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Poetry.

"Eye hath not seen."

You never write of heaven,
Though you write of heavenly themes;
You never paint the glory
But in reflected gleams!
My pencil only pictures
What I have known and seen:
How can I tell the joys that dwell
Where I have never been?

I sing the songs of Zion,
But I would never dare
To imitate the chorus,
Like many waters, there,
I sketch the sunny landscape,
But can I paint the sun?
Can that by art, which human heart
Conceiveth not, be won.

The Laplander, that never
Hath left his flowerless snows,
Might make another realize
The fragrance of the rose:
The blind might teach his brother
Each subtle tint to know
Of lovely lights and summer sights,
Of shadows and of glow.

To whom all sound is silence,
The dumb man might impart
The spirit-winged marvels
Of Handel's sacred art.
But never, sister never
Was told by mortal breath
What they behold, o'er whom hath rolled
The one dark wave of death.

Yet angel-echoes reach us,
Borne on from star to star,
And glimpses of our purchased home,
Not always faint and far.
No harp seraphic brings them,
No poet's glowing word,
By One alone revealed and known
The Spirit of the Lord.

Oh, this is more than poem,
And more than highest song;
A witness with our spirit,
Though hidden, full and strong.
'Tis no new revelation
Vouchsafed to saint or sage,
But light from God cast bright and broad
Upon the sacred page.

Our fairest dream can never
Outshine that holy light,
Our noblest thought can never soar
Beyond that word of might.
Our whole anticipation,
Our Master's best reward,
Our crown of bliss, is summed in this,
'For ever with the Lord!'

F. R. HAVERGAL.

Religious.

Church Fellowship and Finances.*

BY REV. JOSEPH H. SAUNDERS.

Everything that belongs to the Church of Christ is important to the believer. The sphere and aims of its operations must be understood by him. The principles which give to the Church its life and power are worthy of the most thorough investigation of the followers of Christ.

Christ is the head over all things to the Church. The world is to be subject to Him. His methods of accomplishing the subjection must be known by His servants. His Church is commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature. They, and they only, who have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus are to be admitted to membership in the church. This new life in Christ which qualifies for membership in the church, demands a full surrender, and consecration to His service of all the powers and possessions of each member.

Thus commissioned and qualified, the Church rightfully claims to control, and put under tribute, in her own peculiar way, all the physical, as well as spiritual forces of life. There is not a condition of human existence that it does not touch and test. In the Church these converted forces are massed and developed. In her legitimate operations the religion of her Lord is practically illustrated.

Two things then are especially to be expected in Church life. 1st. The development of individual Christian character, and, 2nd. a clear well-defined presentation of Christianity to the world. In order to this, care must be had in carrying out, in detail, the plans of the Master. How we ought to be-

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have ourselves in the church, we do not find so plainly formulated in commands, as germinating in principles taught by Christ and His Apostles and ingrained in the hearts and consciences of believers by the Holy Ghost. We have also very plain examples in the practices of the first churches. By carefully observing and following these directions we shall not go far astray. It is not well that we only practice in some particulars the will of Christ. It is not enough that we embrace and rejoice in some of the features and privileges of Christianity. We are to observe all things Christ commanded. Early in the Church's history we find the word

FELLOWSHIP

used to describe the bond which united believers to each other, and their common Lord. The efficiency of the Church appears then to have largely depended upon its strength here. To this the Church must still look for much of its power.

THE CONDITIONS OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

Now as we can only have fellowship with Christ our Saviour, by a full participation of His Spirit, and this expressed by a hearty co-operation with Him in His work, so our fellowship with His Church must originate in the same source, and prove its existence in the same way. It may be well here to notice the fact that without fellowship with Christ and His Church, we can hold no advantageous relation to either. As without participation in Christ's suffering and work, we cannot have part in His life, so without a full consecration of ourselves, with all our possessions to church work, we can in no wise partake of her privileges. "If a man will not work neither shall he eat," is literally true in this relation. And this is so, not because of any formulated law of the Church, or arbitrary decree of her Lord; but because of the spirit and nature of Christianity itself. Without this fellowship the Christian name by whomsoever taken, is a misnomer. Having our names on Church records does not give us Christian character or Church privilege. This may give us a name to live while we are yet dead.

On the condition of our fellowship with Christ we are admitted to membership in Baptist churches. Any violation of these, breaks the compact and blights our religious enjoyments in the Church, and this is so quite independent of any attitude of the Church towards us—as is frequently imagined—but rather because of our questionable position with our brethren and our Lord. When this is our condition, exclusion or withdrawal of fellowship generally by the Church is no injury to us, as a nominal membership without fellowship is of no advantage to us. These conditions, understood by our church members, would save from many an erring step, and greatly assist in maintaining a proper discipline in our churches.

A NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

In these characteristics and conditions of church fellowship, we are more interested as we discover that individual Christian life and Church life are co-related. So perfect is their relation, that they cannot separately exist. It will be seen that any attempt to cultivate Christian life and character, independent of Church life and fellowship, must be abortive. That fellowship with Christ cannot be maintained independent of church fellowship. It is also seen that they are co-ordinate. First, as each is ordained by Christ; and then as both are equally important in establishing righteousness in the earth. The misleading conclusion is far too often entertained, and by a false charity, too frequently expressed, that it is no difference what church we join, or whether we are members of any church if we are only Christians. As though we can be Christians and not obey Christ, or to state the same falsehood more boldly, Christ's commands and arrangements for our Christian life are of no consequence.

THE HARMONY AND STRENGTH OF FELLOWSHIP.

Our confidence in this arrangement of things a departure from the Apostolic model, "They continued in fellowship." Ananias and Saphira lost their lives by breaking it. The very unsatisfactory condition of our church accounts, as it appears in arrearsages on subscriptions and balances due on pastors' salaries, and the pressing calls for aid from weak churches and destitute fields alike speak of this departure. The claims of our Foreign Missions, and the necessities of our educational work urge us to perfect our fellowship.

1. The love of a common object.
2. A oneness of purpose.
3. A common agreement in plans of operating.
4. A constancy in support in the ratio of individual ability.

Here we have an organization at once simple in its construction, beautiful in its harmony, and unsurpassed in its power. In the absence of either of these constituents, real fellowship cannot exist. All these are richly supplied to a true Church by the regenerating grace of God and the commands of Christ.

THE OBLIGATIONS.

Since church fellowship is so vital to spiritual life, it should be cultured with the greatest care. That this may be well done, all its elements, as well as the condition of its growth, should be understood by church members. On every member rests the obligation to maintain this fellowship; for as we have seen, it includes every Christian duty and privilege. Moreover the means and the motives for its exercise are richly supplied in the conditions of our salvation, and the relation we hold to the world, as followers of Christ. "Freely ye have received, freely give," is the means indicated. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," furnishes a motive that must reach to the lowest altitude of religious life. "Ye are the salt of the earth—the light of the world," marks the relation of the Church to the commonwealth. All these passages together with others map out the field of Christian work.

FELLOWSHIP MEANS BUSINESS.

So does Christianity or Christian life mean the same. We cannot possibly conceive of a fellowship without united effort for the accomplishment of some end. Work is necessary to its existence. Mutual endeavour, and the sacrifice of independent self-interest, are claimed from every participant. On these conditions alone, as we have seen, can they justly claim dividends. For the perpetuation and development of church fellowship, the Saviour has wisely provided in the commission He has given His Church, to preach the Gospel. In this command He has not more surely anticipated the world's wants, than He has provided for the Church's life. For the spiritual needs of a sin-cursed race are not greater than are the demands of our Christian life that we supply the lost ones with the living bread.

FINANCES.

The relation of fellowship and finances is here seen. As by Divine arrangement, individual life and Church life are indivisible, so fellowship and finances are harmoniously united. They are truly interdependent. Fellowship cannot possibly exist in the Church without financial operations, either in giving or receiving; nor can the church's financial operations find support except they be rooted in fellowship. Now in no feature of our Church life is our weakness more apparent than in the department of our finances. In no particular is the feebleness of individual faith more manifest than in the records of our benevolent work.

While very respectable sums are expended in our denominational work, there are many of our members whose financial records are blank. These have only a nominal membership in our churches. They not only fail to give financial strength to the Church, they add nothing to its spiritual life, for

they are out of fellowship with their brethren and their Lord. By refusing, or even ignorantly neglecting to co-operate in church work, they have cut themselves off from Church privileges and the appointed means of grace.

Do we not discover in this condition of things a departure from the Apostolic model, "They continued in fellowship." Ananias and Saphira lost their lives by breaking it. The very unsatisfactory condition of our church accounts, as it appears in arrearsages on subscriptions and balances due on pastors' salaries, and the pressing calls for aid from weak churches and destitute fields alike speak of this departure. The claims of our Foreign Missions, and the necessities of our educational work urge us to perfect our fellowship.

THESE PRINCIPLES MUST BE RECOGNIZED

by all our churches in their work. Our financial agencies, as they go forth to collect must publish these conditions of Christian life and Church life, so wisely and kindly instituted for the children of God, in our pulpits, and at our anniversaries as we endeavour to "arouse the denomination" by pathetic appeals on behalf of the needy, we must bring out in clear light these practices and principles on which our religious life rests, and in the development of which it gathers its joy and power.

