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DUTIES  
OF THE  
CHURCH MEMBER  
TO THE  
CHURCH.

BY  
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# DUTIES

OF THE

## CHURCH MEMBER TO THE CHURCH.

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 HIS little Manual is intended to awaken attention and to serve as a guide to the chief duties which each of its members owes to the church. Many persons become connected with the church, and are members of it for years, without seeming to recognize the claims it has upon them. They do not reflect upon the obligations which this relation imposes sufficiently to be led to make even an effort for their performance.

It is not proposed to point out all the duties which devolve upon believers to God, to the world and to their own souls, *but simply those which rest upon them as church members and to the church.* These duties are either taught by the Word of God, or are involved in the relationship existing between the church and its members. Each church member is urged to read thoughtfully the suggestions here given, to reflect upon them with self-application, and to regard them as hints opening the way to fuller views of those momentous relations which he sustains to the Church of the living God.

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### DUTY I.

TO PRAY FOR THE CHURCH.

The duty of prayer is placed at the head of the list of duties devolving upon the members of the church because, when it is faithfully performed, other duties become easy and more likely to be fulfilled.

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The great object to be sought in prayer is the influence of the Holy Ghost; and when the Spirit is present in power with any church, then believers are built up in piety; peace and love pervade the body; members are added, and the blessings of the gospel spread more and more throughout the community. It is for all this that we pray when we pray for the Holy Spirit.

To pray for the church is to pray for the advancement of our own spiritual interests; for not only do all its members share in the blessings of the church, but the very act of praying will invigorate every healthful power of the soul. The man who prays habitually and fervently for the cause of Christ will have no coldness in his own heart. He will love the brethren, he will take an interest in whatever pertains to the true welfare of the church, and will show by his whole deportment that he is living near to that divine Lord who, with equal positiveness, has commanded us to ask for the welfare of Zion and promised to answer such petitions.

Duty and privilege, hope and love, interest and benevolence, conspire to lead the Christian to pray day and night with all faith and fervor that God would send down blessings upon his Church. The Church will not flourish without this prayer of her members. Without it, all will languish; with it, she will become as the garden of the Lord, and no drought or storm will be permitted to blight her beauty or fragrance. Let every one of her members, then, cherish such a sense of the duty of prayer for her that it will be impossible for it to be forgotten even for a single day. Let it be regarded as a duty, a privilege, a daily calling, the omission of which is not to be thought of. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

## DUTY II.

### TO ATTEND CHURCH.

The various ordinances of the Church were established by her great Head for the accomplishment of the highest

ends ; they cannot be neglected by her members without their doing so much toward defeating those ends. To neglect them is to help to destroy them. For Christians to neglect the ordinances is to stand in the way of the conversion of sinners, of the edification of believers, of the promotion of God's glory, for which they were appointed.

It is the imperative duty of every professed follower of the Lord Jesus to attend upon all the services of the sanctuary when not prevented by obstacles which are insuperable. It is the spiritual home, and shall the children of the household desert it ?

We say to the members of the church, attend upon all the ordinances, and you honor the dear Lord whose dwelling-place is there. Attend, that you may cheer and help your brethren. Attend, that your example may draw strangers to the sound of the gospel. Attend for your own spiritual profiting, which will be best promoted there. Attend, that by your presence you may cheer and aid your pastor in preaching.

Remember, on the other hand, that your absence will dishonor your Saviour, who comes to be worshipped there. It will grieve, dishearten, and so injure your brethren. It will tend to keep strangers away from the sanctuary. It will prevent you from receiving the blessings which Jesus comes to bestow. It will chill the heart of your pastor, and almost make the words to freeze upon his lips.

Attend upon the second service of the Lord's day, for that is the time when strangers are likely to be present and may be impressed. Attend upon the meeting in the middle of the week, that the distractions of the world may be broken in upon. Be absent from the sanctuary no more than you would be absent from your daily meals, for your soul is dependent upon the one as your body is upon the other.

The habit of attending upon the house of God should be so firmly established by every Christian that he would be sorely uncomfortable if compelled to be absent. God has spoken on this matter, and we must hear : " And let us con-

sider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another."

### DUTY III.

#### TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH.

The support of the ordinances has been distinctly enjoined or implied under all dispensations of religion. It has not been left to mere temporary impulse or inclination, but has been made a matter of Divine institution. This subject needs to be brought before those who connect themselves with a congregation of God's people, for there are multitudes who seem to overlook it, as if they had nothing to do with bearing the expenses necessary to sustain the worship of the sanctuary—an oversight which surely must arise from want of consideration.

