

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

DISASTER RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS*

David P. Brown

INTRODUCTION

The introduction to this subject is lengthy. However, it is necessary for one to have a proper background for this specific study. We will begin by defining the terms found in the article's title. Following the definitions we will list some organizations that exist to dispense relief to the victims of disasters. Following said list we name the organization with which this article is directly concerned. Having identified said organization, we briefly give attention to the importance of Bible authority for everything we believe and practice. We conclude the introduction with a review of the work of Christ and His church, emphasizing the place of benevolence in the work of the Lord's church.

A disaster takes place when people suffer from the consequences of war, etc., and/or natural calamities such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, forest fires, famines, disease epidemics, and/or earthquakes. The relief provided those who suffer from the same takes the form of direct support and emergency services immediately following a disaster. Some of these services include blankets, water, food, clothing, and relief kits. Also provided are fixed/mobile feeding stations, shelter, cleaning supplies, comfort kits, first aid, blood and blood products, emergency transportation, rent, home repairs, household items, medical supplies, vocational evaluation, career counseling, skills training, and job placement. In addition to providing vocational services, some organizations provide drug and alcohol abuse programs for the homeless, specialized services for welfare recipients, and workshops for disabled individuals. Moreover, they provide clean-up and rebuilding assistance, especially to the elderly, disabled, widowed, and those least able to help themselves. By understanding what these organizations do we are able to define what they are and the kinds of disasters

they are seeking to relieve.

The following list names some disaster relief organizations:

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the Federal government's disaster relief organization. Other relief organizations are:

- The Adventist Community Services (ACS)
- The American Radio Relay League, Inc. (ARRL)
- The American Red Cross
- The Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT)
- Brethren Disaster Ministries
- The Catholic Charities
- USA Disaster Response
- Children's Disaster Services
- The Christian Disaster Response (CDR)
- The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)
- The Church World Service (CWS)
- Disaster Response Enterprise Works/Volunteers in Technical Assistance
- The Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief
- Feeding America
- The Friends Disaster Service (FDS)
- The International Association of Jewish Vocational Services (IAJVS)
- The International Relief Friendship Foundation (IRFF)
- The Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR)
- Mennonite Disaster Services

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
dpbcftf@gmail.com

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The National Emergency Response Team (NERT)
The National Organization for Victim Assistance
The Nazarene Disaster Response
The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors
The Points of Light Institute
The Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
The REACT International
The Salvation Army
274 Disaster Relief Organization
The Society of St. Vincent De Paul
The Southern Baptist Disaster Relief
The UJA Federations of North America
The United Methodist Committee on Relief
The Volunteers of America, and The World Vision (“Disaster Center”)

The foregoing information pertains to disaster relief organizations in general. They are operated by various and sundry groups, both secular and religious. Our study pertains to disaster relief organizations operated by members of the Lord’s church and specifically one such organization, namely “**Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc., 410 Allied Drive, Nashville, TX**” (CCDRE).

ASCERTAINING BIBLE AUTHORITY

Continuing with our introduction, and as previously stated, without New Testament authority no one has the approval of Christ in whatever actions they may involve themselves (Col. 3:17). Thus, we are studying the Bible to see if there is New Testament authority for the benevolent organization known as “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.” to exist and do the work previously defined. We are not examining the benevolent work of a certain congregation of God’s people wherein they engage in disaster relief work under the oversight of that church’s elders with other individual Christians and churches of Christ assisting them in it.

To have a profitable study of this topic and organization it must be understood that the sovereign King of heaven and earth (Mat. 28:18; Eph. 1:19-23) communicated His Will to mankind through the languages of the Bible and specifically through the Koine Greek in which the New Testament was originally written. Thus, when we have a true translation of the languages of the Bible into English (or in whatever one’s native language is), we have the Word of God in our own mother tongue. Regarding God communicating with mankind through words (signs of ideas or vehicles of thought), consider what the Holy Spirit inspired apostle Paul wrote to the Lord’s church in Ephesus, saying,

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5; also see Acts 2:42;

Jam. 1:18, 21-22; 1 Cor. 2:7-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2:15; Jam. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:1-4; Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 The. 2:13; Luke 8:11; Eph. 6:17; John 8:31-32; 17:17; 12:48).

