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# The Duties of a Church Member to the Church

By ELIOT PORTER



PUBLISHED FOR THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY  
THE PROGRAM AGENCY OF  
THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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"If you have eyes, you will presently see the Church itself—a looming mystery of many shapes and shadows, leaping sheer from floor to dome. The work of no ordinary builder! . . . The pillars of it go up like the brawny trunks of heroes: the sweet human flesh of men and women is molded about its bulwarks, strong, impregnable; the faces of little children laugh out from every corner stone: the terrible spans and arches of it are the joined hands of comrades; and up in the heights and spaces there are inscribed the numberless musings of all the dreamers of the world. It is yet building—building and built upon. Sometimes the work goes forward in deep darkness; sometimes in blinding light; now beneath the burden of unutterable anguish; now to the tune of a great laughter and heroic shoutings like the cry of thunder. Sometimes, in the silence of the nighttime, one may hear the tiny hammerings of the comrades at work up in the dome—the comrades that have climbed ahead."

—*Charles Rann Kennedy, The Servant in the House, Harper & Brothers.*

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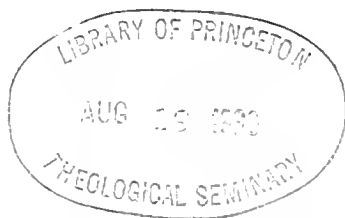
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## THE DUTIES OF A CHURCH MEMBER TO THE CHURCH

A sunny deck and a steamer chair and nothing to do but lie in it, with the sea to watch, and the throb of distant engines lulling you to sleep, and your every comfort cared for—that is all well enough for a week or two. But would you be willing to sail the seas your whole life long as nothing but a passenger? The boredom of it would prove intolerable. There are thousands of men who spend their lives in sailing the seas, but they are members of the crews of the ships that bear them, alert with interest in their work and proud of their skill. The officer on duty on the bridge, the steersman, the engineer, each knows he is helping to make the great ship go. The trouble with many church members is that they remain mere passengers, year in, year out. They never find any way to help to make the ship go. They are mere baggage, and sooner or later they find themselves bored by the voyage.

In this list of the duties of a church member to the church let us put first one duty which, if it is performed, should sooner or later involve most of the other duties.

### I. FIND SOMETHING TO DO FOR THE CHURCH

Do not be content merely to sit in a pew. "That which is not expressed, dies." And Christianity finds precious little expression in mere pew sitting. Do something in person. Write checks if you can, but never let that take the place of firsthand service in the work of your church.

Are you an accountant? Somewhere there is bookkeeping to be done, and done in a better way than it has ever been done before. There are charts to be made to visualize for the members the budget and work of the church.

Are you a writer or editor or advertising man, or have you literary ability? Find how the Every Member Canvass publicity can be made more effective in your church. Volunteer to edit the calendar, or a weekly or monthly bulletin to be mailed to the members.

Are you a stenographer? There are always letters, minutes, addressing and mailing of notices and bulletins.

Have you artistic ability? Think of what attractive posters might do to call attention to the meetings and work of the church. Note improvements needed in decoration.

Have you musical ability? Somewhere in your church it is needed—in an orchestra, or in the choir of the church or in a junior choir, or in special programs.

Have you dramatic ability? Those in charge of young people's work will be glad to have your help. Are you a carpenter or a mason? Somewhere in the church is an improvement that the trustees will be glad to have attended to.

Are you a business man or lawyer or banker? There is heavy work each year in the financial canvass and in the making of budgets. The minister knows people facing business trouble, who need some disinterested person to help them to see through their difficulties.

Are you a physician or dentist? Doubtless you do much charity work already. But the minister occasionally has cases of distress laid on his shoulders, and would be glad to know that you are willing to do needed work from time to time *as a member of the church and as part of its ministry.*

Women with homes rather than businesses will find waiting for them such work as helping with the social program for the young people, including the furnishing of homes for entertainments; calling on new members, invalids, and old people; and befriending friendless persons—an experience which will prove immensely broadening and interesting. Men are needed from time to time as ushers, and women to take charge of the church kitchens and sometimes see that the church is given that kind of housecleaning which not one male sexton in a hundred is capable of conceiving, let alone of carrying into effect. Flowers need to be furnished and arranged. Decorations need to be made for special occasions. Phoning and addressing sometimes threaten to consume hours desperately needed by the minister for the preparation of worship and sermons. Nurseries maintained during the hour of morning worship will allow parents of young children to attend. There are old people and invalids who will be glad to attend church if some one will drive them there and home again. There are women's missionary and local aid societies and men's brotherhoods needing loyal workers.

