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THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR TOPIC

By the Rev. Charles E. Schaeffer, D. D.

January 29th—How Our Church Does Its Work. Eph. 4:1-16.

It is not altogether clear what this subject fully contemplates. It admits of a two-fold treatment. The word Church is sometimes used in a double sense. It may mean the local congregation, which is composed of like-minded individuals who have banded themselves together in fellowship with each other and with Christ; or it may refer to the Church of Christ as a whole, which is the organized institution of Christianity and which is doing its work in groups known as denominations. Both aspects of this topic are worthy of study. The majority of Church members remain ignorant of the way in which the denomination to which they belong does its work. In fact, many do not know what its work really is. They do not know its program, they do not understand its organization. This is likewise true with reference to the life and work of the local congregation. Many members remain ignorant of its policy and system. They do not know about its finances or the efforts which it puts forth in its community along the lines of evangelism and social service. Only a few chosen ones seem to know, consequently the great majority do not count for as much as they might. Information is necessary in order that interest in the work may be stimulated and directed.

First—The Church as a denomination has a specific work to do. The Church is here in the world to do the work that Christ began to do on earth. He came here to establish the Kingdom of God and to do His Father's will. This is precisely the work of the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ doing the work of Christ. Now Jesus organized His own work around three distinct features: preaching, teaching, healing. To this three-fold task the Church must apply itself. It may take on various aspects and the emphasis may be shifted from time to time, but this is the task which confronts it at all times. Now, the Reformed Church to which my readers belong, is organized to do this very work. The organization is very simple. We start with the lowest unit which we call the congregation, which is composed of men, women and children who have the mind and passion of Jesus Christ. This body is presided over by a consistory or an official board composed of elders and deacons. This is the governing body of the congregation. A number of congregations grouping themselves together form what is known as a Classis, which is an old word brought over from the Old Country. It corresponds somewhat to the Conference of the Methodist Church or the Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church. A number of Classes adjacent to each other group themselves together and form a Synod. The word Synod also comes to us from the Old Country and was used by the Fathers of the Church sometimes synonymous with Council. In the Reformed Church there are eight of these Synods. Now, all the Classes uniting together constitute the General Synod, which is the supreme body of the Church and meets every three years. The organization of the Reformed Church, therefore, runs like this: Congregation, Consistory, Classes, Synod, General Synod. We call these bodies by the high-sounding name of Judicatories. These bodies seek to do the work of the Church. Usually these judicatories function through Boards, or Committees, or delegates that are charged with specific responsibilities.

The outstanding causes to which these agencies apply themselves are Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Education, Ministerial Relief and Sustentation, Publishing and other benevolent activities. There are five major boards in the Reformed Church whose members are elected by the General Synod. Each of the District Synods has Boards of its own and some of the Classes have Boards, as well as some congregations, but every one of these Boards functions along lines of work specifically assigned to it. It would be interesting to go into details of the operations of each one of these agencies to learn the nature of its work and the methods which are employed. Each Board, however, from time to time publishes reports of its work giving definite and detailed information. To many Church members the Minutes or records of these bodies are dull reading material, but they are really full of vital and informing things pertaining to the Church. A careful study of the same will be amply rewarding in order to obtain a comprehensive and intelligent understanding of what the denomination does and how it operates. All this material pertaining to the Boards can be secured from their office at headquarters.

