

Concerned

H.L. Collett

Community churches have now for a while been springing up across our nation and we have recognized that they are called "community churches" in order to camouflage the doctrines of the denomination behind it and present an alluring and enticing appeal to those fed up with organized religion as a viable alternative. It is a sad day in Zion when brethren are ashamed of the Christ and His church, the church of Christ and the Doctrine of Christ, the New Testament of our Lord and resort to the same cover up tactics of the irreverent, unholy and ungodly who despite their aversion to Christ, His church and doctrine must nevertheless worship under the cover of "community." Reminds one of Jeroboam who in 1 Kings 12 started the false religion which turned his people away from the laws of Jehovah given in Moses to Israel. Israel was turned to: the worship of two calves of gold instead of Jehovah; in Bethel and Dan instead of Jerusalem; with priests of the lowest of people not the sons of Levi; on the 15th day of the 8th month instead of on the 15th day of the 7th month in the Feast of Tabernacles and with Jeroboam himself as the high priest. This was a religion Jeroboam had "*devised in his heart.*" (1 Kings 12:33)

Many *devices of human hearts* have for a long time been used to turn spiritually minded men and women away from the pattern of New Testament Christianity. There was a time when gospel preachers with a loud, clear voice sounded forth the revealed truth that the local church and the local church alone, functioning after God's own order is sufficient for the advancement of the cause of Christ on earth. The warning was given: Organization Auxiliaries today will turn the Divine organization, the local church, into the auxiliary tomorrow. Brethren accepted the doctrine of Jeroboam and the transformation was no sooner underway than brethren became more defensive of their auxiliaries than the Lord's good gifts. Some few brethren would not be duped with Satan's lies (Gen. 3:1-8), the debate was on and division was the result. The *devices of human hearts* have proliferated until the local church of the 1950s which followed the pattern of the New Testament can only be found among what are in derision called "anti" congregations.

But there is a growing trend among the "respectable" antis, meaning those "larger" in number and resources to resort to *devices of their human hearts*. More and more we see larger congregations concentrating on "youth programs" to the extent that smaller congregations are seeing whole families moving their congregational membership "for the children's sake" out of the smaller congregations where they will be sorely missed because they are losing the strength and stability of both talented men and women and the enthusiasm of youth. The small congregation now must struggle to

hold the ground they once fought to obtain and did so with valor. Too many are losing to the entertainment and social get-togethers provided by the larger groups who scruple not to provide "youth camps," "youth lectures," and entertainment for their youth all in order to draw whole families from other congregations and other communities to enlarge their human egos. Such will swell a congregation for a while but is not the stuff that spiritual strength is made of. In time a congregation built on gimmicks and gadgets and entertainment will fail. Meanwhile in the smaller congregation the struggle to keep the "lamp" of the gospel of salvation lit for the community grows weaker and weaker until finally the doors are closed and what brethren are still there are concentrating their energies in another community while theirs is overtaken by false religion and the world. Yes, I am concerned that brethren are abandoning the spiritual fight in their communities thinking their children will grow and develop spiritually in a climate of social get-togethers and entertainment instead of experiencing with their parents the struggle for truth against worldliness and false religion where they live. Perhaps we need to be reminded that the inspired preachers of the first century told new converts that "*with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord*" (Acts 11:23) and that "*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*" (Acts 14:22)

Parents please rethink your children's needs, please remember that struggle is how muscles and minds are built and made strong and please understand that that same is also necessary for the spiritual development of yourselves and your children.