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HOLINESS

CHURCH ENTERTAINMENTS

by Reverend B Carradine

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CHURCH ENTERTAINMENTS

Twenty Objections

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SAGE Software

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INTRODUCTION

There are two scenes in the Bible that have always made a profound impression on me. One is the cleansing of the Temple by the Son of God. What an obstinate Temple it was in some respects! and what a faculty it had of accumulating questionable things! At one time back in the days of the Kings we read of so many hundreds of cart-loads of rubbish taken from it. In the time of Christ it was cleansed twice; once at the beginning of his ministry, and again at its close. The Scriptures tell us that the Savior spent an entire day looking upon the human innovations and corruptions of the Temple. What thoughts must have dwelt in his mind, what grief must have swelled his heart, as he marked the long lines of bleating animals, the coops and cages of fluttering birds, and listened to the rattle of coins on tables accompanied by the excited chaffering of hundreds of buyers and sellers! And this was the Temple that God had solemnly consecrated to himself! This was the House of Prayer instituted by the Father! Behold, it had become a bazaar or market place! Worse still, Christ called it a Den of Thieves. It was fouler now than when a thousand cart-loads of rubbish had been discovered in its sacred precincts. Christ's solemn, silent and prolonged view of the scene one day, and the occurrence that followed on the next day, when in holy indignation he drove out the animals, overturned the tables and cleansed the courts of the Temple, teach most powerfully and unmistakably the jealousy with which God regards his house.

The second scene in the Bible I call attention to is Christ sitting over against the Treasury of the Temple and watching the people as they cast in their gifts. He saw the rich contribute of their abundance, and beheld among them a certain poor widow who threw in two mites -- even all that she had.

It would have seemed that the trying scenes soon to burst upon him, or the coming terrible fate of the Temple and city lying outspread before him, would have engrossed every thought. He was in the afternoon, even twilight, of his ministry, and the shadow of the cross was falling upon

him, and yet here he sat absorbed in the contemplation of the people as they gave to God.

The fact of divine attention to the gifts of men is the thought presented by this scene. This attention is seen all through the Bible. Whenever individual or nation gave to God, the notice of heaven was instantly secured. Nor did it end with a mere contemplation of the act, but the divine favor and blessing was poured out in such a remarkable manner that the people rejoiced. This attention is still kept up. No one ever gave freely and largely of his means, and according to his means, but felt at once the loving, approving smile of God upon the soul. Evidently much is bound up in the act of giving.

God regards it as so essential that a law concerning it was passed upon the children of Israel, or more truly was continued from the time of Abraham for the tithe law existed in his day and was observed by him. Let us all remember that the covenant with Abraham has never been repealed. Moreover it is well to bear in mind, that the tithe law that existed with the patriarchs and afterwards in the Mosaic dispensation might certainly be thought worthy of observance in our day.

If God ever manifested indignation, it was when he declared to his chosen people that they had robbed him in tithes and offerings; and his approbation was as distinctly marked, when in David's time the people offered to him with a glad and willing heart; while the word spoken to Cornelius by an angel was that his alms had gone up as a memorial before God. Not only was the amount, but the manner and place of giving is carefully laid down in the Old Testament, while Paul in the New, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, appoints the first day of the week, but leaps from the tithe law to the nobler, freer, higher law expressed in the words, "Let every man lay by him as God hath prospered him."

Everything proclaims the divine interest in the matter of giving. It is felt both by God and man to be declarative of the inner state of life. We love to give to those we love. No exhortation is needed to make a devoted parent give to the child, or the affectionate husband to the wife. One of the plainest marks and indications of the presence of love is the desire to give.

This is true between man and man, and man and woman, and man and God.

You cannot prevent these expressions of love: they are felt to be a relief to the love-burdened heart; we are bound to give. God is love, and he is giving all the time. Who can count his mercies and blessings? When we love, giving will follow; and the more we become like God, the more will we love to give and the more will we give. One can readily understand why Christ lingered that morning, watching the people as they cast their gifts into the Treasury.

God's interest in giving is seen also in the fact of its formative influence. There is nothing that affects the character more remarkably than the giving or withholding from God of our substance. The ministry and others who have been called to deal with people in the church and religious life will readily agree with me here.

Now lately, in lieu of direct personal giving to God, there has crept into practice what is called the Church Entertainment method. In some places it is altogether relied upon in obtaining funds for the support and extension of Christ's kingdom; in others it is used to supplement the gifts of the congregation. Now, as giving is so intimately connected with the spiritual life; as it is both declarative and formative of the religious character; as God has ever commanded, expected and had it observed; and as the church entertainment plan is becoming in many places a substitute for the direct personal method of giving to God; and inasmuch as this method takes at the same time most remarkable liberties with our houses of worship -- it becomes us to examine it prayerfully and faithfully. We should study it in every possible light; mark its nature, spirit, work and tendency; observe its effect on piety, finance and the congregation, as well as the world -- and so come to a just and true conclusion.

I have made this study of the church entertainment for years, and do most unhesitatingly give it as my opinion, and that of countless thousands in the land, that it is a great evil that, whether taken in its milder or graver forms, it always remains wrong in principle, spirit and practice, and as

such cannot enjoy the divine smile and blessing, and furthermore never will.

I recognize several distinct classes of people engaged in the church entertainment. One is composed of really excellent Christians -- people who want to do something for Christ, and know not how or where else to devote their time and energies. Ignorant of the evil connected with and growing out of this ecclesiastical mistake, and failing to receive pulpit instructions in regard to the matter, they give their sympathy, labor and presence to a custom which otherwise they would not.

A second class is composed of thoughtless people who plunge into anything and almost everything without a single inquiry. It is a small matter to them whether they attend a monkey-show or a revival meeting. These persons are well known in every community and every church.

A third class made up of worldly members of the church. They joined without experiencing any change of heart and have brought into the midst of God's people and altar the tastes, appetites, opinions and spirit of the world. They have given up attendance upon places plainly forbidden by the Word of God and the rules of the church, and they are too conscientious to perjure themselves and bring reproach on the cause of Christ by a violation of vows assumed solemnly and voluntarily; but they are in heart unrenewed and in mind unconvinced, and hence think of and lean towards Egypt, in the midst of Israel. This being the case, they take most kindly and naturally to the church entertainment which, remarkable to say, offers them in modified form almost every phase and feature of worldliness which they have renounced. This class take enthusiastically to the entertainment, not so much that through it they can raise funds for the church, but because they enjoy it. It is a gratification to certain carnal and worldly instincts of the heart. Of course this class will never see the objectionableness to church suppers, fairs, festivals, bazaars, grab-bags, fishponds, gambling, pink teas, tableaux, theatrical representations, sleight-of-hand performances, and countless other worldly things done today in the church of God. All argument, illustration and Scripture will fail with them until converted. The other two classes can be more easily

persuaded. Would, however, that all could see the evils bound up in and that are bound to flow from the Church Entertainment.

I desire to present in these pages a list of objections to church entertainments which I believe will be recognized and appreciated by every reflective and spiritual mind.

OBJECTION 1

It Precipitates Money-Making Into the Church

My first objection is that the Church Entertainment precipitates into the church that most agitating and disturbing of all things — money-making.

God has asked the church to do a great many things for him, but here is one I am devoutfully thankful he has never required of her as an institution. He has commanded us to visit the sick, relieve the poor, remember the stranger, go to the prisoner, clothe the naked, preach the gospel — but never has he imposed upon us the duty of making money for him. The briefest thought upon this point would convince us of the utter unlikelihood of such a command or requisition. There is nothing more agitating than money-making. The rush, the confusion and bickering that we see on our streets, in our stores and market-places, is the result of the struggle after money. The cause of almost all the litigation in the courts is found to proceed from this disturbing fact of money-making or money-losing. Does any one in his senses believe that God in full recognition of this fact would project into his church the same prolific cause of disturbance and distraction? Would he permit, much less authorize, proceedings in his house that would divert the mind and the gaze of the people from his Son, and engage them in business-like proceedings that absorb attention, consume energy and time, to the forgetfulness of the one great work that the church is called to do! Does God want the clamor, confusion, excitement and pandemonium in his house that we have beheld in the stock exchanges in our cities!

Who has not beheld transactions in the church that have approximated these scenes of commercial excitement?

Let any one look at the commotion, watch the bartering, mark the business driving — and then ask his soul if he believes that God would be the author of such proceedings.

Again, I discover in the Scriptures constant warnings against the love of money. It is the root, God says, of all evil. Can I believe that he, with the knowledge of its subtle and powerful influence upon the heart — that he would project into his church a method calculated to excite the very evil and awaken the very passion he would destroy! One of the great efforts of the Holy Spirit is to wrest men from their business life and undertakings, to entice their thoughts from trade and traffic while they sit in the temples of worship all over the land. Will he contradict himself here? Is God inconsistent? Certainly he would be if he placed before me in the church practices and methods that brought me back by association at once into the whirl and rush of the money-making life that I thought I had left in the world outside, and that could not follow me across the threshold of the church door.

Certainly there is no greater delusion on the part of the church to day than this idea that God expects it to make money for him. God would not thus defeat his own plan and bring to naught the one work of Zion. Individual members of the church are expected to make money in their secular callings and pursuits; but the congregation as a church — never. The whole teaching of the Scriptures, and the teaching of history as well, prove that if the church will see to the salvation of souls, all the money it needs will be forthcoming. I have never heard of nor read of an exception to this rule. It is a rule, and a divine one at that. Church pride will bring us into debt, but a congregation that will devote their whole energy to saving souls will not lack any good thing. Men will bring their money as of yore and lay it down at the apostles' feet. All that God asks of us is to bring souls to him — and he will see to the money. The Bible teaches that no man goes to war at his own expense. God sees to the expenses if we are really in the war. He does not furnish money for spiritual picnicking and dress-parades — but for real gospel warfare with the world and the devil. Let the church see to the salvation of the people — and God will see to the money.

We have confirmation of this fact in individuals and churches. Here we have today traveling all over the country a prominent preacher lecturing in behalf of his church. He is fairly wearing himself out, and yet in spite of it all he doesn't seem able to raise funds sufficient to meet his contract obligations. The papers spoke the other day of some litigation in regard to

the unfinished building. If, instead of flying over the country, this ministerial lecturer would remain with the flock over which God has made him overseer, comforting, visiting, praying with, and leading souls to Christ, God would touch the heart of some millionaire and give him all the money he wants. But no; he thinks God expects the church and preacher to make money, and away he goes on his eccentric course.