When church fellowship is understood and heartily embraced by our membership, then the most perplexing of our denominational difficulties will be overcome.

SOME PRACTICAL HINTS.

1. In so much as Fellowship means business, the Church should adhere to the soundest system of finances, in all its operations.

The correctness of any business transactions is most readily shown by the detailed records thereof. Without systematic records, no business can be correctly done. This truth is as applicable to the Church as any other corporate body. To meet this necessity the Lord has appointed officers whose special duties lie in this direction. The Deacons are the financiers of the Church. It is for them to see that no funds are squandered and that no sound business principle is violated, in the transactions of the Church. By so perfecting Church accounts, as to give each member, whether old or young, rich or poor, a financial record, they will induce a careful recognition of the conditions of church privileges; and by carefully recording all disbursements they will preserve the confidence and co-operation of all concerned.

A neglect of those reasonable conditions has wrought serious difficulties in our churches. Deacons have been ignorant and neglectful of their duties. The members have not understood the conditions of their fellowship. The pastors have failed to explain and enforce these plain principles. The result is confusion instead of order in our churches. A want of confidence in each other that is mutual; instead of the strong bonds of fellowship which God has ordained for His people. Very few of our churches can show well arranged financial records. Only a few of our members are interested in a business meeting of the church. Only a few think they ought to be interested.

All this should be speedily changed. How soon and thoroughly this shall be done must depend in large measure upon our ministers, as they are leaders of religion thought and teachers of the truth.

Revivals of religion, such as we have been enjoying as we see, have failed to lift us into sound business habits. Large accessions to our membership have in many instances increased our embarrassments. We need a revival of universal and prayerful thought on this subject.

2. In so much as church fellowship and finances are so intimately related, the church has a sound financial basis, and should be a model of honest business. It cannot otherwise be a successful leader of morals.

Fellowship lays under tribute all the

possessions of its participants, and confines the demands of the Church within the limits of the united ability of its membership.

When all who love the Lord Jesus are living in His appointed fellowship the Church will be abundantly able to fulfil her mission, discharge all her liabilities, and daily increase her ability. This is God's appointed means, all else must fail. A perfected fellowship will lift our churches above the doubtful methods now resorted to, for the purpose of replenishing church funds. Bazaars, concerts, and theatrical entertainments, with their many demoralizing influences, will be shorn of their present religiousness, and will be seen in their true light, as the antagonists of fellowship, an insult to God and a bad example to the world. If our Church is dancing attendance to worldliness, and pandering to the low passions and appetites of the ungodly for the sake of a financial margin; while at the same time large numbers on our rolls are denying their obligations as they publicly assumed them at their baptism, our influence cannot be favorable to righteousness. If from year to year our churches are in arrears, and fail to pay their honest debts, they shake public confidence in their integrity and ability.

By this we divorce religion and business to the very great injury of both.

A development of fellowship would at once increase financial ability of the church and raise its institutions above the mendicancy of the present day. Its financial agents would no longer be regarded as beggars, and its ministry as a sort of exalted pauperism. She would be independent and honoured. The world would be brought to the feet of her Lord to learn how to put religion and business, and time and eternity harmoniously together.

3. It will be seen that all the elements and forces of the Church are inherent. Her mission is to give and not to borrow, to bear up and elevate, and not to hang upon the common wealth for support. It will also be seen that the powers which inhere in her are susceptible of unlimited development. That the church is the one organization of earth which is equal to every emergency, and independently so. That the more she has, the more she shall receive. It is hers to conquer and win, by Divine power incarnated.

All our denominational schemes should recognize these facts.

These plans should not limit the efforts of the Church to the contributions of fixed sums, or the cultivation of limited areas. Her resources are infinite, and her commission is world-wide. Limits may stint while the Church only needs the development of her ability. Pastors who find it impossible to realize a fixed salary, and our missionary and educational institutions, who find our churches slow to pledge and pay a specified support may gather a hint from this fact. Support in the ratio of the ability of each church member is the condition of life in the Church, and life here means increase.

We should also recognize the fact that these schemes are not the sources of the Church's power; that no external pressure or perfections of appliances for gathering up the contributions of our churches will produce their benevolence, more than will the most perfect machinery for harvesting produce the crop of the farmer. Too much capital must not be expended in machinery. The grand forces of Christianity are internal. The Church's life is hid in fellowship with Christ in God. This fellowship perfected will give the churches financial, as it gives them spiritual strength.

The Bishop of London, anxious to give a little relief for troubled consciences satisfied with a very little, suggests that the Athanasian Creed might be read four times a year instead of thirteen times.

It is easier to blame than to do better.