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I.

THE REVISION OF THE WESTMINSTER CON-
FESSION OF FAITH.

REVISION is in the air. Some years ago it was the revision of the Bible ; now it is the revision of the creeds. The former has been successfully accomplished without doing any harm either to the Bible or to Bible readers ; the latter will be accomplished at no distant day, with the same result of sundry improvements in minor details without detriment to the substance. The Bible revision movement extended over the whole Protestant world, and resulted in a material improvement of the Authorized English, German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish versions ; the Creed revision movement so far is confined to the Presbyterian churches of America and Great Britain, but may soon spread to other evangelical denominations which have formulated confessions of faith.

We live in an age of research, discovery, and progress, and whosoever refuses to go ahead must be content to be left behind and to be outgrown. Whatever lives, moves ; and whatever ceases to move, ceases to live. It is impossible for individual Christians or churches to be stationary : they must either go forward or go backward.

Revision of creeds is not a new thing. It runs through the history of Christian doctrine. Creeds are the mile-stones which mark the stages of development in the knowledge of revealed truth. Every creed is the result of preceding theological controversy. The Confession of Peter and the baptismal formula are the basis of the

III.

CHURCHLY, CHRISTIAN, AND SCRIPTURAL MODES OF ETHICAL WORK.

THE mission of the Church is to bless and save the world. Every desirable end is included in the idea of salvation. In seeking this, its true end, it seeks also, so far as it works intelligently, all lower or subordinate ends which are right and good. The earthly interests of men, and their moral condition fall within the scope of its efforts. It cannot fulfil its mission except as it enters into conflict with evil, in every form in which it appears, and thus restrains or overcomes it. Since salvation includes deliverance from sin, both in its consequences and its power, the Church must deal directly or indirectly with all the social and moral evils which afflict society. It must reform men in their conduct, as by the Holy Spirit it renews them in heart and life.

It is not only true that the Church must do this, or aim to do it, but it is true also that it is the only agent that can accomplish it. All the vital forces for good lie in the Church. The power of Christ, which is the saving power in the world, vests in his people, and in his people not merely as individual believers, but as constituting the true, living Church. What the principle of grace is in the heart of the individual, that the Church is in the world. It is the leaven which is to work until it has leavened the whole mass of human society. It is the living germ which must expand and grow and bear its fruit, after its own kind, in all godliness and honesty. Along its history lies the conflict of the ages, and all hope hangs upon its progress.

This is obvious from the commission which our Lord gave his Church. "Go ye therefore"—because all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth—"Go ye therefore and teach," or disciple "all nations." It is the trust of that power, which, as our Lord and Saviour he possesses and wields, to his Church, and for the specific purpose of making disciples of Christ of all nations. To make disciples of Christ is not merely to bring them into the fellowship of his people, to enrol them as his, or to teach them his truth, but to make them learners of Christ and like him, and therefore to free them from the errors and vices under which they are groaning in bondage and to

fill them with light and purity and love. Whatever enters into our conception of a pure and blessed life belongs to the idea of a disciple of Christ. There is nothing higher than to be like Christ. Christ, therefore, when he gave his power to the Church, and sent it into the world, clothed with his authority and thus amply endowed to preach the Gospel to every creature, or evangelize every creature, sent it to every good work, to be his instrument in saving men. He has never withdrawn that trust, nor delegated it to other bodies or societies of men. The Church still holds the trust with all its honor and all its obligations.

