

COMMUNITY CHURCHES

If there is any organization which wears the name “church” without deserving it, it must be the community church. It stands for anything or nothing, just as the likes and dislikes of the people may happen to be. The big idea of the movement is to get together. There is no thought of pleasing God, but every effort is made to please the people to get them to stick together.

Is this a recent quote? Hardly! It is from the pen of my father in 1928 in a magazine, *Gospel Herald*, published in San Antonio, Texas, Jesse P. Sewell, Editor. This short-lived magazine included a regular column, *Through the Exchanges*, edited by my father. This particular quote dealt with another quote from the *Christian Standard* that was a notable effort by one man in the Christian Church who was lamenting the effort within the Disciples of Christ to establish “community” churches even back then.

Points worthy of current study by us were made by this Christian Church preacher seventy-three years ago. Among them were these criticisms:

1. The community church does not conceive of the church as the divinely ordained institution for preaching the gospel, rather, it is a community club believing sin is unimportant and subordinate to community cooperation and development.
2. Conviction is important only as it may aid or hinder respect by the community along with their cooperation; these are the more important things.

3. Denominationalism is not inherently wrong, just unworkable. If some sort of super –denomination could be formed that worked, it would not hurt.
4. These churches are playing with the babyhood toys of denominations. Every denomination began with some of these departures from the Bible.
5. We have as much business fooling with the community churches as we do with the denominations.

How interesting it is that truly “history repeats itself.” The latent weaknesses of our men who currently are championing the “community church” idea are shown rather bleakly in these criticisms. There is no valid reason for establishing community churches; it simply indicates that one has lost faith in the original design of our Lord.

That these actions are the same actions that fostered every denomination is without question. How sad it is that our short-sighted brethren cannot or will not see the direction they are headed. The headlong desire to please the multitudes was never the desire of our Lord, and such a desire cannot please the Lord today.

Paul declared he was “not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16); what I am wondering is, “Are these folks among us today who are establishing community churches ashamed of the Lord’s church?”

Dare we listen to voices of history?

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