

THE FOLSOM
VIEW

“...HAVING THE EYES OF YOUR HEART ENLIGHTENED...” EPHESIANS 1:18

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The Booming Spectators

BY BILL HALL

Have you ever noticed who does the booing at a ball game? It's not the players on the field. They make their own mistakes and they are not inclined to boo their fellow player when he makes his. They are pulling for one another, encouraging, helpful. They play as a team, win or lose as a team. It is the spectators who boo. So it is in every walk of life: it is the spectators who, as a rule, do the criticizing, not the participants.

Unfortunately, in every congregation, there are the spectators and the participants. The spectators never teach a Bible class, preach, lead singing, or preside at the table; they really don't get that much involved in the worship itself. But more often than not, they are the very ones who are found criticizing the preacher or song leader or Bible class teacher. They are the ones who are so embarrassed and incensed when someone inadvertently commits an "error" in his efforts to lead the group. They come wanting to hear something that is interesting and that will make the time fly by. If they hear it, they "cheer"; if not, they "boo."

Not so with the true participants, those who are really involved in the Lord's work. They are the ones "cheering on" that "rookie" who is preaching his first sermon or leading his first song. When a brother attempts to teach his first Bible class, they are looking for ways to be helpful. They are sympathetic; they rejoice in the success of others; they mourn over the sorrows of others; they feel for the one who has failed, make allowances for him, encourage him to try again, and assure him that he will do better next time. They rejoice especially in

the development of the young men and women in the Lord's work. They are just as nervous and excited when the young people make their first attempt at presiding at the table or teaching a class as they would be if it were their own children.

How many preachers have decided to move because of the booing spectators, right at the time when the participants were enjoying their greatest spiritual growth? How many elders have planned

the work around the demands of the spectators rather than the needs of the participants?

Spectators need to become participants and find out what it's like out there "on the field." Participants need to keep on doing their best, ignoring the "boos" while looking

to their all-seeing and understanding "Manager" for approval. All need to be preparing for judgment, where it will be the "doers of the word," not the critics, who will be saved. "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8).

Christians, like ball players, make a sad mistake when they listen too closely to the "boo-birds".

Are You Tired of All the Gimmicks?

BY FRANK HIMMEL

People should be insulted by all the gimmicks that churches are offering to draw and to keep them. Most of it is directed toward families, the children in particular. I speak of all the secular, non-religious, non-spiritual gimmicks -- the picnics, luncheons and suppers, the parties, the sports

teams, the fun and games, the square dances, the clubs and socials, the diet and exercise classes, and the fund-raising dinners and bazaars offered by churches. Classes and services that used to be purely religious are given new appearances with gimmickry.

Don't the people realize that the churches are saying, in effect, "We know that purely spiritual or religious activities and services, involving worshipping God, teaching and learning His word, edifying and being edified spiritually, are not enough to draw and to keep you. So we are featuring all these other secular activities in which you are probably more interested and adding a little religion to them and calling them 'Christian fellowship.' We are willing to compromise to get our crowd."?

So churches cease to be churches and become more like social, recreational, athletic, health, craft clubs. The Church of Christ is still a church, and we do not resort to gimmickry. We are trying to be like the churches you read about in the New Testament, not the churches around us.

The Work of the Church

Christians have God-given work to do, both individually and collectively. While there is much overlap, passages such as 1 Timothy 5:16 clearly indicate a difference between the two. What does the Bible teach about our collective work?

Spiritual

The Bible teaches that God ordained specific tasks for churches to perform. First-century congregations:

(1) Preached the gospel at home and abroad (1 Th. 1:8). This was done through instruction given in worship assemblies (1 Cor. 14:24-25), by people talking to those with whom they had contact (Acts 8:4), and by sending men out to preach (Phil 4:15-16).

(2) Built up the members of the congregation. Everything done in worship was to be unto edification (1 Cor. 14:26). Elders, spiritual shepherds, were charged with feeding the flock (Acts 20:28). Even severing association was an act of seeking to restore the erring (1 Cor. 5).

(3) Provided for needy brethren, either at home (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35) or abroad (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:26). This third area, unlike the others, was not necessarily ongoing, but as needed. Since the

church is a spiritual relationship, it is no surprise that its work is in the spiritual realm. So much of what modern churches do is conspicuously absent from the pages of the New Testament. The Bible makes no reference to churches operating schools or day care centers, providing recreational facilities and opportunities, being in the health care business, being a source for counseling and all sorts of social services, or even being a general charity. The fact that something seems like a good thing to us is no justification for altering God's plan. Neither do we have any right to employ carnal means to attract more people. See John 6 for the result.

Equipped

The Bible teaches that Christ equipped the church to accomplish everything He wants it to do. "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 3:11-12).

God's provisions are simple, yet sufficient. It is only when we try to involve the church in an unauthorized activity that we find our resources or organization inadequate. Make no mistake: any argument that says we must go beyond the New Testament model for churches in order to be effective is a denial of the sufficiency of God's design!

Independent

The Bible teaches that each church governs itself, planning and executing its own work in keeping with Christ's directions. Elders' oversight is limited to the flock among them (1 Pet. 5:2). No New Testament church ever directed the work of another, wholly or in part. None ever planned a work beyond its ability to carry out. Each did what it could.

No New Testament church ever paid a human institution to do its work for it. There were no add-on organizations, no subsidiary "ministries," no missionary boards or societies.

Let us be busy doing God's work in God's way.

BOTH ARTICLES VIA THE AUBURN BEACON