Across the water we have a marvelous contrast. A man that stays by his work, and calls on God for help — and the help comes, and has come, and will continue to come. He is working to save, and God has sent him money enough to build twelve asylums and feed thousands of children. The same fact is repeated in the case of General Booth; he is saving — and God is sending him the money.

I have seen the same fact illustrated in churches. I recall a congregation that is forever giving church entertainments, and it is never out of debt. I recall another religious gathering, where the one purpose, desire and labor is to save souls, and where one day there was a quiet call on the people for a considerable amount of money. The scene that followed beggars description. The people arose and came down like a tide to the table where they were requested to place their offerings. With songs and shouts and shining faces they poured forward and gave until the table was piled up with money, and it began to roll off on the floor. The amount called for was raised — and there was left over a thousand dollars, which was given to the cause of Foreign Missions.

OBJECTION 2

It Is A Perversion And Desecration Of The House Of God

My second objection is that the Church. Entertainment is a perversion and desecration of he House of God.

That God is jealous about his house is evidenced by the commands in regard to its sacred keeping, the complaints in regard to certain conduct near its door, the swift punishment and death that overtook those profaning it at different times, and by the holy indignation manifested by the Savior at the condition in which He found it on two different occasions.

The reasons for keeping the house of God holy will readily occur. As God is holy, his house should be holy. Then its purpose is purely a spiritual one, and this fact alone should preserve it from anything of a secular irreligious nature. That this is contemplated by the church can be seen in the Ritual of our Discipline, where the form of church dedication we find these words: “We present to you this house to be set apart from all unhallowed or common uses for the worship of Almighty God.” An additional reason is found in the effect on ourselves of desecrating a holy place. God can stand it — he is not hurt or made less holy by what we do to his earthly houses; but we are hurt. I am no Romanist in feeling and lay no improper emphasis and value on wood and stone; but I observe that such is the constitution of our moral nature, that we cannot act in an unseemly way and unbenefitting way in the house of God without receiving spiritual damage.

The Church Entertainment fairly floods the sacred building with every conceivable kind of proceedings. We have eating and drinking, laughing and chatting, clapping of hands and stamping of feet; the house is often made a playground of, and the altar rail is as familiarly handled as a gymnastic pole. Then what shall we say of the theaters, concerts, exhibitions, broom-drills and other performances following each other in quick

succession! The reverence we seek to inspire on Sunday is wiped out on Monday. Suppose a heathen man should look in through our church windows upon one of our church entertainments when it was in full blast. There before him are crowds of people with plates and saucers in their hands, all eating for dear life; here and there are groups of people sending forth peals of laughter; young people romping and chasing each other about; confusion, rattle of plates, clinking of glasses and spoons, and loud-voiced merriment everywhere. What would be the thoughts of the man as he pondered the scene? Would he not be amazed if told that this was a church? Then would he ask, Is this your worship — is your God a Kitchen God — does this kind of worship please him? Is gourmandizing a part of your service?

I am well acquainted with the arguments used and defense made for this improper use of the house of God.

One thing said is, that certain rooms have been built to the church for these entertainment transactions, and that the part devoted to religious worship is not encroached upon. This very thing shows certain conscientious scruples, and it is besides a concession to the demands of the spiritual part of the church membership. And it is done also because there is lodged in the corner-stone of the church a certain document which reads that “no church fair or festival shall ever be allowed in this building.” Such a document rests in the corner-stone of First Church in St. Louis; would that all the other churches had a like paper! This building of a few rooms under the eaves of the church is not only a compromise with conscience — but when examined thoroughly is not even sincere. It cannot stand the light of the truth. I press this thought that if any of our churches were to burn up, the trustees would proceed at once to collect the amount of insurance, making no difference in their minds between the church building proper and adjoining rooms. Furthermore, they have already in the insurance policy called the whole combined structure such and such a church — it exists as such in their thoughts, and they would collect for it as one building without once separating or dividing it in their minds.

I would furthermore add that the desecration of the Temple in Christ’s time took place in the court of the Gentiles; not in or by the Temple

proper, not even in the court of the priests, or the court of the men, or the farther-off court of the women; but in the distant enclosure reserved for the Gentiles. And yet, mark the Savior's indignation. Putting a wrong thing off to some distance, more or less, does not change its nature. If a thing is not right I neither want it in my parlor, dining-room nor kitchen. I don't want it in my house, or under the eaves of my house, or in a room built to and opening into my house.

Another defense made is that what is done and made at the entertainment is in the interests of the church. It is all to help the good cause along. Verily, that is like putting a suit of clothes on a man while you stab him to the heart with a dagger. What is the financial gain as compared with the spiritual loss of the church! Moreover, I press this thought, that this very excuse was made by the desecrators of the Temple. They said, it is true that we have brought considerable confusion into the Temple by the introduction of these animals and money tables: but is not all for the good of the Temple? People must have lambs and doves to offer for worship; visitors from different countries are here with all kinds of money which has to be changed into the shekel of the sanctuary. By having these things on hand we assist the stranger, accommodate everybody and actually help on the worship of the house of God. How plausible it all sounded! How fertile human nature is in coating and covering up its misdeeds! How we give the name of virtues to our vices and go on self-deceived.

It all sounded very well but mark you what Christ said and did for all that. He platted a scourge, and with rebuking eye and irresistible majesty of presence, drove out tradesmen, herds and flocks, overturned the tables of the money-changers — cleansed, in a word, the Temple — saying, in tones of mingled sorrow and indignation: "It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Still another plea put in by a minister to me one day is, that if a few of God's children come together in the church and sell in a quiet way various articles they have prepared or manufactured, that he could not see any harm in the transaction. My instant reply to him was, that one single word and sentence falling from the lips of Christ condemned the whole thing and left him no ground to stand upon. That word is "merchandise," and the

sentence is, “thou shalt not make my Father’s house place of merchandise.” A place of merchandise is a place of buying and selling. It shall not be done, Christ says, in My Father’s House.

But, said another minister to me, I fail to see and believe that the Tabernacle or Temple is a standard or any way representative of the Christian church.

My reply to that is, Has God had two churches’? Has there not been but one all along? Is God careful about the church in one way, and careless about it in another! Did not Christ, in the cleansing of the Temple at the very close of his ministry, and at the fulfillment of all types and symbols, did he not thereby powerfully declare his mind and desire in regard to the treatment and sacred use of his church in the future?

If Christ is jealous about his house at one time, and indifferent at another period, then he is contradictory. He bewilders me, and I know not how to understand him. Instead of this, he changes not — his own Word saying, “He is the same yesterday, today and forever.” That which grieved him two thousand years ago, would grieve him again if repeated in our time and in his church.

An additional plea was made by still another minister in my hearing. He said that he regarded the stomach as a religious organ, and failed to see where any harm was done in a little friendly, sociable supper at the church. How men use the word “little” when involved in moral uncertainties! Lot said to the Lord, Cannot I stop in Zoar? It is true that it is one of the cities of the Plain that has come under your displeasure, but “it is a little one, oh let me escape thither (is it not a little one?); and my soul shall live.”

As for “the stomach being a religious organ,” I had not and have not so found it. My religious organs are higher up. In fact, I discover that it is one of the members that needs to be mortified and crucified, rather than pampered. It is a part of the body that I am told to keep under; and, remarkable to say, the greater religious blessing I receive, the weaker becomes the dominion of the appetites. There have been moments in my

life when I was so blessed in God's love that the thought of food revolted me.

I recall the fact that, when Christ undertook the redemption of the world and entered upon the great battle in the wilderness, when he needed every religious organ — that, instead of eating, he fasted forty days and nights. I also recall his statements that there were some sins that would not come out except by fasting and prayer. This was a remarkable statement if the stomach is a religious organ! Besides this, his striking representation of a world that had forgotten God before the Flood and forgets him again before the Judgment Day is seen in the words, "they were eating and drinking."

I am glad that the Bible says that the Kingdom of God is not meat nor drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

As for having suppers in the house of the Lord, I quote but two passages of Scripture in condemnation of the practice. One is in Luke 11. 16: "And he would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the Temple." In some of our churches we have today hundreds of vessels.

The other passage is in 1 Corinthians 11:22: "What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

OBJECTION 3

It Is A Misconception Of The Mission Of The Church

My third objection to the Church Entertainment is, that it is a misconception of the mission of the church.

The church was never sent to entertain men. Certainly of all labels this would be the most difficult as well as the most thankless of undertakings. Ten thousand theaters, lecture and concert halls, and other places of amusement are attempting this gigantic task. Actors, lecturers, readers, clowns, buffoons, humorists and mountebanks of every description are daily and hourly grappling, with the work in profound uncertainty, each time, whether there will be success or failure, whether they will be greeted with clapping of hands or groans and hisses.

O how glad I am that this impossible, undignified and unprofitable toil is not laid on the Church of Christ! I look in vain all through the Scripture for the slightest authority or command in any direction. It is not there. Read Paul's direction to Timothy. Is the entertaining idea in those solemn, tearful injunctions? Read Christ's last charge to Peter about his sheep and lambs. Is there anything here about entertaining them or amusing them? Sheep and lambs don't need to be amused. Shepherds do not waste time. in such a senseless proceeding. Turn to Christ's commission to the disciples and the church after them. Is it "Go ye out into all the world and entertain men"? Nothing of the kind. Each evangelist tells what is said, and they all agree that the one word was to preach the gospel.

Some would make the word "teach" a warrant for indulging in many unevangelistic doings. But fortunately the word teach is followed by a restrictive clause. Teach what? Not philosophy, nor poetry, nor the drama, nor historic personages, or, lower still, the art of cooking. What, then? Here it is — "the things which I have spoken unto you." Where did Christ mention philosophy or philosopher, poetry or poet, drama or actor? What man did he ever mention but men of God — men who stood

closely related to God and his Providence? And even then it was but a passing notice or word.

The church has become absolutely insane on the subject of entertaining men. Preachers are sought after who can amuse the people. Meetings of all kinds are devised to please and keep the congregation during, the week, while the preacher, with anecdote, sparkling wit and broad jest, must do the rest of the work on Sunday. Whatever happens, the people must be entertained. The idea being that, if not amused, they will all drift away and be lost.

