

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

1201 Meeks St. Corinth, Ms. 38834

Phone – (662) 287-2187

Visit Our Website at:

MeeksstreetchurchofChrist.com

March 29, 2020

“A Church Treasury, Only In A Emergency”

by Gordon J. Pennock

via Truth Magazine - January 1961

It seems that considerable controversy has arisen regarding what we call the church treasury, meaning of course the funds contributed by the members of local churches. This controversy seems to be a by-product of the discussion of scriptural and unscriptural ways in which such funds are spent. In the course of discussion we occasionally hear the question raised as to whether or not a church should have a treasury other than on a temporary basis, designed to cope only with emergencies.

The following quotation from the *Firm Foundation*, November 1, 1960, p. 696, will serve to illustrate the point: "The collection of funds on the first day of the week was commanded due to the rise of the Jerusalem emergency (I Corinthians 16:2-3) The church is recorded as having a collected fund on hand, that is, in their treasury, only after an emergency had already arisen (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37; I Corinthians 16:2). In no case does one find the church collecting funds, except after an emergency had already arisen."

In this writer's judgment, the author of the foregoing, as well as those who share his views on this subject, has evidently failed to consider some matters of biblical record. In fact, it seems to us that even a superficial study of the Bible will reveal that God's people have always had a treasury. And, that such was always drawn upon to meet the normal demands "for the service of the house of God," as well as to cope with emergencies.

The Jews Had A Treasury

Turning to the Old Testament, let us note that the Israelites stored-up treasure -had a treasury -to be used for the construction and maintenance of the temple, both in its planning stage in the days of David, as well as its restoration in the days of Nehemiah.

Let us read:

- "They with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of Jehovah" (I Chronicles 29:8).
- "They gave after their ability into, the treasury of the work" (Ezra 2:69).
- "The governor gave to the treasury of the work" (Ezra 2:69).
- "The governor gave to the treasury a thousand darics of gold" (Nehemiah 7:70).
- "And, some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work twenty thousand darics of gold" (Nehemiah 7:71).

Even the collection of first-fruits, tithes, free-will offerings, etc., constituted treasure, and such were given a Storage-room or treasury in the temple (Nehemiah 13:5). The prophet,

Malachi, charged the people with having robbed God because they had not surrendered the tithes and offerings which were due Him. He admonished them, saying: "*Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse* [treasury - James Moffatt], *that there may be food in my house*" (Malachi 3:10).

Turning to the Gospel by Mark 12:41-44, we learn that the Jews continued to have a treasury in the temple into which the people gave of their money. Jesus once sat in the temple, these verses inform us, "*over against the treasury*" and observed the gifts of the people, and from his observations He taught a much needed lesson. And again: when Judas Iscariot returned the pieces of silver which he received in payment for betraying Jesus, the chief priests said, "*It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is the price of blood*" (Matthew 27:6).

So, we see that the Jews always had and sustained a treasury, and used it to meet the demands made upon them as the people of God. It seems also quite evident that Jesus approved of this arrangement.

Jesus And His Disciples Had a Treasury

That Jesus and His disciples had a treasury is clearly shown from a reading of John 13:27-29, "*After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'*" Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "*Buy the things we have need of for the feast*"; or else, that he should give something to the poor."

Also the fact that they used it to aid the poor and to purchase the necessary things for their worship of God.

The Jerusalem Church Had A Treasury

Passing now to the establishment of the church in Jerusalem, we observe that the early disciples, among other things, "continued steadfastly" in "fellowship" (Acts 2:42). Upon this statement, David Lipscomb commented: 'In the fellowship' means the spiritual union and sympathy for each other that all should have. This embraced the contribution and distribution of means to help the needy." - J Commentary on Acts, McQuiddy Printing Co., Nashville, Tenn., 1896.

