

Some Thoughts on Article “Contributions”

Tim Haile

Is giving an article to a publisher the same thing as giving him money? Some are saying that it is. In an effort to silence criticisms against the practice of human evangelistic organizations soliciting and receiving funds from others, some brethren are alleging that sending a religious article to a publisher is the same thing as sending money to that publisher. Hence, receiving an article from a writer is the same thing as receiving money from that writer. Like other arguments that have been put forth by the defenders of non-church religious organizations, this one is flawed, and the makers of the argument fail to consider the implications and logical consequences of the argument. I will here enumerate these.

1. The Argument Misuses Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:18 is cited to support the argument. Paul said, *“For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox when he treads out the grain, and The laborer deserves his wages .”* Paul here defends the financial support of elders and preachers. As the treading ox has the right to be rewarded by eating some of the grain that he treads, so the elder has the right to be financially compensated for his labor. Notice how this works: The ox’s *treading* does not constitute *grain*, but grain may be given to the ox as compensation. “Treading” and “grain” are not the same thing. One is compensation for the other. So also, *labor* is not *pay*, but the laborer may be paid for his labor. In the same way that “treading” is not “grain,” and “labor” is not “money,” religious articles are not money. Brethren misuse 1 Timothy 5:18 when they cite it to prove that sending an article to a publisher is the same thing as sending him money. In order to prove that giving an article is the same thing as giving money, these brethren need “treading” to be “grain,” and “labor” to be “money.” As you can see, some brethren have perverted 1 Timothy 5:18. Paul’s point is that the teacher (laborer) may be compensated (dispensed “wages”) for his teaching. In order for 1 Timothy 5:18 to help those who are making the false argument, they need Paul to here teach that the teacher **pays others to accept his teaching!** Friends, this is the kind of upside down interpretation that brethren are guilty of when they start looking for Bible authority for a practice AFTER being already engaged in the practice!

2. The Argument Defies a Basic Principle of Economy: If work is money, then why pay workers? After all, they already have their labor! James said, *“Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears*

of the Lord of hosts” (James 5:4). James (and the “Lord of Hosts”) thought that “wages” were not the same thing as “labor.” James condemned employers for *keeping back wages* from their workers. How are such workers defrauded from their wages if their work is their wage? It appears that the inspired James didn’t have the benefit of the convoluted interpretive methods of some of today’s brethren. I recommend that, along with studying the Bible a little harder, these brethren also take a basic course in *economics*. Perhaps, they will learn that labor (articles) and money are not the same thing. But that money may be paid in compensation FOR teaching (1 Tim. 5:18).

3. Newspaper Articles: Some have cited 1 Timothy 5:18 as proof that giving an article to a publisher is the same thing as giving him money. A “wage” is a price that is paid for a service. W.E. Vine describes it as a soldier’s pay (Lk. 3:14). For what service is the writer “paying” when he sends a publisher an article? I would guess that he is paying for circulation and exposure. But this raises a question. If giving an article is the same thing as giving money, then why do we pay publishers to publish our articles? The church where I preach pays (quite well) for space in a local newspaper in order for them to publish a weekly religious article that I write. If some brethren are right, *why are we paying for this?* Aren’t we *already paying* in the form of the article that we are sending? Again, 1 Timothy 5:18 does not cite authority for the teacher to pay to teach, but for the teacher to be paid. This passage is turned upside down by certain brethren in our present controversy. Either they are not reading the verse carefully, or they are prejudiced towards their practice and won’t accept the obvious truth.

4. Tax Implications: If contributed articles are equal to contributed funds, then some publishers are guilty of **tax evasion**. They are receiving articles which they claim to be substitutable for money. Interestingly, most of the people who are making the articles-equal-donations argument are affiliated with a particular organization that sells books and periodicals. I wonder if this organization is reporting all of this article “income” to the IRS? If not, wouldn’t they need to do so? Wouldn’t they need to claim this article “income” along with their other “income?” Organizations having a long history and a wide circulation should be particularly concerned. Imagine the back taxes that some organizations would have to pay if the taxable monetary value of all of the articles that they have received over the lifetime of their publication(s) had to be paid to the IRS! Ouch! Since I have also received and used contributed articles, and could also be affected by this, I have written the IRS to find out whether or not the government position is the same as the position that is held by those who are defending the practice of charitable contributions to evangelistic organizations. I would suggest that they do the same thing.