Second—When we narrow our subject down to the local congregation it becomes a more difficult thing to discuss in general terms how one's congregations, although located in the same community, do their work exactly alike. This difference is determined by local conditions, by the life and genius of the members as well as by other conditions which vary quite as much as human nature itself. Consequently this subject can be adequately treated only by resorting to case work. Let the members of the Young People's Society make a careful and close study of the life and work of their own local congregation. Interesting facts and conditions will be disclosed by such a study. Perhaps it will be discovered that there is no program at all, or if there is one, it is not properly articulated and expressed. Perhaps the methods which are employed may be obsolete and inadequate. A scientific study of the organization and the operations of the local congregation would prove very interesting and informing. Such a study would include elements such as these: How are the officers of the Church elected? How long a time do they serve? What is being done at the consistory meetings and how are matters brought to its attention and how are the things on which the consistory deliberates brought in a well formulated program before the congregation? Make a study of the financial system of the Church. What is its budget? How are pledges and subscriptions to meet the same obtained? How does the money reach the treasury of the Church? What determines the congregational budget for current expenses and what for benevolences? Study the missionary program of the Church. How is the missionary spirit kindled and developed? What stimuli in the form of information, tracts, literature, addresses, etc., are employed to develop the missionary spirit? What constitutes the full program of evangelism or the reaching of the un-Churched in the community? What is the educational program of the Church? How is the Sunday school organized and what kind of teaching is done in the Sunday school? Is the equipment adequate for a modern program of religious education? What is being done in behalf of the young people and how is it done—effectively, inadequately or thoroughly? What special efforts are put forth for the social and recreational life of the members of the Church? What is the emphasis upon worship and what efforts are put forth to make the regular Church services as spiritual and helpful and uplifting as possible? What is being done for the local community to relieve poverty and sickness and distress and vice in the community? What is being done along the line of publicity to bring the work of the congregation in a proper, a dignified and a challenging way before the community? What is being done in the local congregation to integrate its life and work with that of other denominations and of the Church of Christ in general? Is the work of the local congregation done by comparatively few or does it enlist the active co-operation of all?

Such a program of study and investigation would prove exceedingly helpful to a better understanding and a higher appreciation of one's own congregation. Such inquiry, however, should be made not in the spirit of criticism or fault-finding, but rather of helpfulness and mutual encouragement. In this way the weak spots may be discovered, the elements of strength may be recognized, the low places lifted up and the life of the whole body be stimulated and properly motivated.



Are You Overdoing?

Overwork Throws a Heavy Burden on the Kidneys.

OVERWORK, rich foods and stimulating drinks put extra burdens on our kidneys. When the kidneys slow up, impurities remain in the blood and are apt to make one languid, tired and achy, with dull headaches, dizziness and often nagging backache. A common warning is scanty or burning secretions.

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Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

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Lesson for January 29

THE GROWING FAME OF JESUS

LESSON TEXT—Mark 3:7-12; 6:53-56

GOLDEN TEXT—"The common people heard him gladly."

PRIMARY TOPIC—Jesus Followed by Crowds of People.

JUNIOR TOPIC—The Growing Fame of Jesus.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Why the People Followed Jesus.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—The Secret of Jesus' Fame.

I. Jesus Ministering by the Sea (3:7-12).

1. Why He withdrew. It was because of the murderous plotting of the Pharisees against His life. So violent was their hatred against Him that they conspired with the Herodians, whom they regarded as traitors to their nation and country, to put Him to death. Their opposition was aroused when Jesus claimed to have power on earth to forgive sins (2:10) It grew in intensity when He mingled with publicans and sinners (2:16) and was fanned into a violent flame when He set at nought their false interpretations of the Sabbath law (2:23-28). Criticism and harshness causes Jesus today to withdraw from our presence.

2. To whom He ministered (vv. 7,8.)

A great multitude, representing a wide stretch of territory. They came from Jerusalem and Idumaea on the south, from beyond Jordan on the east, and from Tyre and Sidon on the northwest. Jesus was the magnetic attraction—the hero of the hour. The interest of the whole country centered in Him.

3. The result (vv. 9-12).

(1) So great was the pressure that lives seemed endangered by the thronging of the multitudes. Some came out of curiosity "when they heard what great things he did" (v. 8). Others came for physical benefit, to be healed of their diseases. To escape from the throng He ordered the disciples to secure a little boat for Him.

(2) The unclean spirits prostrated themselves before Him (vv. 11, 12) They confessed Him as the Son of God. They had no doubt about His deity. This testimony He refused to receive because (a) the time for His declaration was not yet ripe. (b) They were not the beings to make Him known. He would not receive tribute from such a source. He would be proclaimed only by those who loved and honored Him.

II. Jesus Ministering at Gennesaret (6:53-56).

1. Jesus recognized (v. 54). The people quickly recognized Him because they had witnessed His mighty works. The feeding of the 5,000 was doubtless still in their minds. Perhaps many of them had witnessed His works in Capernaum and nearby places. They had doubtless heard Him teach also. He was recognized wherever He went. When He rules in the lives of believers today, those who come into touch with them recognize the fact. They take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

2. The people ran to see Jesus (v. 55). They did not go about this in a half-hearted way. Those who really come into touch with the Lord Jesus Christ have called forth from them unusual energy. The degree of reality of our contact with Him is expressed by our enthusiasm.