When it is remembered that salaries, fuel, light, repairs, insurance and various incidentals have all to be provided for, it will be seen that the whole amount necessary for the support of a church is not small. Every comfort should be provided for the house of God, so that it may not be inferior in taste and attractions to the average of the residences in which its worshippers dwell. Strangers should not be repelled by its neglected appearance. It should attract by the evidences it affords that it is cared for.

Every one should consider that the church is his own Sabbath home; that he is in the full enjoyment of all its privileges; that the well-being of the church is a matter of vital importance to him, and to those who are dear to him; and that consequently it belongs to him to bear a share of its expenses. No one should be satisfied without bearing some part of the expense of conducting the worship of God's house. The resolution of every member of the church should be that of King David: "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." The members of the congregation should be all

the more thoughtful in attending to this matter, as the minister is obviously embarrassed in making appeals concerning it from the pulpit. He cannot urge it without appearing to plead for his own interest ; he ought not, therefore, to be put under the necessity of so doing.

The matter will appear in a more impressive light when it is considered that the church has no other means of support than that which is furnished by its members. There is, fortunately, in this land no government supply on which it can depend. The appropriations made according to their own choice, by those who attend upon the ordinances, are the sole reliance of the church in this respect.

No member, then, but should do his or her part. The principle to be observed concerning the support of the ordinances of worship is old, equitable, and established by the wisdom and authority of Jehovah himself. It is this : "Every man should give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee."

It need only be said further that appropriations for the support of the church can be made by a family renting a pew, or by two or three individuals combining in the renting of a pew, or by special donations in the collection-boxes on the Sabbath, or as the custom of the church may be.

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#### DUTY IV.

##### TO DRAW OTHERS TO THE CHURCH.

As soon as one has himself found a spiritual home it becomes his imperative duty to endeavor to bring others into the enjoyment of the same blessing. To long for the salvation of others is the instinct of the Christian's new nature, the prompting of gratitude for the blood-bought blessings he has himself received, and the constraining influence of his new and all-absorbing love to Jesus. It is the believer's nature and his calling to strive to bring his fellow-men to believe. Every man, woman and child has some advantages, some influences, some power, by which they may bring others to the house of God. And how much good would be accomplished if Christians generally were faithful

in this duty! Then the attendance at the sanctuary would be constantly increasing; new converts would be added to the kingdom, and the gospel would be incessantly exerting a wider and deeper influence throughout society.

Every member of the church should aid in this blessed enterprise. What a privilege is this!—even that of being a co-worker with Jesus in that undertaking upon which His heart was set. Every private member can help to fill up the church. Very much of the success of the church in this respect depends upon the people themselves. It is seldom that the minister can do it unless he is aided by them. The co-operation of both is needed in ordinary cases.

Let every one, then, enter upon this work of bringing others to the house of God with all promptness. Begin with your own relatives and near neighbors. Then cast about you to find others who are habitually neglecting the sanctuary, and whom you may possibly influence to come with you into its open doors. Study well how you may best succeed in conferring this blessing upon them and in rendering the church this aid. Use gentle, but earnest and persevering, efforts to bring them in where they will be under the sound of the truth, and in the atmosphere which is made sacred by the presence of the loving holy Saviour. Never forget the high calling of all who are followers of Jesus—even that of being “fishers of men.” Listen to the stirring command of the Master: “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in; that my house may be filled.” This principle was inculcated of old: “Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law.”

#### DUTY V.

##### TO STUDY THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.

The promotion of the harmony of the church is an object which every one of its members should set definitely before him, study constantly, and strive after with all his might.



It is surprising how much stress is laid on this duty in the Word of God. A full view of it is almost startling; as if it were the one great thing for which the whole church should labor. See how it appeared to the saints of old: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." See what Paul thought of it when he exhorted: "Be at peace among yourselves;" and again: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Listen to the loving John as in such tender appeals he exhorts his children in the Lord to love one another. Above all, consider how Christ urged this peace, at one time giving to his disciples a new commandment that they should love one another; at another declaring, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another; and at another breathing peace upon them as if it were his crowning blessing. With rapture is its beauty described: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

To appreciate that peace the better we should contemplate the deplorable condition of a church which is without it. Who can adequately depict the evils of church strifes? Who can describe their loss to the church, their influence upon the world, their tendency to drive away the Holy Ghost, and their wretched results upon the individuals engaged in them? They render them miserable, sour their temper, eat into the life of their piety, and are very often followed by the retributions of God's providence even in this world. Animositities among the followers of Christ, the Prince of Peace, are horrible. With perfect dread should they be shunned.