This whole idea of entertaining the people at God's house comes from Satan, and is one of the most subtle and dangerous of all his movements upon and against Christianity. He knows that if Christ is held up before the people, and men look steadily at him, they will be saved. Hence, his idea is to divert the church from doing this wise and heavenly, and powerful and saving thing. He whispers that Christ alone is not enough to draw souls: that it takes Christ and jokes, Christ and lectures, Christ and entertainments. As he discovers his success in blinding the church, he becomes more aggressive, and whispers again that, if the naked cross be held up — the simple, strict, holy life of Jesus be insisted on — then all the young people will be driven away. That young people are young people, and must be amused; and old people have to be entertained, and entertainment must be provided. So he tempts, and so he has succeeded in thousands of instances, in sidetracking the church. He has switched her off from the one blessed heavenly employment of crying, "Behold the Lamb," and she is now part lyceum, part theater and part kitchen. As you pass her doors today you will hear the name of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Emerson, Tyndall, Darwin and others far more frequently than the name of Christ; while, instead of sobs and cries of "What must I do to be saved?" you will be greeted with clapping of hands, rattle of plates and bursts of uproarious applause.

A sidetracked church!

The church engaged in the noble, exalted, heavenly, spiritual and soul-saving employment of amusing the crowd!

Think of the Church of Christ posing as an entertainer before the public!

Today the country is filled with her children engaged in this work. Her ministers are flying about in every direction in this earth-demanded, but not heaven-appointed work. One recently visited our city lecturing on an old-time philosopher. Another, the same week, came with a lecture on a politician of the present day. Who were these, this philosopher and the politician, but sinners? They were men, and sinners at that. And yet, two men, anointed of God to give their entire time to preaching Jesus Christ, cross the breadth of a large nation to speak for two hours to large assemblies about men like ourselves. Did the Holy Ghost separate them for such a work as this? In the solemn, awful, holy call to the ministry is not the soul conscious that a single message to the world is delivered to it: a single person to be held up before dying man — and that person the man Christ Jesus?

Recently the city of St. Louis was regaled with the sight of a certain professor, who appeared in our midst ready to entertain the public with a series of spectacular exhibitions. He proposed to do it for the church, in the church and by the help of the church. Different from most stage managers, he finds his troupe at each church. He lays his hand upon the young people of the church and used God's children and property for a world's entertainment. As the church in each place he visits furnishes the troupe, he is saved much expense in keeping up a regular traveling company of actors.

The spectacle was a sad one. While there was nothing criminal or outrageous in the exhibition, yet the mission of the church was again forgotten and made to sink down to the level occupied by the amusement halls and minor grade theaters of the world.

The church is, I repeat, insane on the subject of entertaining the public. The land is traversed with preachers from great distances, lecturing upon everything and everybody but Christ. If he, the Holy One, appears at all, he is thrust in a corner; or brought out for a moment, as I have seen a child

presented for a short while to the guests and then banished to a back room or kitchen.

I have sinned in this regard myself in the years that are gone. But God opened my eyes to my mistake, and I have done with the wretched halfway business forever. Don't think I do not get invitations to lecture still. They come constantly — three only this week. One was to go to Chicago. My invariable reply is, that I cannot come. I am too busy; I have a better work. I prefer to hold up an undivided Christ. I feel that a preacher's lips are consecrated, and as such, belong peculiarly to Christ.

Let lawyers, professors, men of science and unprofessional citizens go around lecturing on branches of science, historic characters, etc. — it is all right for them, and they will do good for Christ in these fields — but let the preacher stand by the one work given him by the Holy Ghost — and that work to cry, "Behold the Lamb!"

Some one has charged me with doing wrong in writing a book of travels to Palestine. That I should not have lost the time in doing this. But my reply is, that I wrote almost the entire volume while journeying through foreign countries, and that the time spent thus in writing and traveling was a four months' leave of absence, granted me by my church in New Orleans, to rest and recuperate after three years of heavy pastoral and pulpit work.

I cannot believe that the church is under obligations to furnish lecturers to the world. Let us study how it would appear in gospel times. I arrive in Ephesus late in the afternoon, and inquire my way to the church where Apollos preaches with real spiritual power. But I am told he is not in the city. Why, is not this Wednesday one of his regular services? "Oh, yes; but he has gone up to Smyrna to lecture on the character of Plato."

"But I thought he was a man of soul-burning piety, and brought so many souls to Christ, that he would not be diverted from such a work."

"True; but he says Plato was a man of admirable character and that it will do the young men good to hear of him."

And so I go to Jerusalem and inquire after Peter. The answer is that he is not in the city: he is absent in Antioch lecturing to the people on the Life, Sayings and Character of Socrates!

How would all this appear to us? If the thought shocks one in regard to these Scriptural characters, why should it not shock us that men equally called of God to the work of the ministry should devote their precious limited time and strength to lecturing about old-time philosophers and present-day politicians?

The fact that the newspapers say the lecture was excellent does not make it right. The fact that some of them have certificates from notable men and scientific circles does not make the proceeding, right. Let us look at one:

This is to certify that I, Pontius Pilate, heard Simon Peter lecture on the "Life, Sayings, and Character of Socrates" The lecture was replete with learning, telling hits and fine points. The lecturer handled his subject well. He showed intimate acquaintance with the customs and laws of ancient Greece, while his portrayal of the men of that early day was most graphic and impressive. We predict for Dr. Simon Peter a great future in the lecture field, and our academies of learning may congratulate themselves on such an accession into their midst.

Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea.
Jerusalem, Month of Abib

How would such a document look and sound in apostolic times? If wrong then, why not wrong now?

I repeat for the third time that the church is insane on the subject of entertaining the people. The congregations don't need to be amused or diverted in any way. They need Christ in his constant presence and fullness. It is not entertainment nor recreation that the people want, but a full, joyous and blessed salvation. It is not such a supper as human beings can prepare that can supply the wants and satisfy the longings of the church, but such a supper as Christ prepares in the heart, and where he feasts with us. Give the people the living bread in the heart and the

constant gushing of the water of life in the soul, and they will ask for nothing else, they will be satisfied.

OBJECTION 4

It Is Unwarranted In The Scripture

My Fourth objection is, that there is no warrant or example for it in Scripture.

We may be sure that so important a duty as giving, or Christian liberality, will be mentioned. And when we remember that the church, in all of its manifold interests, is to be supported and advanced by these gifts, we may expect a very clear and unmistakable mention as to spirit and method. Other duties less important, are enjoined and manner of performance described. Shall not the mode of giving acceptably to God be laid down? It is laid down, clearly defined, and illustrated again and again by human example. But let me say, that one will look in vain from the beginning to the end of the Bible for even so much as a hint of the church entertainment.

Before you commit me to a religious practice, you must show me a “thus saith the Lord.” But who can lay his hands on any passage that can be construed into authority for the creation, or justification for the existence of, this ecclesiastical financial dodge, called the “church entertainment”?

There have been occasions in the early history of the church when, according to the ideas of many Christians today, the people of God would have been perfectly justified in instituting such proceedings. For instance, when the Israelites, impoverished after a long captivity, were called on to build the Tabernacle, and afterward the Temple. And, again, when the Philippian Church, composed mainly of poor people, was called on to bear some heavy expenses connected with the gospel. Now was the time for fairs, suppers, and other clever and respectable avoidances of duty. But I am happy to state, that in these instances and others mentioned in the word, that God’s people refused to dodge the issue, but met their duty fairly and squarely, and, poor as they were, gave and continued to give, until Moses in the first instance gave the signal to stop, and Paul in the

other told the Philippians that in their poverty they had abounded in their liberality. We may look when and where we will in this Book, and as long as we will, but we will never find a word falling from the lips of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, or from prophet or priest, or apostle or disciple, that ordered or justified the institution of the church entertainment as the method, or a method, of raising funds for the support on earth of the cause of God.

OBJECTION 5

It Neutralizes God's Labors For Spiritual Life

My fifth objection is, that it neutralizes and defeats God's plans and labors in behalf of the spiritual life of his people.

Life is an enigma to me if you eliminate the fact of God actively at work with our souls, preparing them for another and better life. By his calls and movements he is awakening and developing graces, gifts and powers within us that are to bless here and glorify us hereafter. Upon no power does he more frequently call, than the benevolent faculty. He is trying to establish the love principle, and secure a generous, liberal movement to our nature. Study men when and where we will, and we will discover that those individuals who have most endeared themselves to men, lingered longest in grateful esteem and memory, those who most nearly approximated the divine image, and were felt to be Christ-like, were those who abounded most in this spirit and life of love and liberality. All men have not the same means to be generous. But all have the same power to be liberal. It can come to its full perfection as much in the soul of the seamstress as it does in the soul of the millionaire; the first through the response of pennies to the call of God; the second by an answer of thousands and tens of thousands of dollars. Nothing will awaken and develop this grace, or faculty, so much as regular, persistent, systematic giving. When it hurts, so much the better; when our giving entails money sacrifices and acts of self-denial upon our part, this is simply blessed for the religious character — it is life itself to that most God-like part of the nature. We do not always remember the gracious outcome to character of this giving, and so sometimes say, "Spare such and such an one from the financial calls of the church and God's providence." But Christ never says "Spare." He lets a person give to him as long and as much as he will. He sees what we do not see. I notice that when this poor woman at the Treasury cast in her last farthing he did not check her. He knew that it was all she had on earth, and yet he permitted her to cast it in the box. He saw what we had not thought of, that she would gain ten thousandfold more by

it, in higher and better things, both in this world and the world to come. And so when she, in the exercise of those two heavenly powers, faith and love, cast in her mite, even all she had, Christ commended her, and all heaven congratulated her.

Here now is seen the curse of the church entertainment. It comes in between God and his work; between the soul and its proper exercise and development. It defeats God's gracious design, and neutralizes a work connected with the soul's blessedness and glory. And this it does while it creates the delusion in the soul that it is responding to divine call and duty when there is not a single movement of the virtue God is endeavoring to awaken. The idea conveyed to the man is, that because his feet and hands are busy, and body flying around that therefore the principle God is seeking to arouse has been called into action, when really nothing of the kind has been done; and so far as the benevolent, liberal nature is concerned, it is profoundly motionless and dead; for there is nothing in the church fair, or show, to call it forth. I have seen a mother disciplining her child in love, wisdom and firmness, and suddenly the father, without knowledge of the case, without stopping to inquire, would interfere, come between and bear off the child; and I have seen a look of mortal anguish in the eyes of the mother. I could well understand the look. So in like manner, the church entertainment throws itself between God and the spirit he is trying to educate for eternity; preventing an exercise and development of powers that would bring more pure joy, and true light and life to the soul, than almost any other virtue in the spiritual life. I charge the church entertainment with laying its hands upon God's hand, and arresting his work.

