

What the Disciples in the States are Saying and Doing.

COLUMNS AND CLIPPINGS FROM EXCHANGES.

CHURCH FINANCE

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"Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men" (Rom xii 17) - R. V.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH FINANCE.

This arises from the importance and value of the Church itself. "Christ gave Himself for the Church" It is the "house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The Church is the lighthouse of the world. Its Founder and Head designed and organized it to be an helpmeet for Him in the salvation of the world. Hence, when the Church is in prosperity, her cords are lengthened, her stakes are strengthened, and converts are multiplied. Her sons will be as plants grown up in their youth, and her daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace. "Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners!" The Church in her primitive purity, unity and consecration, in the day of her espousals, when many, having houses and lands, sold them, and brought the price thereof, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

I. Church Finance a Necessity.

On this earth no society can live and do a great work without finances, revenue, money. It is a stubborn fact, certain as we are born, that the Church and its work cannot be carried on with success and prosperity without an adequate revenue, or a needful supply of money. As a people the Disciples have made commendable efforts to maintain invention. And they have succeeded well. And many efforts have doubtless been made to treat church finances in the same way. But it is a Banquo's ghost that will not down. Without money the work of the church will not be done. The meeting house will not be opened, swept, warmed and lighted; the poor will not be fed, the Gospel will not be proclaimed very much, not many converts will be made, and those brought into the church will not be diligently instructed in the word of righteousness without adequate, systematic pecuniary support.

II. Hence there should be adopted some system or plan by which the needful finances may be regularly and sufficiently supplied to fill the treasury of the church.

THERE ARE SEVERAL PLANS.

The subscription plan, the ad valorem assessment plan, and the weekly contribution plan. I do not insist that God has revealed to us any one of these plans, as the plan by which all our financial work is to be done. Any one of these plans will work well, provided, first, there is a willing mind. Without a willing mind no plan will work well; no plan will work itself. With as much reason we might set a plow in the ground and expect it to run itself and turn over the sod. Take any one of these plans and work it with a hearty good will, using the best business talent of the church, and push it on till every member is giving or paying according to his or her ability, and my word for it, you will soon have money in the treasury and your finances will be all right.

There must be first the willing mind. Whatever plan is adopted, it should as far as possible include and be made to reach every member of the congregation.

(a) All enjoy the benefits of the church,

and all should take a share in its financial support. (b) Thus all will be educated and trained in the grace of paying and giving. (c) In this way more money will be raised, and more easily, than if only a limited number contribute.

III. The respective features and merits of different plans.

1. The weekly contribution plan is found to work better in towns and cities, where money is often changing hands, and every week brings an income of cash receipts to every worker and to every business man. There are some excellent features in this plan. (a) It seems to be scriptural. (See 1 Cor. xvi. 12.) (b) It affords a continual supply of money. (c) It affords every church member an opportunity to give something when he has it in hand, and (d) It cultivates liberality.

2. The ad valorem assessment plan. This will work very nicely where those holding the wealth of the church willingly consent to an arrangement of this kind. There is much in its favor. It proposes equality in giving in proportion to each one's ability. This is an excellent point, and greatly encourages those members whose means are limited. Whereas, to know that a brother in the church worth \$50,000 or \$100,000 is doing no more than I am, and all I have does not exceed \$3,000 or \$5,000, causes me to feel hateful towards him, and makes me give with a grudge, what otherwise I would give or pay gladly.

To carry out the assessment plan, however, will require much caution, prudence and good judgment on the part of the official board, and a good amount of Christian principle, and cheerful liberality on the part of the membership. It is just and right that all should give in proportion to their ability. No reasonable person can object to the one most commonly adopted. It is voluntary. Each member pledges a certain amount for one year, to be paid in quarterly, monthly, or, in some cases, in weekly installments for the support of the Gospel. Three considerations favor this plan. (a) It is the customary plan. (b) It gives each and every member the opportunity to signify what amount he is willing to give. (c) For that amount he gives his pledge, which is virtually a note, and thus the official board of the church knows just about what means they can have at their disposal for the work.

Every church will decide for itself which plan will suit best and work best for that church. But whatever plan is adopted let it be sure to include these particular points:—

(a) Make an ample supply for every object. A sufficient amount should be raised to meet the wants of the different departments of church expenditure.