In ascertaining the authority of Christ from the Words of the New Testament, one must know how language works in directing one to do anything. This involves knowing a language's grammar, etc. (direct statements, examples, and implications). Of course, if there is any doubt about the English translation, one must always settle such doubts by going to the Greek text. The foregoing are the communicative elements of language and by them Jesus authorizes mankind to act or thereby specifically forbids them from taking certain actions. Thus, without New Testament authority to act, one cannot act by faith. This is the case because faith comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17). Thus, to walk by faith is to walk as the Word of God leads, guides, and directs us (2 Cor. 5:7). Therefore, with His Will originally couched in the mechanics and grammar of the Greek language, Jesus located His authority therein. Hence, without a proper working knowledge of the communicative elements inherent in any language one cannot ascertain the authority of His revealed on the pages of the New Testament—but ascertain His authority for our beliefs and actions we must (Col. 3:17; John 12:48).

WHY DID JESUS COME INTO THE WORLD?

Through God's grace Jesus came into the world to solve mankind's sin problem (Isa. 59:2; John 1:29; 3:16; Mat. 18:11; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eph. 2:8; Tit. 2:11, 12; Jam. 4:17; 1 John 3:4). This involved Him becoming a human being with a human nature living in a physical body. As such He experience living as a human being in the flesh (Isa. 53; John 1:1-14; Phi. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:15; 5:7-10; Acts 2:22-36; 20:28; Mat. 26:26-28; Acts 2:37-38, 41-42, 47; Rom. 5:6, 8, 14; 1 Cor. 15:1-8; Rom. 6:3-11, 17-18; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21;). Although He was tempted in every point like as we are (Heb. 4:15), He never committed even one sin, and, thus, He died sinless. This is the only way Jesus Christ's physical body could be offered as a sacrifice for our sins and His blood shed for the remission of the same. In our Lord's life, suffering, and death on earth He did on behalf of sinful humans what they never could do for themselves—save them from their sins.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS TO SAVE SOULS FROM SIN

As Christ came to save mankind from the consequences of sin and add the saved to His church, it is the duty of the saved (the church, His spiritual body) to make known the Gospel of Christ—God's power to save—to this sinful world (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:30; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15-16; Mat. 28:18-20). The church does this by preaching the Gospel to the alien sinner (alien sins are those sins committed by anyone who has matured to the point of knowing right from wrong and is thus responsible and accountable to God for one's actions—beginning with the first sin committed, which sin separated or alienated one from God—Gen. 3; 1 John 3:4; Jam. 4:17; Rom. 3:23; 5:14-21; 6:23), edifying the brethren (instructing them in Christian conduct and encouraging them to persevere), and engaging

in benevolent activities, some examples of which we have previously noted (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; 1 The. 5:11; Rom. 15:26).

To relieve people who are suffering from the consequences of the different kinds of disasters is one of the ways Christians can prove their love of and concern for those who suffer from the various calamities that are common to this world. Faithfully adhering to God's Word reveals the Christian's love of God's Word, one's own faithful adherence to it, and one's own respect for God's Will as set out in His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jam. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:1-12; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 2 Tim. 2:15; John 12:48).

Unlike those who believe the Social Gospel (teaching that benevolent acts are the end within themselves when it comes to living the Christian life or serving God faithfully), the New Testament teaches that benevolent acts are a means to an end—the salvation of one's soul from sin. Benevolent acts reveal to those who are suffering that there is a doctrine that teaches people to be concerned about the well-being of others, especially those who cannot provide for themselves. The result of such acts is this—that those assisted will seek to know why someone cared enough for them in their plight to help relieve them of their sufferings in this life. Hence, a door is opened to teach them the Gospel that can save their souls, giving them the hope of eternal life, long after their fleshly needs are no more and their bodies have returned to the earth (Rom. 8:24; Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gen. 3:19).

Since the beginning of the Lord's church on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2), Christians have shown their concern for all people, especially their brethren, who were in such terrible conditions they could not help themselves. Christians understand from the teaching of the New Testament that some of their faithful service to God is to practice "**pure and undefiled religion,**" a part of which is to provide for the "**orphans and widows in their affliction**" (Jam. 1:27). Christians understand the meaning of the parable of the "Good Samaritan" and how it finds application in their faithful conduct toward helping relieve the hurt of others (Luke 10:29-37). They know that a part of doing good is to be involved in caring for the victims of the various disasters common to the world, especially the suffering of one's own brethren in the Lord (Gal. 6:10).