Now bear in mind that it is not money as money that God desires. He is not poverty-stricken; he has inlaid the floor of the sea with pearls, his mountains are full of gold and silver. He could send an earthquake, some mighty dynamic force that would burst open some treasure-house in the bosom of the earth and scatter diamonds, as thick and bright and sparkling as raindrops, all over the church floors in the land. But it is not money as money that God wants. He paid no attention to the value of the gifts the rich men threw into the Treasury — it is not money God is after, but the

cultivation of the giving principle; and this the church entertainment defeats.

It does even more. We are taught in the Bible that giving is an act of worship. It is frequently classed and associated with prayer. What said the angel to the upright Roman, Cornelius? "Thy prayers and alms have come up as a memorial before God." They went up together, prevailed together, were accepted together. Now, then, if giving be so regarded in Scripture as an act of worship, then it is just as proper and advisable to treat people to berries and cream and charades, in order to get them to pray, as to do these things to get them to give. The additional feature of evil in the church entertainment is seen in that it lays a ruthless hand upon a beautiful religious act, and transforms it into a common commercial transaction.

OBJECTION 6

It Misrepresents The Great Aim Of The Church

My sixth objection is, that it creates the impression on the world that the great aim and struggle of the church is for money.

There is no question in my mind, but that if some churches showed as much activity and unanimity in the work of saving souls, as they do in selling oysters, more people would join our congregations, and there would be no lack of money. I grieve to say that the church has a financial look in its eye, a kind of mental summing up of an individual's financial worth, as though men were precious according to the amount of money they were willing to contribute. Nothing is more calculated to disgust men than this. Let a man feel that the church yearns over him in love, for his immortal spirit and you bend him as the winds do a weeping-willow. But when the church swoops and moves down upon the masses with the smell of the kitchen upon it, and with the invitation not to come to church, but to come and stuff at so much a saucer, then the world is nauseated and says of the church, as a certain prominent gentleman said recently of Kirmess: "If that be the spirit and fruit of Christianity then God save me from Christianity!" I remember an exhortation given once by a bishop to a class of young preachers: "Let me beseech you," he said, "not to labor for the fleece of the sheep, but for the sheep themselves!" It would be well for every church to take it as a motto. I knew a church once where, whenever the pastor took in a new member, some of the members and official would ask what he was worth. It was not enough that there was a soul for which Christ died. They were thinking of something else altogether; so that the child or poor person joining, never elicited the least interest. Does any one wonder that people were slow to unite with such a congregation? and that God literally dried it up as an organization by removing his presence and blessing? Sad and great is the change that has come over the church! there was a time when it stood and wept, saying: "How often I would have gathered you as a hen doth gather her brood under her wing!" But now it seeks to gather sinners for a different reason, and with a different spirit. It

is not souls she wants so much as dollars. It is not to get men to write their names in the Book of Life, but to write them at the bottom of bank checks for twenty, fifty, and a hundred dollars. I charge this upon those who advocate and foster the church entertainment, that they are creating this impression. They make the world think that the aim and end and consuming care of the church is money, when it should be souls.

OBJECTION 7

It Is An Open Humiliation Of Jesus Christ

My seventh objection is, that it is an open humiliation of Jesus Christ, by placing his cause, or church, as a mendicant at the feet of the world.

Whenever there is a church entertainment given, it is felt by the outside world to be an admission upon the part of the church of its inability, or disinclination, to meet its obligations. That it either cannot or will not. We leave the cannot feature for another point. We beg now attention to one of the most humiliating and mortifying facts connected with the cause of Christ today. And it is a fact that cannot be questioned, and is evident to everybody. And that is, that the church is the only institution in the land that will not take care of itself. Its members refuse to meet its just debts and obligations, and fasten the humiliation upon it of making it a beggar before the public. There is nothing else like it in the land. Let me ask a question: What would we think of a corporation down the street, say some banking institution, sending out its clerks each morning to beg of other similar institutions an alms, in order to meet its current expenses? What would we think of a family that pretended to self-respect and respectability sending out their children each morning to beg of their neighbors, as an alms, money to be used in defraying the regular expense of the household? It is a lowering of self, a forfeiting of self-respect, a giving up of true manhood. Then how must it appear to the world for the church, an institution of heaven, claiming divine support and presence, filled with people claiming to love God, and to have consecrated their all to him, how must it appear for this church, which is sent on earth to rebuke, teach and save the world, to be found stooping at the feet of this world begging an alms? And just as some beggars have certain tricks and amusing ways by which they get some additional pennies, so the church has learned some curious ways and methods of attracting a crowd, exciting a laugh, creating a stir, and so becomes richer by a rain of pennies. How thinks and feels the Son of God in heaven as he witnesses these things? What does he care for money, except as it represents so much devotion and sacrifice?

What do they think in heaven, when the fact is made known that the church of Christ has opened restaurants and places of amusement on earth, in order to get a few dollars from the world that it was commissioned to reprove and warn? That Christianity has got to such a low ebb that it has to beg of the world to get along; that it is spending much of its time in snapping up the crumbs that may be swept from a table of abundance, and receiving eagerly from God haters and defiers small silver change, taken from the vest pocket and tossed toward the church oftentimes indifferently; but oftener contemptuously. Oh, it is enough to make every child of God to bow his head, while his face burns with intensest shame.

I call attention to a fact none will deny. That while we might beg on the street for one not related to us by blood, and not personally dear, yet many would rather die than take alms of people to relieve the daily wants of loved ones.

We would work our fingers to the bone before doing it. This fact itself ought to open our eyes to the subject we are discussing. This public mendicancy of the church is a virtual admission that Christ is not as precious to us as he should be; that we do not love him as we ought.

What if a man should make his wife and daughter assist him publicly in begging for their support by song or dance or attitude, and that, too, when there was no real need to justify such a course? And what if the church thrusts out its lovely daughters upon stage and platform, before a mixed throng, where the bold glance of the worldly man roves unchecked and critically over their forms, all for a few pennies? And what if it is discovered that there is really no state of beggary in the church to justify such humiliation of its daughters? Humiliation upon humiliation! Let us see how it would appear in apostolic times. We come to the famous city of Ephesus. That cloak of Paul is sadly in need of repair or replacing; or missionary money is to be raised, or a house of worship built. Now, then, who shall do it? Of course the church at Ephesus, upon whom the Holy Ghost had fallen under the preaching of the apostle. Certainly they will be glad to do it. Not at all! Instead they say, let the world foot the bill. Let these Ephesian outsiders give the money, while the church furnishes the

brain work, the planning, the arranging; in a word, the making the motions of giving. The church will get the credit, at home, abroad and in the Jerusalem Conference, for having raised the money; but the church has a sly smile and twinkle in its eye; it remarks behind its hand, it will all come out of these worldly Ephesian pockets! Oh, heavenly cunning! Oh, celestial adroitness! Look at their plan. Peter is sent down at once to the sea, where he throws in a line and draws out several fine specimens of the deep. These are cut, and fried, and sold at fabulous prices at the church supper. It was not the first time that Peter had got money out of a fish. Lydia is sent for to preside over this table; as a saleswoman she knew how to drive a trade, and thus protect the interests of the church. Aquila and Priscilla are in town still making tents. They are requested to make one especially for this church entertainment; also a drop curtain for some stage performances to be had. In the tent is placed Rhoda and the soothsaying damsel out of whom Paul had cast an evil spirit. These two females are to tell fortunes at so much an individual; children half-price. Some one suggested sending off for the daughter of Herodias to pose before the crowd. No sooner said than done. It is true she was getting along in years, but she was famous, and could cut a caper or two and draw a crowd. At this juncture it was learned that Drusilla was in the city. True, she was a bad woman, had broken a number of God's commandments, but she had a fine figure, and could represent some heathen deity, or historical character in costume, and draw many Ephesians. So a committee was sent to wait upon her with this request — and she consented to help the starving cause of Christ by posing before a mixed audience in its behalf. Then there was the concert feature. This was happily and speedily provided for by obtaining the help of Alexander the coppersmith and Demetrius the silversmith. It is true, they hated Christ, and Paul said that the first had done him much harm; but one sang a good bass and the other a fine tenor; and they consented to lay aside their enmity to the Son of God until the church entertainment was over, and sing for his cause. But one more voice was needed, and that was soon supplied by the town-clerk of Ephesus. It was remembered by all how his voice has been heard in the day of uproar above thousands, and so the Ephesian church was well satisfied with him as a soprano. No one doubted after this that the concert would be a success; while all joined in praising the beautiful spirit of Alexander in consenting to sing bass for a church that he hated, and which he proposed

to handle without gloves as soon as he finished his song, or the church entertainment was through. One more brilliant thing was done. Some one reminded the brethren that the silver shrine makers of the temple of the goddess Diana were a money-making set of men. It is true, they were idolaters, and that their work in shrines was idolatrous; but then they had money, and it was money the Ephesian church was after. So a committee was dispatched to wait on them; and in response they graciously contributed a purse of their gain, and one went so far as to donate a silver shrine of Diana to the church, to be raffled or voted for, and the proceeds given to the impecunious Christians of Ephesus. Did this really occur! would anyone have dreamed of such a thing! Would anyone have dared to suggest such a thing to Paul? If he had, don't we know what the man of God would have said? Don't we know that a holy horror would have filled his heart; that his eye would have flashed with a consuming indignation; that love for the church, and jealousy for the honor of the Son of God, would have aroused every protesting power of his soul while to such a proposition of making money he would have uttered the words, "Thy money perish with thee!"

OBJECTION 8

It Exhausts And Demoralizes The Congregation

My eighth objection arises from the utter physical exhaustion and demoralization that it produces upon the congregation. Just how many people have been laid upon beds of sickness by these affairs would burden the science of mathematics to tell. As for the general physical effect, we can see for ourselves. Look at, the prayer-meeting or Sunday congregations the day after the entertainment is over; and it creates the feeling somehow that a cyclone had swept through the church. Count the empty seats, number the drooping heads, the moody faces, the closed eyes! No need to explain to the casual visitor or stranger; he knows the meaning of it all, having seen the like in his own community or neighborhood.

