

THE CHURCH VS. SOCIETIES.

PAPER READ BY REV. E. J. GRANT AT THE CARLETON COUNTY BAPTIST QUARTERLY MEETING, AND PUBLISHED BY THE EXAMINER REQUEST OF THAT BODY.

If there is any fact of history that cannot be disputed; that never has been disputed by any body, or set of Christians, it is the fact that Christ established a Kingdom in the world, that that Kingdom has an outward visible form, or better perhaps, visible local organizations which are in the New Testament designated by the word "Ekklesia" and properly translated church.

"The church," says Dr. Harvey, "is the visible earthly form of the Kingdom of Christ, and is the Divine organization appointed for its advancement and triumph. Organized and governed by the laws of the invisible King, and composed of the subjects of the heavenly Kingdom, who by the symbol of faith, have publicly professed allegiance to Him, the church is the Kingdom of Christ on earth."

The church is God's organization in which the Holy Spirit dwells and from which divine spiritual forces go forth to transform the world from sin to holiness, and subject it to the will of Christ. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it, but through it as the medium of God's power, the grand visions of ancient prophecy predicting the triumph of the Messianic Kingdom shall find realization in human history."

We ask then, whether the church as divinely constituted, is adapted to all ends, and to the accomplishment of the ends which its Head and Founder had in view, or has the changed conditions of society, the restlessness of the age and the influence of the sciences and the spiritual things rendered necessary other agencies and organizations, better adapted to the work of evangelization in this changed condition of things? Does the church need to be supplemented by other societies in order to achieve the best possible results?

Or in other words, is there any department of Christian work needing organized effort, that does not come within, or is not fairly covered by the church as constituted by our Lord?

If so then let us seek to know what that department of work is, and let us by all means meet that necessity by the best organizations we can possibly form.

But if on the other hand, this divinely authorized and divinely constituted organization has anticipated all possible demands, and provided for all possible conditions of society, then it is clearly unnecessary to attempt to supplement it, and any such effort, however fair, it may promise at the beginning, must in the end weaken and render less effective the one and only God-given institution, the church of Christ.

The church is divinely constituted; possesses all the functions and facilities necessary for self-government, for inward spiritual development; and for outward self-education.

The church is a Self-disciplinary Society. If any of its members conduct themselves in a manner inconsistent with the Christian profession and loving efforts on the part of individual brethren fail to bring them to a right spirit; then the church as per Matt. xviii, 17, and its action is final, carrying with it the authority of the Great Head of the church.

The church is a Mutual Education Society. Paul certainly advances this idea when, in his letter to the Ephesians, he says, "From Whom" (i. e. from Christ) "the whole body" (i. e. the church) "is joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The reference here is doubtless to the growth and development of the inner spiritual life of the local church, and there is no hint at distinction between old and young, male and female, but the very opposite. They are not to work apart, but "fifty joined together" that the older may be stimulated by the enthusiasm and buoyancy of the younger, and the younger guided and helped by the ripper wisdom and richer experiences of the older members. And hence any outside organization which tends to separate the church into classes, doing any part of the church's work, must, in the end, weaken and render the work less effective, because of departure from the divine plan.

The church is a Benevolent Society, and is under the most sacred obligation to do its utmost in rendering material assistance to any of its own members, or others who may be in need of such help.

When the church of Jerusalem was in need of help, the apostle wrote to the church at Corinth pointing out its duty in the matter. If he had known as much about ways and means as many Christian workers now know, he might have written Sister Priscilla to organize a Bazaar Society, and to Brother Stephanus to form a Relief Society, with the assurance that he would, in this way, awaken greater enthusiasm and secure better results than is writing to the church as such.

But Paul knew nothing of such methods and so he wrote as follows: "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." And what he wrote, he wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit; hence for all time to come, so that we can confidently affirm that if the apostle were living and writing today, he would recognize no society other than the church itself for doing the church's work.