As previously noted, Christians respect the authority of God's Word in general and the New Testament of His Son in particular. That being the case, as is true of all things, Christians must do what Jesus said, in the way He said it, and for the reason(s) He said it. In other words, if brethren are to be faithful to their Lord in all their beliefs and practices, they must have New Testament authority for every action, including the benevolent activities of the Lord's church (Col. 3:17).

If we understand the importance of having New Testament authority for the Lord's church to assemble to worship God acceptably on the first day of every week; if we can understand that we must have New Testament authority for the five acts of worship in said worship assembly; if we can understand that

we must have New Testament authority for the emblems that constitute the Lord's Supper and why Christians are to observe it only on the first day of the week in the worship assemblies of the churches; if we can understand the importance of New Testament authority for only singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in our worship to God; then, we should be able to understand why we must have New Testament authority for anything else we believe and practice, including the organization known as the "Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc." (CCDRE). Thus, we shall engage in the study the New Testament to see whether such an organization has New Testament authority to exist. As we leave our introductory remarks and get directly into our topic of study, please keep in mind the matters covered in said comments.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF EFFORT, INC.

From the following quotation on their Internet website, we learn about this particular benevolent organization:

How Our Effort Works

The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort immediately responds to any major disaster in the continental United States by sending truckloads of emergency food, water, cleaning, and other supplies to disaster victims. We are a non-profit corporation, tax-exempt—state taxes and federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c). (3). Only fifteen employees are paid in the entire organization. Unpaid volunteers are the secret to success of our organization.

Our History

The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort unofficially began operations in 1990. Since then, the organization has distributed more than \$106 million in emergency food and supplies in response to 301 disasters in 42 states. In 1994, the non-profit operations center located in Nashville, Tennessee was incorporated, and a large warehouse facility was purchased. Growth has been remarkable. For instance, in 1996 we shipped \$1.1 million in aid. Major disasters in 1999 caused us to respond with more than \$4.5 million in supplies.

Tragedies in the past three years forced us to ship massive amounts to several different types of disasters. We sent \$16,096,517.13 in 2005, \$14,800,207.71 in 2006, and \$6,042,596.03 in 2007.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of this organization. The members of the board of directors and advisory board are all volunteers and receive no compensation. We also have volunteers working daily sorting and pre-packing relief supplies. When we load a truck, it is not unusual to see 300 volunteers show up to help.

Youth groups and Sunday school classes from throughout the Southeast have enjoyed working a day or two before seeing the Grand Ole Opry and other Nashville attractions.

Who Supports Us?

The Disaster Relief Effort is voluntarily supported by Church-

es of Christ, individuals, churches, corporations, and other non-profit agencies nationwide. In 2001, 1,041 congregations in 50 states and 2668 individuals or families from 50 states supported us financially. In addition, 37 leading corporations from across the country donated substantial amounts of product.

What Are the Advantages?

- Ready immediately to respond to emergencies with organized preparation, distribution, and follow-up
- On-site review of assistance
- Local churches help to distribute food, supplies, and funds
- Workable system for distribution to victims

Who Gets Help?

- Strict guidelines apply to type of disaster
- Advance team goes immediately to survey the situation
- Advance team aids in setting up distribution centers in disaster areas
- Advance team follows up to see that all areas are covered
- All cases are checked out, not an individual benevolent fund
- Anyone at site can receive assistance regardless of race, color, or creed

We are Cost Effective

More than 85% of every donated dollar goes directly to disaster victims, 86.82% to be precise. Expenses such as salaries, utilities, supplies, maintenance, depreciation, truck rentals, etc., amounted to only 13.18%. We are proud of this remarkable record and acknowledge that without our many volunteers this could not be possible.

Distribution of Supplies

Churches of Christ Disaster Relief only works through the local Church of Christ in the community or town, where the disaster has occurred. If there is no Church of Christ in the town, Disaster Relief will contact the nearest town that has a Church of Christ and ask for help. Supplies will be distributed by this congregation "in the name of the Lord" to anyone who has been affected by the disaster regardless of race, color, creed, or religion ("Disaster Relief Effort").

WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT THE ISSUE

All other things being Scripturally equal, Christians are authorized by the New Testament to privately associate and cooperate in benevolence, evangelism, and worship. However, that is not the question under consideration. Furthermore, all other things being scripturally equal, the issue has nothing to do with Christians incorporating because civil law requires it. Such would be in complete harmony with Romans 13 for Christians to do. Neither is it a question of having a board of directors because a board of directors or trustees may be required by civil law. However, such New Testament authorization for Christians to privately associate for evangelistic and/or benevolent purposes does not constitute New Testament authority for anyone to apply "church of Christ" to any group of well-meaning and good intentioned Christians that come down the pike.

