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Why Does The Church Of Christ Not Use Fairs And Bazaars For Money Projects?

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WHY DOES THE CHURCH OF CHRIST NOT USE FAIRS AND BAZAARS FOR MONEY PROJECTS?

I. In the contrast of religious activities this and similar questions are intelligent.
A. First however some basic things must be said.
   1. Who decides—hierarchy or Christ?
   2. By what is decision made?
      a. If the Word the standard
   3. May common sense enter on a generic term—like how teach? TV, paper?

II. Christ Decides.
A. He is the head.
   1. We body.
   2. Voice in head

III. Word dictates the standard.
A. Has God spoken?
   1. More hear than any subject.
B. Read I Cor. 16:1-2
   1. Periodic
   2. Personal
   3. Proportionate
   II Cor. 9:6-
   4. Purposeful.
   5. Primary importance.
C. God said this— if done—would take care of needs.

IV. Common Sense Seems Pitfalls of Other Methods.
A. We list these objections.
   1. Why should outsider support your work?
      a. Do they benefit? Does your mowing yard mean neighbor should furnish mower just because yard looks better?
   2. Why waste time and effort?
a. You buy raw product, time making it, time selling, money for purchase. Why not work a secular and give more and sooner!

3. You offend merchant as either competition or else polite black mail—since he gave to others. He has taxes, etc.

4. Machinery to service deal costs too much to oil.

5. Practices ( ) introduced are questionable.


V. Lord decided it.

A. He gave self—so do we.

West End Teen Age Bible Class Fall '61
J. C. Brewer knew a
house 2 assembly in Tenn.
that did not want us
using it. In deed wanted
"no Campbellites can use
it." Lawyn said they'd
disown name. Suggested
they use word "Christian.
Thus in deed "For use y
all denominational bodies -
no 'Christians' allowed"
One way to keep from losing your shirt is to keep your sleeves rolled up.
FOR THE past several years there has been an increasing opposition within Protestant circles to fairs, bazaars, sales, and similar money-raising events. One denomination, at least, has officially gone on record as strongly encouraging its churches and their organizations to give up such activities and to support the principles of Christian stewardship. Here and there individuals and groups have expressed the conviction that Jesus’ action in driving the money-changers and traders from the temple is warrant for a complete prohibition of all money-raising enterprises, including church suppers.

Others frankly state that, if their churches are to continue to exist and pay their bills, they must make use of such activities. They believe their congregations are doing a significant work and filling an important role in the life of the community; however, there is not the necessary financial strength within the membership to support the enterprise and they see no other source of income apart from these events.

As in most differences of opinion there is no clear-cut, simple answer. Those who attempt to present an all black or all white picture overlook some important factors. The more we study the matter, the more a gray area seems to stand out and make our decisions difficult and complicated. For this reason we propose to examine some of the pros and cons to see what help we may find.

One argument sometimes heard in support of these activities runs somewhat like this: a live and thriving church benefits the whole community. Even people who have nothing to do with it enjoy the values that its presence makes possible. Most of us are familiar with the various claims made in support of this argument: increased real estate values, heightened moral tone in the community, prevention of
delinquency, and so on. Assuming these to be valid, it is asserted that it is only fair that those who do not support the church by their membership and contributions should have a chance to do so through these other channels. They enjoy the benefits; why shouldn’t they bear some of the expense?

This argument strikes some of us as a bit specious. For one thing, some of those whom we expect to come to our fair and spend money are already supporting churches of their own. But what of those who have no connection at all? It seems to this writer unfair to expect anyone to support that in which he does not believe. To get a more objective viewpoint, let’s look at a somewhat comparable situation: when someone builds a fine home on my street, or when my neighbor improves his property, it enhances the value of my own. Should they therefore have the right to expect me to help pay for what they have done?

One of the reasons most frequently given in support of carrying on fairs, bazaars, or other money-raising activities has already been mentioned. It is claimed that the members of some churches do not have the resources with which to finance adequately the work of the parish. In some cases this may simply mean that there are too many churches in the area and that some of them should be closed or merged with others; but this is not always the answer.

There are situations, particularly among inner city churches, where a congregation is made up of a little handful of the faithful surrounded by a considerable number of uncertain and bewildered folk who have no strong belief and who never will have unless the church continues to minister to them in spite of the fact that they do little or nothing in return. The expense of carrying on Christian work in such situations is as great as anywhere; and, because more welfare and social service needs must be met, it may be even more costly. Mission aid may not be available to the extent needed. In such a case what shall a pastor and his people do? Shall they turn their backs on the need at their door or shall they resort to carefully selected money-raising activities to supplement their too meager funds?

This argument in support of such projects is less vulnerable than the first; nevertheless, there are probably too many of our churches that accept the idea of their financial weakness too easily. If such activities are to be approved on the basis of necessity, it should be absolutely certain that the necessity exists. It should never be an easy “out” from the practice of sacrificial Christian stewardship.