The church is a Missionary Society, and cannot and dare not hand over her great responsibility, her sacred trust, to any other society. Her commission is "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." If money must be raised in order to obey the

Lord in carrying out this last command, it is to be raised by the church as such, and not by outside, humanly-constituted societies, whose running expenses must necessarily consume money that belongs to the Lord, and should be expended in prosecuting the work which life has laid upon the church.

This is equally true of local mission work. If the church is located in a community where mission work needs to be done, when such work can possibly be done, surely it is the duty and privilege of this divinely authorized missionary society, as such, to undertake, and untiringly and faithfully to prosecute her God-given mission.

Such a sacred trust needs the best wisdom, experience, and diversified gifts of the whole body, and if trusted to any other society, it cannot be so well done. It is strange, indeed, that any Christian could fail to see that the organization of any kind of a society for doing Christian work, is not only an injury to, but also a reproach upon, the church of Christ.

The church is not a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, it is true, it is a Christian Endeavor Society, every member of which, old and young, rich and poor, is bound by his allegiance to Christ, the Founder of the Society, and by his covenant of membership in the society, to endeavor, in every possible way, to co-operate with all the other members, in the development of the inward spiritual life of the body, and in promoting its outward self-enlargement.

Yes; but, said a pastor to me, not long since, "in my church there are a lot of old members, who will not leave the maker, and they spoil the meetings, and I have a number of young members who are willing and anxious to work; am I not, therefore, right in organizing them into a Christian Endeavor Society?"

My answer is, decidedly No. In organizing the young into any kind of a society for Christian work, you are doing a wrong both to the older and the younger members, by separating those whom God intended should be "fifty joined together" in the great work.

In doing so you are acknowledging your own inability to organize and lead the Lord's army in solid phalanx against the enemy, and this is doing yourself a wrong, if you have been called of God to the work.

No, the church itself is a divinely authorized and a divinely constituted society for doing every kind of Christian work that can possibly need to be done, and for the execution of her great mission she has been divinely officered and equipped.

When He ascended upon high, He led captivity captive, and gave us unto men. He gave to the church apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. What for? To organize societies and multiply machinery? "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (i. e. the church itself), till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God; unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

We take the ground, therefore, that any societies for doing Christian work other than the church itself, should be discouraged for the following reasons:

1st. They are not needed. If it be true that the church itself is a divinely authorized society, perfectly adapted to the prosecution of every department of Christian work, then it must be clear to all who will think of the matter, that other societies are needless, and he who attempts to justify their existence, will be under the necessity of showing that the church is not perfectly adapted to all departments of Christian work. Until one shall succeed in doing this, we cannot be driven from the position here taken.

2nd. They encourage that which the Word of God manifestly discourages, i. e., class distinctions in the church.

In the Bible idea of the church, there is neither old nor young, male nor female, rich nor poor, high nor low. It is the household of God, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner, in whom all the building is fitted together, growing unto an holy temple in the Lord. But it will be clear to anyone who will look at the matter with unbiased mind, that the organization of certain classes of the church membership into distinct and separate societies must tend to weaken and disjoint this divine compact which the Lord would have remain, "fifty joined together," and so grow into an unholy temple in His house.

Let all the brethren of one faith in any given community organize themselves into a general Missionary Society, all the sisters of the same faith organize themselves into an Aid Society, and all the young people—whether Christian or not who incline to the same doctrine—believe, organize themselves into a Christian Endeavor Society, and what further need have you for the church organization?

You have then three humanly-constituted churches instead of the one divinely constituted church. And this for the past twenty years has undoubtedly been the tendency of things.

Let the growth continue along the same line for the next twenty years, and it is not at all impossible that the condition of things above described may be a fact and not a fancy.

We have the assurance, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. Let us see to it that the gates of heaven do not prevail against her."

3rd. These societies must of necessity weaken the sense of individual responsibility to the church, which should characterize every member. Individual members of these societies may deny that this statement has been true in their own experience. But any number of such denials would not prove to a thoughtful person that the tendency of the principle involved is not in the direction here indicated. It must be so in the nature of things. I meet a young brother and say to him, "Well you have joined the Christian Endeavor Society, I understand?"