"Antis" (those who bind where God's Word does not bind) think that the church (a God-ordained institution) must be-

come a home (another and different God-ordained institution from the church) for Christians to Scripturally provide for the needs of orphans. Thus, one would have a “Church of Christ Home”—an institution not found on the pages of the Bible. A Scriptural home is found in the Bible. However a “Church of Christ Home” is not found therein.

THAT CHURCH OF CHRIST THING-A-MA-BOB

There is no such thing as a Church of Christ Family, in a Church of Christ House, on a Church of Christ Farm, running a Church of Christ Dairy, milking Church of Christ Cows, fed with Church of Christ grain and Church of Christ grass, from Church of Christ Pastures and Fields, fenced with Church of Christ Wire, drinking Church of Christ Water from Church of Christ Ponds and Church of Christ Streams, giving Church of Christ Milk, to make Church of Christ Butter, to put on Church of Christ Bread, along with Church of Christ Jelly, to feed to Church of Christ Children (Orphans in a Church of Christ Legal Home) as they drink their Church of Christ Milk, and eat their Church of Christ Eggs, from Church of Christ Hens, and Church of Christ Bacon from Church of Christ Pigs fed and fattened on Church of Christ Slop.

The previous paragraph graphically illustrates what happens when people are ignorant of Bible information, do not know, or do not care how to ascertain Bible authority, or they just do not believe and/or respect what the Divine volume says. Indeed, we have all such characters in the church today. Thus, anything and everything may flow from a church composed of such Christians—and that is what has and is happening throughout the land with the church of our Lord today.

It should be noted that the “antis” start with two God-ordained institutions—the home and the church. Their error is thinking that the church may not contribute to the support of a legal home—another God-ordained or authorized institution. CCDRE begins with the church (a God-ordained institution). Respecting the autonomy of the church, they rightly conclude that Christians may associate with one another for evangelistic and benevolent purposes, incorporate, and have a board of trustees and/or directors to achieve legally non-profit organization status. They then make a sad attempt to defend themselves by labeling their organization with a term the New Testament applies only to the institution of the saved, the Lord’s church. Now why do that, when such is totally uncalled for and is without New Testament precedent? It is as foreign to the New Testament as is “Church of Christ Slop for Church of Christ Pigs.” It is a misuse and abuse of a Scriptural term. Since such terms are meant to describe the organizations to which they are applied, I ask, where on the pages of the New Testament is such an organization as Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc. of Nashville, Tennessee found? Answer: It is found in the same Scriptures that mention “Church of Christ Pigs.”

Church of Christ is one of the Scriptural terms that identifies the proper relationship of the church to her Head and Savior Jesus Christ and vice versa. It is obligatory on us to “**speak as the oracles of God**” (1 Pet. 4:11) and do all things by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). Nowhere do “**the oracles of**

God” apply the term *church of Christ* to any other institution or organization than the blood-bought body of Christ, the family and kingdom of God whether it is another organization of Christians or not. Yet, the “antis” want “Church of Christ Homes” and now those enamored with CCDRE contend for a “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.” organization. The people who designated their benevolent association of individual Christians as “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief; Inc.” are, for whatever reason, ignorant and/or disrespectful of the fundamental hermeneutical principles necessary for ascertaining Bible authority, which principles designate what institution is authorized by the New Testament to wear the descriptive term church of Christ or any of the other scriptural terms for the realm of the saved.

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Let us examine some of the cooperative efforts of the first century church as they are revealed on the pages of the New Testament.

1. Paul cooperated with those who assisted him (2 Tim. 4:9-12).
2. Phoebe “**succoured many**” (Rom. 16:1-2).
3. The household of Stephanas had “**addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints**” (1 Cor. 16:15). This is an example of a Christian family cooperating with persons in need.
4. The disciples determined according to each person’s ability to send “relief” to the brethren in Judea. This they did. Through Barnabas and Paul, the brethren sent their “relief” to the elders in Judea (Acts 11:27-30).
5. The churches of Macedonia, Achaia, Corinth, and Galatia cooperated in the collection recorded in 2 Corinthians 8-9.
6. In the matter of the letter that was sent out by the church at Jerusalem, other churches cooperated (Acts 15:19-31).
7. Aquila and Priscilla (husband and wife) cooperated in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26).

