

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

The Lord's church is the spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 1:22–23). It cannot be seriously argued that the work of the spiritual body of Christ should or can be different from the work Jesus came to do (and did) in His physical body. Most would not argue such verbally, but many strongly argue it practically. There is a new virus loose in the church—"provide all things for all men" (not to be confused with personally "becoming all things to all men" in matters of judgment). It is also called "ministering to the whole man" and "meeting felt needs." By this approach, churches are justifying almost anything that men might enjoy and/or find useful, whether or not such things are authorized.

My first work out of college was to serve as one of the preachers with a large church. There was a Methodist Church a few blocks away with a gymnasium in its basement. You could have tortured the elders where I worked and they would not have built such a building--they knew there was no excuse for such use of the Lord's money. Now that same congregation has built its own gymnasium. Oh, they call it their "Family Life Center." However, when I see a building with basketball goals, net poles for volleyball and lines on the floor for boundaries, pardon me for calling it a "gymnasium."

When one starts down the "minister-to-the-whole-man" road it is difficult to find a stopping place. Another symptom of this viral disease is the endless pleasure jaunts of senior citizen and teenager groups in the church (why are we "middle-aged" folks always left out?). I am in favor of having a good time and seeing pretty scenery as much as the next fellow. I commend Christians who **plan and pay for from their own pockets** such outings. I have never figured out why the Lord's church should be

charged with hiring someone who spends much of his time planning such pleasure jaunts, often on a bus or van owned, operated, and fueled out of the church's bank.

Can you imagine the Lord's planning a three-day sight-seeing trip to Tyre and Sidon for the "39ers" or the "Autumn Leaves" group? Picture Timothy's planning a "ski retreat" on Mt. Olympus for the "keen teens" of Ephesus. Did Paul ever consider taking a contribution from the Gentile churches to build a "Family Life Center" for the church in Jerusalem? Such suggestions are ludicrous, if not blasphemous. They are no more the work of the blood-bought church of Christ in the twenty-first century than in the first. The kingdom is a spiritual entity by definition (John 18:36). Its work and mission are tied innately to its nature.

—Dub McClish

Denton, TX