



General Topics :: Are Church Constitutions Scriptural?

Are Church Constitutions Scriptural?, on: 2007/7/2 1:46

Church Constitution

Every church that obtains and retains a 501c must have one. All read differently but similar. Some are short and some or long and deep. They can be divisive and dividing among members and church leaders when they are revisited after year s of adoption for scriptural accuracy and auditing. Some are combined with the by-laws and statement of faiths but some are separate. We have the Bible, God's Holy, infallible, inherent Word, so why do we need the church constitutions other than the 501c?

Re: Are Church Constitutions Scriptural? - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2007/7/2 13:43

Quote:
-----so why do we need the church
constitutions other than the 501c?

To provide a sense of unity to the brotherhood, to assist it in identifying false doctrine. This is not an exhaustive list, but a few ideas that came to my mind as I considered your question.

This past weekend we met a pastor who said how he used to think formal church membership was not essential to the life of a believer and the brotherhood but he has learned otherwise. If this structure is not in place and operating, the sheep can easily scatter because of wolves. And that is a problem anyways, but when you have people who have covenanted with each other, they provide a line of defense against those that would work to destroy it.

Just few of my thoughts...

ginnyrose

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2007/7/2 13:57

A church or religious organization does not have to be 501c3. They can be independent and not have to be dictated to by the government as to what can or cannot be preached, while still maintaining tax free status.

As for Constitutions, and by-laws, they are helpful as the poster before me said to help everyone be on the same page.

Re: - posted by vsuarez, on: 2007/7/9 13:42

Quote:

ginnyrose wrote:

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ginnyrose

I am sorry, but I still don't get it. How is a by-law or church covenant going to protect the sheep? If the Word of God itself, by teaching and preaching, is not enough, then, in my opinion, no church documents, by-law or agreement/covenants are going to protect anyone.

I've personally been involved with a couple of variations of this and both failed miserably because of reasons I will not mention in order to cover those involved.

In Him,

Brother Suarez

Re: - posted by wonserwonton (), on: 2007/7/9 17:55

Quote:

-----To provide a sense of unity to the brotherhood

Just a thought, but shouldn't that be accomplished by the Scripture?

If the only sense of unity a "brotherhood" feels is the church constitution or statement of beliefs, there may be something wrong with this so-called "brotherhood."

In my experience, it's too easy to rely on the church's constitution to give a sense of what's right and what's wrong--and that distracts from the Word of the Lord. It's easier to find loopholes in church constitutions than it is to find them in the Bible, which means that many of the things that go on may coincide with the church doctrines and constitutions, but may collide entirely with Scripture.

Re: - posted by deltadom (), on: 2007/7/9 21:08

What is 501c?

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2007/7/9 23:37

Have you all considered I Cor. 11:18-19: For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

The reason a brotherhood needs to spell out their core beliefs is simply because there are too many people in the church who are ignorant, carnal and have a "don't care attitude" which will make them subject to any wind of doctrine that comes floating along.

Hey, guess what? I fit in that category when I was much younger. If it sounded good, more powerful I was for it and never mind what the old people said: they lived to do nothing but rain on your parade anyhow! Fortunately, the hand of God was on me and He taught me a few lessons by the way and I am glad for those barriers our church had in place that keep me from going off the deep end. There is that social pressure which can have a positive effect, you know, like Hebrews 10:25 says: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." So, basically, what a church covenant works to prevent is apostasy from infecting the brotherhood. The early church had a document they used titled: Didache. If they needed it, I would think we do as well. It is not a cure-all for whatever may ail a church but it does help to provide some structure because we are so dreadfully human and we do not function well in a vacuum.

Does this explain anything?

ginnyrose

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Re: - posted by JelloTaster (), on: 2007/7/10 0:23

The problem with church constitutions is that they have splintered the body of Christ into many many pieces. I've read that there are over 20,000 protestant denominations, all with their own take on doctrine.

You see, every one of us has doctrine that is incorrect. While I'm often seen in my church as judgemental and legalistic because of my desire to see people grow in Holiness and their faith, I will fellowship with any brother or sister who is sincere and growing, regardless of their doctrine.

Re:, on: 2007/7/10 4:53

It is a non-profit tax-exempt status.

At the present a 501 c is not a requirement. There is a move in the government to require all churches and nonprofits to register if though were government lobbyist. I believe the devil is using the 501c or should I say his workers in attempting to muzzle preachers and also attempting to keep the word from going forth because they know it want return void but it will accomplish that which it sent it to do. These people are attempting to pass laws that will put a preacher and or a church in violation in certain subjects contained in the WORD OF GOD and make the church and the preacher be in violation if they speak from the pulpit on certain issues. The objective is to at least muzzle the preacher found preaching the full council of God and if they continue to preach against certain sins that the world calls a civil right the preacher or the church is found guilty to remove their tax-exempt status as a penalty and eventually a worse penalty.

