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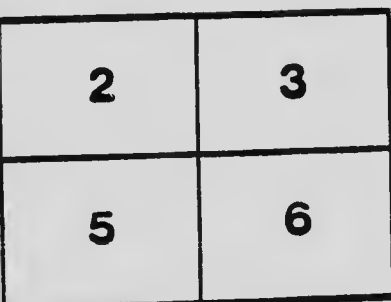
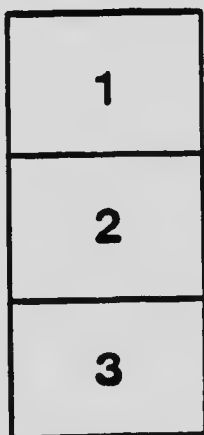
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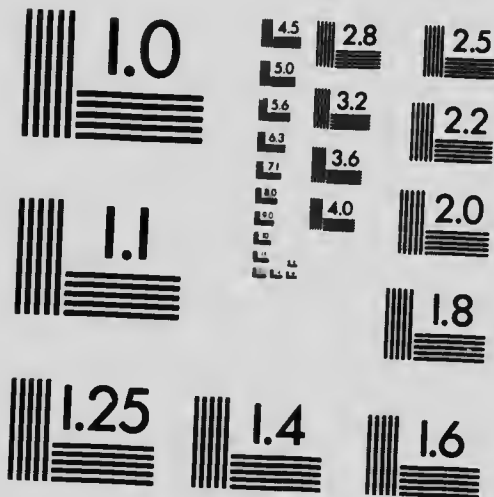
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Entertainments

A Menace to the Christian Church.

BY

H. R. McCONNELL.

OTTAWA, ONT.
HOLINESS MOVEMENT PUBLISHING HOUSE
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1908

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Entertainments

A Menace to the Christian Church

**"If the foundations be destroyed what can the
righteous do ?" Ps. 11 : 3.**

In trying to say a few words about Church Entertainments, I have no desire to say hard things about the entertainers ; nor of speaking of the methods of entertaining. I do not know, nor do I wish to know much about them. What I am anxious to do is to look at them as a Christian and a member of a Christian Church. Church entertainments injure the cause of Christ. It is the duty of every Christian to fight everything that makes against Christ's kingdom.

ENTERTAINMENTS AND GOSPEL.

We know many say, "Preach the Gospel, and let entertainments alone;" but the question is, "Can we preach the Gospel and let entertainments alone?" The truth is, the entertainments are against the Gospel and the Gospel against entertainments. The two are wholly antagonistic to each other. If you embrace the Gospel, you oppose the entertainment; if you are an entertainer or patronize them, you oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as the whole teaching of the Scriptures is opposed to the spirit and principles of Church entertainments. "Thou shalt not make my Father's house an house of merchandise" (John 2:16). Jesus would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple (Mark 11:16.) "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Luke 19:46). "Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to

eat etc., and rose up to play" (1 Cor. x. 7).
"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ : whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame" (Phil. 3 : 18, 19). "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4 : 4). "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty."
II. Cor. vi. 14-18.

IMPERILS SOCIETY.

Now, let us look at entertainments as

Christians, and as Church members, in the light of these words, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" This evil is striking at the foundations, and threatening the superstructure of both Church and Christianity. It is at work among that portion of the community which makes the Church what it is. We hear much in these days about the "classes" and the "masses." And whether we like it or not, notwithstanding all we have heard, and learned about the brotherhood of man, the Fatherhood of God, and the equality in our country, we are still divided by the class and mass distinction. We have an aristocracy, or "Upper Ten," who hold the wealth and position, and influence, and as a result, power. And if that be rightly guided it will be a very great blessing. Wrongly directed it becomes a curse. Great and mighty as this "upper ten" are, they do not make or destroy the Church. Then we have the lower strata of society, or "submerged tenth," these are at the lowest round of the social ladder, and

we cannot give them too much attention ; for while they are practically outside the social circle and are the burden and difficulty of society, they are very near the heart of the Eternal Father. "But if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Between these two extremes of society we have the great professional and industrial classes. They form the bone and sinew, the muscle and fibre, the foundation of the Church. The hope of the Church is in the artisan population, which includes all who have to earn their living.