What are some of the lessons we may deduce from these seven New Testament accounts of cooperation among and between the brethren of the first century?

1. There was cooperation between individuals (2 Tim. 4:9-12).
2. One individual and several other individuals cooperated (Rom. 16:1-2).
3. A Christian family cooperated with needy individuals (1 Cor. 16:15).
4. Churches and needy saints in Jerusalem cooperated (2 Cor. 8-9).
5. Different churches cooperated with one another (Acts 15:1-32).
6. A husband and wife cooperated with each other to teach another person the Gospel (Acts 18:26).

Question: Where in the New Testament is the direct state-

ment, example, or implication authorizing any of the previously enumerated cooperative efforts to be labeled “Church of Christ Whatever”? Now we are down to where the “rubber meets the road.” Here is the real issue—simply because I find New Testament authorization for cooperation between and among Christians does not mean I have found authorization to stick church of Christ or churches of Christ on such cooperative efforts. Imagine labeling the benevolent work of Paul and Barnabas with other Christians as “Gentile Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort For Judea.” Or, how about: “Phoebe’s Church of Christ Succouring Ministry”? If the two preceding ministries will not do, what about the name “Church of Christ Team Ministry of Aquila and Priscilla”? What is the difference in CCDRE and these “Church of Christ Ministries of The First Century”? If the great thinkers, shakers, and movers in Nashville (or anywhere else) who came up with the CCDRE name had been in the first century a.d. church, that is exactly the kind of labeling they would have done. You say, “How do you know they would?” Because that is exactly what they are doing and they would have conducted themselves in the same way if they had lived then—that is until Paul caught up with them and applied his rod of correction.

IS “CCDRE” THE LORD’S CHURCH?

Again, Christians (individually or collectively) may deliver goods or money to the elders of churches or to churches without elders that such may be distributed to relieve those suffering from various disasters (natural or otherwise). Individual Christians may help any person in need, especially Christians, as they have opportunity to do so (Gal. 6:10). Who is it among the brethren who oppose such conduct, “antis” in general notwithstanding? But where is the New Testament authority for a group of Christians engaged in benevolent work to call themselves “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.”?

Efforts have been made in an attempt to justify calling a group of Christians who are dedicated to good works such as CCDRE by appealing to the fact that since it is Scriptural for churches, colleges operated by the brethren, other schools, and child services agencies operated by members of the church of Christ to incorporate, or appoint trustees for legal purposes, that said group of Christians who are dedicated to good works should be afforded the same right as the other organizations operated by members of the church. These brethren have taken one of the terms found in the New Testament that identifies the Lord’s institution of the saved and attached it to themselves and their work so people will associate their work with the church of Christ. There is no authority in the New Testament for some organization of Christians that admits it is not the church to use Scriptural terms that are only to be applied to the blood-bought body of Christ.

Surely, those who make such a feeble effort do not think that CCDRE is the Lord’s church. Is it comprised of Christians (as the New Testament defines and uses Christian)? As far as I know, CCDRE is comprised of Christians as the New Testament defines the term. Because it is made up of Christians, is it the church? People who make this effort know (or they should know) that it is not necessarily the case. Are the defend-

ers of CCDRE or anyone else willing to say that all organizations composed of Christians constitute the church? (What about a home where all family members are Christians—is it the church?) Those brethren who would attempt such a thing are operating from the following false premise: “The Scriptures teach that organizations composed of Christians are organizations authorized by the New Testament to call themselves a “Church of Christ Something or Other.” Remember those “Church of Christ Chickens.”

If CCDRE is the church, whether organized or unorganized, where does it get its New Testament authority to call itself “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.”? We are told that the name CCDRE identifies their benevolent work with the churches of Christ. Thus, I ask, who authorized CCDRE to represent the churches of Christ and by what authority did they act? Remember, no such organization is even hinted at as scriptural in the New Testament.

