

Institutional v. Anti

- Division in churches of Christ following Restoration
 - Emphasis should be on truth—what does the Bible say about the church and its work; not on the “brand”
 - Bible must be the standard—its authority is key
- Definitions
 - Liberal – Not bound by orthodox tenets or established forms in political or religious philosophy
 - Called “institutional” because of support for various human institutions
 - Conservative – Disposed to maintain existing institutions or views; opposed to change
 - Called “anti” because of position of opposition to various changes
 - None of these terms (used this way) in NT
- Issues:
- Benevolence for saints only or all poor
 - 2 Cor. 9:13 – passage used to support helping anyone
 - 1 Cor. 16:1-4 – collection “for the saints”
 - 2 Cor. 8:1-4 – ministering “to the saints”
 - Rom. 15:25-26, 31 – minister “to the saints”
 - 2 Cor. 9:12-14 – Who prayed and longed for Corinthian Christians?
 - v. 13 – the needy saints in Jerusalem and surrounding area, not sinners
 - “Sharing” also translated “fellowship” (1 Jn. 1:3) and “communion” (1 Cor. 10:16)
 - 2 Cor. 6:14-15 – “no fellowship with lawlessness”
 - Individual obligations to help needy v. Authority in how church operates collectively
- Using/supporting various organizations besides church to conduct work – Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1
 - Either doing work that isn’t part of church’s mission, or
 - Supporting other organizations to do the work of the church
- Focus on social activities/recreation, e.g., fellowship halls, kitchen, camps, sports, orphanages, schools, colleges, charities, etc.
 - “Fellowship” in Bible – joint participation in spiritual activities. 1 Jn. 1:7; Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 5:11
 - Does Biblical definition include common meals, games, sports, carnivals, etc.?
 - Church doesn’t have objective of meeting social needs of members – Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 11:22, 34
 - Church is pillar and ground of truth – 1 Tim. 3:15
- Churches working together v. independently
 - Local church conducts its own evangelistic efforts – 1 Ths. 1:8
 - Acts 11:27-30 – example of coordinated effort only when 1 church received funds for benevolence for needy saints
 - No Biblical example of a “Sponsoring church arrangement” to accomplish evangelism
- Claim authority via silence of scriptures instead of what is authorized – Mt. 28:18; 2 Tim. 3:16-17
 - Various promotions, ministries to attract people, engage members and prospects – “good work”
 - Drawing power should be the Gospel – Jn. 6:45; Rom. 1:16