From the history of entertainments, we learn that they were not resorted to by any denomination in the days of primitive existence, and it did not effect Christianity so much whether they lost or gained in many members. It was deplorable, and must have resulted in evil, and only evil, when entertainments were so largely confined to the older bodies. It is a much more serious thing when this spirit of evil, with all its degrading and demoralizing effects,

ONE CLASS IS
MORE WORTHY
OR MORE IM-
PORTANT THAN
THE NEXT.

begins to eat its way into the life of the working-classes, for then it is at the very heart-strings of the Christian Church. Therefore, anything that would lower, or tend to lower, the high standard of morals and spirituality of this class, strikes at the very roots of the Christian vine, or to keep to the figure of the text, the very foundations.

THE BACKBONE OF THE CHURCH.

The working-classes are the backbone of the Christian Church. I am not following in the wake of the politician, who pats the working-man on the back, and harangues on the political platform about the democracy of the people, when I say that this great industrial portion of the community constitutes the very foundations of our whole social, political and religious system. Nor do I over-estimate the importance of the working-man. I simply state a great truth, very apparent to those who take the trouble to look into it, yet one which we are far too much inclined to overlook.

They are the overwhelming majority of the community. This fact gives them many advantages. Particularly in the franchise which practically places the statesmen and government in their hands. *BUT THEY DIDN'T ALWAYS HAVE FRANCHISE*

From this great working-class population have arisen our soldiers, lawyers, merchants and ministers. What would the nation be without the preacher? It falls to him to "cry out and spare not" against sins, individual, national and denominational. There is nothing affecting the people--political, social, or moral--in which he, as the ambassador of Christ, has not a right to speak. You can better afford to be without the lawyer or statesman than to be without the preacher.

The fact is, that it is from this great middle-class that we get the leaders of every department. It is high time that every lover of God and of his fellows should "cry aloud and spare not" against the hydra-headed monster called Church Entertainments, when it strikes at the very foundations of Chris-

tianity. And that is precisely what is being enacted, for we are told, and told, I fear, with too much truth, that entertainments are on the increase among our industrial and working-class population.

GROWTH OF ENTERTAINMENTS.

One can scarcely credit that this evil is growing and eating its way into every department of the Christian Church to the extent that it is. When I was a lad, I remember a garden weed with which they used to have a great deal of trouble. Once having taken root in a garden, it spreads out its trails in all directions ; these trails again take root, and each trail again shoots forth others, until in a very short space of time, it has overrun everything—flower and vegetable alike being victims of its baneful effects. What this noxious weed is to the vegetable world, so is the entertainment to the moral and spiritual world. And, like this evil weed, it seems to have taken root and is sending forth its trails throughout

every Christian denomination. It is not content to be a prime factor in Cathedral and Church finances, but everywhere it has crept into the mission hall and Sunday school. Church entertainments hold empire throughout the length and breadth of Christendom.

SOME SAD CASES.

It is laying hold of both young and old men. Let me tell you a true story. A young man, who was a member of an aggressive church and an energetic worker in a mission hall in the slums where I afterwards labored, was placed in the way of temptation through church entertainments. He had a fine voice for singing, and soon developed into a "star" concert actor. Various churches sought his assistance for their entertainments. In this way his talents became well known. The manager of a company playing in the Allambra Theatre, learned of this talented young man, and offered him a large salary to go on the stage, if he could "carry" the audience on Saturday night. Now the

TESTIMONIAL.

concert training came to his assistance, and he "carried" the audience. His friends warned and entreated, wept and prayed, but he went off with the theatre company. TO HELL. .

ANOTHER.

"A minister," says "Sabbath Reading," "went to visit a young man in prison, convicted for forgery. He began by giving the mother's tender message, and then related the interest all the church felt in his welfare.

At last the prisoner impatiently replied: 'Do you not know that yourself caused me all this trouble? I began the business in your Sabbath school. Don't you remember the Sunday school fair, when they set up a raffling, and hid a gold ring in a loaf of cake? For twenty-five cents I got a whole box of little books. I was pleased with my luck, and went in afterwards for chances. Sometimes I gained, and sometimes I lost. Money for lotteries I would have. Half crazy with excitement, I used the names of other men, thus committing forgery. Here I am. Don't let the church come blubbering around me.