Yes. And you now do your Christian work from the standpoint of your membership in that Society? Yes. But you were a member of the church for some years before you joined the society? Yes. Did not your membership in the church place you under the most sacred obligation to do that very work which you are now doing because you are a member of the society? Well, yes, I suppose it did. Still you did not do the work because you were a member of

the church, but you are now doing it because you are a member of the society. If that is not disloyalty to the church and if it does not tend to lessen the sense of responsibility which membership in the church is supposed to involve, then I shall be obliged to acknowledge my stupidity.

But suppose the young brother should contend that he did just as much work before he joined the society as after, then it is manifest that he should not have joined it, for now he must divide his loyalty and devotion between it and the church.

But it is argued that if the pastor keeps an eye upon all the work of the society, he can easily prevent any of the evils here pointed out. To which we reply, Why organize a society for doing the church's work, which requires the work of the past to prevent the development of its acknowledged evil tendencies?

If the pastor has not wisdom enough to organize and lead the church as a whole, he will not likely have enough to prevent the growth of the inherent evils of a half-dozen societies.

4th. The organizing of human societies for doing the church's work is a reflection upon the wisdom of the church's Lord. If He had thought other societies than the church, necessary, He would doubtless have made provision for them. As He has not done so, it is manifest that He considered the organization whose principles are present in His teaching, and afterward formulated by inspired Apostles, was all that was necessary for the carrying on of His work in the world, and that the best of men, even the wisest leaders among us, when we ask them to admit that the Lord's way of doing things is probably wiser and better than their own.

Yes; but, says the objector, Your theory is disposed of by the practical working of these societies. The results of the organization have been increased enthusiasm, greater earnestness and activity in the Lord's work, meetings more largely attended, and greater readiness to take part; members of the church who never did much before, are now at work.

Very good, we say; but if this new zeal has been generated, this unusual enthusiasm awakened, these new signs of life created, simply by the introduction of some novel method, and not by an increase of piety and spiritual power in the church, what then, what then, and the fact of feeble hearts, I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?"

Thirty, forty, and fifty years ago, before societies were unknown among us, novel methods were unknown among us; tidal waves of revival power frequently swept over the land, leaving behind them thousands, concerning whose conversion and connection to God there was no doubt.

Since the strange fire of outside piety has been brought in and placed upon the altar of the Lord, and since the shallow, thorn-cracking, superficial activity, created by novel methods, has taken the place of the painful soul travail, and mighty wrestling with God in the hearts of His people, the results of these "Provinces" thirty years ago, such blessed seasons of spiritual quickening, and saving power as those witnessed in the past, are no longer experienced.

For a number of years past the Report presented to convention of the state of the denomination has been a reflection upon the altar of the Lord, and since the shallow, thorn-cracking, superficial activity, created by novel methods, has taken the place of the painful soul travail, and mighty wrestling with God in the hearts of His people, the results of these "Provinces" thirty years ago, such blessed seasons of spiritual quickening, and saving power as those witnessed in the past, are no longer experienced.

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Nettle's Conquest.

ERNEST MEAD.

"A little child shall lead them." "Uncle, don't you have family worship?"

Ernest Mead's eyes dropped, and he strove to evade the direct question of the little one perched upon his knee by calling attention to some robin in the garden. Ornithology was his hobby, and had he known how to adapt his knowledge of his numerous pets to the comprehension of his little niece, he might have succeeded in banishing, for the time being at least, the subject which called forth her question. But Ernest Mead was a bachelor who never went to society and had until recently a devoted attention to children. What wonder, then, that his efforts to evade Nettle's question were unavailing, and that she persistently patted his cheek with her chubby hand and repeated, "Uncle, don't you have family worship? Mamma did."

"Mamma did." No sooner had the words escaped the child's lips than a tear fell from Ernest Mead's eyes to the little hand on his cheek.