We have left to the last the most important part of the work of the church, that of the Church School. For, "what shall it profit the Church if it gain the whole world and lose the coming generation"? Teachers are needed, as well as substitutes, secretaries, keepers of records, musicians, and leaders of Junior High and Senior High Fellowships, Scouts, Camp Fire Girls. Many churches are looking also for older folk to act as counselors to young people and older boys and girls in working out their own programs of worship and service and social life. There is probably a Vacation Church School in June. If you feel unprepared for such duties as these, leadership training courses may be sent for, if they are not already offered by your church.

For young people, the obvious field of service open to them is in working with young people of their own age and also with boys and girls who are somewhat younger. Often the best possible leader for a group of boys and girls is some one only "a few jumps" ahead of them in experience. Such a leader may require advice and help from older folk, but often only such a one can supply the understanding and enthusiasm needed. And often the willingness of a younger person to engage in such work will prove more impressive to boys and girls than the volunteering of some older person. Church and Vacation Church Schools, Scouts, Westminster Fellowships, and other such organizations can be immensely encouraged by the leadership of young people.

"Silver and gold have I none," said Peter; "but *what I have, that give I*

*thee.*" Find what ability you have and give it. The first thing the church needs from you is active service. If you give it, you will find yourself, not a bored passenger, but an alert, enthusiastic member of the crew.

## 2. ATTEND CHURCH

It is difficult to make one coal burn alone, but together with other coals it burns readily. Who can resist the spirit of Christmas? It gets into the very atmosphere. Even Scrooge capitulated. And so with the spirit of worship. "Ordinary people at all levels help each other to be a little more supernatural than each could have been alone," said Evelyn Underhill, which is another way of saying what Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

We need to worship because life proves too much for us, or not enough. Sometimes life terrifies us and again it bores us. We need re-enforcement in order to meet its tragic moments and we need zest to meet its monotonous ones. Whether life proves too much for us or too little, sooner or later we succumb to spiritual weariness. And then worship is our salvation.

Life may have proved too much for us, imposed on us a task too great, a sorrow too deep, a defeat too crushing, a temptation too dangerous. Or life may not have proved enough, so that we find ourselves "filled with a weariness of all that is old and habitual," find "ambition's sails drooping," and come to a bitter doubt of the worth of all our efforts. In either case, worship proves our "spiritual self-preservation." It "renews the spirit as sleep renews the body." Whether it be the "too-bigness" of life or its "too-littleness" that distresses us, worship brings us the experience of God which lifts us out of our burdened lives or out of our bored ones. "Question marks straighten out into exclamation points." "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

There is more to being a Christian than going to church, but if you unnecessarily stop going to church, your interest in the church will very probably die. You will in all likelihood become dead wood on the church roll, and it would have been better had you not made your confession at all. One minister insists that the principal reason why church members discontinue regular attendance at church is because they have bad consciences—not necessarily that their consciences are burdened with sensational sins, but that they know their lives to be unspiritual and unchristian. If you find yourself disinclined to attend church, examine yourself to see whether this is true. Recall your vow of allegiance to Christ, attend worship resolutely, and strive to bring your life into conformance with what Christian worship implies.

Moreover, by going to church you vote for the survival of Christianity. Voltaire said, "I have no expectation that I will be able to destroy Christianity so long as vast multitudes of people attend the churches regularly." If you do



not attend regularly, you vote for the disappearance of the Church of Christ, and ultimately for the disappearance of his religion and spirit from the earth. For if his Church dies, his spirit among men will not long remain. "In all history," says Durkheim, "we do not find a single religion without a church."

Attend the worship of your church in worshipful attitude. Every minister knows that with some congregations it is easy to offer prayer, and with others it is difficult. There is "something there" which helps or hinders prayer. And that something is the aggregate spirit of the congregation. Make your contribution to that corporate spirit, then, a helpful one. Pray for the worship when you have entered—for yourself, your fellow worshipers, and those who minister; and pray *with* the minister as he prays. Especially during the opening minutes of worship, take care to maintain an attitude of desire and expectation. One writer, after long observation, concludes that "the character of the whole service is determined by the demeanor of the worshiper during the first five minutes."

Above all other services of the church, observe the Lord's Supper by unflinching attendance after prayerful preparation. "This do in remembrance of me," our Lord has said. Ministers know that almost invariably those members who neglect the Communion drift away from the church.