3. They searched the whole region for those in need (v. 55).

Those who were found to be sick and in need were carried in beds to Jesus. Those who have come to know Christ will go about earnestly seeking for the lost to bring them to Christ. It matters not what effort is required.

4. They were made whole by His touch (v. 56). The only touch which is needed for the healing of the human soul is that of faith. When the individual is brought into touch with Him by a vital and living faith, sin is vanquished and sickness and death lose their power.

Honor

Honor is like the eye which cannot suffer the least impurity without damage; it is a precious stone, the price of which is lessened by the least flaw. —Bossuet.

The "Yes" and "No"

You are what you are today because of what you were yesterday. You are the product of the "Yes" that you have said, and the "No."—Margaret Slattery.

Good Christians, Citizens

Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens.—Daniel Webster.

Stepping Stones

Men may rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things.—Tennyson.

The Library of God

Few, but full of understanding, are the books of the library of God.—Tupper.

MAN LIVES 34 YEARS FEARING MURDER CHARGE

Doubting He Could Prove Innocence, Returns Home to Find Charge Dropped.

Omaha, Neb.—After living for thirty-four years in fear, knowing that he was wanted for a murder in which he had no hand but of which he could not prove his innocence, John K. Van Ness, sixty, has just found himself a free man.

He can go about and do as he pleases. And all because he had decided to risk prison for a glimpse of the faces of members of his family.

Ran Away From Home.

Thirty-four years ago Van Ness and two companions ran away from their homes, in Omaha, Neb. They became separated on the way to Chicago. The companions of Van Ness and another man who had joined them engaged in a battle in which two railroad policemen were killed. The two Omaha men were sent to prison, but the third suspect disappeared.

Police at once began searching for Van Ness, for he was the third member of the party when the youths left Omaha. Van Ness, fearing that he could not prove his innocence, changed his name and fled to Florida. There twenty years ago he pretended to his family that he had been drowned.

Worked and Lived In Swamps.

Van Ness worked and lived in seclusion in the swamps. Always he feared that he would be arrested.

A few months ago, however, he decided to see the faces of his loved ones. He went to Omaha and was reunited with members of his family.

Some one in Omaha recognized the man, however, and he was arrested.

Omaha police got in touch with railroad police, only to learn that the fugitive slayer had been captured and



Worked and Lived in Seclusion in the Swamps.

that he had confessed many years ago. So Van Ness, a free man, had been making a fugitive of himself for a long time uselessly.

"It's great to be free again!" exclaims Van Ness as he goes about Omaha renewing old acquaintances.

Self-Accusd Leprosy Plotter Held Insane

Portland, Ore.—Fears of a hideous plot, nationwide in scope and sponsored by America's enemies, to spread leprosy germs throughout the United States were dissipated when an examination of William Nash, self-accused plotter, in Judge Tazwell's court, showed the man to be mentally unsound. Dr. William House, alienist, who conducted the examination under orders from Judge Tazwell, found that Nash is suffering from tabo paresis, a form of softening of the brain, in addition to being physically unsound. He was committed to the state hospital in Salem for treatment and observation.

Delusions and fancies had caused him to write letters about his germ-spreading activities, he admitted under examination.

At the hearing Nash said he was born in Michigan in 1878. He said he had been married, but failed to account for the whereabouts of his wife, and that he was the father of two children.

Man in Jail Six Years by Error Is Liberated

Pittsburgh.—After serving more than six years in the penitentiary here by mistake, Joe Sarappa was given his freedom.

In September, 1919, Sarappa was convicted as an accessory after the fact in the murder of Tony Cardello, in Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania. He was accused of assisting the killer to escape and was sentenced to serve from ten to twelve years in the Western penitentiary here.

Habeas corpus proceedings were instituted in an effort to gain Sarappa's release, his attorneys contending the sentence was illegal. In ordering the release Judge A. B. Reid held the sentence was excessive and void, since the law provided only a two-year penitentiary sentence in such cases.

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