"What makes you cry? Does something hurt you?" was the ready query as the tiny arms were clasped about his neck, and the child sympathized with the fair cheek of the child pressed that of the bearded man.

Ernest Mead's thoughts went back to the time when the mother of this little one shared his life so fully that their joys and sorrows were one. Indeed, it was then that he had been so much comforted by those who were dear to him, best that Charles and Mary Lamb could not have loved each other more devotedly than this brother and sister. But one summer a handsome stranger came to the village and won the affections of the fair young lady. "I do not love you less, Ernest, because I love Howard more; as she told her brother of their betrothal, dwelling, as young ladies are apt to do, upon the peculiar merits of her hero.

Let me keep my own place Ruth. I think I love you too truly to mind being second," was Ernest's loyal answer. And with her head resting upon her brother's shoulders she averred that his place in her heart should be kept sacred.

But her lover watched with jealous eyes the devotion of brother and sister. To his narrower vision, it seemed incredible that such a love could exist without detracting something from his share of her affections, and emphatically rejecting the proposition that they all share one home, removed to a distant country with his bride, taking care to prevent as much as possible intercourse between brother and sister.

Ernest Mead pined so continually for his sister's companionship that in three years he seemed to have aged ten. Then he sought solace in his books—those true friends which so often afford strength and comfort to the weary and oppressed, and for five years studied the best authors with a spirit of earnestness that would have shamed many of our college students. One day, while busy as his work, a telegram was handed in which stated that by a terrible railway accident his sister and her husband had lost their lives. The husband had died instantly and Ruth lingered only long enough to request that her brother be sent for and to write faintly on a slip of paper, "Ernest, I leave my baby to you, and in doing so die happily."

So the little one whose life had been spared by being left at home with her nurse instead of accompanying her parents, was brought to the home by her brother's uncle, and straightway she, that little six-year-old girl, became mistress of that establishment, masters and servants alike doing obedience to her will. And now she has asked a question which the ministers in the town would have shrunk from putting to Ernest Mead. Was it the Spirit of God speaking through the little one to this stern man? One thing is certain: his heart softened as the cheek of the child pressed his own, and after only a few moments' silence he asked tenderly, "Nettie, what is family worship like?"

"There was something so pure and artless in the astonished gaze of the child as she put the question, 'Uncle, don't you know?' that he felt constrained to answer truthfully, 'I have never been in a home where they have family worship, Nettie; how did mamma do it?'"

"She read verses out of the Bible, and then we knelt down while she prayed."

"Who was in the room when you had it beside you and mamma?"

"The servants."

"Didn't papa read or pray?"

"No; mamma always did."

He remembered how his sister had written him of her conversion and that she had made no allusion to her husband, and wondered if her married life had been a happy one. At any rate, she had been a faithful mother, for it was evident from the intelligent answers of her child she had been carefully instructed; and now this child was his; he never felt his own weakness so much.

"I don't know how to pray," confessed this man whom the world called "learned."

"I can say, 'Now, I lay me,' was the eager reply. And again the tears came into Ernest Mead's eyes. He pressed the child to his bosom, and he carried her out to the garden; and as they plucked the flowers, he laughed and merrily that he caught the infection and more than once joined her.

"Only listen to Mr. Meade; he's not like the same man since that child came," said Betsy, the cook, to the housemaid.

"She's doing what nobody else under the sun could do, makin' a better man of him," was the reply.

"A happier man you mean, Eliza; he always was good enough."

"No, I mean what I say; a better man; you know well enough the fear of the Lord; not to be taken out of the world in monastic sorrow, but to be kept from its evil in shepherd's peace—John Ruskin."

Ernest Mead's eyes were now recommended Ayer's Cherry Pectoral as the most reliable remedy that can be had for colds, coughs, and all pulmonary disorders. Ask your druggist for Ayer's Almanac; it is the best publication of the kind, and full of information.