Next to prayer for the loving spirit of Jesus, the one thing needed here is self-restraint. To dwell in harmony we must sometimes make sacrifice of our own feelings. We are not always right, nor can we expect always to have our own way even if right. We must study the good-feeling of others; we must seek not to irritate by communicating to them what is unpleasant. We must not indulge in the exasperating practice of fault-finding and complaining. We must bear



with the weaknesses and failings of others, and put the best construction upon their acts. We cannot know all the motives by which they are actuated. We cannot see the circumstances which lead them to act as they do. It is more than probable that if we were situated precisely as they are, our course would be just the same.

The determination of every one should be that no effort shall be spared in promoting the peace of the church. It should be a fixed purpose not to strive, but to be like Him of whom it is said, "He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." Oh, let it be the noble, noble aim of every one to pursue the Christlike course of disseminating good feeling, and making the circle in which he moves happier and more loving.

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## DUTY VI.

### TO GUARD THE GOOD NAME OF THE CHURCH.

The enmity of the world against the Church is so intense that all means are used by which injuries can be inflicted on her. It is the unremitting aim of all that is satanic to bruise the seed of the woman. And of all the means by which this hostility is carried on, there is none more formidable or more frequently resorted to than that of striving to damage the good name of the Church, and so her power for blessing the world. Hence the demand that every one of the church's members should guard that good name, both by defending it against assaults, and by seeing to it that he does not himself wound it by unnecessarily exposing the sores of which he may be conscious.

The good name of the church is her great power. With it she is irresistible; without it, she is weak and will be despised. The enemy knows this, and hence the incessant efforts to soil it. With this good name untarnished, her own members are constrained to toil and suffer for her glory; even the world, while it would destroy her, is compelled to do her reverence; men are easily drawn to espouse her cause and

receive her blessings; and honor unceasing is rendered to her Divine Lord. In this good name of the church there is a power which contains blessings for the world far greater than men ever knew.

Now it may be said emphatically to every one of her members, This good name of the church is a sacred trust committed to your keeping. Be sensitive to it; be watchful that no stain shall rest upon it; be zealous to defend it whenever unjustly assailed. To this end do not tell the world of the sins of the church of which you may have knowledge; do no magnify the failings of her members; do not disparage your own church in comparison with others; do not take up an evil report against her; do not censure your church, her officers or her members, but rather defend her when right, and use every possible effort to have what you think is wrong amended.

We should not unnecessarily tell the outside world the troubles of our church. They are our family troubles; why expose them? The world will not understand all their extenuating circumstances; it will only gloat over the defects of those who profess to be Christians. On the contrary, be it ours to live down in quietness the reproaches for which we may know there is too much foundation, and which, rather than recklessly repeat, we should personally mourn over in shame before God. Be it ours to do our part toward making the Church worthy of the good name against which the shafts of enemies will be hurled in vain. Be it the study of every one of her members to do his part toward making the Church so truly excellent that with just pride in her he can take up the glowing language of the Divine song: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following."

#### DUTY VII.

TO STAND BY THE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

This duty might well have a manual devoted to itself alone. Only the more prominent points of it can here be

touched upon. If the pastor occupied the position of a private Christian, it might seem arrogating too much to ask for the discharge of special duties toward him. But he is not simply a private Christian. Involved in the performance of the duties of his office are the interests of the whole church and of each of its members; and hence the duties owed to him are of the highest moment. The spiritual welfare of every member of the church is connected with his ministry. Manifestly, it is the duty of every member of the church to pray for its pastor. He needs his people's prayers in order that he may truly and faithfully interpret the Word of God and preach it impressively. He needs them that he may wisely discharge the duties of the pastoral calling, many of which are so difficult and delicate, and the issues of which will be eternal. If Christians do not pray for him, he will make mistakes and be unfaithful, and the interests committed to him will languish. If they do pray for him, the blessing of God will make his work easy and successful. He needs such prayers more than other men because his ministrations pertain to the things of the Holy Spirit, which is pre-eminently the gift bestowed in answer to prayer, and because such vast interests are involved in his work. Oh, then, let prayer for the pastor be the habit of every member—prayer most earnest.