It is clear that the apostles thus understood their commission. They went everywhere preaching Jesus and the resurrection. They aimed constantly, and in all their work to bring men to Christ, or to make them his disciples. They never seemed to question that this would secure all needful reforms—social or moral. They were never turned aside from their simple purpose and work by the overshadowing forms of superstition and vice which met them everywhere. The Gospel would make men good men, like Christ, pure and unselfish in their motives, upright and generous in their conduct. It would bring the light into the regions of darkness, and undo the heaviest burdens. They enforced the purest morality, the most unselfish devotion to the interests of men, the noblest charities, the most costly sacrifice of life itself to bless the world, by considerations drawn only from the Gospel entrusted to them. They kindled the flame of human love at the cross, and never doubted that if the flame can be kept aglow, it will consume pride and lustful appetites and passions. The epistles, in which we have the record of their manner of teaching, are all based upon this conception. We have first the clear and full unfolding of the truth, then the life of love and practical godliness based upon the truth. The necessity for other or outside agencies never seems to have occurred to them. Their loyalty to Christ and the Gospel precluded any apprehension of failure. They never resorted to expedients to win apparent success. They went everywhere, into all conditions of human society, with the Gospel in their hands, the sure remedy for all human ills, the only permanently reforming power in the world. They expected that the truth would prevail, and, having lodged the truth in the minds of men, went on their way to others, leaving it to work according to its nature and the power of Christ attending it. Even in moments of personal depression, and sometimes disappointment, they never lost their confidence in the truth, nor in the ultimate success of their mission.

The whole history of the Church confirms this view. The march

of human progress has been along the line of the Church's work, and most clearly with those parts of the Church which have held and taught the Gospel in its simplicity and fulness. The truth it has taught has lifted men not only to a hope in Christ of eternal life, but to a higher plane of living. The light has streamed in upon the ordinary life of men, and they have felt the inspiring influence of the wholesome air. Great evils have been ameliorated, or their power has been broken in its progress. It has planted simple principles, which in their power have changed the whole life of individuals and the whole aspect of society, which have restrained prevalent iniquities, broken the yoke from the oppressed, and have brought under their divine sway and control the most defiant forms of evil. From the very first the path of the Church has been one of healing and blessing. Even in the dark ages, when it had to such an extent lost its hold upon the truth, and was shorn of its strength, it was still the conservator of human learning and culture, held in check the violence and rapine with which society was full, was the refuge of the oppressed, and the sanctuary in which Christian charity had its home. At the Reformation the Church resumed distinctly its teaching work. There was a new and fuller declaration of the Gospel. It was freed from the errors and superstitions under which it had been buried. It brought freedom and light and hope to men, and they rejoiced in it. Society, in all its interests, earthly as well as spiritual, felt its power as the breath of a new life. All the movements tending to ameliorate the intellectual and the moral condition of men have their source in the doctrines of grace, and within the sphere of the Christian Church. Even the eleemosynary institutions, which seem to have a life separate from the Church, springing out of merely human sympathies, and depending upon their endowments, as our hospitals and asylums, are easily traceable to the truth which the Church teaches. They owe their existence and support, directly or indirectly, to the Church. They are largely Christian institutions, and are rarely found on unchristian ground. They are not indigenous to the soil of the human heart, but have their roots in the soil of the human heart, made new and enriched by the grace of Christ. And no reform movement which seeks to repress vice or to rescue men from its power, unless it bases itself upon the Gospel of Christ, and thus connects itself with the life of the Church, has ever been of any permanent value.

But if this is its mission, and it is thus attested, has it the power needful to fulfil it, or must its power be supplemented by other agencies or societies which professedly seek in part, the very end which Christ has sent his Church to accomplish?

1. The fact that it is composed of sinners, rescued from sin by the grace and truth of Christ, gives it great power. The practical knowledge of sin, and of the method of deliverance from it, fit it for its conflicts with evil. There is an obvious fitness in the instrumentality which Christ has chosen to the work he has called it to do. He has not called angels, but sinners, men of like passions and experiences with those whom he would save. If it is true that he has best learned the art of war who has learned it in the actual conflict, on the field of battle, it is true also that the Christian who has been taught the power of sin in his own experience, who knows how it entrenches and fortifies itself, and under what pretences it conceals its real nature, and has overcome it, may go out into the conflicts with sin as it exists and works in others with legitimate hope of success. As one who has been won to Christ and purity, he may pass more hopefully from his own experience to the hearts of those whom he would help and save. And as the Church embraces within its fold men of every description of character, of the most varied experiences, taken from every class and condition, it has a wonderful plastic energy, and adapts itself with ease and efficiency to the variety of evils it meets.