"Nettie, in her night dress, stood at her uncle's side, with her great, dark

eyes raised to his. He arose, walked across the room, took from an upper shelf a long-neglected Bible, resumed his seat and lifted the little one to his knee; then, with trembling hands, turned the sacred pages. Was it chance, think you, that caused his attention to be drawn to the third chapter of John? And was it surprising that, in his state of mind at that time, he should quickly recognize in those words the outstretched hand of a yearning Saviour to repentant sinners.

They knelt down, he and the child, her hand clasped firmly in his. She repeated her little prayer, "Now, I lay me," adding, in her own quaint way, "help me to be good, and make uncle good, too." Then another voice, a deeper voice, broke the stillness; and there was joy among the angels in heaven. They turned their harvest and sang praises to God, for the lost was found, the wanderer reclaimed. Proud, stern Ernest Mead bowed humbly at the feet of Jesus.

The church was crowded. The ordinance is always regarded with interest; but this was a peculiarly happy occasion, and the minister's eyes glowed with a holy light as he announced his text, "A little child shall lead them."

There were only two candidates; but as the choir sang, "Just as I am, without any good works, I will follow thee, O Lord, into the water a man past the meridian of life, and a six-year-old child, there was not a dry eye in the church."

"What!" you say, "receive that baby into church fellowship?"

Why not, my friend? Would you present to church those who are unworthy? Him who has seen fit to hide these things from the wise and prudent, and reveal them unto babes?—National Baptist.

An Exploded Book.

The Bible is a book which has been refuted, demolished, overthrown, and exploded, more times than any other book you ever heard of. Every little while somebody starts up and upsets this book; and it is like upsetting a solid cube of granite. It is just as big one way as the other; and when you have upset it, it is right side up, and when you overturn it again it is right side up still. Every little while somebody blows up the Bible; but when it comes down it always lights on its feet, and runs faster than ever through the world. They overthrow the Bible a century ago, in Voltaire's time—entirely demolished the whole thing. In less than a hundred years, said Voltaire, Christianity will have been swept from existence, and will have passed into history. Infidelity can riot through France, red-handed and impious. A century has passed away. Voltaire has "passed into history," and a very respectable history either; but the Bible still lives. Thomas Paine demolished the Bible, and finished it off finally; but after he dropped into a drunkard's grave in 1809, the Book took such a leap that since that time more than twenty times as many Bibles have been made and scattered through the world as ever were made before since the creation of man. Up to the year 1800, from four to six million copies of the Scriptures, in some thirty different languages, comprised all that had been produced since the world began. Fifty years later, in 1850, the statistics of eighty different Bible societies which are now in existence, with their unnumbered agencies and auxiliaries, reported more than 165,000,000 Bibles, Testaments, and portions of Scripture, with two hundred and six new translations of Bibles or portions of the Bible distributed by Bible societies alone since 1804; and say nothing of the unknown millions of Bibles and Testaments which have been issued and circulated by private publishers throughout the world. For a Book that has been exploded so many times, this Book still shows signs of considerable life.

Ruskin's Mistake.

Looking back upon my writings for the last twenty years, I believe their failure has been in very great part owing to my compromise with the infidelity of the outer world, and my endeavor to base my pleading upon motives of ordinary prudence and kindness, instead of on the primary duty of loving God—foundation other than which no man can lay. I thought myself speaking to a crowd which could only be influenced by visible utility; nor was I the least aware how many entirely good and holy persons were living in the faith and love of God as vividly and practically now as ever in the early enthusiasm of Christendom, until, chagrined by the knowledge of the great illness which, for some time after 1878, forbade my accustomed literary labor, I was brought into closer personal relations with the friends in America, Scotland, Ireland, Italy, to whom, if I am spared to write any record of my life, it will be seen that I owe the best hopes and highest thoughts which have supported and guided the force of my matured mind. These have shown me, with lovely imitation, in how many secret places the prayer was made which I had foolishly listened for at the corners of the streets, and on how many hills, which I had thought left desolate, the host of heaven still moved in chariots of fire. But surely the time has come when all these faithful armies should lift up the standard of their Lord—not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit, bringing victory, that they should no more be hidden, nor "overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." If the enemy cometh in like a flood, how much more may the rivers of paradise? Are there not fountains of the great deep that open to bless, not to destroy? And the beginning of blessing, if you will think of it, is in that promise, "Great will be the peace of thy children." All the world is but one orphanage, so long as its children know not God their Father; and all wisdom and knowledge is only more bewildered darkness, so long as you have not taught them the fear of the Lord; not to be taken out of the world in monastic sorrow, but to be kept from its evil in shepherd's peace—John Ruskin.

