

INSULTING OUR YOUTH

While living in south Florida in the mid 1960's I received announcements from churches in the area of plans to have special activities for the young people (especially juniors and seniors in high school) near the end of the school year. These activities included an annual "track and field meet" of the (as one group announced it) "south Florida district of the churches of Christ." Another event in 1966 was a "Junior-Senior Banquet" with entertainment provided by Pat Boone (remember, this was 1966) and the "Belles and Beaux" of Harding College. Also, a "senior king and queen will be crowned" during the banquet. After the banquet they had all night bowling and then a breakfast served in the "fellowship hall" of one of the area churches. Those promoting these activities said they wanted to provide wholesome activities so the young people would not be attending such activities as the school sponsored proms. The newspaper article promoting these activities quotes the person they interviewed as saying, "The event is not underwritten by the churches, but by the interested parents and friends."

Even though the events were announced and promoted by the churches and each congregation selected their own "king and queen" candidates and one church provided the place for the breakfast, they contended that it was "not underwritten by the churches." In the years following many of these churches got involved in openly providing recreational and entertainment activities to attract the young. One preacher in the area at that time defended such by saying, "anything that may ultimately lead one to become interested in the gospel would be an authorized work of the church." This is just another way of saying "the end justifies the means." See what Paul said about such thinking in Romans 3:8.

Many opposed these activities then, not because they were bad within and of themselves, but because these things were not an authorized work of the church. Even though the claim was made that they were not paid for by the churches they were promoted as a work of the churches.

Recently, some of my brethren who spoke out against such activities as described above have engaged in the very same activities and making the same claim. They plan a "Teen Retreat" that includes Bible study, prayer and singing and, the next day, outdoor recreational activities and hay rides with meals provided. They later sent a letter explaining that they understood that recreation and social activities are not the work of the church and that these activities were not paid for by the church. This was the same statement made by those in south Florida in 1966.

I am convinced that all of these brethren are making the same mistake. And the mistake they are making is an insult to our young people. In essence they are saying to the young people, "You are too carnally minded to respond to an invitation to simply study God's word and engage in things spiritual." If we truly believe that recreational and social activities are the responsibility of the home then why don't we let the parents plan and provide such and let the church fulfill its responsibility of teaching and edifying?

At this time of year (summer) when many groups have their "Vacation Bible Schools" the announcements of these leave the impression they are, in the words of one young man, "having a party instead of a Bible study."

Let's quit insulting our young people by thinking the only way to get them interested in studying God's word is to make a carnal appeal to them. There are those who desire to "*remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). They respect those who are concerned enough about their souls to provide that spiritual teaching and training they need. They recognize

that the social and recreational have their place, but it is not the work of the church to provide such. I am encouraged by the number of young people who refuse to participate in the previously mentioned activities because they recognize that such is not the work of the church and that it should not be made to appear such. In the words of many of the older preachers in days past, "Let the church be the church and let the home be the home."

✠ James Hahn