OBJECTION 9

It Produces Differences And Dissensions In The Congregation

My ninth objection is, that they are productive of the most unhappy differences and dissensions in the congregation. Just to announce a church entertainment, is the signal for the first division. The spectacle to the world is lamentable in the extreme. A congregation that should be a unit in God's service is here now divided into two opposing bodies. Which side will the preacher take? By springing the question, or permitting it to be sprung, he has now two factions in the church, and no matter which side he takes, he has now arrayed against himself a part of his flock. The judgment is, "Better never to have a church entertainment. Better for the minister to do his utmost to prevent the occurrence, for this reason if for no other." But this is not the saddest division; there will be divisions in the divisions themselves; especially in the church entertainment workers.

Some one speaks of the old family feuds in the South. They were, I admit, bitter and long enduring, but let me say I have known more rancorous feuds and quarrels than these that have arisen at church entertainments. Upon a question of gravy and potatoes, or a knot of ribbon, or an hour's popularity, individuals and families have been betrayed into bitterness of spirit and acrimony of remark, and finally into widening separations that have lasted as long as the lives of the parties themselves.

OBJECTION 10

It Operates As A Cloak For Covetousness

My tenth objection is, that it operates as a screen or cloak for the covetousness and avarice of many church members. Those that love their money better than they do Christ will never object to church entertainments. It offers a double relief to them. One is, that they get back the full value of their money in food or amusement, so that as a business venture it is a success. The entertainment saves the man from utter financial loss. The other benefit is, that by the expenditure of a dollar he obtains credit and stands upon a like platform of liberality with the rest; whereas if the appeal had been made to conscience in the name of the church and God he would have been compelled to give much more.

OBJECTION 11

It Shifts Church Support To Outsiders

My eleventh objection to the church entertainment is, that it shifts the responsibility of church support from the congregation to outsiders, and hence is a dodge or avoidance of a gracious and imperative duty. One would suppose that in gratitude to him who paid down for us “the gold of his blood and the silver of his tears,” the church would gladly spend and be spent for the support and advancement of Christ’s kingdom.

Moreover, the less noble motive would seem to affect us, viz., that our coming reward at the Judgment will be regulated and graduated by the extent of our sacrifices for the Son of God. But with many both motives fail, and a duty, and privilege as well, is forfeited and transferred with all its blessedness to a crowd that corresponds with the “mixed multitude” that came up out of Egypt with Moses at the time of the Exodus, a multitude that, if not Egyptians, were certainly not Israelites.

OBJECTION 12

It Is The Sin Of A Blemished Offering

My twelfth objection is, that it is the sin of a blemished offering. Those at all familiar with the Bible will remember God's expressed stipulations in regard to gifts and offerings made to him. No physical and moral blemish would be allowed. We also remember how his indignation flamed out when he declared to the Israelites that they had offered him lambs upon the altar that were lame and diseased.

No need to dwell here, but tell me, when people go up to a church entertainment, ostensibly and professedly to lay a gift on God's altar, to contribute to Christ, and God, knowing their hearts, sees that they go there to be fed, amused, entertained — what is this but a blemished offering? A gift lame and diseased with double motive, and consequently an abomination to God.

This is a great time at present for "Charity Balls," so called. They are as awfully grotesque and manifestly incongruous as a dance or ball that I once heard of that was given to build a fence around a graveyard. Who is deceived in these matters? Not God; not even the people. It is worldliness breaking out in the church, or the world clothing itself in religious garments and trying to dance to religious music.

Lately in a certain city we were regaled and edified as a Christian community by a number of dancing and theatrical performances on the stage under the sweet name of "charity." It was a beautiful name they went by, and virtue they illustrated; but it no more covered the thorough worldliness of this enterprise, than the figleaf covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve. No one with ordinary intelligence and powers of observation could be deceived; not even the participators. One very prominent lady of that city said in regard to the affair: "I am sick of hearing Kirmess called charity. It is not so. No one is attending the performances for the sake of charity. We are all going there to be amused."

Here was a gift laid upon the altar. God's attention was called to it — the givers called it charity. God saw it was pure, unadulterated worldliness. It was the sin of a blemished offering.

Just so is the church entertainment. Here are people who declare that they have come up to give to God, and yet they are people who care nothing for God or his cause; they never go out at night to a religious meeting; they are here, not to meet God, but to be fed, amused and entertained; they are here really to gratify the eye, the ear, and the palate, although ostensibly and professedly they have come up to give to the cause of Christ. I solemnly declare the whole thing a mockery; it is the sin of a blemished offering and is an insult to the intelligence, holiness and majesty of heaven.

OBJECTION 13

It Is The Sin Of Ananias And Sapphira

My thirteenth objection to the church entertainment is, that it is the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. What was the sin of Ananias and his wife? They said they had given all of their money when they had only given half.

What is the sin of the church in these entertainments? Plainly this, that it declares that its members have given all that they possibly could, and are now driven to this resort through poverty or exhaustion of financial resources, when God and men know better. Some of us need to read that terrible speech of the Almighty to Ananias that was delivered through the lips of Peter: “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

I feel perfectly confident that there is not a church member in any congregation or denomination who can say he has done all for God in a financial way that he possibly could. Hastily a man might say it, but reflectively he could not. He could not say it when the solemn shadows of death were falling about him and the soul making ready for its long flight; he could not say it at the Judgment bar. None of us will be able to face God and say, “Lord, I gave all that I possibly could to your cause when I dwelt on earth.” See how this fact may be proved. In a certain town there was a member of our church who had a salary of twenty-five hundred dollars a year. His annual donation or subscription to the church was one hundred dollars; he used to say vehemently that he could not afford to give more, that in his contribution he gave all he could. But mark you, in the same town resided his pastor, with the same sized family, on a salary of six hundred dollars per annum, paying one hundred dollars for his house rent, and yet managing that same year to give to the cause of God ninety dollars in cash. Now, this pastor will face this member of his flock at the day of final accounts, and prove by his life and deeds that the brother did not do all that he could for the cause of Christ.

Look again: Some of us are giving a tenth of our income; we say we can do no more; but there are others living in similar circumstances to ourselves who give a fifth of their receipts to God. Some I recognize do contribute liberally at the call of the gospel but there was a certain man named John Wesley, who not only gave liberally, but after that stinted himself in his diet, lived for years on one article of food, that through this self-denial he might have more to give to God. He will at the Judgment convict and silence millions who said on earth that they did all they could for the gospel.

In the light of these facts, I repeat that when the church, by one of these entertainments, says that it has done all that it can do, that it is thus forced to appeal to public generosity and charity, I solemnly affirm that it commits the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. The church can do more, and more upon the top of that; not one of its members advocating and engineering the church fair and supper but feels it in his heart. Nor can they appeal to God now; nor will they declare to his face in eternity that they did all that they could for him in the gift of their money while on earth, no matter how they gave, whether spasmodically, systematically, or any other way.

Where does this cry of financial inability come from? What individuals or class of members is it who are always lamenting the poverty of the church, when calls of different kinds are made on the congregation? Alas, that the lament arises in quarters where it should never be heard. I have listened to it in many places, but, strange to say, oftenest in homes where the carpets were thick and the furniture costly and elegant, where paintings worth hundreds of dollars hung from the walls, where bricabrac representing as much crowded the tables and mantel, where dinners of three or four courses were daily occurrences, and a trip north for the summer the annual relaxation. It comes from women who possess diamonds, and from men who walk with gold watches ticking in their vest pockets, while their broadcloth fairly glistens in the sun. These are some whom I have heard say: "Really, we must have an entertainment to help our poor church along. We are unable to meet these claims. Moreover, we have done all that we possibly could."

“Ananias, why hast Satan tempted thee to lie unto God! Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

OBJECTION 14

It Involves The Church In Inconsistency

My fourteenth objection to the church entertainment is, that it involves the church in the grossest inconsistency and contradiction.

The church is set to do — what? To rebuke and warn against worldliness. But the entertainment opens the flood-gates and literally submerges the church with worldliness.

The church is called on to teach men to deny the lust of the eye — to crucify the flesh, mortify the members, subdue the appetites and every lust of the flesh. But, amazing inconsistency! here is the church, through its entertainments, inviting men to gaze on scenes that border on the theatrical, firing their blood with carnal thoughts, and instead of striking at the appetites, bidding men come up and eat and cram and stuff in the house of the Lord! And the more the people eat, the more money, of course, is made, and the better pleased is the church — so called!

The church is presumed to inculcate peace, kindly feelings and love in the hearts of men. See what the entertainment does in this regard! I have already touched upon some of the dissensions, but permit me to mention another. A lady was talking to me a few days since in regard to a church fair held some years ago. “And oh,” she said, “we got two fire companies voting against each other for some prize, and they got so excited! and we made so much money!” As she talked thus the heart fairly sickened. “And so,” I said, “all this money which was given in strife and rivalry, and obtained at the cost of wounded, disappointed, mortified hearts, this was offered to Christ?” I could say no more. My whole soul was grieved at such an inconsistent, contradictory and unChristlike course.

I recalled another entertainment, where a stick or gown or something else was set up, and two congregations tried to outvote each other at so much money a vote, in order to capture or win it for their respective pastors.

I thought of an old couplet I heard when I a boy:

“I bet my money of the bob-tail nag,
And who dare bet of the bay?”

I saw the two excited flocks voting early and often; I remembered a certain famous saying: “See how these Christians love one another?” I see one brother warming up in his liberality, he grows more and more generous — to whom? to God? Why, God is not thought of! The man is simply growing liberal and generous to a selfish purpose of his mind; and that is to have that stick for his preacher, and disappoint the other congregation. and this is called Christian liberality! By and by the momentous question is decided, and the stick, or rod, now become a serpent, is handed over to the winning congregation. Passing over the pangs of defeat and chagrin felt by the losers, I listen and catch the remarks made by lookers-on: “Dr. A.’s flock are not so liberal and so much attached to their pastor as Dr. B.” congregation,” etc., etc. This, of course, adds much to the general sweetness of spirit that marks the occasion. And out of all this the Son of God is to be glorified!

OBJECTION 15

It Is Purely Worldly In Character

My fifteenth objection to the church entertainment is, that it is purely worldly in character.

However spiritual the object and however laudable the motive of the originators of the enterprise may be, the entertainment itself is worldly. Some are less so than others, but the taint is on them all. The leprosy may only appear as a spot in the forehead, but a single spot according to the Word of God is leprosy. A person has only to read the advertisements, and even hear the names of the various kinds of church shows and sociables, to detect their spirit and character.