Re: we need constitutions for our day - posted by roadsign (), on: 2007/7/10 8:38

Quote:

----- The problem with church constitutions is that they have splintered the body

You have a point: Not too long ago I saw a church spit over a "drinking prohibition" clause in the constitution. Of course this "law" was an attempt to protect the church from worldly behaviors, but sadly, it did little to protect the church from its OWN sin problems: pride, legalistic righteousness, hard-heartedness, Biblical ignorance, etc. Sadly, the warring factions failed to see that the world had ALREADY crept into their church. Alcohol abuse was not even one of their problems!

Constitutions can't fix the sin nature, and when they are created for THAT purpose, - ie to preserve a "form of godliness, then they are bound to fail, eventually.

However, in view of the ever-present danger of heresy infiltrating the church, I believe that there always needs to be a carefully scripted presentation of foundational truths - to use as a clear standard. True, Scripture is the perfect standard, but let's admit, just about every heretical trend has used scripture to support its position.

Creeds and such were created in the past to protect the church from the heretical trends of THEIR day. I wonder how many of our contemporary churches have constitutions that protect themselves against current trends. I wonder how many of our churches even know what the unbiblical trends are in our culture, or have they been so sucked into them that they can no longer distinguish Biblical truth from relativistic post-modernism?

I'm all for creeds, constitutions, or whatever you would call them - just as long as they do the right job for the right time.

Diane

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Re: D A Carson sermons - posted by roadsign (), on: 2007/7/10 8:56

Here is a link to some thought-provoking messages on postmodernism, the emergent church, etc:

(<http://anaselli.blogspot.com/2006/12/mp3s-of-d-carson.html>) D A Carson - sermons

Carson is up to date! He addresses the issues that threaten our modern church.

In view of what this theologian is saying, how might we word a church constitution today?

Re:, on: 2007/7/10 9:14

Quote:
-----This past weekend we met a pastor who said how he used to think formal church membership was not essential to the life of a believer and the brotherhood but he has learned otherwise.

When we meet in homes or on the streets of Detroit we have no membership or bylaws. Those who are members are united only by walking daily in the light (1 John 1) and our membership book is the lambs book of life (rev 20). The bylaws are recorded in scripture and the Spirit bears witness to them.

I am not picking on anyone, but this thread typifies the babylonian mindset that our "church" system is plagued with.

I am going to write an article soon on how God saved me from "church" to expound on this further, until then "Come out from her my people, run for your lives." The overwhelming majority of western organized "christianity" is a great whore, and is a counterfit imposter of what the true Church is.

In Christ - Jim

Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2007/7/10 13:21

Quote:
----- God saved me from "church"

Jim, I thought that God saves us from OUR sins.

While I can relate to your comments about the "church", I feel that you have created a "we" and "them", and it looks like I'm one of the "them's". So, in essence you have lumped me in with "Babylon" - along with thousands of other believers. I wonder if you would feel that way if you heard some of the messages on the suggested link I posted.

Let's admit, numerous groups of believers throughout history have felt that they were the ones who finally "found" the right way. But in time it became apparent that they had some blindspots, or fell prey to heresy. How does a non-structured "group" like yours guard against specific threats that arise from the culture they are immersed in? .. ex: syncretism? If that was a problem in the first century, surely now too.

By the way, Jim, I suspect that your testimony parallels mine in many ways. I admit, MY sin was not "the church", but my idolatrous reliance on it. Now I serve in the institutional church, not to give me a sense of righteousness, but to be a light in it. From "within" I can see that the creeds serve as a useful platform from which to expose the fact that we have strayed.

(Creeds may also serve to expose the erroneous priorities in constitutions)
Diane

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Re:, on: 2007/7/11 11:00

Quote:

-----Jim, I thought that God saves us from OUR sins.

Come on now sis, if I would have said He saved me from crack addiction it would have been ok...

Quote:

-----While I can relate to your comments about the "church", I feel that you have created a "we" and "them", and it looks like I'm one of the "them's".

No, I don't mean to do that though it is unavoidable to a degree. I have no problem with people who fellowship in a building, some of the God fearing pastors here on SI that I listen to preach from pulpits.

Quote:

-----Let's admit, numerous groups of believers throughout history have felt that they were the ones who finally "found" the right way

you are right in that there is always a small group of Godly saints that break away from and becomes a reproach to the counterfeit religious system of their day.

Quote:

----- How does a non-structured "group" like yours guard against specific threats that arise from the culture they are immersed in? .. ex: syncretism? If that was a problem in the first century, surely now too.

The word of God is quite sufficient! As an example we have people who study Wesley along with Spurgeon or Finney. We are united as 1 John 1 says by walking in the light. What threat shall overtake us in that place... prosperity doctrine, lasciviousness, false manifestations?

Dear sister, as long as you are not taking part in unclean alters, stay in the "system" and be a light.. as long as God calls you to so. May He richly bless and guard your heart in Christ Jesus. BTW, for all who are called and are walking in the light, perfecting holiness and bearing fruit in accordance with repentance, there is no us or them... being in Christ Jesus we are one body.

In Him - Jim