They may thank themselves. Their raffling was what did it! It ruined me!"

It is laying hold of the women, the young especially. A young lady friend of mine in T——, with an excellent alto voice, was a paid singer in a church choir. The choir was often engaged in church concerts. This might have proved her downfall. The manager of an opera company heard her sing and offered her a large salary to join his troupe. This being refused, he came again the next season and offered her larger wages, but was again refused. "Sunday night choral services," says the author of 'Bible Salvation,' "and Sabbath school concerts, advertised as entertainments, are really feeders of the opera and theatre, and not counter attractions." It may be, if the truth were fully known, that more church concert workers go on the stage, than go from the churches into the ministry.

STILL
ANOTHER.

EVEN CHILDREN IN PERIL.

Is the evil laying hold of the child-

ANTI-LIFE
ATTITUDE

ren of the Sunday school? Alas! Yes. Even the very little ones are trained for the entertainment by their teachers and older scholars. Go to the churches before the festive seasons, and you will find that for weeks the children are trained for the concert and become very good actors in little plays. The children of Gospel ministers and Christian parents are often the leaders. What can we do? The children are the "future foundation" of the church. They are the men and women of the next generation, "and if the foundations be destroyed (and they are being rapidly destroyed even now) what," I say, "what can the righteous do?"

WOW!!

Oh! to drive home to each of you, this appalling truth, that the CHILDREN ARE IN PERIL! They, who should be taught to reverence God and religion; to be liberal and to understand the sanctity of His house, are being rendered irreverent, selfish, hard and demoralized by one of the most subtle and soul-destroying evils which the arch enemy of souls ever devised.

Are you horrified at the thought that the children and youth are in the grip of this destroying monster. We say to you "help!" "help!!" Save the children! for if the foundations be destroyed, what, oh! what can the righteous do?

ENTERTAINMENT AND CHARACTER.

Entertainments strike at the foundations of individual character. From the moment a person decides to go to a Church entertainment, all the higher and finer qualities begin to suffer.

In "getting up" an entertainment a man resolves to repress his conscience, his will, his reason and his affections. "Only one part of his nature is allowed free play, and that is his emotions. He is permitted to hope and fear, to grieve or rejoice, but not to use either reason or will, conscience or affection." For the use of any of these might affect the results. It is plain that anything that will repress or hinder the free play of any of these higher attributes of our nature must be damning in its effects

on the character and soul. For at one stroke, everything that goes to make a noble character is cut off.

Reason ! What can a man be who will not use his reasoning faculties to enable him to decide for himself what is good and what is bad, what is safe and what is unsafe.

What shall we say of the person with impaired affections ? That must reduce a person to a state very low. And a man without a will, must be a ship without a rudder, the sport of every wind that blows : and to repress or refuse to hear the voice of conscience, is the extinguishing of the Light Divine, without which the soul must be in "outer darkness." To be devoid of any of these attributes is lamentable, but to have them all cut off at one stroke, is a sight to make angels weep.

ENTERTAINMENTS SELFISH.

The entertainment cannot be anything but selfish. This system of raising money for the church, shifts the responsibility from those who derive

the most benefit, to outsiders. It is generally the people that are well off that plead inability to give sufficient to meet the current expenses. This is so customary that the church has to go begging, and she has become well practised at it. She also shows herself proficient in gambling, and conducts lotteries and other games of chance.

HARSH
GENERA-
LITY.

Extortion is common at sale-stall, at pic-nics and bazaars. Besides, she has learned to cater to the taste of the worldly, and serves out frolics, food and fun, in order to raise the money she should furnish gratis. Does she know that "God loves a cheerful giver?" (2 Cor. 8); that the early church abounded in liberality? (Acts 4) that Paul said the offering of the Phillippian Christian was "an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God?" (Phil. iv. 18) Apparently not. By the modern devices for raising funds, the church has become selfish, hard-hearted and calloused. She does not manifest loyal devotion to the Heavenly Bridegroom, but she does

much stinginess. The Church which Christ purchased with His own blood, has betrayed her trust, profaned the sanctuary, burlesqued religion, and insulted Almighty God by her "blemished offerings."

