was a biblical context).

Q: Do you have any true orphans at MSCH?
A: No. All the kids are from broken families.

Q: Do you extend fellowship to congregations that are in known error?
A: I am not sure, as we fellowship all kinds of churches.

Q: How are the kids expected to dress?
A: Decently, not like so much of what you see today.

Q: Do the kids wear shorts to worship or Bible study?
A: No.

Q: Is there a board of directors who oversee the work?
A: Yes.

Q: How many people comprise the board?
A: 6 men.

Q: Are they all Christians?
A: Yes.

Q: How can the elders oversee the work if the board does?
A: Well, they both do in a sense.

Q: What do you mean?
A: It was too much for the elders to do, so the board was created to relieve them of the pressure.

Q: Do the salaries of the employees at MSCH come from donations or do they raise their support on their own?
A: We do not raise our own support; our salaries come out of the donations.

Q: Where do you get the authority for auctions in order to raise funds?
A: We consider that a work of MSCH, not the church.

Q: But MSCH is overseen as a work of the church; how does that gel?
A: Yeah, I see what you mean, that is kind of a sticky situation.

Q: How many of the kids are baptized for the remission of sins?
A: About 2/3.

Q: Do you know how many stay faithful after leaving MSCH?
A: I'm sorry to say that we do not keep up with that.

Q: Is there a standard disciplinary process for the kids?
A: It differs depending on the situation, but we watch them carefully.

Q: Is it mandatory that the children attend worship and Bible class?
A: We cannot make them, but we strongly push them that way.

Q: Do women at MSCH teach the Bible to the teens?
A: Yes. Mostly middle school age though. She teaches the Old Testament.

Q: Really? (Not a prepared question)
A: I am just being honest; we are so undermanned that we do what we have to do.

S: (Statement) I will help you find a teacher or do it myself, unless, of course, you are pleased with the current situation?
A: No response.

Q: In your counseling sessions is the Bible used?
A: We use Bible principles and blend it with other things, but no, we do not pull out the Bible and read sections of it.

Q: What is the average length of a child's stay at MSCH?
A: A year to a year and a half.

Q: Does any of the money we give go to help denominational people?
A: Yes, we accept anyone; Baptists, whatever. It is an evangelistic tool.

Q: Do you solicit funds from non-Christians?
A: Yes. For instance we sell beef from the farm.

Q: What is the annual budget for MSCH?
A: 850,000 -900,000.

S: (Statement) – Well, that gives me a good insight into what goes on up there.
S: (Statement from Randy) Wow. Those aren't the kind of things that I thought you wanted to know. Nobody has asked me that kind of stuff before.