But the power here is not traceable only to the practical knowledge of sin and salvation. This knowledge is fruitful in tender sympathy with those who are still in sin, or in whom evil habits hold sway. It animates the Church with the spirit of its Lord. There is no bitterness in its spirit, no censoriousness. It does not say to the sinner, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." Its experience of sin in its own members represses all tendency to pride. It goes out to those whom it would bless, conscious of its own weakness and shame, and conscious of its victory through Christ, faithful in its reproofs, but tender, breathing words of warning and words of hope and courage. It "does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." The power which this sympathy and tenderness exert needs no illustration. The most hardened are conscious of it, and every one who has been drawn to Christ by his love has the illustration in his own history.

This practical knowledge of sin and salvation fits the Church for its work, gives it skill in its work, inspires it with sympathy and tenderness; it fills it also with compassion for the sinful and wretched. It starts into operation those dispositions and motives which impel the Church to its work and sustain it under difficulties and apparent reverses. Mere human pity would be quickly exhausted. Love to Christ, in whom we have found salvation, and the outflowing and generous love to those who are in sin and need salvation, are

those impelling and sustaining motives, and they find their nourishment and growth in these personal experiences of sin and grace.

2. The Church has all the power which results from the true idea or theory of its work. It is to turn men to Christ and therein to effect every salutary reform, and to furnish stimulus and direction to every good work. It seeks the heart and then the life. We may throw around sin salutary checks and restraints, we may bring the force of public opinion to bear upon specific evils, but we have done little unless we have reached the heart. It is some gain doubtless to restrain outward sins, but the gain is small unless the change goes deeper, and touches the springs of conduct. It is the purpose and aim of the Church to enthrone Christ in the conscience and life. It is not content with reformation. It seeks to renovate or make new the whole man. It works upon the divine model, or as God works, both in the kingdom of nature and of grace. He plants the germ, and the tree grows into shapeliness and beauty according to its kind. Whatever excrescences may cling to it are thrown off by the energy of its living forces. He touches the heart so that it beats with love, and then all reforms follow, and all the life is adorned with Christian graces and virtues. The man ceases to be profane, intemperate, lustful, or covetous. If the fountain is purified, the streams will be sweet and healthful. Working upon this theory, the Church wastes no energy upon false issues, and has no work to do over. Whatever gain it makes is a sure gain. History and experience prove that salutary and permanent reforms have never been effected except by the Church, and in this divinely appointed way.

3. The Church is divinely equipped for the work. "The weapons of its warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imagination and every high thing which exalteth itself against God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There are no words which could better describe the character of its foes, or the complete subjection into which they are brought. If its weapons are mighty unto such issues, there is nothing which it may not attempt and do in their use. It has the living and life-giving word. Armed with this word, "quick and powerful," searching "the thoughts and intents of the heart," wakening a response in every human heart, there are no strongholds into which it may not come. With this the Church can enter the very citadel of the soul. It lays its hand upon the conscience, for the conscience recognizes the authority of the word. It appeals to principles and motives which no other agency can reach, and has power, therefore, when all other agencies or associations have failed. It convinces the sinner of his sin, its evil nature, its

guilt, its pollution, its power, and at the same time lifts him from the abysses of despair into the regions of hope. It touches all the springs of action. Although it is true that this word cannot be brought into contact with the souls of men insane with passion, or drowned in sensual indulgence, it is true also that men in that condition will not listen to any appeal of reason or interest. And with every man, however far he may seem beyond the reach of any influence for good, there are moments when the tumult of passion subsides, and the Church may come to him with its message from God, and with that authority which God gives, and by the love of Christ appeal to him to hear and turn. The power of the word in its subtle relations to the human heart and life cannot be measured or exhausted, and the Church is justified in relying upon it with far greater confidence than it has ever shown.