ITS ECONOMIC ASPECT.

Entertainments cause financial loss to the church. God's plan of "free-will offerings is lost sight of and the membership educated not to give. The church that faithfully does God's work will have every need supplied. God has shown His care for His people in providing for the Israelites in a "waste howling wilderness," and for the early Christian Church that was surrounded by fierce enemies. God could easily make the church immensely wealthy if He chose, but He withholds and guards against church pride. How easy it would be for God to reveal to His followers where the hidden wealth of the earth lay, and to place great financiers in the ministry if He wanted the church to be a money-making in-

"CHURCH
PRIDE"??

stitution. God's care is to develop the principle of giving. The work of educating liberality is hindered by church entertainment. As soon as they are resorted to the people must be induced by some consideration to support the church. This cuts short the Spirit's work of enlightenment. It "prevents an exercise and deveiopment of powers that would bring more pure joy and life to the soul than almost any other virtue in the spiritual life."

Instead, the entertainment too frequently fosters discord and always gives blank disappointment and heart-burning shame. But she says, "I get gold. That's my satisfaction." Does she get gold and satisfaction? Let us see what she gets. Here are some of the things that accompany the entertainment: loss of conscience, loss of self-respect, loss of the respect of others, loss of the affection for that which should be dearest to the heart, a tarnished name, a brain diseased by the one thought of "gain, gain," a soul shrivelled and dwarfed by the all-scorching desire or

lust of gold. These are some of the "equivalents" of the church entertainment.

But, to come to the business aspect of the question. The entertainment grieves and disgusts the conscientious and spiritual-minded people who feel the whole thing is wrong, and draw off and have nothing to do with the entire matter. These people are not only the life of the prayer-meeting, but the monetary stay of the church. The congregation that depends on voluntary contributions raise more annually per capita than the congregations that have adopted the entertainment plan.

A minister that I know well discarded entertainments for two years while on a certain circuit. During that time he exhorted his people to give, hoping for nothing in return, and led them into soul-saving work. The membership greatly increased. The missionary money more than doubled. The church edifice was remodelled and one hundred dollars added to the minister's salary.

OH BOY...

Another minister tried afterward to lead those people back into raising funds by entertainments, but many of them sought other preachers more spiritual and drew off and left the man. The adjoining circuit had a few of the "cheerful givers," who joined the faithful brethren of the other circuit. The minister said, "a better class will take their place;" but instead, the church was left with a membership "that won't pray nor pay." That church is now all but closed for want of funds and members.

Recall how the money poured in for the tabernacle and temple; how the early Christians laid their money at the apostles' feet, and any free-will offering you have witnessed, and the fact will be clear to you that the entertainment plan is an enormous financial loss to the Christian Church.

"Give and it shall be given unto you" (Luke vi. 30). "He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. ix. 6). "Every

man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give ; not grudgingly, or of necessity, but upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. xvi. 2).

ENTERTAINMENTS AND THE SOUL.

"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" (Mark viii. 36). The love of entertainments casts a film over the eye of the soul until it cannot see the light, just as the cataract on the natural eye grows until it obliterates the vision. It deadens the spiritual sensibilities. Those who have made a special study of the effects of sin on the individual, tell us there is hardly any class of church-going people so callous and hard and apparently dead to every spiritual influence as the entertainer. You have not far to seek for the reason, when you remember that before any one can be an entertainer, he or she must shut his or her

THE
EXPERTS

eye and ears, and indeed every avenue of approach, to the better nature and see only one thing, that is "gain." For surely no one conducts entertainments for the purpose of losing. If not to lose, then it must be to gain, though that gain may mean the continued heart-aching of the awakened sinner, tying the hand of God's real workers, and preventing spiritual revivals. Surely an evil that is fraught with such diabolical results is something to be shunned by every right-thinking person, as you would shun the plague.

Let me plead with every young person, yea, and every older member of any Christian congregation, to avoid this thing in every shape and form. It matters not what guise or name it may assume. For, be assured of it, it is the same creature of hell, whether it be in the name of church-work, amusement, or charity. If any of you have been tempted into this thing in any way, let me plead with you to turn from it NOW, for that is where many good people have taken the first step to destroying

their usefulness and ruining their Christian experience. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

THE FIVE-FOLD REMEDY.