(b) So arrange your plan as to give every member the opportunity and cause him to feel that it is his privilege and duty to give something. Some one has said that every member of the church should give something, or receive something.

(c) Whatever plan is adopted, and whatever the amount provided for, let some adequate portion be paid at the beginning of each quarter, month or week. This should be pre paid to the church treasurer, and just as promptly paid out to the preacher and for other objects, as occasion may require.

4. The treasurer. Whatever plan of church finance may be adopted, the treasurer holds a very responsible position. Select the best man on the official board for this position. A man of number one business sense. A man who writes well and plainly, level-headed, honest and careful, and one who will take pride in making an accurate and full report of all receipts, and

of all moneys paid out, every quarter, or at least at the end of the fiscal year. Such a full and faithful report, certified to be accurate and correct by competent auditors, gives great satisfaction and inspires the church with confidence, which is worth a great deal.

Let each and every member of the church bring in his or her payments. Use the envelope system for collections. Enclose the sum you intend to pay. Write on the envelope your name, the amount you enclose, and the object for which the sum is given. Bring it with you to the house of God, and when the basket is passed make your contribution in the spirit of a true worshipper. "Bring an offering and come into His courts." The treasurer and the Lord will give you credit for all you do. This should be insisted on, so that no officer of the church will be compelled to take up the unthankful task of canvassing the parish every quarter to dun, dun, dun delinquent members for money. If the church is obliged to employ a collector, then those who are delinquent should pay an additional per cent. sufficient to remunerate him for his time and labor.

(To be continued.)

ENCOURAGEMENT.

Dr. Adam Clarke, the eminent Biblical scholar and commentator, relates that the turning point in his life was a hopeful word spoken by a school teacher. He had been a dull boy. His father had despaired of seeing him become a man of mental power, and he had filled his boy with the same hopelessness. A new teacher, starting a select school, came to the house and asked the father to send him both his boys. "I'll send you my other son, but not Adam," was the reply. "Adam is dull," said the father. "Adam is a dull boy!" said the teacher, as he looked into the boy's bright eyes and laid his hand kindly on his head, "I'll not believe it; he'll be a scholar yet; send him to me and I'll show you that your boy has something in him." It was the first encouraging word young Adam ever had; it was the first time anybody ever believed in him, and the teacher's confidence was like honey to his soul. The boy was sent and from that hour he proved the truth of the teacher's hopeful words. It is the old story over again, if you want the best anyone can do, encourage him. The child at school, the servant in the house, the clerk at his desk, the apprentice in the shop, the laborer on the farm, anybody, everybody old or young, will do more and better work if somebody but believes in him and cheers them on. A large part of the wickedness of the world is the result of sheer despair. A man does not believe he can conquer, even by divine help, the vicious habits by which he is enslaved, or live with any measure of consistency a Christian life. In consequence the effort to do so is paralyzed and protracted by discouragement. The first step toward the kingdom of God on the part of thousands has been taken when they have come to believe that a better life is possible for them. Satan has a cut-throat mortgage on every disheartened person, and no minister of Christ more directly cooperates in the foreclosure of that mortgage than does he whose preaching takes its tone from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. An essential condition of all success in winning souls is a hopeful spirit.

The world needs an increase of no class of people so much as the kind who make it their business to encourage others. The croakers are legion. The prophets of failure abound. The high priests of despair are on every hand. Proclaimers of the gospel of

doubt fill the land. Wanted, an army of men and women, who, like the kindly teacher of Adam Clarke, have a message of faith and hope for their followers; who go through the world like a band of music through the streets of a city, sending out on every side sweet inspiring strains that fill all about them with new strength and courage; who know enough to know that what humanity most needs to promote its onward and upward march is not criticism, condemnation or denunciation but inspiration, encouragement, enheartenment.—George Darsie, in the Guide.

THE WORK IN LOS ANGELES FOR THE YEAR 1891.

The work of the Lord in this City of Angels has been prosperous during the year just ended. The church worshipping on Temple street closed the year with 587 members on the roll. Of these there have been 122 added during the year. There were 36 dismissed by letter, and four passed on to the church above, leaving the number larger by 82 members than at the beginning of the year. About three thousand dollars have been raised and disbursed during the year. In addition to this the Ladies Aid Society has made about six hundred dollars. Every department of church work is growing. The Sunday school is the largest in the history of the church. Our house is too small to accommodate its demands. M. Lane recently organized a Christian Endeavor Society with nearly forty members. In all departments of church work the cause is very prosperous.