### 3. SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH FINANCIALLY

Jesus did not care about money for its own sake. "His only purse was a fish's mouth." But he cared about money tremendously for the sake of man's spiritual welfare. It has been claimed that one verse in seven in the Gospels refers to money. Jesus was a skilled physician of souls and he knew how avarice preys on men like a spiritual cancer, and how their niggardliness toward God and their fellows proves their own great spiritual hindrance.

In our worship we repeat that great old creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord. . . . I believe in . . . the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting." And then, on the instant when our lips prepare to say, "Amen," away below the level of our conscious thought an inexorable conscience asks: "*Do* you believe it? How *much* do you believe it? How much have you given to it this last week? As much as for that entertainment, that dinner out, that unnecessary luxury?" Or in some "date with adversity," when we desperately need help and kneel to pray for it, our conscience will mock us if it can. It will ask us what right we have to pray. Some deep ingrained honesty within us sits in judgment on our prayer, and if we know that we have not played square with God, and have refused God the support his Kingdom needs, that prayer is stifled on our lips. We may not know what has discounted the creed, or hindered our prayer. We may only know that our "amen" reverberates in our mind as if it had been followed by a question mark. We may sigh to ourselves that prayer has never seemed very real to us. But the real difficulty is that deep within ourselves we know that we have no right to lift our souls to the earnest

God who waits on our laggard loyalty. An Old Testament prophet said that when men quit robbing God, God would pour them out a blessing such as there would not be room enough to receive. That is not because God sells his blessings, but because his richest blessing *can* come only to those who are loyal to him.

So, when that deep-seated conscience sits in judgment on our worship, or our prayer, if we can answer, "Yes, I believe—by this old coat, by the hat I went without, by the old car I still am driving," then the question mark changes into an exclamation point. We have witnessed our belief at the judgment bar of our own conscience. We have proved it to ourselves. And also, we might add, to the world, for the world is not looking for a religion the expansion of which is worth to its devotees the present average of only eleven cents a day.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. . . . For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

*Every* Christian is expected to give to his church, and to give *regularly* and *in proportion as he has been prospered*. "Upon the first day of the week," wrote Paul, "let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper." The only safe way to take care of such a duty is to systematize it. Save for those few of us who receive our income in one yearly sum, the only way we can possibly pay what we ought is to pay it in small installments; so that if we pay our church moneys only once or twice a year it is proof positive that we have not come near the line of sacrifice, and are only "tipping the Lord." We ought to give a sum we *could* not pay in one yearly contribution!

"Let each one of you lay by him . . . as he may prosper." Jesus cared more about proportion than about amount. It took his eyes to see the widow's little coins larger than all the payments of the rich who had passed that same treasury box. Mark 12:41-44. And still he sits over against the treasury and beholds how we cast money into it! We are not to give what is left. We are to give in proportion as we have prospered. What proportion? The Jews, we often hear, gave a tenth. Actually they gave a good deal more than that. Are we *less* indebted to God than the ancient Jews? Some of our gifts will go, of course, to other welfare causes, not to the church. But a generous share of them we owe to the church.

It costs money to operate the church in which we worship. We do not want to be slackers. Once a year, in most well-organized churches, every member is asked to subscribe for its support. Your duty as a member is to make your subscription loyally and sacrificially.

You are asked at the same time to subscribe to the benevolence budget of the church, from which payments are made to support the great national and foreign mission enterprises of the Presbyterian Church, to its work of Christian education, and to various other enterprises, generally including certain local welfare work. Sometimes one hears of Presbyterian church members who "do not believe in missions." There is only one thing to say about them. They have got into the wrong organization. They are as much out of place as an

Orangeman at an Irish wake. The Presbyterian Church is committed to the extension of the Kingdom of Christ at home and overseas. It is constantly sending out men and women, evangelists, surgeons, teachers, nurses. As a member of the Presbyterian Church you help to send them out. You are their employer! You owe them their living and their necessary equipment. Some one has said that we must either give away our religion or give it up. The Presbyterian Church is determined to give it away. And in its annual budget every church includes not only its own needs but the needs of the great fields where its workers are living out and sometimes laying down their lives in *our* name as well as in Christ's. No father and mother would care for a child in their home and neglect the needs of one at a distance; no more can we think of meeting local necessities while we disregard those of our great Church in other communities and other lands.

