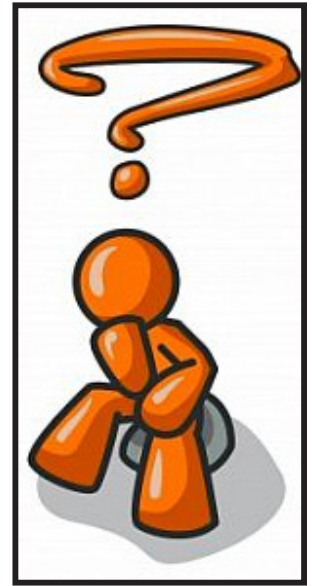


What About ... Corporations?

BY DR. DAVID A. DEWITT

We live in a world of corporations. We are born in a hospital corporation. We go to school corporations. We buy our food from grocery store corporations. This produces garbage collected by a garbage collection corporation. During the week, we work for a profit-making corporation, and on weekends we are involved in religious and non-profit corporations. All this is done while living under a government corporation. When we get old, we are placed in a nursing home corporation until we die and are buried by a funeral home corporation. Corporations are generally created to protect and preserve physical assets. The New Oxford American Dictionary defines a corporation as:

“A company or group of people authorized to act as a single entity ... created under the laws of a state as a separate legal entity that has privileges and liabilities that are distinct from those of its members.”



But all this misses another very important ingredient. Corporations are formed by people. People are spiritual creatures who cannot avoid thoughts of morality, purpose, destiny, God, and religion. So all that is also injected into their corporations. A more realistic definition, and an elaborate description, of a corporation was provided by Dr. Michael Black [currently the librarian at Oxford] in a December 2011 article entitled “The Crisis of the Corporation.” Black writes:

The Corporation has its own interests, values, or criteria of choice, which are not those of its members ... the authentic corporate relationship is in the first instance a spiritual task, which can only be understood theologically. So,

Every corporation is a religious organization

But the church established by Christ and the apostles was not a corporation. The institutional church, legally established by the Emperor Constantine after The Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, was a corporation. But that was not the case with the New Testament church. The New Testament church was God’s creation, not man’s incorporation. Jesus said: *I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it* (Matthew 16:18). He did not ask us to build His church. His church was not brought into existence by its members. Paul describes it as *the church of God*

which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28) ... *Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body* (Ephesians 5:23).

The New Testament church was not formed as a legal entity. Peter and John were forbidden to proclaim their beliefs (Acts 4:16; 12:1-5). *But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison* (Acts 8:3).

The New Testament church had no physical assets to protect or pass on to the next generation. It was not members incorporated for personal, social, or religious protection. Believers were promised persecution not protection (2 Timothy 3:12). It was dynamic, not because it was incorporated but because it was believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote,

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you ... Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

So, the church of Christ and the apostles, the church of the New Testament, was unique in that it was not a corporation conjured up by men. It was created by Jesus Christ, paid for with His blood, and it consists of individual believers in Jesus Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit.