

The Baptist Examiner

A nation-wide, independent paper, standing foursquare for the distinguishing doctrines of Baptists, and shunning not to declare all the counsel of God.

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

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Machine Rule or Holy Spirit Control—Which?

By EDITOR DEWEY H. JONES In "The Messenger of Truth", Benton, Ky.

"We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self government, free from the interference of any hierarchy or individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ, through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and the furtherance of the gospel; that every church is the sole and only judge of the measure and method of its cooperation."

The above quotation is taken from an article in the Confession of Faith of the Benton Baptist Church. It gives us the true Baptist position on the independence of Baptist churches. That this position is scriptural no Bible student will question. But there are many today who wear the name "Baptist" that act as though they do not believe in the freedom of local churches. They deny that "every church is the sole and only judge of the measure and method of its cooperation," and they declare that a centralized committee, or board, or convention, has the right to judge and decree both "measure" and "method" of the church's cooperation.

The one and only superintendent of the local church is Christ, through the Holy Spirit. This is clearly set forth in the Scriptures, where we read that He is the "head over all things to the church." Eph. 1:22. If Christ is head of all things to the church, He is head over her cooperation; and the church herself must determine what the will of the Head is. This she can do only as she follows the teachings of the Word of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit. **It is not the right of any man or set of men to tell a church of the Lord Jesus Christ what to do.** Yet this is the very right that Baptist "machines" are claiming in our Southland.

For a person to refuse to support these machines is for him to receive their anathemas upon his head. For a preacher to refuse to line up with the machine means that he will lose his head ecclesiastically. It means those who are bowing before it will do everything in their power to bring the church of which that man is pastor to reject his ministry and put in his place one who recognizes their unscriptural claims.

What did the preacher mean who, at the recent session of Blood River Association, hinted that there were certain churches in Blood River Association which ought to tell their pastors where to "head in?" It is certainly the right of a Baptist church to call the pastor to account if he refuses to preach

the truth, but what preacher, board or committee has the right even to suggest to a church that she tell her pastor where to "head in?" What place does such action on the part of preachers give for the right of the Holy Spirit to direct the affairs of the church? Is it not a fact, known to all who have given it consideration, that Baptist machines do reach their hands into the affairs of local churches and aid the worldly element to rid the church of the ministry of the man the Holy Spirit placed there to lead the flock? This is "machine rule," and gives no place for the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Another way a machine has of ruling affairs in Baptist life is the way of branding as "non-cooperating Baptists" all those who refuse to support their program. And all the puppets of the machine (those who have got a job through the machine or are expecting the machine to furnish them one) with one voice cry out, Great is the Cooperative Program. (See Acts 19:34). Many Baptists have been whipped into line because they do not want to be considered non-cooperating Baptists. But is it a fact that a man is a non-cooperating Baptist just because he refuses to support a man-made program? The following from "The Sling of Stone," issue of May 16, 1931, is to the point just here:

"What is a cooperative Baptist? The answer depends largely upon the accent given to the expression.

"If the accent is put on cooperating, the answer will be as varied as the moods and methods of men.

"If the accent be put on Baptist, the answer will be as fixed as the message of God's Word.

"The definition of a cooperating Baptist will vary according as cooperation or conviction is given primary emphasis.

"Much of the trouble Southern Baptists have experienced in recent years has been due to misplaced accent in the definition of a cooperative Baptist.

"The way out of the trouble as Southern Baptists is to restore the emphasis to Baptist faith and call on real Baptists to cooperate in scriptural manner."

With what is one cooperating when one gives to the Cooperative Program? According to the report of the budget committee as found in the proceedings of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky, 1930 session, only 56 2-3 cents out of a dollar goes to the objects known as missions, while 23 cents out of every dollar is used for a kind of education not