On the negative side, there are further arguments against the practice of holding bazaars, fairs, and other benefit activities. For one thing, a number of practices arise in connection with them that are, to say the least, questionable. For example: as a part of many of these, a program booklet is published which carries advertisements that are themselves a source of revenue. The writer has seen some of these ads that were for such expensive luxury products that they seemed inappropriate for Christian consideration. Other products seemed out of place for other reasons. Again, there are cases where merchants have taken ads only because they feared to offend a customer or lose trade. It is very doubtful whether any advertiser gets his money’s worth from an ad in such a program.

Because the writer has known a number of merchants rather well, he knows how unhappy most of them feel about the demands made on them by churches, hospitals, P. T. A.’s, volunteer fire companies, and other charitable and non-
profit groups. Especially in smaller cities and towns, they are besieged for ads and asked to contribute merchandise to be resold or used as prizes; and, if they give to one group, they have to do so to all. It becomes a form of polite blackmail from which there is no protection in law. Certainly the Church dare not become involved in such a practice.

When activities offered come close to being games of chance and gambling or are morally or spiritually questionable, any church that presents them is on shady ground—to say the least. Nevertheless, many money-raising enterprises skirt dangerously close to these offenses and some clearly step over the line. It becomes very difficult at times to convince an overenthusiastic committee that a profitable raffle or game of chance isn’t consistent with the practices of Christian stewardship and morals.

Another argument against most money-raising affairs is that they cost more than they produce and therefore just don’t make sense. The members of a church buy food or the material out of which to make different products and pay for it out of their own pockets. Then they spend long hours of hard work cooking, sewing, planning, and arranging. After that, they work hard serving a meal, washing dishes and cleaning up, or in manning booths where the things they made are sold. For the most part, the customers are these same people buying back their own or their neighbors’ cooking and handiwork. They’ve paid for whatever they have gotten four times: when they bought the raw materials and when they paid for the finished products, when they expended work in preparing it and when they sold it. How much simpler and more effective it would have been to have given the money directly and to have used the time and energy in some other form of Christian service.

All of these arguments against money-raising affairs boil down to a matter of Christian stewardship. They point to the necessity for a greater amount of training for the officers and members of our churches—not to speak of some of the ministers. There needs to be a greater understanding of what it means to be a Christian in the use of one’s time, abilities, and money. Many of us can’t afford to give to the cause of Jesus Christ as we should because our standard of values doesn’t put him high enough on our list of what is important. As his sovereignty over the whole realm of our financial life increases, the need for special affairs to support his work will decrease.

In spite of all these objections, there are still situations in which there is real justification for money-raising affairs that are conducted with a serious effort to maintain a high level of Christian honesty and fairness. Among them are those in which a small, low-income group are trying to serve a needy area. In addition, the writer knows of at least one situation in which a church fair is carried on fully as much for the value of its by-products as for the money raised. This situation may have something to contribute to our thinking on this matter.

The church in question is a large one, located in a densely populated metropolitan area. Its members come from all walks of life—the very rich, the very poor, and most levels in between. Some of its members are well educated and very sophisticated; others are very humble folk with only a few years of formal education to their credit. There are native Americans who trace their ancestry to the American Revolution and the Mayflower, and some who have come here so recently that they can barely speak English. Nearly every race, color, and nationality is represented among its
members. Some of these people have only this in common: the fact that they believe in the same Lord and worship in the same church. Because these people move in such different circles, have such different interests, work on such different schedules, and live in widely separated areas of a great metropolis, many of them never have contact with one another. There is little opportunity for real Christian fellowship to develop across the lines of separation.

A few years ago this congregation conducted a church-wide fair. To plan and conduct it a committee was formed which included representatives from every group, organization, board, and Sunday school department, from juniors on up. This in itself brought together a large number of children, young people, and adults from all segments of the congregation. Each group instructed its representatives concerning its ideas and suggestions, and these representatives brought back from the committee to their groups regular reports on what was being done.

One important task of the Fair Committee was to select the objective or objectives to which the proceeds were to go. Each group was asked to consider what cause it believed should benefit from the fair and to send its representatives to a general committee meeting ready to present the facts and arguments in support of their project. Preparation and presentation of these appeals was in itself an education in the missionary and benevolent causes that appealed for help from members of the church. One basic principle, always observed, was to pick some cause not currently supported by the congregation and provide for it funds over and above the allocation given by its supporting denominational board or sponsoring agency. It was an effort to stretch the horizons of the local church and extend Christian work in a way not possible without this effort. Further, it was determined that no funds should go to the support of the local church itself.

As group representatives presented the facts about their special causes, the various needs and desires were weighed and balanced. It became necessary to select from among the many important and appealing projects the one, two, or, at most, three that seemed most worthy of support, and determine the proportion of proceeds each was to receive. This was accomplished through a democratic process of discussion and debate leading to the voting in which the judgment of the majority was accepted as the wish of the entire church. Here, again, a considerable number of people gained an insight into the inner workings of church finance and government, and learned how to bring into united purpose many differing viewpoints and desires.

Once the objective or objectives were determined, a special sub-committee began an educational campaign to acquaint the entire congregation with the Christian work being done by the designated recipients. Thus the fair became an enterprise in Christian missionary education which climaxed in the event itself. Here decorations and displays told more about the cause being supported and, when possible, representatives of the work were present to speak in its behalf.