4. But the Word of God, the weapon which the Church uses in its warfare with evil, can never be separated from the Spirit of God, who dwells in the Church and goes with it in all its efforts to reform and save men. The Spirit gives the word, and he alone gives it its divine efficiency for good. With him there is all requisite power. When he speaks the conscience is quickened, the heart beats with penitence and hope, sin appears in its true nature, and God is loved and obeyed. The Spirit is given to the Church, and is its richest possession. He is given with special reference to the great work of the Church in the world, "to convince men of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment." When, therefore, the word may seem to fail, or its edge to be turned, the Church draws upon the hidden springs of power within. It goes to its work in the deep consciousness of its own weakness, and with the most unshaken confidence in the power of the Holy Ghost. His presence settles forever the question of power. There is nothing impossible to the Church animated by the Spirit of God. In the presence of the most appalling evils—those which have resisted successfully all other powers—it may safely say, as it assails them with its weapons of love and truth, "I can do all things through him who strengtheneth me." And its confidence will never put it to shame. Thus constituted, thus instructed in the methods of its work, thus armed and animated, there is nothing which can long resist its progress. And there is no other society or organization which has this heritage of power, or which stands upon the same plane as the Church, or has like hope of success.

With this commission laid upon its conscience, and thus divinely qualified and empowered, the question may naturally arise, Is the Church divinely organized for its work, or does it need human and varying organizations to perfect it? We do not enter here upon the

question of the *jure divino* organization, or polity, or government of the Church. It is enough for the present purpose that Christ has placed his Church in the world, in its necessarily visible form, as composed of believing men and women related to each other, and related to the world in which it lives and works, under pastors, evangelists, governments, elders, and deacons, who are not to exercise lordship over God's heritage, but are to watch over it and give direction to its energies. It may fairly be inferred that when Christ put this work into the hands of his Church, and so richly qualified it for the work, he would give it an organization sufficient to develop and direct all the individual energies of his people. There is presumably no necessity for any human organization practically coming between the Church and its work, and assuming to do what he has distinctly and definitely commissioned the Church to do. Under this commission it cannot fail in its work as the Church, or permit any other organization to do it, without proving derelict to its trust. This inference is fully justified by the actual path of history; for while some forms of the Church are more efficiently organized than others, or are organized for more efficient Christian work, it is true that every form of the Church has sufficient organization to give scope and direction to the spiritual energies of its members. As a matter of fact, too, voluntary societies, formed with the best motives, and possibly meeting some pressing need for the time, have had their periods of growth and decay, have seemed well-nigh indispensable—so that to criticise them or question their right to existence subjects one to the charge of touching, as it were, the very ark of God with his unhallowed hands—and then have been easily dispensed with without harm or loss of power to the Church, which has moved steadily on in its work, unconscious of any call for other organization than that which Christ has given it, and never more amply qualified for its great work than to-day.

Nor has the Church failed to make its power felt. We can scarcely conceive what the world would have been without the Gospel. If we eliminate its principles, its restraints, its culture, we should have a human society more degraded and hopeless than that which the heathen world now presents, unless in its lowest forms. It is difficult to imagine what would have been the product of the energies of the historic western races had they been left without restraint. The Church has not done what it ought to have done, what the power given it justifies us in looking for, but it has done much. It has guarded the truth committed to it. It has vindicated it against the assaults of unbelief and error. It has spread the truth as a saving power in the world. It has restrained vice. It has delivered the

oppressed, and opened the prison doors of those who were bound. It has relieved human wants, and wiped away the tears of the sorrowing. It has cheered the desponding, and put courage into the hearts of those who were ready to abandon hope. It has brought the light of truth and love into the hearts and homes of multitudes. It has held up the standard of virtue, and helped men in their efforts to reach it. In the record of its achievements are found the lives of saintly men and saintly women, whose unselfish devotion to truth and duty is the most impressive reproof of vice, and the noblest testimony to the beauty and loveliness of virtue. These, and other like things are its works.

