

visit[ing, i.e. helping] the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27 **cp. Eph. 5:27**).

We have already seen some extremely serious problems with the **anti** view, but consider another one. With their position it is a fact that they (the members) can take money from the church’s treasury and buy fertilizer to feed the church’s lawn, but cannot take God’s money to feed a starving baby!!! **Is this reasonable???** It is not reasonable at all!!! This may seem like a harsh illustration, but it is the truth and we must consider these things with all honesty.

Shall the church of Christ just look on while many non-Christians stand in need? I remember many years ago a woman being stabbed to death on a public street and many people just “looked on” and did nothing while she received many wounds and died! The world is watching the church. What kind of image do we give them of the church and our God? The All Seeing Eye is looking on us to see how we are using **His money**. How do you think God would have us use His money? He has told us, has He not (Gal. 6:10; James 1:27)?

“**Unto him be glory in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21). David Lipscomb wrote concerning this passage: “The church, being the creation of God’s love in Christ and the receptacle of his communicative fullness, is the instrumentality formed for his praise. His worship is a daily tribute to the divine majesty and bounty. The life of her people in the world, her warfare against sin, her ceaseless ministries to human sorrow,...” [New Testament Commentary – Gospel Advocate Co., 1989].

What can the church do without its very makeup? How, if possible, can the work of the church be distinguished from the work of a Christian? Can one separate Christ from His Word (John 12:48)? Neither can one separate Christians from the church.

For our learning (Rom. 15:4) and honest consideration God has given us many Old Testament Scriptures showing His people are to be benevolent (Lev. 25:35-38, Duet. 24:17-21, et al). God’s people, mind you, the Israelites, and a type of the New Testament church. This alone should help us understand how the church should be.

Furthermore, much is written of the Israelites (the church then) not being benevolent and God condemns them for it. Brethren, will we be condemned, as His church today for not being benevolent???

Let us all pray for unity as Jesus did and then set about to do something about it, but never compromise truth. ♥



“Hold fast the form of sound words”

SW

(2 Tim. 1:13 cp. Tit. 1:9; Jude 3)

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Benevolence of The Church Anti or Liberal?

by Perry Sexton

Left hand or right hand: Moses, the great lawgiver of the Old Testament, wrote: “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (Deuteronomy 5:32 KJV). **Jesus**, the supreme lawgiver said: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13,14).

Liberalism or anti-ism: It is a most serious matter not to continue in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11)! Those who depart to the “left hand” are referred to as “**liberals**” in that they are loose with God’s Word and do not follow it as a pattern. Those who depart to the “right hand” are referred to as “**antis**” because they are opposed to certain things. Some oppose multi cups when serving the fruit of the vine, Bible class, not eating in the building, and not supporting non-members in need such as widows and orphans from the church’s treasury. It is with this latter category we want to deal with mostly in this article.

Savage wolves: As if we do not have enough problems we have those self-appointed brethren with inflated egos that, if you do not toe their line, will search out and do all they can to destroy you. We must contend for the faith (Jude 3), but these are contentious in their own conceits. The Bible is clear as how to handle those of this kind.

Along this same kind are those who are going to do what they

want regardless of how much others are offended by it. I heard a brother say he was going to eat in the building regardless of who he offended! This is so contrary to God's will (1 Cor. 8:13, etc).

Many are anti or liberal because they were raised in that environment or converted to it, and may have never heard the other side presented correctly. Shall we attack and destroy? Or should we follow Christ in the spirit of meekness and love (Gal. 6:1, etc)?

We should have the mind of Christ: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³Meekness, temperance," etc. (Gal. 5:22,23 cp. 6:1). Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20,21). **Should we not strive to have that unity?** Can we ever have that unity when we present ourselves as the savage wolves above? Let us examine ourselves and all of us strive to do better.

Benevolence of the church (the main subject at hand): The **antis** say there is no authority for the church to financially help non-members. I full well agree that we **must** have authority for everything we do (Col. 3:17; John 4:24). And I do believe a lot of our problems stem from brethren who do not understand authority. But I believe the church has full authority to help non-Christians financially and are indeed obligated to do so. Please have the mind of Christ as you consider these things.

Let us look at some facts which no one claiming to be a Christian would question. Therefore, I am going to save space rather than show biblical proof. God is benevolent to all people. Christ is benevolent to all people. Humans in general are to be benevolent to all. Christians are especially to be benevolent to all people! The **antis** would agree to this. But what the **antis** oppose (are against) is the greatest institution ever, the kingdom of God, the church of Christ being benevolent to all people!!! **Is this reasonable???** Well, if God says so, then it is. But does He? I contend not. Let us make it easier to see. Please consider the chart and think very carefully and Christ-like:

<u>Benevolent To All People</u>	<u>Must Not Be Benevolent To All</u>
God	Kingdom of God, which is the
Christ	Church of Christ
Humans	
Christians	

I most concernedly say this is extreme inconsistency!
Why do the antis hold to such an extreme position? They say

there is no authority for the church to help the non-Christian. I appreciate all brethren who have respect for biblical authority. I personally believe a lack of respect for biblical authority is why the church is in such a mess today, and why we have lost so many young people. I believe many have not been grounded in the basics including understanding how the Bible authorizes. **The Bible authorizes by:** direct statements / commands, examples, implications / expediency / necessary inference. All we need is one statement from any one of these areas for a matter to be authorized. But let us all be **warned**, we must be very careful to make sure we have authority for what we practice (Col. 3:17 is very important as well as 2 John 9, etc).

The antis show examples of the church helping only members, and challenges anyone to show where the church helped non-Christians. Furthermore, to help their position they wave off Galatians 6:10; and James 1:27 as being commandments only to the individual members, but is this right? No.

James 1:27 and Galatians 6:10 are for the church. Please consider: The book of Galatians was written "unto the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2). Please go through the book and right off and all the way through the book see how many times personal pronouns are used (cp. all the New Testament). How else are you going to address the church? How can the church act without individuals doing it? What is the church made up of in the first place (Acts 2:41,47)? Brethren, if you separate the Christians from the church, you have no church at all! The New Testament is for the church and the members that make up the church, is it not?

If the church is not practicing this it needs to repent: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

God makes it perfectly clear what pure religion is: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). **Will any deny this???** The **antis** will have to admit that according to their position the church cannot practice pure religion! This is a very serious charge from the **antis** to God concerning God's church!!! I would hate to face God with this on my record.

When there is doubt we should take the safest road possible. Clearly, in this case, that would be the church helping non-Christians as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10); and practicing, "Pure religion ...