The remedy—is there any?

1. It is no use to point out the evils of this disorder, to hurl our anathemas against it and leave it there. We should seek a remedy, and cease until we have throttled this enemy of all good. Think of it!

Here we have in our midst a great inter-denominational evil. If anything is to be known by its fruits, then judging by the fruits of church entertainments, we are justified in saying, it came from the nether regions. It is insinuating itself into every sphere of church life; it is permeating everything, like yeast in flour. It is attacking with tremendous force the ministry, office-bearers and membership in general. It is too bad that the Young Peoples' Societies and Sabbath-schools should be rendered unsafe and blighted by the presence of the entertainer.

I was wondering if the various church

THIS IS THE TYPE OF BOOKLET THAT
INSPIRES THE STEREOTYPED BIGOT
TO REPRESENT SOCIETY IN PURGING
LIBERALISM, PROGRESS, BROTHERHOOD, ETC.

ENTERTAINMENTS

25

organizations could not expel this curse from their midst. Not only does it threaten the auxiliaries, but it is eating into the spiritual life of the Christian Church. It is becoming more and more difficult every year to live a true Christian life, because of the tide of worldliness and amusement, which is striking at the roots of spirituality of the Christian world. Is this to go on? Or, must it cease? It certainly ought to die, and shall die an ignominious death if every Christian does his duty. "GOD EXPECTS EVERY CHRISTIAN TO DO HIS DUTY."

2. Let us open our eyes to the condition of things as they are to be seen to-day.

One reason why there is so much indifference and inactivity in reference to this sin is because there does not seem to be any very pungent convictions as to the enormous amount of evil being wrought by it. And the reason for this lack of conviction must be found in the lack of knowledge. Let us, therefore, acquaint ourselves with

CONVINCE
THE PEOPLE
REBUKE
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LITTLE.

LET US...
ATTEND A
FEW CPE-
RAS!

the state of religion, as affected by this sin. I do not mean that we should study the numberless methods by which entertainments are conducted. It would not be of any advantage to know anything about that. But, we should try as far as we can to ascertain to what extent this evil is at work amongst us. And more, learn the results on individual life, and the life of the community. If this is seen in all its appalling blackness, it will be well known that this is an evil that must be dealt with.

3. Let us, for ourselves, have nothing to do with this vice. A deliberate pledge should be made with God against entertainments in every shape and form. This would be one way that we could help stem the tide of iniquity that is surging at our feet. And be assured, that every solitary unit who takes his stand and refuses to have anything to do with this thing, is doing much to check the spread of the plague. If you or I can do nothing more, this at least we can do, and this we ought

to do. We stand guilty before God if we do not.

4. Again, having our own eyes opened, and having taken the side of truth, and righteousness, and God, labor to convince others, and to create a public conscience with reference to this evil ; for it is the duty of Christians to create a conscience where there is none, against any crying evil of the day. This you will not find to be very pleasant work. You may find that not many will thank you for your efforts. The world has never cherished very kindly feelings towards its reformers, and immediately you take up arms against any form of vice that is deep rooted in the heart of sin, you may be sure you will find opposition. They crucified the Lord Jesus and they have nothing better for His followers. But as His followers we should fight His enemy.

5. Finally, give yourself to Him for this work, and appeal to Him to aid us in this war. In our own strength we can do nothing. Christian, you must

go forward, armed with all God's powerful weapons, to fight His terrible foe on every side. The battle may be severe, but it is for God and Christianity, for your children and your homes, therefore never falter. Through Him and by Him we must conquer. "For God is God, and right is right, and right the day must win."

If there are any of my readers who have felt the pangs of this deadly viper fastening on your soul, in the name of Jesus, I beseech you to flee to Him, who alone can break the fetters of this and every other sin which binds the soul. Rise and fling off the tyranny of Satan, and come to Christ, who alone can release you here and now. Oh! don't let this day pass until you realize the liberty wherewith Christ can make you free.

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean.
His blood avails for me."



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