But its work is very imperfectly done as yet. There are wide fields of Christian effort which it has, to a large extent, neglected. It has failed somewhat in the application of its own principles. It is partly in this neglect that voluntary societies have their origin and their apparent justification. The need was obvious and urgent, the call imperative, and, as the Church was slow to respond, good men felt that something must be done to meet the case. Societies were formed because individual effort could not do the work. It is doubtless true also that the tendency in us to seek relief, under the binding duty and taxing labor, in new methods of work, which awaken for a time fresh enthusiasm and courage, finds scope and exercise in these organizations. They kindle new hopes. In the face of countless disappointments in the past, men are ready to believe that now the work will be accomplished, that the plan which will lead unerringly to success has at length been discovered and adopted. But whatever may be due to this tendency, the real occasion and apparent necessity for these societies, is in the neglect of the Church to use its own powers and methods.

Thus the poor were laid by Christ at the door of the Church. Their wants were to be met. The sick were to be visited, and the helpless supported. Drawn by the ties of Christian brotherhood, which have their home and strength in those in whom the Spirit dwells, who have been organized into one body in Christ, and impelled by the authority and example of the Lord Jesus himself, the Church was to fulfil this sacred trust. It has been slow to recognize the obligation. These temporal ills—especially as lying beyond the bounds of the Church—have not been met and relieved. Hence we have the Masonic Order, Odd Fellow Fraternities, Knight Templars, Grangers—societies all of which, whatever else they claim, claim to be bound by the ties of a close brotherhood, and to have charitable ends. They would never have had the power they now wield had the Church applied its principles and discharged its trusts.

Thus the crying sin of intemperance, so fearful in its extent and power, so destructive to all human interests—earthly and spiritual—was not fully met by the Church with its saving truth and energy. It mourned over the sin, it testified against it, it deplored its painful issues, but it did not rise in the might of its Lord and his truth and struggle with this giant evil and overcome it. It was not a question of power. The Church might have done it ; might do it now. As far as power is concerned, it has irresistible power. But because it has not used its power, we have temperance societies in all their variety, one rising in the room of another, as the exigencies seemed to demand, until we have now come to build our hopes rather upon legislation than upon the Gospel. The question which is the pressing one is not so much as to the moral nature of the evil, but as to what legislation will be most effectual. We are not here discussing the wisdom of these methods, but simply stating facts.

There is no respect apparently in which the Church has so greatly failed as in developing and using its own resources in its more direct and spiritual work. There is room enough for all its members in all their variety, in age, and energy, and sex. Its work demands the wisdom which comes from age and experience, the enthusiasm and vigor of youth ; the strength of manhood, and the gentleness and tenderness and endurance of womanhood. But the Church has not utilized these varied resources. It has not worked its divine plan. This is true with the local church, and with the Church in the wider sense of denominations. In this neglected field Young Men's Christian Associations, Christian Endeavor societies, Women's Missionary societies, King's Daughters, White Cross Bands, widespread organizations, have struck their roots and grown into their strength. Christian activity now runs into these channels. They claim the attention of Christian people, and solicit their support and co-operation. They enter fields comparatively unoccupied by the Church, and undertake largely its work. They spring into vigorous life, and for the moment there seems to be no limit to their success. It is almost with reluctance that one ventures to criticise their methods, or to suggest a doubt whether they have any permanent mission, or to assert that there is a better and divinely appointed way.

It would obviously be unjust to class these societies as all standing upon the same level in their relation to the Church, or to its work. The great secret, charitable brotherhoods, as they are termed, have no relation to the Church, save as they draw the principles which give them their power from its teachings and apply them to their ends, and sometimes, therefore, come to occupy the place of the Church in the hearts of their membership. In some cases the de-

mands of the brotherhood and the claims of the Church come into conflict. At best they are avowedly human brotherhoods or organizations, claiming to be governed by Christian principles and motives. They are outside of the Church, and we dismiss them from further consideration here.

But the temperance societies, at least in many of their forms, the Christian associations, the Christian Endeavor societies, the Woman's missionary societies, are avowedly closely related to the Church, recognize their dependence upon it, claim allegiance to it, and claim its recognition and support. Perhaps the order in which they are named above will correspond to the degree in which they are actually engaged in churchly and Christian work.