Is it Scriptural for five Christians to agree among themselves to start a food business and contribute the profits of that business to the church? Assuredly, the New Testament authorizes them to do so. We have already noted that there was cooperation between individuals in the early church for the purpose of benefiting the church (2 Tim. 4:9; Rom. 16:1-2). Also, Peter reminded Ananias regarding his money: “**Whiles it [their land] remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?**” (Acts 5:4). Thus, *all other things being Scripturally equal*, the five Christians of our illustration may do with their money as they will. (It is too bad that more brethren do not think this way regarding business matters benefiting the Lord’s church.) Another question—because the five persons of my illustration are Christians and have decided to contribute the profits of their company to the church, do they have Biblical authority to call the company: ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART? They most certainly do not. Why is this the case? Because the term *church of Christ* as it is defined and used in the Scriptures (along with other New Testament terms of like nature) is only applicable to designate the institution of the saved—that organization and that organization alone. Therefore, to refer to such an institution as “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART” is to violate Peter’s inspired directive, “**If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God**” (1 Pet. 4:11). Simply put, there is no New Testament authority to call a food store operated by Christians with the profits going to the church: “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART.”

Contending for the Faith, of which I am the editor, is a privately owned and published paper. The owners engage in this work as a part of their personal work for the Lord in teaching and defending Bible truth as well as exposing and refuting errors and false teachers. However, it has no Biblical authority to label itself: “THE CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH CHURCH OF CHRIST JOURNAL.” As in my illustration of the “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART,” such would be an abuse and misuse of the descriptive term *church of Christ*. There is not a direct statement, example, or implication in the New Testament authorizing *church of Christ* to be used

in the way it is used in the preceding two illustrations regarding the paper *Contending for the Faith* or “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART,” and the same is true concerning CCDRE.

THE FALSE PREMISE FROM WHICH THEY REASON

Please mark the following statements “true” or “false.”

1. True or False—Any organization composed of Christians only that exists for the purpose of practicing benevolence is authorized by the New Testament to have as a part of its name *church of Christ*. (Major Premise)
2. True or False—CCDRE is an organization composed of Christians only existing for the purpose of practicing benevolence. (Minor Premise)
3. True or False—(Therefore), CCDRE is authorized by the New Testament to have as a part of its name *church of Christ*. (Conclusion)

The previous three-line syllogism sets out the reasoning that some defenders of CCDRE must do to conclude that they have New Testament authority for designating their benevolent organization as CCDRE. However, the first statement (major premise) of the three statements (syllogism) is false. There is not a direct statement, example, or implication in the New Testament giving us such authority. Thus, statement three (the conclusion) is false.

Now watch the previous reasoning go to seed as it is out in another syllogism.

Major Premise: Any organization composed of Christians only that exists for the purpose of serving God is authorized by the New Testament to have *church of Christ* as a part of its name.

Minor Premise: The David P. Brown home is composed of Christians only that exists for the purpose of serving God.

Conclusion: Therefore, the David P. Brown home is authorized by the New Testament to have *church of Christ* as a part of its name.

Remember, those “Church of Christ Cows.” Such terminology comes from the same lame thinking and Biblical ignorance that causes sectarians in and out of the church to speak of “Church of Christ Churches.” We might as well have “Church of Christ Cows” and “Church of Christ Churches” as “Church of Christ Relief ‘Whatever’s’”—one has as much New Testament usage and authorization as the other—and that is none!

AGAIN—WHAT WE ARE NOT SAYING

We are not saying that a church of Christ must have elders and deacons before it can engage in benevolent and evangelistic activities. However, the church is the only institution that the New Testament authorizes to wear the descriptive term church of Christ because it is one of those Scriptural terms that refers to the institution to which Jesus adds all of those who are saved and bears all the other New Testament identifying marks of the same.

It is not a matter of who gets the glory. Christians know that God gets the glory, but as noted previously, God is glorified only when the church does what Jesus says, in the way He says it, and for the reason(s) He says it. Remember the plea of those men in America of around 200 years ago who sought to be Christians as the Bible defines that term—“We will call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways.” Clearly many in the church today have lost the desire those men had.

Another attempt to justify CCDRE is to parallel it with an institution already accepted. In this case it is AGAPE of Nashville, TN, primarily a child care organization operated by members of the church of Christ. The reasoning goes something like the following, “As ‘Agape’ describes some brethren who take care of needy children, so CCDRE informs people that it is the church of Christ that is helping people who have suffered from disasters.” For “Agape” and CCDRE to be parallel “Agape” would have to be called something to the effect of “AGAPE CHURCHES OF CHRIST CHILD CARE, INC.” What proves too much proves nothing.

