

The Claim of Christian Endeavor

by Claude E. Hill

Christian Endeavor is a vital organization that has helped solve theological problems, promote Christian union, and raise the standard of good citizenship, and deserves support and encouragement from the church.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:25, 1 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Galatians 5:6, Galatians 6:7, Philippians 2:4, 1 Timothy 6:10, James 2:18

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Faith And Works"

Description

Claude E. Hill preaches about the significance of Christian Endeavor within the church, emphasizing that while it is not the sole focus, it has played a vital role in theological discussions, promoting faith through works and emphasizing the importance of activity over mere intellectual pursuits. Christian Endeavor has contributed to Christian unity, peace, and missionary education, helping to instill a money conscience and raise the standard of good citizenship. It has been a servant of the church, aiding in various societal battles and claiming a servant's reward.

Transcript

Bellefield Church, Friday Night, October 15.

Christian Endeavor as an organization of the church is not the biggest enterprise on hand, nor is it responsible for all the great things which have been brought to pass during the last quarter of a century. It is not the whole show. After this procession has been reviewed there is still another to be seen. The whole future of the church is not staked upon the perpetuation and prosperity of this movement. If in due process of time and in the course of unnatural events it should die and cease to be, either by neglect or crucifixion, the gospel would continue to be preached, the church would live and the truth would go marching on. It might not go quite so vigorously, and the battles which it fights and wins might not be such easy victories, but it would go on [307] conquering and to conquer by the might of its King.

I am aware of the difficulty of saying new things about Christian Endeavor. I shall not attempt that. My purpose is to ask you to remember and think about what you already know. There is just one thing which I want to say. This is a young people's organization. It is not, nor will it ever be, an organization of tried veterans. It is made up of recruits, not of the old guard. Young men and young women are constantly coming in and going out--properly so. But this should make one charitable in judging its work. Mistakes have been made, and will be made--it has its ups and downs--sometimes it has fallen down, sometimes it has been knocked down. Christian Endeavor has always known how to pull the trigger. Taking aim is a

matter of training. We only learn to shoot by shooting. But as an untrained body it has done more hitting than any organization in the world, and has shown as much courage. It has never quailed under fire. It has never run or played the baby.

1. The claims of Christian Endeavor. Christian Endeavor has helped solve

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the theological problems of the last twenty-five years. I mean this: It has stood resolutely by the statement of James the Just: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." It has emphasized activity, which, after all, is the faith which saves. In Christian Endeavor conventions you hear about workers, rather than thinkers. I have infinite respect for a man who thinks. I do not aim to speak lightly of an activity of that sort. We must discriminate between constructive thought and mere intellectual trapeze performers. The church is not a circus, but a force going out to harvest the world. There is no place for a clown or an intellectual tight-rope walker. We have more serious business in hand. Sam Jones used to say that society had two crusts, the upper and lower crust--the goody was between. Now, theology has two crusts, the upper and lower. Sometimes the lower crust is a fossil, and the upper crust is very soft and flabby--a mushy substance. Christian Endeavor is between. It is the goody. It says, "Neither higher criticism availeth anything nor lower criticism, but faith, which worketh by love."

2. Christian Endeavor has helped the cause of Christian union by its interdenominational character; it has helped the cause of peace by its international scope, and has aided the cause of universal brotherhood by its inter-racial conventions and activities. Incidentally, it has been a powerful contributing agency toward the propagation and popularization of the plea of the Disciples. We would neither be so well known as a people, nor so well understood as to our teaching, were it not for Christian Endeavor. It is perhaps difficult for the people of the Middle West to understand this fact the way we of the East and South appreciate it.

3. Christian Endeavor has helped stem the tide of commercialism which has been sweeping in on the church in these recent years. The early morning prayer-meetings, the quiet-hour movement, the daily Bible reading and prayer--none of us know the extent of such influence. And really this is the important feature of the Christian Endeavor movement. There are other interesting and helpful things connected with it, but its foundation is the pledge and the pledge means what I have just stated.

4. Christian Endeavor has provided a channel whereby missionary inclination in the form of literature and lectures can reach the young people of the church. We can never hope to be a great missionary people without missionary education. We must create a missionary conscience, and that comes by education. Our increasing offerings are very largely due to the attention we have paid in various ways to the education and missionary training of our young people. Our secretaries will bear me out in the statement that there are [308] only three people who can be depended upon to answer letters and distribute literature in the average church. These are the preacher, the Sunday-school superintendent and the president of the C. E. society.

5. Christian Endeavor has helped in the creation of a money conscience in the church. We have always had a creed conscience, we have always had a name conscience, we have always had a baptismal conscience, and we have always had a union conscience. There have been times when, for convenience' sake, our conscience on Christian union has been laid aside, like the preacher who laid aside his Bible and religion to thrash a disturber of the meeting. Some of us carry an olive branch on dress parade, but we have a tomahawk for private and practical purposes. But the money conscience among us has been

weak, very weak. Some of the brethren can not stand a salaried preacher, let alone paid missionaries. Too many of our folks are like A. McLean's cow. She would give no milk of her own accord, voluntarily, but if you would get her in a corner, where she could neither hook nor kick, she would give about two gallons. We need a money conscience. That can not be

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doubted so long as we are giving thirty cents per capita for Foreign Missions and less for Home. Our colleges are meagerly endowed, and great cities in our country are calling and pleading for help, and we are a rich people. Christian Endeavor through the Tenth Legion and systematic giving for missions is helping to overcome this defect.

6. Christian Endeavor claims that it has helped raise the standard of good citizenship; it has helped in the preservation of the Lord's Day, and it has helped in solving the problem of ministerial supply. It has helped in fighting the battles against liquor. It is a fact that the majority of the men who are leading in the fight for prohibition are young men, many of whom secured their ideas and their training in Christian Endeavor. Thus Christian Endeavor has proven itself a servant of the church and claims only for itself a servant's reward.

TWO CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR CLAIMS ON THE CHURCH.

It merits, therefore, support and encouragement. It merits the support of the preachers, without which its hands are tied, and for the most part it gets it. It merits the support of the officers of the church, and for the most part does not get it. It merits the support of every man who desires to see the church of the next generation a stronger church than the church of this generation. It merits the support of all our missionary agencies. It will give back, both in money and in men, ten to one over what you put into it.

Our national missionary organizations give \$500 a year to support a national superintendent. They are getting \$32,000 a year from the society. The offerings this year will be more than \$50,000. Should not the \$500 be given cheerfully?

The C. W. B. M. are wise, even if they are women. They have a competent superintendent who gives all her time to Junior work. And last year they raised more money than any missionary organization among us. The expected has happened. No, it did not happen; it was a logical result. I have never known a preacher to complain about a society being lifeless who put any of his own life into it, but without moral support it will be of little value and the Bible school or the mid-week prayer-meeting would go the same way. Both the Bible school and the Christian Endeavor plead for more generous support, and they ought to have it. Other bodies are wiser than we in this particular. They make liberal appropriations. And they get it all back, and more. I am perfectly familiar with the fact that some good men smile cynically when a matter of this sort is brought up. Christian Endeavor is an insignificant side issue in their eyes. Its workers are not more than faddists, and it is of minor importance as [309] compared with the great question of Jonah and the whale, tainted money, etc.

This attitude must all be changed, and will be before we ever come to our proper place. This thing is of fundamental importance. It deals with the future church as well as the present. From our sowing of to-day will be our reaping of to-morrow. "He that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully."

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