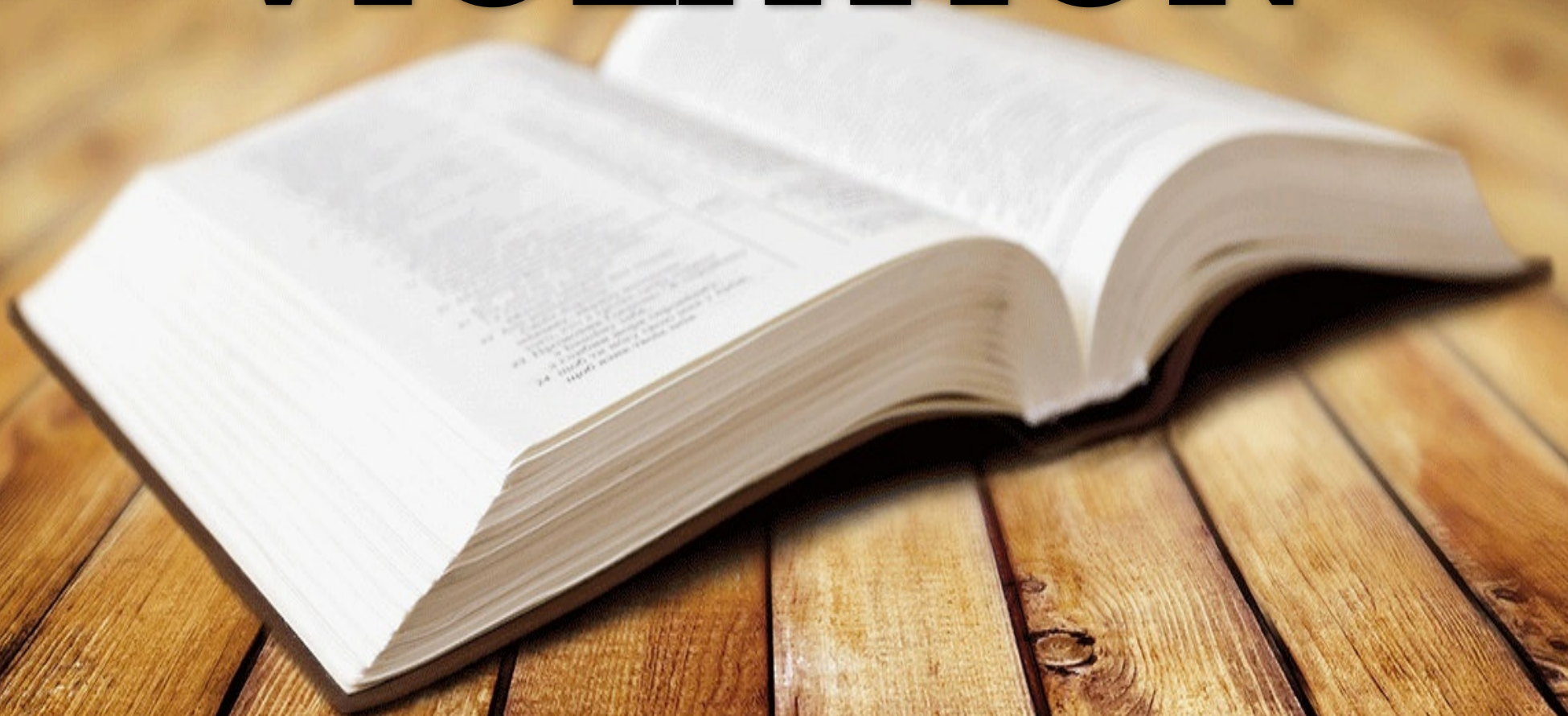


COOPERATION **VIOLATION**



IS THIS REALLY **IMPORTANT?**

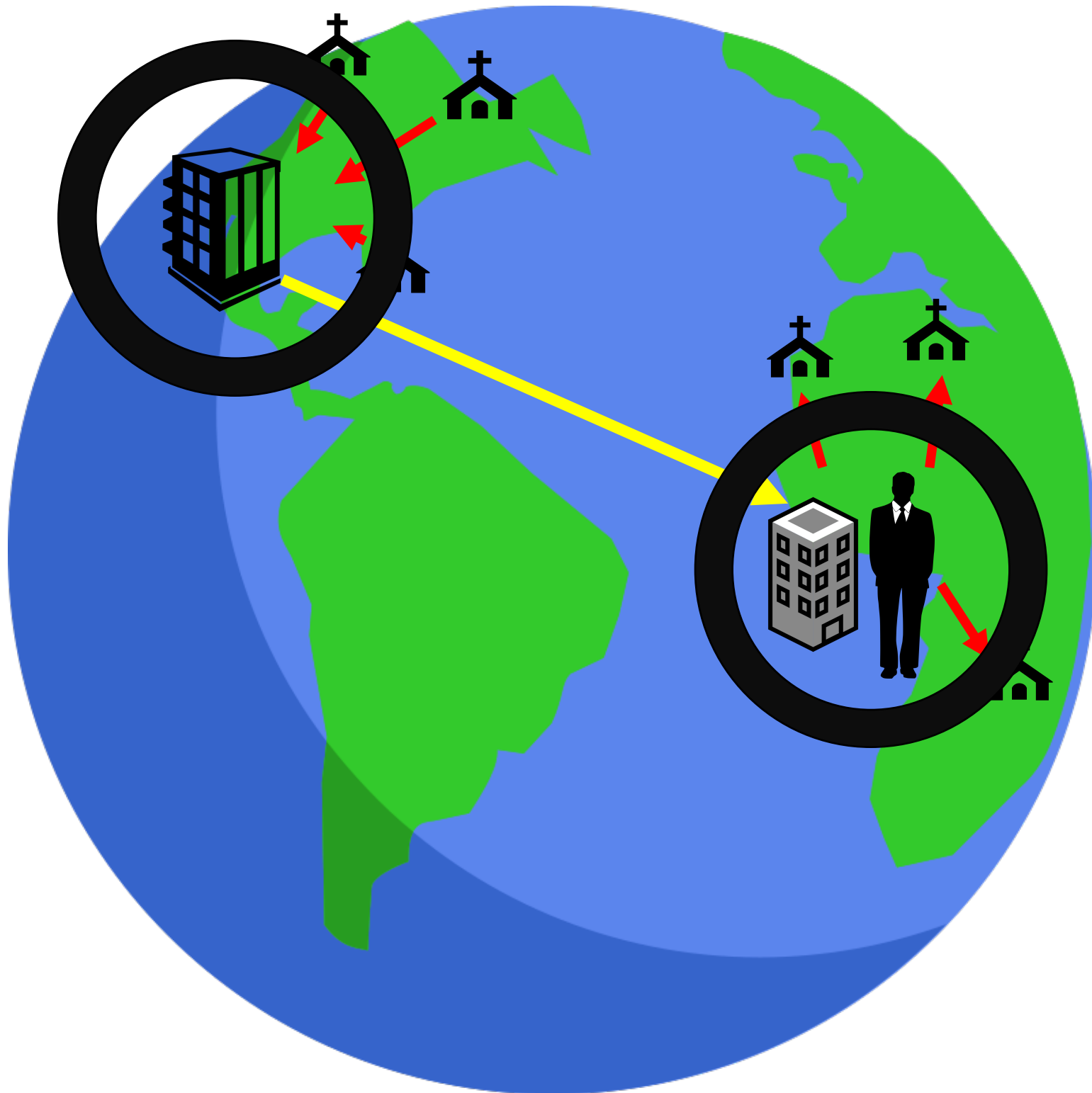
- Someone might wonder if there are more pressing issues than church cooperation, or that this is just a relic of a by-gone era of debate and division. Even though the old terms like “sponsoring church” and “missionary society” are not in use much any more, the problems persists.
- Ignoring this issue is as dangerous as ignoring the “apostasy” predicted by the apostles in their letters (1 Tim. 4:1-3, 2 Tim. 4:2-4, 2 Thess. 2:1ff). Local autonomy, leadership, and authority are at the heart of the issues related to church cooperation (Acts 20:28-30).

SO WHAT ARE WE
TALKING ABOUT?











THE ISSUE:
NO SCRIPTURAL
AUTHORITY FOR
ANY OF THESE
ARRANGEMENTS

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Every congregation has an obligation to spread the gospel and practice benevolence in an authorized way. Nobody else can take on these responsibilities for a congregation – they cannot be outsourced or managed by a third party! Essentially, we must let the church be the church, fully equipped (Eph. 4:11ff).
- Individual lampstands in Revelation 2-3.
- Elders only have local oversight (1 Pet. 5:2, Acts 20:28, 14:23, Titus 1:5).
- Local, autonomous churches sent and supported preachers (Acts 11:22, Phil. 4:15-18), collected funds (Acts 11:27-30), had control of funds collected (1 Cor. 16:3), and made sure they were sent DIRECTLY to the church in need (2 Cor. 11:8, Acts 11:30).

EVANGELISM

- Only a local church has control of who preaches and teaches there, and support is sent and given directly to the preacher. This is the pattern in the 1st century (Rev. 2:2, 2 Cor. 11:8-9, Phil. 4:14-16).