There may be reasons for these voluntary organizations still. There may be vast populations, especially in our large cities, which lie beyond the reach of any particular Church. It may be true that they cannot be reached except by associated work, though that is by no means clear in the light of what Dr. Chalmers accomplished in Westport by the love and labors of his own church, and labor distinctly and definitely rendered, as by church-members. There may be such a failure to appreciate the obligation and the honor which Christ put upon his Church when he commissioned it to preach the Gospel to every creature, that young people's bands and women's missionary societies are necessary to train the conscience and stimulate the zeal of the youth of the Church, and to call out its buried energies and resources. But conceding all this, we ought notwithstanding to look for the time when the Church as such shall resume its normal functions, and go out in the name of Christ, and clothed with his power, not as men or women, not as old or young, but as the Church, to win men everywhere and in all conditions from sin to Christ.

Recognizing gladly that these societies have their origin in pure motives, and have been the sources of great good, we still feel that they are open to criticism, both as to their structure and methods. It would be an ungracious task to do this unless a better way could be suggested, and one which has the sanction of divine authority and of the experience of the ages—the divine plan in the Gospel.

1. It is a serious thing to introduce and foster class distinctions within the Church—distinctions defined by external organizations, or by specific lines of Christian activity; for while it is doubtless true that a Christian may be specially fitted by nature and by experience for special work, these fitnesses do not furnish the basis of these organizations. It is a purely external line, known by badges, by age or sex, which makes the distinction. It would be in the face of the

whole history of the Church to expect that those so separated and banded together, and made prominent, should not come to regard themselves as better, or at least, more active and efficient than their brethren. They are the workers. There is no design to favor such a tendency. It is farthest from the thought of the founders of these societies. Still the tendency exists and works, and must exist and work while the human heart remains what it is. The noxious growth will spring up under favoring conditions. And the tendency is aggravated when the associated members are brought under a pledge—irrespective of their inward experience or the workings of God's Spirit in them—to take some part in the public service of the society; for every such pledge involves either the idea that the person taking it is specially consecrated to the Lord's service, or that he is not already pledged to Christ in his Christian profession, and pledged once for all against every sin and to every good work, or that the pledge adds something to the completeness, solemnity, and sacredness of his obligation to Christ. It will be strange if the fruit of spiritual pride does not grow under such culture.

These distinctions also favor the idea among those so separated, and brought under such special bonds and pledges, that the services of the association may well and safely be substituted for the ordinary Church service; that the requirements of the one shall be held as a valid excuse for absence from the other; and thus the ordinary and scriptural means of grace as observed by the Church shall lose their hold upon the Christian conscience, and become uninteresting and profitless. Thus the very element in the Church which it most needs, its youthful vigor and blood, is taken partly from under its control, its activities turned largely into other channels, and then the Church falls under censure for not giving scope to its young life and energies.

Then, too, it is certain that these class distinctions operate to lower the tone and authority of the conscience of those who are not upon their rolls. Anything which acts as a moral opiate is dangerous. It is no new thing that the conscience of the Christian even should plead excuses and exemptions, if there is a plausible ground for its doing so. It seeks release from obligation. If the young, with their enthusiasm and zeal, will do the work, then those more advanced may content themselves without exertion. If the noble women will raise their hundreds of thousands, and by their self-sacrifice fill the Lord's treasury, then the men need not be burdened with the obligation to personal self-denial. The very work of the Church which it ought to do as the Church, and which it can do only by the combined activity and zeal of all its members, is largely handed over to a class. This can only work serious injury.