In a certain town in Texas, on the border line, an entertainment was given in behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association, consisting of a Bull-Fight! Think of the suffering and agony inflicted upon dumb animals at such a time — and reconcile such a proceeding, with the advancement of the kingdom of Christ that teaches good will to man and mercy to the brute world! Here is a clipping in regard to a church on Long Island:

“A church on Long Island, N.Y., has got a first-class advertisement in the daily papers by holding an entertainment in which a novel method was adopted for raising money. A handsome tent was erected, on the outside of which was posted the following notice: ‘Admission five cents. To kiss the baby, twenty-five cents.’ The ‘babies’ were young ladies, with which the tent was liberally supplied. A large amount of money was raised, but the whole community was scandalized.”

At another church we read of ladies going to the festival hall with baskets filled with luncheons. The ladies were weighed and the gentlemen had to pay for the luncheon according to the weight of the lady at the rate of a cent a pound. All this was of course profoundly edifying, and calculated to

fill a scoffing, skeptical world with reverence and admiration for such a church!

We give another clipping, taken from a church paper:

“At the festival of the King’s Daughters, which begin next Wednesday evening, instead of a caricature on ballet dancing, as was originally intended to be given, there will be a humorous take-off on the Delsarte system by the same gentlemen. A pretty little girl will execute a fancy dance. The little lady is quite an adept at dancing, and will, doubtless, prove a favorite. A well known humorist has volunteered to act as the ‘Showman’ in the ‘Arabian Nights’ entertainment, and will introduce and explain the characters in his happiest vein, full of fun and with plenty of new jokes and comical sayings. A composer of music has a number of new songs which he has written especially for the occasion. They are said to be very bright and ‘catchy,’ and will lend an additional charm to the entertainment.”

Comment is unnecessary.

We give a clipping that bears of the proceedings of another religious denomination than our own. We offer no remark, but give it as it appeared in print. This is the denomination that claims to be the true church. If they be true, what is to become of those who are false? “The I. C. B. U. Journal, of recent date, has the following:

“Sodalities and St. Louis. “The Sodalist of Cincinnati says the Sodalities of that city ought to imitate the example which the Sodalities of St. Louis give, and adds, “ A great deal is yet to be done by the Cincinnati Sodalities before they can stand comparison with St. Louis.’

“How, we do not discover.

“Here is what we know lately occurred in St. Louis: A Sodality gave a play, “a rude tragedy,” on Sunday, followed by a ball, and a saloon in full sway in the basement. Another Sodality prepared for Lent by giving a ball

in an unfinished church. The pastor said “it was the best attended hop ever given in the parish.”

“If Sodalities in Cincinnati and St. Louis are the same kind of a thing, they differ very much from what are called Sodalities in Philadelphia.

“On a St. Louis church door was lately posted an account of the receipts from a recent festival. One item read: “Received from the bar, \$42.75.”

“Beer was the chief drink sold at that festival, though the Council of Baltimore prohibited rum selling by churches.”

The beer-drinking feature brings to mind an occurrence of a similar nature in an Episcopal church in New Orleans. To the honor of the pastor, be it said that he solemnly protested against such a thing as beer-selling and beer-drinking as a financial resort of the church but the protest led to his removal from the charge as pastor. He was hardly worldly enough for some of his members.

Here is another, taken from a daily paper published in the city of Memphis. It is about a Protestant church:

“‘CUPID’S FREAKS’. FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NEW FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, FRIDAY March 6, At the Lyceum Theater — This production, under the direction of Miss G.L., will be the amateur affair of the season. It will consist of a very beautiful tableaux, a tambourine drill, the minuet, pantomimic posing several recitations and vocal selections by gifted artists. The rehearsal last Saturday gave as a foretaste of a rare treat.

“The box sheet for sale of reserved seats opens this morning at 9 o’clock at the Lyceum Theater. Those who have already purchased tickets may exchange them for reserved seats. All the boxes have been engaged by prominent society people.”

Let Methodist people everywhere who love Christ, and honor his church, stress certain words in the above extract; for instance, the words minuet,

pantomimic posing, box sheet, reserved seats, tickets, boxes, Lyceum Theater, and prominent society people. As you read, answer the question — Where are we drifting? or rather, Where have we landed? Has the world come to us, or have we gone to the world?

But this is not all of that remarkable entertainment; we give more, as it appeared in the daily papers. Much more could be added, but we content ourselves with the following extracts:

“‘Cupid’s Freaks,’ As presented by an army of lovely young ladies under the direction of Miss G. L. is an entertainment that is delightful and pleasing from the first to last. The entire performance was so well rendered that it would take a host of staid judges to decide the excellence of the one over the other. Little Miss. E.F. in her recitations won the most applause by her winsome and childish manner, so entirely free from affectation. After her recitation, ‘Chicken Talk.’ she was recalled twice. The tambourine drill was one of the prettiest numbers on the programme.

“Miss...recited ‘The Prettiest Girl’ in a manner to gain generous applause.

“Miss... proved herself a clever actress in the monologue ‘After Her Heart.’ She was recalled and received many baskets of flowers.

“The scene shifted and Miss.. sang a gypsy song, ‘Merrily I roam, beating the while her castanets and gayly dancing.

“‘St. Valentine’s Revenge’ the first on the programme, was personated as follows:

St. Valentine.....Miss.....

Queen of Hearts...Miss.....

Maiden.....Miss.....

Messengers.....Misses.....

Cupids.....Misses.....

“‘Cleonis’s Studio’ was filled with the following beautiful figures:

“‘Vanity’.....Miss.....

“‘Modesty....Miss.....

“‘Ophelia’....Miss.....

“‘Psyche and Cupid’...Misses.....

“‘Hebe’...Miss.....

“‘Indifference and Sympathy’..Misses.....

“‘The statues had wonderful fortitude and remained apparently motionless, while Miss.. recited the beautiful but somewhat lengthy selection, ‘Marble Dream.’”

“‘Cupid’s Dancing Lesson’ is a pretty tableau, in which Miss... and Miss... are the musicians, to whose music little Miss.. as Cupid. poses in the attitude of dancing.

“‘Zekle’s Courtship.’ a tableau vivant, was laughable in the extreme. Miss... was the reader, and the actors were:

Zekle....Mr.....

Huldy... Miss.....

Ma...Miss.....

Parson Doolittle...Mr.....

Charity Sniffles...Miss.....

Debby Slocum...Miss.....

Decon Elderberry...Mr.....

“The shadow pantomime, acting the ballad of ‘Mary Jane,’ was well carried out. Miss... read the poem while the others followed in action, The personations were:

Mary Jane...Miss.....

Benjamin...Mr.....

Father...Mr.....

Lord Mortimer.....Mr.....

Reader...Miss.....

“Through all the Lyceum orchestra played in its own exquisite fashion, accompanied by Miss on the piano, a difficult task that was performed with grace and skill.

“The closing scene, a pantomimic posing minuet, was the picture of beauty and graceful motion, and was frequently applauded. The young ladies were costumed in flowing robes of creamy white and carried heartshaped silver fans outlined by pink flowers.

“The entertainment was greatly enjoyed throughout by one of the largest audiences ever assembled in the house. The performance will be repeated today at a matinee.”

After reading the above programme the mind is confused in the effort to discover where the church appears in this matter. In the words of a certain Christian paper may be found the proper explanation:

“Either the church or the theater have changed, for they are harmonizing in many places. From the show-bills we see posted in public places, we cannot believe there is any change in the theater.”

We conclude the point with one other notice, of a famous entertainment given in behalf of two protestant churches in the city of St. Louis. The handbill begins with the words “Announcement Extraordinary!” and so it is.

ANNOUNCEMENT EXTRAORDINARY!

Thursday and Friday Evenings and Saturday Matinee,
February 26th, 27th and 28th.

Professor John W. Sherman’s

Wonderful

P H A N T A S M A!

Under the auspices of the Ladies of.....

A Novel, Unique and Elegant Entertainment, which has met with phenomenal success, and won the unqualified endorsements of Pulpit, Press and Public in San Francisco, Denver and Kansas City.

Artistic Tableaux. Beautiful Illusions

Enchanting Music.

Allegorical. Classical. Historical.

Acknowledged by all cities the most charming and mysterious Spectacular and Scenic Effects ever produced on any stage. Groups of Living Figures

Transformed in every Conceivable Manner. Appearing and Disappearing at Will. Living People Vanishing in Air.

The Programme will be varied by

VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC OF THE BEST LOCAL TALENT.

A variety of wealth and worth that must be seen to be appreciated, all under the superintendence of
PROFESSOR JOHN W. SHERMAN,
 Inventor and Patentee of the Phantasma.
 Admission 50 Cents. Reserved seats 25 cents extra.
 Matinee, Tickets for Children, 25 Cents.
 Tickets for sale at.....

In order to get at the full moral effect of this “unique” entertainment, let the reader transport himself to Jerusalem in the time of the apostles. The church in the city of David is thought to be financially languishing. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both members and stewards as well, have announced that they would give no more. That although they were both men of great wealth, they did not propose to be forever giving. Let the laboring classes learn to give. They themselves have given one hundred shekels apiece (equal to one hundred dollars), besides subscribing to the support of the poor widows in Judea — and could spare no more. The ladies and the financial steward of the church of Jerusalem were in desperation. It was at this critical moment they heard of the wonderful deeds of Simon the Sorcerer, in Samaria. Some one suggested that a messenger be sent to engage his services in a kind of magical and necromantic show or entertainment. Half the proceeds were to go to Simon and the other to the church in Jerusalem. John Mark, always great at running, was sent to see him, and in due time returned with the Samaritan Conjurer. The upper room, where the Holy Ghost had fallen, was engaged, and the handbills appeared. Now let the reader substitute the name of Prof. Simon, the Sorcerer, for Prof. John W. Sherman, and Jerusalem for the blank church on the handbill, and then see how it reads.

As the shocked feeling goes over one as such a thing takes place, let the writer ask the question, Why should it be any more horrifying and

culpable in the times of the disciples then in the present time? A proceeding that is morally wrong in the first century is a sin still in the nineteenth century. The idea that God would receive and bless such an entertainment in apostolic days is no more absurd than to believe that he would look upon and bless such an exhibition now. Time does not and cannot regenerate.

OBJECTION 16

It Has Evil Educational Tendencies

My sixteenth objection to the church entertainment is, that its educational tendencies are evil.

