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A Model Congregation.

(A Paper read by the Rev. Dr. Jardine at a Conference held by the Presbytery of Brockville, and published by request of the Presbytery.)

IT will be admitted, I think, upon all hands, that the subject of the present paper is one of great practical importance. The great object for which the Christian religion has been established in the world is the development of Christian life and work amongst its members. It may be said, perhaps, as a correction of my statement, that the Christian religion is designed to bring about human salvation—the salvation of the immortal soul. Very true. But what is the salvation of the soul but the imparting to it of true Christian life? And how is Christian life exhibited except in Christian work done here, in this world, to which we are to look primarily, as the evidence of the possession of Christian life. Unquestionably we look properly to a future eternity as the great and ultimate sphere in which the energies of the regenerated souls of men will find scope. But it is surely unwise to look so exclusively to the future eternity as to forget or neglect the claims which the present life has upon us. To us who are living in the midst of the busy world, the present life, with all its cares, duties, pleasures and sorrows, affords the immediate sphere in which we have to show what manner of persons we are. And it is in the present life, primarily, that the fruits of the Christian religion have to be exhibited. Now, the Christian Church, as a great whole, is divided into congregations: that is, into small communities of Christian families, who can conveniently meet together for the purposes of Christian worship and work. The

great Christian Church, therefore, receives its support and energy from Christian congregations; they form the basis upon which the Church rests, and from which it proceeds to the conquest of the world for Christ. It is manifest, then, that the prosperity and progress of the Church as a whole will depend upon the character and degree of the Christian life and work found in its constituent congregations. The whole depends upon its parts and partakes of the character and life of its parts; and if the individual congregations of the Church are not living and vigorous and efficient, we cannot expect the Church to be so. Hence the success of the great Christian Church in the world must depend ultimately upon the efficiency with which congregational efforts are developed and guided. And these considerations are a sufficient vindication of my statement that the subject of the present paper is one of great practical importance.

It may further be assumed, at the outset, that an organization of some kind is almost a necessity for the development of systematic Christian work amongst the members of a congregation. Very few individuals have originality or force of character sufficient to discover and open up a path of Christian labour for themselves. And it is of special importance to young Christians that they should find an organization ready made for them, into which they can enter, and where they can train themselves to independent efforts. Aiter Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, had been enlightened, when on his way to Damascus, his first question was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This should be the first question, also, of every young Christian who joins the communion of our Christian Church. And I believe that many a fervent Christian life becomes dead and useless simply because of the want