Regarding this same verse, J. W. McGarvey wrote: "The original term, *koinonia*, is sometimes used for contributions made for the poor." He gave as references, Romans 15:26 and II Corinthians 9:13. In the former passage Paul wrote "*of a certain contribution (fellowship) for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem.*" In the latter reference he tells the donors that "*the liberality of your contribution (fellowship) unto them*" both filled their needs, and was the cause of many thanksgivings to God.

Fairness of course, demands that we quote from brother McGarvey: "While this is one of the ways in which fellowship is manifested, the word is not usually restricted to this sense." With this we willingly concur. But note: although the word *koinonia* may have included more than just the "contribution for the poor," it evidently did include such, and so we find the Jerusalem church with a treasury before any mention is made of an emergency. It therefore follows that the liberality of the saints, recorded in Acts 4:34-37, did not result in the establishing of a treasury, but simply a replenishing of the treasury that already existed.

We might also point out that the treasury of the Jerusalem church was in the custody of the apostles. But, when its administration began to interfere with their ministry of the word, upon their recommendation, seven deacons were selected and appointed to handle it. Read Acts 4:34-35; 6:1-6. Again, David Lipscomb wisely remarked: "The first fruit of an earnest church was a full treasury, and these men were appointed to distribute it. . . . Without a treasury there is no work for deacons in a church." - Queries And Answers, P. 86, F. L. Rowe, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1918.

Judean Churches Had Treasuries

Continuing to study our theme, let us read Acts 11:29-30: "*And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*"

Now, while it is not necessarily implied that these gifts were placed in the treasury of the Antioch church, they certainly constituted church-treasure once they were transferred to the hands of the elders of the Judean churches, and remained such until distributed to the poor among the "brethren." Therefore, the Judean churches had treasuries.

The Corinthian Church Had a Treasury

Let us now consider I Corinthians 16:1-2, which reads: "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper ' that no collections be made when I come.*"

Let us hear the comments of J. W. Garvey and Philip Y. Pendleton on these verses: "The word *'thesaurizoon'*, translated *'in store,'* means, literally, *'Put into the treasury;* and the phrase *'par heauto,'* translated *'by him,'* may be taken as the neuter reflexive pronoun, and may be rendered with equal correctness *'by itself.'* Macknight thus renders these two words, and this rendering is to be preferred. If each man had laid by in his own house, all these scattered collections would have had to be gathered after Paul's arrival, which was the very thing that he forbade. . . . It was put in the public treasury of the church, but kept by itself as a separate fund." - Commentary on First Corinthians, p. 61, Standard Pub. Foundation, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The order therefore, which Paul previously gave to the churches of Galatia and then extended to the church at Corinth was, that every member should contribute to the store or treasury of the church, when they assembled upon the first day of the week, so that when Paul arrived to receive their *"afore promised bounty"*, it would be ready -evidently in a special fund in the treasury -- to be dispatched to Jerusalem. His order and their compliance with it did not institute a treasury in the church at Corinth, but rather involved their use of it for the receiving and distributing of their gifts for *"the poor among the saints"* at Jerusalem.

Works Impossible To Churches without Treasuries

Did the early churches maintain treasuries other than when benevolent emergencies were present? Let us continue the study from another viewpoint. Paul to the Corinthians wrote: *"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you"* (II Corinthians 11:8).

How could churches pay wages to Paul unless these churches had resources - treasuries from which to pay them? Certainly, they could not. The same apostle penned these words: *"Ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need"* (Philippians 4:15-16).

Again, it stands without argument, that the church at Philippi could not have had fellowship with Paul in meeting his physical needs unless they had a treasury!

With regard to *"desolate"* widows, Paul again wrote: *"Let none be enrolled as a widow [to be supported by the church - GJP] under three-score years old"* (I Timothy 5:9). *"If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve them, and let not the church be burdened; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed"* (I Timothy 5:16).

Surely these passages not only show that New Testament churches had treasuries but that no real church work can be done without a treasury. To, even call in question this fact does not reflect a healthy attitude toward either the Lord's church or the work that he has given it to do.