During the year the Temple Street church has swarmed twice, and the result is that both of its missions have become churches. The West Mission, under the superintendency of D. A. Central Christian church. It has about ninety members and has purchased a comfortable church house. Its Sunday school is large and flourishing. It occupies a field where, with effort and care, it will be able to build up a strong congregation.

The East Mission, under the direction of B. F. Coulter, has organized into the East Los Angeles Christian church, and begins work with one hundred and thirty members. It has built a neat building, capable of seating four hundred persons. They are doing a good work. They have about doubled their numbers during the past year, and every thing augurs well for another prosperous year. God has abundantly blessed us in our work here. We take courage and push on in the good work. There are eight hundred members affiliated with the churches in Los Angeles. This is more than in any other church on the coast.—A. C. Smither, in the Standard.

The dividing line between the church and the world—where shall it be drawn? This is an old question that seems to be ever new. The question used to concern the individual life of the Christian: In what kinds of business, in what kinds of amusement may a Christian engage without forfeiting fellowship in the church? The question seems now to be taking on another form, in some quarters at least: What kinds of amusements may the church as a church employ as agencies in its work of saving the young? At a recent meeting of the Methodist preachers of New York, Rev. H. W. Knight read a paper in which he advocated the placing of billiard tables, bowling alleys, gymnasiums, etc., in the basements of churches, in order to draw young men into them by means of amusement and that they might be brought under religious influences.

Mr. Knight's views were endorsed by others. Some, however, protested against the scheme. One of these said that "young men can be lured from virtue, but they cannot be wheedled into piety." Another thought a church was no place for a billiard table. The meeting is described as an exciting one, and Mr. Knight's proposition "created a genuine sensation." Without dwelling at length upon the matter, we would say that the question in this form is one that concerns city churches only. There are, of course, no specific statutory enactments in regard to it in the New Testament, but there are certain plain general principles in harmony with which it must be settled, it rightly settled. We may not adopt the distinctive principle of the Jesuits and "do evil that good may come," but are enjoined to "avoid the very appearance of evil." In regard to things which are evil in themselves, and only evil, the principle is explicit: "touch not, taste not, handle not." In regard to things not sinful per se, there can be but one rule, when the abuse of a thing is the rule; and the proper use of it the exception, it must be avoided. Every church in which the question of the use of such agencies as the bowling alley, the billiard table, the gymnasium, is sprung, will have need of all its "consecrated common sense," and its sanctified wisdom, in settling it in harmony with the scriptural principles. For our part we deprecate the raising of this question. There are so many means of drawing and entertaining the young, which are not only not merely harmless but positively beneficial to them intellectually and spiritually, that we consider it a most unjust impeachment of their good sense to assume that they cannot be won to a righteous life except by means of mere physical pleasures and animal excitement. We fully agree, too, with the sentiment expressed above that "young men can be lured from virtue, but cannot be wheedled into piety."—Christian Evangelist.

High Thinking.

High living often leads to low thinking; and lowly living is often ennobled by the highest thoughts. There is nothing which relieves drudgery more than doing the lowliest tasks from the highest motives. Household service, perhaps, more than any other field of labor, offers incentive to the noblest thinking. Bread-making may seem irksome to you, weary mother, but take comfort, and when you provide your family with sweet, wholesome loaves, try also to plan to satisfy the hunger of the soul, and minister to the craving for the Bread of Life. You do not like to clean lamps. But suppose you let the cheerful performance of this task come to mean one way of letting your light shine, and let your thoughts be, "How can I enlighten those about me?" thereby pointing them to the Light of the World. As you fashion fair garments for your children, think of the enduring garments of graces of character which only a mother's hand may weave into the fabric of their lives, and of the wedding garment which they will need at the marriage of the Lamb. Think of the infinite pains which the Creator has taken with what seems to be insignificant features of the material world, and imitate him in doing the best things perfectly. And let the breath of prayer go up to God with every act, doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus can you glorify much that is hard and commonplace in your daily duties, and make this life a fit beginning for the life everlasting, where his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and His name shall be in their foreheads.