If the group that incorrectly calls itself CCDRE were under the oversight of a certain eldership, or it was the work of a certain congregation, they could easily and Scripturally be known as “Disaster Relief Fund—a work of the ABC Church of Christ and supported by churches of Christ and interested Christians.” That arrangement is Scriptural, and everyone who is properly educated in the New Testament’s teaching on such matters knows it is. However, those who started and organized CCDRE chose to do their work as a group of Christians. They chose not to be a work of a particular congregation of God’s people. Indeed, as far as I know with *all other things being Scripturally equal* (and I am assuming everything else about them is in harmony with the Scriptures), they cooperate as individual Christians in the work of benevolence just as *Contending For The Faith* is a work of individual Christians to propagate and defend the Gospel. But, *CFTF* is not a “Church of Christ Paper” any more than Tennessee Orphan Home is “Tennessee Church of Christ Orphan Home” or a university operated by brethren is “ABC Church of Christ University,” or a gospel preacher is a “church of Christ preacher,” etc. Every one of these organizations must meet certain civil laws that pertain to them and, as already proved, such conduct is simply a matter of expediency or necessity as in the case of complying with the teaching of Romans 13. What is so difficult to comprehend about the Bible’s teaching on these matters?

WHO DOES CCDRE FELLOWSHIP AND WHO FELLOWSHIPS CCDRE?

Does CCDRE seriously attempt to determine the faithfulness of the congregations and individual brethren who support them before they accept or reject said support in whatever form that support takes? Knowing the rank apostasy of many congregations and individual brethren in the nation in general and Nashville, Tennessee, in particular, how do the powers that be at CCDRE determine that they are not accepting support from churches and individual brethren who basically are believing and practicing the beliefs of Lipscomb University concerning

denominationalism, mechanical instrumental music in the worship, etc.? Does CCDRE extend and receive fellowship from those who believe and act as Rubel Shelly does and the many false brethren like him concerning who is and who is not a Christian, who is in fellowship with God and who is not, etc.? In fact, what does the CCDRE board believe when it comes to the Biblical doctrine of fellowship, who is and who is not a Christian, who is and who is not faithful to the Lord, and so on?

WE ARE NOT TEACHING WHAT MUST BE TAUGHT

With all due respect, somebody has failed to study the issues herein set out and discussed as they should have studied them—maybe they simply do not believe the New Testament regarding said matters. When the colleges operated by the brethren gave up teaching sound doctrine, to a great extent, we could depend on the preacher training schools to provide the fundamental teaching necessary to refute the spurious doctrines that are designed by the devil to lead people away from **“sound speech, that cannot be condemned”** (Tit. 2:8). However, in recent years the preacher training schools have turned to the course of least resistance and begun their own incremental departure from the whole truth of the Gospel. They have decided to sit in judgment on what sins and false doctrine the church can tolerate and which ones must be opposed. As is the case every time people decide to pursue that false philosophy, they end up embracing more and more error as they enter through the wide gate into the broad way that leads to destruction. They have begun the trip that the colleges, operated by the brethren took many years ago. Thus, for the most part, such schools of preaching are a hindrance rather than a help to the cause of Christ in dealing with the error of such organizations as CCDRE.

The material presented many years ago in debate with the “antis” by such men as the late brethren Guy N. Woods, G. K. Wallace, Thomas B. Warren, and a host of others, along with their sermons, articles, tracts, and books on various issues pro-

vide the necessary hermeneutical tools and other information that permit one to see through what the defenders of CCDRE have failed to see. Those who make an effort to defend them are without excuse. Although not the only thing, we may be sure that bad reasoning and/or ignorance of the Bible will always destroy efforts for the unity for which Christ prayed and Paul commanded (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10). However, faithful Christians must continue to adhere to the truth of God’s Word on everything, whether we are many in number or not. Numbers have never determined what is right and what is wrong. In so many cases recorded in the Bible, “the few” have been the ones in the right while the majority of people have been in the wrong. So, whether we are few or many in number, let us embrace the truth of God’s Word on all things, and all will be well with our souls when life’s little day has run its course (Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58). **“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”** (Gal. 6:9). We are only doing well in God’s sight when we are doing only what is authorized by the New Testament, leaving undone what is not authorized, and what is expressly forbidden. ■

END NOTES

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All Scripture quotations are from the *King James Version* unless otherwise indicated.

“Disaster Center” 25 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.disastercenter.com/agency.htm>>.

“Disaster Relief Effort” About Us. 25 Mar. 2013. <http://disasterrelieffortorg/?page_id=23>.

—25403 Lancewood Dr.
Spring, TX 77373