2. These class distinctions dishonor the Church. The glory of

the Church lies in its mission. It is its work to preach the Gospel to every creature. Its work is its glory. To do its work robs it of its highest honor. It has no sufficient reason for its existence in the world, unless it is to bless the world. It is not a society formed for mutual support or comfort, or even edification, but a divine society constituted and set apart by God to evangelize the nations. It cannot hand its work over to others, or allow others to do it, without parting with its own life and honor. The conscience of the whole Church needs to be impressed with its obligation, binding by the authority of Christ and by the solemn pledge which every Christian takes when he receives Christ—a pledge which covers his whole life. Any purpose—or even any unpurposed assumption—to do its work, as these class societies do—for they work as societies and not as members of the Church, under the direction of their officers and not under the direction of the Church or its authorities—dishonors the Church. Beyond all question this is far from the thought of their founders. These societies are born in loyalty to the Church, and intended to serve as aids in its work; but as vast leagues, stretching their arms into all the world, having their separate life, framing their own laws, and in a large measure irresponsible, they practically place themselves in the room of the Church, and thus deprive it of its glory. History proves that if the Church, as such, is not recognized as doing its own work, it loses its hold upon the world.

3. The power for good, as we have seen, is in Christ, and he has given it to his Church to be applied in the truth of the Gospel to the hearts and lives of men. There is no true moral reformation separate from the Gospel and the renewing power of the Spirit. They leave high vantage ground, and part with all that justifies hope, who attempt such reforms upon any other basis, or by mere human persuasions or legal restraints. Failure is certain unless the heart is reached, and repeated failures destroy confidence and paralyze effort. The temperance movement affords the best illustration here. The evil was apparent. The Church seemed asleep and powerless. Good men resorted to human expedients. Temperance societies sprang into being, pledges were taken, total abstinence was urged and practised, a more healthful moral sentiment seemed to be created, but as it was not distinctively a religious movement, and urged by the motives of the Gospel and under the authority of the Church, it had no permanent life. One agency has succeeded to another. More stringent measures have been adopted. Men have drifted from their moorings. The Church has been assailed as if unfriendly and hostile. In some cases the reform has been based upon unscriptural principles, and its friends, while claiming to be the instruments for the exercise of the power of the Church, are

found antagonistic to it ; but the evil itself remains. So conspicuous have been the failures of the reform movement, and so depressed is the faith and the courage of the Church even, that any one who should now publicly insist that the Church has all the power needful to eradicate this evil, that it can easily do what these organizations have failed to do, would be deemed quixotic. It may be, it is said, a true ideal of Church power and work, but can never be actual. We may dream of it, but there is no rational ground of hope. It may come when the millennium comes. And yet nothing is more certain than that the Church has ample power to-day, if it will use it in faith, to rebuke, repress, and bind this iniquity—and that by the simple agencies which Christ has appointed. Anything which destroys or weakens the confidence of the Church in its power or methods is a serious injury.

4. These associations are largely independent of the Church. So far as the local society is concerned, it may be under the authority of the local church, and amenable to it. But it will not be strange if there should be friction even here. It will need great wisdom and grace to prevent it. But in the great leagues reaching into all denominations and all sections of the country, holding their general conventions under their own officers, and their own rules, prescribing with high authority the methods of work, passing all the members under a solemn pledge or oath to work in the method prescribed—a pledge which may easily ensnare the conscience and embitter the life—making men and women, boys and girls, share in the public service under pledge, in such an overshadowing institution as this, in its very structure irresponsible to any denomination or Church, there is serious ground for apprehension. It may well be that the Church should carefully consider the nature of these institutions, and what is likely to be their issue, before giving them its sanction and authority.

What, then, ought to be the attitude of the Church toward these societies ?

1. It ought not to be one of indifference, or unfriendliness, or hostility. It must give them, at least as to their spirit, if not as to their methods, its Christian sympathy. The Church should make these warm Christian hearts feel that it has a warm place for them ; that it is their home ; that here is the family fireside ; that the mother heart beats with love for all her children ; that the doors of this home are ever wide open, and that when wearied or disappointed with their work they may find rest and cheer in its loving arms. There is no room for coldness or harshness in the Church, or for suspicion or alienation on the part of the societies or their members. The Church cannot leave these noble Christian youth and Christian wom-

en, their hearts burning with enthusiasm for Christ and the souls of men, without her sympathy and love.