Young members should begin to support the Church as soon as they join it. Their subscriptions may not be large, but they are important subscriptions because they will continue for a long time, and the challenge of Christian stewardship is far better faced in early years than at that most difficult time of all, when the establishment of a home makes perhaps the heaviest drain of a lifetime on one's income.

#### 4. GROW IN GRACE AND CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

Just as water cannot rise above its own level, so you cannot contribute to the church more than you really are. One of your duties to the church, then, is to grow, yourself, in grace and Christian knowledge. Take care of your prayer life. Pray for the church, its local work, and its world-wide activities. Such unselfishness will lend wings to your prayers. For most of us are lamentably self-engrossed in our praying. If your experience of prayer is disappointing, the minister will be able to suggest helpful books, and perhaps some printed prayers which may deepen and enrich your own.

Take care, also, of your Bible-reading. Stake out certain areas from time to time for intelligent study, and pursue such study with the aid of handbooks or introductions, about which the minister, again, will be glad to advise you.

Books on religious subjects, written for laymen, are pouring from the presses today—such books as will deepen your faith, broaden your religious horizons, answer many of your questions. Excellent church journals are published, concerning which your minister will be glad to give you information. Missionary books of absorbing interest are constantly appearing. When Lloyd George wished to speed up munitions manufacture in England, he sent groups of munitions workers through the trenches in Flanders. When they returned to England, the munitions supply rose to meet the demand. When we at home know the splendor and the urgency of the situation in our foreign fields, our prayers and gifts will likewise increase. Do not depend on the minister's sermons alone for the enrichment of your Christian knowledge and experience. Strike out for yourself. Study your Bible and read great religious books.

## 5. DRAW OTHERS TO THE CHURCH

Your friends need the church, and your church needs your friends. In all probability you have friends who tell themselves that they do not need to make an out-and-out commitment of themselves to Christ. But the trouble is that just when they need Christ most their consciences condemn them. They know that they are not enlisted soldiers, entitled to rations, billet, field allowance; the King has called for volunteers, and they have never answered the call. They are only camp followers. So it proves true in many a secret disciple's life that "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Many a man is kept in the time of his greatest need from a rich experience of God's help by a ruthless conscience within him which tells him that he has only flirted with the love of God all his life long. You have friends who need to turn their pale attitude of admiration for Christ into definite, full-blooded allegiance.

And you can appeal to them with an effectiveness which no one else can have. The minister's words they discount because it is his professional duty to speak them. Evangelists they discount, too, and, anyway, there are too many other interesting things for unconverted people to do today than to go to a revival meeting and see if they can hold out against the appeal of the evangelist. Today the church must track down its prospects to their own homes and places of business and invite them by families or one by one. It is often the only way left, and it is the better method anyway.

Here, then, is an open door of service for you. You need not be able to quote long passages of Scripture, or argue theological quibbles, or preach a kind of sermon. You need not even be prepared to pray with your friends, though you should pray for them. It is in many cases the very people who have at first felt most timid in contemplating such Christian service who prove the most effective. For there is an inevitable beauty and appeal in the words of a Christian who really wants to serve his Lord, and really covets for his friend the experience he himself has found but who is so far from self-confidence that his bashfulness is evident.

Those who do this most important work will find that it does almost as much for them as it does for the folk they bring to Christ. For "a truth becomes a hundred times more true to us when we get another man to believe it." A salesman found a satisfaction in this work which he had "never experienced in a \$100,000 order."

The chief chaplain at the Great Lakes Naval Training School during World War I interviewed a large share of eighty thousand young Americans, and found that one of the principal criticisms these young men leveled at the Church was that of its amazing muteness. They said if one of their fellows found a good brand of cigars or a good entertainment he did not keep the discovery a secret. They thought that what we like to call our "reverent reticence" was really our lack of faith in our own religion. If God is real and kind and near and helpful, if he can make weak men strong and lonely hearts glad and defeated lives victorious, how can we keep quiet about it? Jesus still says, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

## 6. PROMOTE A SPIRIT OF LOVE WITHIN THE CHURCH

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you. . . . *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" This is the supreme test. Not listening to sermons, nor engaging in Christian activities, nor even giving money, is the final criterion. The hardest test is that of love. Even the Lord himself, Dr. Charles E. Jefferson has pointed out, could not, after years of patient training, get twelve men to sit down together at a table on the last night of his life without an exhibition of petty irritation and wounded vanity. His supreme prayer for his followers was that they might be one.