Throughout the months of preparation—about seven—the Fair Committee met regularly to receive reports on what each group was doing, act on requests and suggestions from the participating organizations, and send back to them, through their representatives, full information about the causes that were to benefit from the fair. At each meeting of a church board or of any club or organization, its representatives reported on
preparations and shared the facts about the mission field or other projects that were to benefit.

A booklet was published that contained a directory of the fair, giving the necessary information about various activities and their location. However, it also told the story of the cause or enterprise the fair sought to support, thus becoming an educational tool that gave members of the congregation a wider vision of the work of the Christian Church. Along with this, the booklet carried information about the life and program of the local congregation that would be of interest to those who had recently come into the church and to prospective members as well.

At the time of the fair itself (it ran two days), members of the congregation from all parts of the city worked together in operating the booths and projects and mingled in the activities. Thus, in every stage of planning and preparation and in the actual event itself, all kinds and conditions of people met and counseled together, worked and planned and shared together. Here was an instrument that brought people into fellowship and service across social barriers, racial, economic, and educational differences, and all the other things that separate people, even Christians in the Church.

In the years that have followed the first of these fairs, ministers and church leaders have guided the planning for subsequent ones so that these values have been maintained. In the first place, the local church has never benefited financially; for the proceeds have gone to some mission enterprise, social service project, or youth work outside the parish. In addition, these objectives have been selected from causes other than those to which the church has been committed in its regular mission and benevolence budget. This was done de-

**PULPIT POWER**

A famous preacher was asked the formula for success in the pulpit: “I would recommend that you sedulously avoid all polysyllabic profundity, stentorian vacuity, thronical bombast, and similar transgressions.” “Or to put it a bit differently,” he added smilingly, “talk simply, naturally, and, above all, don’t use big words.”

This is really second-hand advice. In an indirect way, Jesus was the first to teach us that our sermons should be marked with clarity and simplicity. Christ told the story to which we have given the title “The Prodigal Son” in 322 words. All but 63 of these are of one syllable. There is not a cloud in its sky. No man can mistake its meaning. Through the centuries it has had an almost unequalled power to explain God, to describe man, and to draw God and man closer together.

“What do you read, my Lord?” Polonius asked Hamlet. “Words, words, words,” Hamlet said. “Someone has discreetly listened, and has aptly said that in many worship services words, words, words are Satan’s saints. The preacher’s words can become Satan’s saints if he tries to be sophisticated rather than sincere, to be great rather than simple.

To effectively communicate the unsearchable riches of God’s truth is still our main task.

An eleven-year-old girl had heard her adult friends talk much about the brilliant new minister. After hearing him preach a wonderfully clear sermon for the first time, she made a profound observation: “Daddy, that preacher is not so smart. I understood every word he said.” What happened? The preacher was not only brilliant, but also wise. He had followed the example of Jesus. He had preached in a language that all could understand. He had preached with power.

—REV. ASBURY LENOX
First Methodist Church
Navasota, Texas
THE CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER
1st  World Communion Sunday
8th  Men and Missions Sunday
15th  Laymen’s Sunday
22nd  World Order Sunday
29th  Reformation Sunday
      World Temperance Sunday
31st  Reformation Day

THE CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER
1st  All Saints Day
3rd  World Community Day
19th  Thanksgiving Sunday
23rd  Thanksgiving Day

liberately, as a means of extending the horizons of the congregation.

It may be true that the money raised could have been obtained far more easily had people been fully committed to the principles of Christian stewardship and proportionate giving. Nevertheless the training and experience in church leadership that this program has provided, and the education in churchmanship and missions that scores of young people and adults have received have been invaluable. Add to these the fact that a spirit of understanding and fellowship has developed, cutting across all human differences and barriers, and we must recognize that this has become a valuable tool in the life and work of this particular church. Even if the financial returns were little or nothing, it does something worth doing.

Many money-raising activities in our churches are of questionable value and some are quite inconsistent with the principles in which we believe. However, it is possible to redeem some of them and transform them into programs that provide wide Christian education for church members and, at the same time, unite all segments of the congregation in a closer fellowship. No one can produce a rule to cover all situations. Each church must seek the leading of the Spirit as it tries to determine what it should do and how it should be done.

THE HOLY LAND

T here is an almost merciless clarity in the sunlit air of the Holy Land. It can reveal the crevices in hills miles away, or penetrate the make-up of a woman’s face and reveal its true age lines ...

The idea that in the land of Israel things can be seen which elsewhere may be veiled is an old Jewish and Christian theme. ‘The eyes of the Lord are upon this land,’ says the Bible, and an old rabbinic commentary explains that what in other lands may be less noticed, must in the land of Israel be sharply exposed and called to account. Here the coverings are stripped away, and the souls of men and institutions are more fully revealed. What may pass in other places—compromises, weaknesses, surface pretense—will here not be tolerated.

That the Holy Land can reveal to individuals and peoples an intensity of truth that may remain somewhat veiled in other places—this has been the faith that has brought so many pilgrims here.

—from The Wild Goats of Ein Gedi, by Herbert Weiner (Doubleday)