

“Too Social, Too Frivolous”

Dub McClish

In her syndicated newspaper column the late Ann Landers, popular syndicated columnist of the mid-twentieth century, printed a letter in which someone complained about how “social” and “frivolous” worship meetings had become in the Protestant church of which he was a member. In response, Anders asked for comments, and among them were many who agreed—including Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—concerning their religious meetings. There were complaints about selling tickets to ball games, “fun stuff,” funding churches with bingo games, style shows, little that pertained to worship, having to wait till one gets home to pray, a “showbiz” atmosphere, applause, hugging and kissing of strangers, and the use of almost gutter language in the pulpit. One respondent wrote: “Everything is so laid-back; you might as well be in an amusement park.”

Sound familiar? It should. Many of the things we see publicized in church bulletins and brotherhood newspapers are in the same category. It is becoming more and more common for an audience to applaud a preacher at some of our college lecture programs, as if he were a performer in a theatre. We also are aware of some who encourage the practice in their worship assemblies of turning to rank strangers, embracing them, or telling them “I love you.” I don’t know of any of our brethren who have introduced bingo yet, but one church bulletin carried a note from the preacher thanking God for a brother who won a government-sponsored lottery and gave some of it to the church! It is becoming increasingly common to read of brethren who are quite willing to make merchandise of the Gospel by their musical concerts. They are touring the country and advertising for “bookings” just like professional musicians (which is what they are). Some of these, while not yet using mechanical instruments, are imitating such sounds with their voices. Some of these groups are now performing in denominational churches.

It is becoming increasingly common to read in church bulletins of churches conducting car washes, yard sales, and similar activities to raise money for “mission work” or other works in which they are involved. If one or more families in a congregation want to have a “yard sale” and give all the profits to the church, that is quite different from the church itself doing so.

Why can’t people let the world be the world and the church be the church? Why can’t our brethren be content with insisting that the church must retain its spiritual nature and do its spiritual work? Try to imagine the Lord or the apostle Paul endorsing any such travesties and you will see how profane they really are!

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, November 26, 1987, of which I was editor.]

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