It is remarkable that the very things most earnestly forbidden its members by the church have their beginnings and approximations in the entertainment. The church tells me I must not go to the theater and other places of worldly amusement; but the entertainment says, "Come to me and I will give you very much the same, only under another and softer name." The church forbids my gambling, and warns me against the lottery; but the entertainment says, "In lieu of this, I will let you indulge in raffles, the grab-bags, or the recent practice of voting, which is a mild form of a game of chance." Who wonders that our children are found in places of worldly amusement, when we are all the time educating them in this direction, giving them, ourselves, a taste and relish for such things! Who wonders that after we have blunted their spiritual sensibilities, and familiarized their minds to such a life by contact with the more refined forms of worldliness in the church, to find them afterwards perfectly content and at home with the coarser forms of worldliness outside the church! There is a young man in the penitentiary of Ohio today, placed there for some crime committed as a gambler, who says he is there from the influence and effect on his character of church entertainments. He says "that he was so lucky in all the grabbing and raffle performances of the church, that on entering life as a young man, he discovered a relish and thirst awakened in him for things of that character; and it occurred to him that as he had been so fortunate in church raffles, he might be equally successful in cards, lotteries, etc." And so he embarked in the life of a gambler; then came a crime as a gambler; and then the penitentiary. Oh, church of the living, holy God how glorious has your work become! The drift, or educative tendency, of the entertainment, I emphatically repeat, is toward evil, and to grave evils all the while. In a certain church in the West it was resolved to raise some funds to push on the work of the gospel. The

idea of a supper was hooted at, that being too tame. Something new, interesting and crowd-drawing was demanded, and so the marvelous spectacle was beheld of a saloon in one corner of the hall, where drinks of alcoholic nature were sold for so much, and in the other corner was a billiard table, both run in the interests of the church! All this money was to push the gospel on in its victorious way!

But what follies and evils may we not expect to flow from the entertainment, which is itself the child of such parentage as Covetousness and Worldliness! What may we expect of such a child! and what will the grandchildren be!

OBJECTION 17

It Entails Financial Loss Upon The Church

My seventeenth objection to the church entertainment is, that it entails financial loss on the church.

The idea of many is that it is always financially profitable, when really the entertainment is what could properly be called a penny-wise and pound-foolish proceeding. It brings in scores of dollars, but it loses hundreds and thousands. And this it does in two ways: First, by the entertainment plan we are educating the young generation not to give. Instead of teaching of young people that it is their privilege and duty to contribute, and training them to do so from principle, and systematically, we are actually paying them to give; we are bribing them, coaxing them with charades and tableaux, and concerts, and berries, and cream, to give to Christ their Maker, Redeemer, Benefactor, and Judge. The attitude of many of our young people today, if transformed into language, is, “Tempt me — sing to me — coax me — induce me with savory dishes, and perhaps I may give to the cause of God.” Look and see this strange education. Where are the princely givers of the church? As they die, who are taking their places? I know few young men who deserve to be called liberal. I do not blame them so much as blame the church; for they have been educated not to give.

Another way in which the entertainment hurts the church financially is that it stands in the room of the better and true way. There are many people who willingly shelter themselves behind a fifty cent ticket of admission to a church festival, or feel they have done liberal things by eating a saucer of ice cream? and go off tranquil in mind and self-satisfied; when if the appeal for help had been made on the line of conscience, and in the name of the Son of God, there would have been fifty dollars in the treasury instead of fifty cents. The profound mistake of God’s people is seen in working with the human stomach when the moral nature does not reside there. The work of the church is with man’s conscience — may

she not forget it — for there is to be her great achievement and only lasting victory.

I might also mention how much the entertainment loses to the church by grieving and disgusting conscientious and spiritually-minded people, who feel that the whole thing is wrong and so draw off and have nothing to do with the entire matter. Let me give an instance. I knew of a certain congregation that had concluded to build a house of worship. A gentleman well to do, thinking it was to be erected through the voluntary gifts of the people, quietly resolved to bring up a thousand dollars. To his unspeakable disgust, before the Christian community had been approached for the amount that could have been easily raised, a church entertainment was inaugurated. He quietly drew out and had nothing more to do with the matter. The entertainment realized some hundreds of dollars, but lost a thousand from one individual. It is, I repeat, a penny-wise and pound-foolish business; and if the church, while counting its dimes and dollars, could only see the hundreds and thousands that might have been hers, she would open her eyes in astonishment, and give up this method, and take God's plan instead, which has ever been, and will ever be, the best, world without end.

I repeat, that as a financial plan the church entertainment is a failure. Has not the reader noticed that the congregations that most abound in this method are always in debt? I recall a certain church in this city that invested twenty dollars in a festival and took in three; net loss seventeen dollars. At another in the same city the congregation secured at considerable outlay the presence of a famous preacher and lecturer, hired an expensive hall, and lost three hundred dollars by the operation. They had expected to make one or two thousand. Viewed in every light, the church entertainment as a financial method for caring for God's house and cause is worse than a failure.

OBJECTION 18

It Entails Spiritual Loss Upon The Church

My eighteenth objection to the church entertainment is, that it entails spiritual loss upon the church, by destroying the lines and distinctions which God has drawn between it and the world.

God wants his church to be a perfect contrast to the world; as clear and distinct indeed as light from darkness. In that separation and difference will be the beauty, strength and glory of his people. I hardly need to say that if a pure woman would lift up a fallen creature of her own sex, she will never do it by becoming corrupt herself. It takes purity to lift up impurity. And so, if the church is ever to make the world better, and help it into godliness, she will never do it by becoming like the world. There is a fearful picture drawn in one of the prophets, where a certain powerful and wicked king had died, and as his soul descended to perdition, the Book says all hell was stirred and rose up to meet him at his coming, crying out at the same time: "O, thou son of the morning, how hast thou fallen, and become like unto us!" Do we realize that is what the world is saying today about us? The judgment passed on the church by thousands is, that she has become worldly. That you cannot tell a church member from a man of the world. If we would listen we would hear the world laughing at us. We would endure the laugh if we were innocent. I hear much of it as I go about. It is the same derisive, horrible laugh, the same fearful welcoming cry that rose up from hell: "How hast thou fallen, O thou Church of God, thou child of the morning, thou hast become like unto us!"

In the church entertainment we lower the approaches, rub out lines and demarcations, and put the gap low. "Come in," we say to the world; "how much alike we are, after all! You thought I was so holy, but I am not holy; I am just like you; only come in and see how much alike we are!" And so through the low gap the world comes in; but, alas for us, something goes out from us that is indescribable, and the loss of which is irreparable. That beautiful, heavenly grace, that wondrous force and spiritual power that

comes to the church from spotlessness, unbending integrity, separation from the spirit and ways of the world — that goes and leaves us poor indeed. Would it not be strange if it did not occur to the farmer, that when he set his gap low in order that his neighbors sheep might come in and be appropriated, that through that same gap he might lose his own?

There was a certain minister of another religious denomination who determined to set his gap very low; he determined that as the world would not come up to the church, he would bring the church down to the world. In a sermon preached in his pulpit a few months ago, he stated to his hearers that after coming to the morning service and worshipping, that they were free to spend the rest of the Sabbath as they would — in sailing, riding, baseballing, and other ways of relaxation and recreation. To his amazement, he failed to get a single worldly man to join his church by this religion-made-easy plan. The fact is, men do not take to such a church. When they change they want something different; there is no sense in going from the world to the world. Thus it was he gained no one by his low gap; on the contrary, he lost one of his most valuable members. Naturally, that member was shocked and pained at such teachings, and so immediately left that fold and sought another flock and preacher where he could hear doctrines more in accord with the sentiment of his heart and the truth of the Bible. The conclusion is that there is nothing to be gained but everything lost by any compromise with, or approximation to, the world. When we come into any relation with the world, except such as is taught and allowed in God's Word, it means loss of members, loss of respect, and loss of the virtue and power by which we can alone uplift and save men.

In the church entertainment we are called upon to notice a very remarkable fellowship. Here are people who hate God, hate the Sabbath, hate the church, deny the Bible, and refuse to believe in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, mingling and working with Christians. A certain lady was expatiating to me in glowing terms upon this intimacy! "Oh," she said, "we have such beautiful Christian fellowship!" "Christian fellowship! I said. "Do you call this affinity you have made with people who say that your Savior is a fraud, liar and impostor — do you call that Christian fellowship?"

I remember something in the Old Testament of a similar nature, where a certain king who knew and served God made affinity with a king who hated God and served him not. He had hardly begun the strange, unnatural intimacy, when suddenly a prophet sent of God stood before him, and with solemn face and more solemn words said: "Thus saith the Lord, Do ye love them that hate the Lord? Therefore, evil is come upon the from the Lord!"

In the Book of Genesis appears another remarkable fellowship. "It came to pass," says the Bible, "that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, and took them wives of all which they chose." My only remark here is, that it was just after this God repented that he had made man, and, grieved at the universal wickedness, sent a deluge to destroy the entire race.

We have nothing to expect from any kind of affinity or amalgamation with the world, but the loss of God's favor, and our own final overthrow and ruin. May heaven keep us far and forever from it! But certainly when we see church and the world socially and morally one, when they can work side by side in a common religious, or rather irreligious, enterprise, it means, that history is repeating itself, that the people of God and of the world have amalgamated, are at peace, and that any day we may look for the sweeping judgments of the Head of the Church.

OBJECTION 19

It Robs The Pulpit Of Force, The Church Of Rebuking Power

My nineteenth objection to the church entertainment is, that it robs the pulpit of its force and the church of its rebuking power.

We all know the stress God lays on the reproofing power of the church; she “must cry aloud and spare not”; she “must declare the sins of the people”. The effect of the rebuking and warning voice of the church is to awaken sleeping consciences, form a healthy public opinion and sentiment, and be a bulwark between men and all encroachments of evil. We all know very well that reproof draws its great power from blamelessness and purity of life. For instance, who pays attention to the reproof of a bad man or woman? Who cares for the judgment of one full of faults and inconsistencies? It is the pure alone, who are tolerated and hearkened to when it comes to reproof. Now, if the church becomes assimilated to the world, is different indeed only by a few delicate shades of moral coloring, how will she be able to uplift her voice against the iniquity that is in the world? How can the pew and pulpit speak against the theater, when we have things so much like it in our shows and festivals? How can the church denounce gambling and the lottery when she has the grab-bag and raffle and “voting” within her sacred walls, and meeting with her smiling approval? The whole effect is to paralyze the tongue of preacher and layman in the presence of the great evils of the day.