When Paul wrote to his converts at Corinth, he was hurt by their idolatry, their greediness, their drunkenness, and their shocking sex immorality but worst of all to him was their wrangling within the church. Some liked one preacher better, some another. Some thought themselves more spiritual than others. Some were lax in conduct; some were strict. And each group despised the other. Paul told them, "Though I could preach with the tongue of men and of angels, though I could pray with great fervency, though I knew all manner of Biblical mysteries, though I had all faith, even to remove mountains, and though I gave away everything, even my life, and yet had not love, I should equal zero!"

And John said: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

"Our immediate task is not to Christianize the world, but to Christianize the Church," says Dr. Jefferson. It is useless, he points out, to preach the brotherhood of all men if we have not realized the brotherhood of Christians within the Church. But if the world sees the warm fire of fellowship on the Church's hearth it will be drawn within.

Study, then, the peace of the church. Refrain from criticism of its minister or its members. Express your views in congregational meeting, but if the majority do not agree with you, acquiesce in the will of the greater number. Be tolerant. Every healthy organization exists in a state of reasonable tension between enthusiasts for that which is new and devotees to that which is old. Both groups have their function, and each needs the check of the other. If you cannot conscientiously acquiesce in the policy of your church, quietly seek one in which you can. But do not create dissension. For he who sins against love within Christ's Church, however faultless his conduct otherwise may be, fails of Christlike spirit in the most important test of all, and deals the deadliest blow of all to the life of the Church.

"Loneliness is the major social evil," Dr. Richard C. Cabot has said. People are entertained enough and organized enough but in our cities they become more and more friendless. Here is the church's great opportunity. Help, then, to make new members at home. In every way possible promote the warmest fellowship within the congregation of which you are a part.

## 7. STAND BY THE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH

The congregation should be "not the minister's field but his force." Its members are "not sheep to be tended but soldiers enlisted for a desperate warfare." Give your minister, then, the utmost loyalty.

You may sometimes be tempted to criticize his sermons. Remember that no human being can maintain the highest level of preaching week after week. He must study, write, speak on many occasions, call, and guide the various activities of the church. His work should be judged with sympathy, and your criticism of him should be constructive. Tell him when he has helped you. Suggest to him ways in which he might help you or others of whose need you know.

Unless you are in particular need of his help, do not expect him to come to see you often. If you are in need, do not expect him to become aware of it by telepathy, but let him know. Remember that if he calls more frequently at another home it may be because its members are indispensable in the work of the church, or have special need of his help, or are losing interest. When he does call at your home it is in order to know you, and to understand your needs in order that they may be met by the worship and work of the church. He wants to meet all the members of the family, and will be sorry if you send the children out of the room. He will not thank you for unfavorable news about other members of the congregation, for he must minister to all its members, and in order to do so needs to think as well of them as possible. He will wish to know, when he calls, how he can help you or anyone of whose need you know. And he will deeply appreciate your confidence if you will give it to him.

He needs your prayers. Every minister knows at times an access of power which he can attribute only to the prayers of his people. And he needs your help. One of the most wearing of his tasks is to discover workers for the activities of the church. He cannot carry all its duties by himself, and he should not even if he could, for that would be to rob his people of the experience and privilege of Christian service. When he comes to you for assistance, then, do not make him hear the words he has already heard only too often, "Can't you find some one else?" Accept the work for which he has chosen you gladly, and save his powers of persuasion, for he has more than enough need for them.

## 8. BE LOYAL TO THE CHURCH

The Church, like every other institution today, is incurring criticism. Doubtless much of this criticism is deserved, and from it we have much to learn. Yet much of this criticism arises from the sheer enmity of the forces of evil. Let the Church move against war, economic injustice, political corruption, crime, liquor, or vice, and the world's hostility is quickly aroused. Church members should be prepared intelligently to defend the good name of the Church, instead of weakly acquiescing in the wholesale criticism of it. It goes without saying, surely, that members of a church should refrain from disparaging its efforts and magnifying its failures, or spreading evil reports of its

members or officers. If trouble arises in the life of the church, the matter should not be aired in public but rather treated as a family affair.

To some new members the church will seem narrow and its ways traditional. They should not despair of it. "The church has no greater need than for men who are dissatisfied with the existing order. It needs the infusion of new blood." Such members will need, however, to remember that they are new, and not demand their way immediately, or without regard for the convictions of others. If they wait, study, pray, and perform such tasks as are committed to them their opportunity should come. Let them make a game out of the achievement of patience and tolerance and the eventual attainment of their hopes for the church. Lemuel Bolles, early national officer of an ex-service organization, replied to a veteran's severe criticism of the organization, "If I were in your position and if my ideas were as positive and my ideals as high as yours, I would get into this organization and remodel it to suit, or break my neck trying."