- Each church has a right to test those who come to them, without accepting the orders of a headquarters, regional or world leader, or assembly/synod/conference of churches (Acts 17:11, Colossians 2:16ff).
- This shows God's wisdom, since human institutions always drift naturally toward liberalism and hegemony. Colleges, hospitals, media programs, etc., eventually become secular or lose sight of scriptural authority.

When control over evangelism stays local and autonomous, everybody benefits! Preachers are free to associate with any church they think needs them, and churches are not forced to accept the appointment of a preacher (or any leadership position) by an authoritative institution. Additionally, preachers are directly supported by churches (one or many), so it is to the Church that they are immediately accountable, not a board of trustees or other hierarchy.



BENEVOLENCE

- Multiple congregations can send aid for benevolent purposes (1 Cor. 16:1-2), but there are certain conditions, such as the money being sent directly to the church in need (16:3). Also see Acts 11:29-30.
- In the NT, money is never sent through a sponsoring church and then forwarded or dispersed at their discretion. One set of elders cannot cede decision-making to another (or to a human organization).
- The need was also very specific (“to the saints” is always the operative phrase in the NT). Notice Romans 15:26. Money was never sent from one church to another for anything but benevolence.



INDIVIDUALS

COOPERATE

(1 Corinthians 12:12ff, Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:4-6, 1 Peter 4:10)

CHURCHES

PARTICIPATE

(2 Corinthians 8:1-5, Philippians 1:3-6)