In the church entertainment the main expectation is from men of the world. The church wants their unsanctified dollars. Has the reader noticed at such times who are the most liberal contributors? They are men representing vocations and pursuits that are wrong. Not always legally wrong, but morally so. Now, why is it that the man of cards, or of the saloon, or of the rack-track, or of the lottery, will always give at such times, when the church forgets her heavenly birth and high callings so far as to ask money at their hands? God tells you in the Book of Proverbs: It is because they

know that a gift pacifieth; and that it will, when received, take the reproof from the tongue of the reprover.

They know the psychological effect of dollars; they know how their gifts will fling a softening atmosphere around their wrong lives and pursuits, while, at the same time, the hearts of the benefited congregation will relax and relent; and they will say, looking kindly upon their donors: "Let us not judge our fellow creatures any more; who are we that we should judge any man!" All of which is very true, especially the last sentence commencing "who are we?" There is no question in my mind that the secret of the liberality of the wrong business and pursuit is to secure the tolerance of a Christian community, gag the tongue of a Christian people, and stop the motion of the Christian pen. Men know the tremendous power that lies in the reproof of a holy church, and they know the disarming, silencing power of a gift received; and so they give and will continue to give. There is a gambling institution in New Orleans whose baleful corrupting influence is felt all over the land. It is a running sore and eating cancer to the financial and moral prosperity of the community; and yet this institution never fails to give to every good cause in the land, and was never known to refuse liberal donations to churches of all denominations. It is done, not for the love of God, but to produce silence in the church, and perpetuate its own existence. And it does both of these things. God knows that if the church would arise in the majesty of heavenly rebuke, with the lightning of a holy indignation in her eye, that men would not be able in a Christian land to corrupt and make gamblers and drunkards of our children. If she would confront them with God's truth in her life and lips, as did Christ in the Temple, there are a thousand evils now in our cities that would slink at once into the darkness where they properly belong, and never lift their head, again. But when the church places itself under obligation to these evil pursuits and institutions; when she receives money from their hands, how is she going to rebuke them? She cannot. Indeed her reception of the gifts is a virtual endorsement. For a mess of pottage she has sold her birthright! She expresses horror at the act of Judas in selling Christ for thirty pieces of silver; but, at the same time, turns herself about and sells Christ's honor, the purity of the church, and the rebuking power of the church, for the same shining, perishing metal. But men say, "We must have money, and all money is the same. One

man's money is as good as another's." I beg pardon, but this is not so. He that noticed the two mites that fell into the treasury, and commended the gift, and said nothing of the bullion going in, declared by that act that all money is not the same. The giver gives character to the gift. Nor is this all. He that said in the Bible that "the hire of a harlot offered in the Temple was an abomination to him," declared in that speech that all money is not the same. A five dollar bill coming from one person, and a five dollar bill coming from another of different life and character, are as different in the sight of God as good and evil themselves. From all I can gather of the nature and acts of God in his Book, I feel safe in saying that the God of Truth and Love, never accept money offered to him that has the tears of the widow and orphan upon it, and that if wrung in the hands would actually drip with human agony, and the blood of souls. My brother of a different denomination. whatever you be, if ever I worship in your house, church, or cathedral, please let me sit in my pew and lean my head against the bricks, or stone, or plank, that have been paid for by the loving, voluntary gifts of God's dear children; I think I will feel better, enjoy myself more. Don't put any one near that section of wall paid for by money made in unspiritual and immoral ways. I am sure they would be uncomfortable and sorrowful; they would all the while during the service fancy they heard the rattle of dice, the shuffling of cards, the low swish of the lottery wheel, the dripping of tears, the cries of women and the spurt of blood. Put them somewhere else, and place several lightning rods on that part of the building, for if ever the electric bolt does fall, I rather think it will strike just about there.

OBJECTION 20

It Is Condemned By General Testimony

My twentieth objection to the church entertainment is grounded on the fact of the general testimony against it.

First of all, the whole spirit and teaching and example of Scripture is against it. For argument's sake, I would be willing to admit for a moment that it was not an evil. And still the Bible condemns it. Say that it is no evil, but the last one of us will admit that it has the appearance of evil. Now, what says the Scripture? "Abstain from all appearance of evil." This one verse wipes out the church entertainment from beginning to end.

Again, I have never talked with ministers or laymen on this subject but the vast majority condemned the thing in total, while those most active in the church festival business admitted to me that they felt it was not the best way to raise money for the gospel. One thing is certain, the church of the Son of God has nothing to do with any but the best ways. We cannot afford to touch or have anything to do with financial methods and entertainments that have any doubt resting upon them, or can be questioned by spiritually-minded people, much less, by the world itself. God have mercy on us as a church when we do things that even the world out of Christ condemns!

Again, the religious press is against it. Almost, if not every, denomination has spoken through its journals upon the subject. With but few exceptions all these papers have condemned the practice, while none editorially have approved or commended it.

Still, again, I notice that large religious bodies have pronounced against it. Conferences, synods, assemblies, associations and conventions have all recognized and branded it as an evil. Only a few years since, in the city of Chicago, there assembled a convention of several hundred ministers of different religious denominations. Among other things they did, was to

express themselves emphatically and unmistakably on the subject of church entertainments. I cannot forget what they called it. May all remember it, for it was just, true, and thoroughly descriptive. They branded it “The Cooking Stove Apostasy of the Nineteenth Century!”

There was a time I thought of the church robed in spotless white, and moving through the nations with uplifted, transfigured countenance, love in her eyes, the perfume of holiness about her person, and scattering blessing constantly from her hand. But there is a sad change. There have been thoughtless hands who have stripped her of her spiritual glory, and otherwise altered her, so that she either stands posing before the world in the tinsel attire and half-learned attitudes of a second-rate theater; or she moves through the land with the rumpled, frowsy, heated, greasy appearance of the kitchen, and distributing from her garments the smell of poorly-fried oysters and mildewed chicken salad wherever she goes.

The true method of giving — what is it? There is but one way recognized and accepted of God.

I first notice it in the Mosaic times. “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering.” What were the offerings? Substances of value, gold, silver, brass and precious stones. No one was allowed to dodge behind some corporeal service and call that an offering. “Every one,” says the Scripture, “offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.”

In the kingly times of Israel I see the method again. Turn to Second Kings, twelfth chapter and ninth verse “But Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar; and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord.”

Please notice that it is always money! Why? Not because God loves money, but because he sees we do. He knows, as some of us know, that there are many people in the church who are willing to do anything for the Lord — but give him their money. I verily believe they would walk the streets in behalf of the church until their tongues protruded; they would fry oysters all through the silent watches of the night until they dropped

in their tracks exhausted next morning; they would do anything, everything rather than give their money to God! And, by the way, this class constitutes the most active element among church entertainment workers. But God will not be satisfied with this. The dearest idol, deepest love, must be sacrificed for him. He knows of that money-love in the human heart. He is determined to break it up, and awaken that loving, liberal, generous nature that will respond to every call that he makes. And so he says: “Bring an offering of gold; bring me the most precious of metals; give me the recognized standard of value; lay money, your money, not another man’s money, not the world’s money, but you money upon my altar!”

In the time of Christ I see God’s method still. It is mentioned in the text, “Jesus sat over against the treasury.” and saw it in successful operation. Rich and poor were casting in their gold and silver. No church fair or entertainment in sight, or even thought of. Everybody was giving voluntarily to the Lord.

In the times of the apostles the method was still working. Many things had been changed. Circumcision had given way to baptism, and the Passover had been substituted by the Lord’s Supper; but the method of giving to God was still the same. In the first chapter of Acts I read that as many as had money “brought it and laid it at the disciples’ feet.” Some sold their most valuable estates, houses and land, in order to bring money. No embroidering of useless purses, and crocheting a few senseless articles of dress, and giving a few groceries, and waiting on the table behind the chair of some world-lover and God hater, and calling that an offering to the Lord. No presenting of some old faded pincushions or unsalable article of merchandise to the disciples to be raffled or voted for. Thank God such things never occurred to them! they did so love Jesus Christ and his cause that they gave the best they had, and all they had. As the Bible says, they sold their lands and houses and laid the money at the disciples’ feet.

Later still, when the church is thoroughly organized flourishing, might we not expect to see the true method again, and recognized as a rule for all to go by? Undoubtedly Paul crystallizes the practice in one of his epistles and formulates it in words never to be forgotten. Here it is in the sixteenth

chapter of First Corinthians and second verse: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.”

But suppose God has not prospered you; then he does not expect anything from you. But what if God has prospered one, and the man will not give? To that I say, we are not empowered to force or cajole a man into giving — better leave him with God. And yet I would not have us forget that there is always a resource left the church. It is indeed, a resource and power. It covers the illiberal man’s case, and all cases. I have rarely known it to fail. It was tested several years ago in a large city by a faithful layman. There was a pressing burdensome debt of some \$16,000. It had rested as an incubus upon the congregation for years. One afternoon this gentleman requested nine or ten other male members of his church to meet him in a certain office. Here they spent a number of hours in humble, earnest prayer to God. As the prayer ascended, of course God descended; and there steadily grew within them a profound sense of their obligation to God. He was their Maker, Preserver, Benefactor; he had given ten thousand mercies, his Son had died for them, he had forgiven them, and this moment had heaven and endless life and blessedness awaiting them. And now what was it that they could do for him? What act or gift or sacrifice could ever repay, in the least degree, even a part of his love? “Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?” Who wonders at what followed? — that on their melted, graceful hearts God poured the spirit of his love, the tender, beauty. They arose from their knees and in ten minutes wiped out the debt of \$16,000.

The same heavenly recourse is open to us, and the same gracious results awaits us. Let any congregation, great or small, come together in prayer before God. I care not what the financial burdens may be. Let them ask importunately for the presence of the Holy Ghost. Let them recall who God is, what he has done, what he is doing, what he is going to do for them, both in this life and the life to come. Let them linger thus, asking for the grace and life and power of a consecrated heart; and while they are upon their knees the power will come. That which just now seemed impossible, will suddenly, strangely, sweetly and graciously become possible, the demand will be met, the burden lifted, the last dollar paid,

and that, too, with a conscious blessedness and rejoicing within the souls of the givers, that comes only a little short of the thrill and joy and rapture of the redeemed in heaven.

THE END

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