2. Neither should it be an attitude of endorsement and approval. The apparent good and the real good even, which they accomplish do not justify approval. There are many things which do good for a time, but they are not, therefore, to be regarded as wise and best. The missionary societies which originated three quarters of a century ago or more were the sources of great good. They raised funds, sent out men and women into the field, planted churches, established schools, translated the Scriptures, and have on their records to-day the lives of as sainted and heroic men and women as the world has ever seen. They awakened by their appeals and example the slumbering conscience of the Church and made clear its duty, but were not, therefore, to be endorsed as the true method in which mission work should be conducted. The Church could not release its conscience, or transfer to those societies its obligation. It must do its own work, and under its direct responsibility to its risen Lord. So the Church felt and acted. Though these societies may be in the very flood-tide of success, the Church cannot endorse them as permanent agencies without denying in part the reason for its existence. For the Church does not exist for itself. It exists for Christ and his kingdom; for the world and its work in it. To pass this work out of its own hands would be suicidal.

3. Nor again should it be an attitude of mere expectancy. It is not to wait, Gamaliel-like, and see what the issue will be, and then shape its course accordingly. It ought to shape the issue. In every legitimate way it should influence and direct these energies. It has the right to do so. It might as well cease to preach the Gospel as to leave its members without care and instruction. Nor can it afford to wait, since the time is brief, the interests are precious, and these agencies are not only growing in number, but are fast passing from their plastic state into fixed and rigid forms, when it will be very difficult to influence or shape them.

4. It ought to be an attitude of helpfulness. It watches these societies with intense solicitude. It is slow to censure or condemn. It is conscious that it has not reached perfection either in its character or work. It needs to learn how to develop its resources more fully, how to encourage and use the energies of its members, how to approach the depraved and vicious with the best hope of success, how to adapt itself to the different circumstances in which it is placed, and the changed conditions of human life and human society. For while men morally are ever the same, and the Church must come to them as lost sinners, with its one message of grace and salvation in Christ, they are ever changing in their intellectual and earthy

conditions, and must be approached on the planes upon which they move. Great wisdom is needed in the application of the eternal principles of the Gospel to the lives of men, and possibly the Church needs to be much more pliant in its methods, while rigid in its principles. As it is ever young, it is never too old to learn.

But while it watches these movements with the deepest interest, and ever seeks wiser methods of work, it must witness to the truth. It must insist upon its own prerogatives and obligations. It must set forth the scriptural method by which Christ saves men; that it is through the Church, by its living ministry, by the lives of godly men and women in the spheres in which Christ has placed them, by the activity of its members in every good work, under the inspiration of the truth, and under the direction of those whom he has clothed with authority for that purpose. It must reach out its hands to its enthusiastic and generous-minded youth, who are working so ardently without its divine powers, and bring them up to the plane upon which it moves. It must give them scope for their energies. It must show them that the Church is the moral reform society—but with divine powers added—the temperance Society, the Christian Endeavor Society, the true divine association of Christian men and women, in its very nature the missionary organization, and that every Christian, old or young, male or female, by his Christian profession is a member of all these societies, and under the most sacred obligations to all the work which Christ requires of his own. If human societies arouse the enthusiasm and ardor of multitudes, stir them with grand impulses and hopes, send them out to toil and conquest, what may not the Church of Christ do, when it enlists the same energies, working freely, but working under its divine direction, and attended and sustained by its divine powers? There is ground for large hope surely. If the Church can do this—and we should be faithless to doubt it—if it will reach the conscience and energies of all its members, and then, as consecrated to Christ and his service, send them out into the world to do good, there is scarcely any limit to what we might hope for: that which Christian men and women are striving for in their varied methods, and with only partial and transient results, would be easily accomplished; all moral reforms would become possible and permanent, because based upon hearts turned to Christ and controlled by his gospel. If this is chimerical, if it is a vain thing to hope for, then it would seem as if the Gospel was a chimera, and that there is no power in the world upon which we can build any hope.

A. GOSMAN.