The church needs your critical loyalty. You will undoubtedly discover aspects of its life and work which need improvement. Help to improve them. Attend congregational meetings and prepare yourself to vote intelligently. State your convictions, but be ready to accept the will of the majority and bide your time, if necessary, until the church is ready to move with you.

The church needs active loyalty. Once when Cyrus was riding in the van of his army, so we read in "The Anabasis," he looked back and saw the column behind him halted. Riding back, he found that the wagon train had stalled in the mud. At a distance, safe from the mud that flew from the struggling horses, stood the silk-robed young nobles of Persia. Cyrus ordered them to fling aside their silken dress and leap against the wheels, or turn their traitor faces home again. Admitting the frequent narrowness and inefficiency of the church, why should any Christian not lend his full strength to Christ's cause?

## 9. GIVE EVIDENCE OF THE POWER OF CHRIST BY A CHRISTLIKE LIFE

It was said of Clerk Maxwell that he "made faith in goodness easy to other men." It is the sermons church members preach by the manner of their lives which, far more than those preached by any minister, bring other people to Christ or drive them away from him. It is not what we say, but what we do or do not do—the laugh with which we do not greet a story, the criticism or cynicism from which we refrain, the slightly shabby business practice we avoid, the easy conformity into which we refuse to fall—that speaks more loudly for Christ than anything we might say to witness for him with our lips.

"Who is the most formidable enemy of a physician?" asked William Lyon Phelps. "Is it another doctor who happens to be a competitor? No. It is a patient who goes around saying, 'I took the medicine that doctor gave me, and it made me worse.' . . . Now if Christianity professes to be able to make men and women better, every church member who is not made better is a serious

argument against the truth of Christianity. All professed Christians who exhibit in their lives selfishness, cheating, hardness of heart, meanness, jealousy, envy, hatred, are terrible indictments against the Christian religion. They are doing their utmost to destroy it. Every one of them might as well walk the streets with a placard on breast and back, proclaiming in large letters, CHRISTIANITY IS A FAILURE."

Lord Kitchener addressed these words to the troops ordered abroad at the beginning of World War I: "Remember that the honor of the British Army depends upon your individual conduct." Just so, the honor of Christ's Church depends on *your* individual conduct.

The worst heresy, so Bishop Fiske has said, is the heresy of those who proclaim their belief in Christ as God, but do not treat him as God. Jesus himself said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

This means that we are not merely to refrain from sensational sins, but also from those less sensational ones such as hypocrisy, worldliness, intolerance, and selfishness, which, one writer has recently said, were the sins which Jesus hated above all others, and which, it may be added, are precisely the ones which, in church members, most often bring Christianity into disrepute among those who are not Christians. Robert Louis Stevenson pointed out our tendency to "make a home for ourselves in the negative virtues and the cowardly vices." Christian morality involves abstention, not only from sexual irregularity and drunkenness, but also from hard bargains with customers or employees. If we take Jesus in earnest, we cannot live for outward show or passing pleasure or physical comfort. Every Christian knows, deep in his heart, that to take Jesus in earnest means a life lived as if the things Jesus stood for were true. That means a life of irreproachable honesty, a life of unflinching kindness, a life which obviously puts first the things of the spirit and not the things of sense. If it can be said of us, after we are gone, that we have made "faith in goodness easy to other men," we shall have witnessed for Christ, not only by word but, in that far more difficult and far more significant way, by the manner of life we have lived.



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"If Jesus Christ and you are together, you must do for him what he cannot do for himself. If there is a kind word that should be spoken today, he cannot say it; you can. He would like to speak it; you must. If there is a deed to be done, a sacrifice to be made, a witness to be borne, you must do it. The gospel must be carried to the regions beyond. He cannot do that; you must. . . . What the Lord cannot do for himself, and I can do for him, that, by his grace, I must do and will.

"The converse is also true. That which he knows you cannot do for yourself, he will."

—*W. Y. Fullerton, The Practice of the Presence of Christ.*

"The Church is the only organization in the world whose function is to recruit, train, and continually inspire men, women, and children to work with the will of God under the leadership of Jesus for an honest and friendly world."

—*E. I. Bosworth.*

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Porter, Eliot, 1889-  
The duties of a church  
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