Of course, this would be problematic only if their articles are highly valued, which raises an obvious question: Who is in charge of financially evaluating these contributed articles? Is there an independent committee of some sort? If not, shouldn't there be one? I would think that some articles would be worth more than others based upon a variety of factors (depth, relevance, timeliness, etc...). I know that, with me personally, some of my articles require more time to write than do others. Using the basic premise behind the argument that contributed articles equal contributed money, I would think that the monetary value of articles may be directly linked to how much time a writer has in the article in proportion to how much he is paid. For example, the preacher who works 50 hours per week might spend 10 of those hours writing an article, thus spending one fifth of his time on the article. Theoretically, that article would be valued at one fifth of that week's income. If he spends only 5 hours writing the article, then it would be less. Articles would therefore range in value. In-depth articles that require much research could be worth *several hundred dollars*. Again, are publishers who receive these articles reporting this as "income?"

5. The Argument Ignores Personal Accountability: The author of an article expresses his own thoughts and represents the Scriptures as he understands them. He is answerable to God for what he says in the article. He may even submit an article to a publisher who teaches soul-damning error, and vehemently opposes the truth that he teaches. Would sending such a publisher *money* be exactly the same thing as sending him the truth-teaching article? Obviously not! If sending an article to someone is the same thing as sending him money, then let my detractors start sending me money instead of sending me their articles! I will then use their money to finance the circulation of my convictions on subjects like this one! Will they do this? No. And why not? Because they know the difference between sending an article and sending money! Again, if there is no difference between sending an article and sending money, then rather than a church sending their own religious article to the local newspaper, why couldn't that church just send them money? Any thinking person can see the difference. By sending an article, one retains control of what is said. By sending money, he cedes that control into the hands of others. There is obviously a difference between sending an article and sending money.

6. The Argument is an Ad Hominem Argument: An ad hominem argument is an argument *to the person*, rather than to the person's *position*. The primary purpose of an ad hominem argument is to point out the inconsistency and hypocrisy of an opponent. Jesus effectively used this method of argumentation for this very purpose (Matthew 12:27). This proves that we may also use it for that reason. Let us remember, however, that the ad hominem argument does not address another

person's *position*, nor does it answer his *argument*. In order to do that, one must appeal to *Scripture*, not to the opponent's real, imagined or alleged *practice*. In the present controversy, the very best that the defenders of human evangelistic organizations can accomplish with their ad hominem arguments is to paint their detractors as hypocritical. The ad hominem approach provides no defense for their own practice. I will admit that if my practice was equivalent to their practice, then I would be wrong to condemn their practice (Matthew 7:1-5). However, my accusers have misrepresented the facts.

7. The Argument as it Relates to my Bible Banner Website: Because I own and operate a Bible teaching website (biblebanner.com), and because I have been critical of individually funded missionary societies and business Bible lectureships, some brethren have tried to equate my practice with their own. They tell me that by receiving and publishing the articles of others, I am doing the same thing that they do when they receive money from others. I have already addressed the question of whether or not giving an article is the same thing as giving money, but there is another error in this charge against me and my publication. My detractors know, from the plain statement on my website, that my website is individually owned and operated. I receive no funding from others. I am operating solely in the realm of **individual action**. The Bible Banner is not an organization. Even knowing this (which demonstrates the dishonesty and ungodliness of the tactics of my accusers), these men have tried to equate my actions with their own, or those with whom they are politically affiliated. These men have become so frantic in their attempt to defend their own actions that they are willing to say anything! There are 2 fallacies behind the accusation:

A. As addressed above, these brethren are wrong when they claim that giving someone an article is the same thing as giving him money.

B. My website is a private function. I don't receive funding for my efforts, but what if I did? How are the evangelistic actions of an *individual* parallel to the actions of evangelistic *organizations*? What is the basis of the accusation against me? As an **individual**, I have the right to be paid for providing a teaching service (Luke 10:7). As an individual teacher who provides instruction to others, I could be paid by those who benefit from my teaching. The criticism against me is baseless. There is no parallel between what I am doing, and what the evangelistic **organizations** are doing. To charge me with inconsistency in this matter is an ignorant and godless charge.

Conclusion

Desperation has set in. Passages are being perverted and facts are being ignored in order for brethren to defend their beloved human institutions. Brethren are infatuated with the idea of having an organization that can do the work of God's local church, but without the limitations that God has placed upon that church. They know that no New Testament authority can be found in support of local *churches* contributing to evangelistic organizations, so they charter their organizations to receive funds from the members of the universal church. Organizations are being formed that can preach the gospel, edify and relieve needy saints, and ALSO collect funds for the construction of church buildings, finance the secular education of needy people, and anything else that they want to do. We are witnessing the development of an alternative institutionalism! History demonstrates how this will end, and it isn't good.

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