Ernest Mead's eyes were now recommended Ayer's Cherry Pectoral as the most reliable remedy that can be had for colds, coughs, and all pulmonary disorders. Ask your druggist for Ayer's Almanac; it is the best publication of the kind, and full of information.

"Nettie, in her night dress, stood at her uncle's side, with her great, dark

eyes raised to his. He arose, walked across the room, took from an upper shelf a long-neglected Bible, resumed his seat and lifted the little one to his knee; then, with trembling hands, turned the sacred pages. Was it chance, think you, that caused his attention to be drawn to the third chapter of John? And was it surprising that, in his state of mind at that time, he should quickly recognize in those words the outstretched hand of a yearning Saviour to repentant sinners.

They knelt down, he and the child, her hand clasped firmly in his. She repeated her little prayer, "Now, I lay me," adding, in her own quaint way, "help me to be good, and make uncle good, too." Then another voice, a deeper voice, broke the stillness; and there was joy among the angels in heaven. They turned their harvest and sang praises to God, for the lost was found, the wanderer reclaimed. Proud, stern Ernest Mead bowed humbly at the feet of Jesus.

The church was crowded. The ordinance is always regarded with interest; but this was a peculiarly happy occasion, and the minister's eyes glowed with a holy light as he announced his text, "A little child shall lead them."

There were only two candidates; but as the choir sang, "Just as I am, without any good works, I will follow thee, O Lord, into the water a man past the meridian of life, and a six-year-old child, there was not a dry eye in the church."

"What!" you say, "receive that baby into church fellowship?"

Why not, my friend? Would you present to church those who are unworthy? Him who has seen fit to hide these things from the wise and prudent, and reveal them unto babes?—National Baptist.

The Bible is a book which has been refuted, demolished, overthrown, and exploded, more times than any other book you ever heard of. Every little while somebody starts up and upsets this book; and it is like upsetting a solid cube of granite. It is just as big one way as the other; and when you have upset it, it is right side up, and when you overturn it again it is right side up still. Every little while somebody blows up the Bible; but when it comes down it always lights on its feet, and runs faster than ever through the world. They overthrow the Bible a century ago, in Voltaire's time—entirely demolished the whole thing. In less than a hundred years, said Voltaire, Christianity will have been swept from existence, and will have passed into history. Infidelity can riot through France, red-handed and impious. A century has passed away. Voltaire has "passed into history," and a very respectable history either; but the Bible still lives. Thomas Paine demolished the Bible, and finished it off finally; but after he dropped into a drunkard's grave in 1809, the Book took such a leap that since that time more than twenty times as many Bibles have been made and scattered through the world as ever were made before since the creation of man. Up to the year 1800, from four to six million copies of the Scriptures, in some thirty different languages, comprised all that had been produced since the world began. Fifty years later, in 1850, the statistics of eighty different Bible societies which are now in existence, with their unnumbered agencies and auxiliaries, reported more than 165,000,000 Bibles, Testaments, and portions of Scripture, with two hundred and six new translations of Bibles or portions of the Bible distributed by Bible societies alone since 1804; and say nothing of the unknown millions of Bibles and Testaments which have been issued and circulated by private publishers throughout the world. For a Book that has been exploded so many times, this Book still shows signs of considerable life.

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