It is the duty and the interest of every church member to defend the good name of his pastor—not only his name for integrity, but also his reputation for industry and fidelity in his office. The good name of the pastor is his power. With it, he is mighty for good; without it, he is shorn of both honor and strength. And that good name of the minister is liable to be assailed by the ungodly world so as to injure the cause through him. As a public man and a recognized leader in the cause of Christ, he is a target for the arrows of the enemy from many a quarter. Let him be ever so upright and watchful, yet these shafts of detraction will be shot at him. He will at times be condemned, even by Christians, when the motives for his actions are not seen or understood, and when, if they were, he would be praised

rather than censured. By all the members of the church, therefore, the good name of the minister should be regarded as a sacred trust, and should be defended by them as tenderly as their own, for their own and their children's interests are clearly connected with it.

There is a habit, often indulged in without thought, of criticising the minister's sermon, and that sometimes before children and those who are indifferent or unfriendly to religion—a habit that does much harm. It destroys the effect of that sermon for good. It tends to produce prejudice against minister and message. It is unjust as well as unkind; for there is no minister who does not sometimes preach an inferior sermon. He often must come short of his own standard, even. By bodily ailments or temporary distractions, or by various calls upon his time, it is often rendered absolutely impossible for him to make the needed preparation, and the sermon has to suffer. Allowance should be made for this. And let it be hinted that the fault may be in the hearer rather than in the message.

Church members should co-operate with the pastor. Help your minister; he cannot accomplish much unaided. Do not let him stand alone while there is such a vast field of work lying around him and you. Help him by attending faithfully upon his ministry; by being always present and seated so near to him that he may feel the influence of your sympathy; by receiving the Word attentively from his lips; and by bringing others under the sound of his message. Do not discourage him by being absent. Assist him by informing him, when there are those who are sick, or sorrowing, or spiritually awakened.

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### DUTY VIII.

TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BENEVOLENT OBJECTS OF THE CHURCH.

Giving to the cause of God is an act of worship. The Scriptures put this beyond question: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." There is scarcely a surer method of manifesting our love and the sacrifices we are willing to make for Him who gave up all,

even His life, for us. It is an act of worship which is sure to be followed by the Divine blessing, for the promise is, "Them that honor me I will honor;" also, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." On the other hand, the individual or church that will not render unto the Lord the gifts which he asks will certainly not prosper, for the warning is, "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." It is the manifest duty of every one who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ to give regularly to His blessed cause. The *amount* to be given by each is a matter purely between himself and his God. The duty is simply that each one should do something, remembering that when we give as God hath prospered us, the larger gifts of the rich and the smaller ones of the poor are equally acceptable in His sight who looks only upon the heart. We are merely assured about this matter that "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

### DUTY IX.

#### TO ADOPT SOME BRANCH OF CHURCH WORK.

The rule of duty which God has given us leaves no room for question as to the solemn obligation which rests upon every Christian to help in that great work which the gospel has yet to do in the world. It is no more certain that any one is a Christian than that he has been made such in order that he may do his part in the work of Christ. The old stirring call still rings out, "To the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty!" It is no unmeaning thing that a part of the law of the kingdom, as Christ himself announced it is, "Son go work to-day in my vineyard." When the glorious King went up into heaven, to be absent for ages as to His bodily presence, He left the memorable charge for His people as they should successively enter His kingdom, "To every man his work."

The first thing for every member of the church to do is to study out very carefully what, according to his talents and opportunities, he can do. There is teaching in the Sabbath-

school, visiting the poor, the ignorant and the sick, writing letters, helping in the Dorcas Society, taking part in the pastor's aid association, collecting for benevolent objects, aiding in the service of song, and many other branches of work, one or more of which should be selected as a special department of effort. But no person should wait for an organization; whatever his hands find to do he should do with his might, and at once. Organizations greatly help Christian work; but while they should be used to the utmost, it is better for each one to work for Christ just where he is, just as he has the opportunity, and just in that scriptural way which promises the highest success.

One thing to be studiously avoided is waiting for some great undertaking before we attempt anything. It is the constant doing of little things—the daily, hourly speaking kind words, alleviating little ills, conferring little favors, honoring Christ in small matters—that makes up the glorious aggregate of a Christ-like life. Something should be attempted all the time, organization or no organization. The call upon every member of his Church is to be at the Master's work, whether the special thing of the moment be great or small. How solemn are the words of warning!—"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Let each one, then, work on until the service of Christ shall grow to be his delight. It may become such, and then his life on earth will be a constant blessing both to himself and the society in which he moves.

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## DUTY X.

### TO HELP IN THE SABBATH-SCHOOL OF THE CHURCH.

The Sabbath-school is the activity of the Church exerted in the department of Bible study and teaching, and especially among the young. It is the plan which the wisdom and piety of the Church, under the guidance of Christ, who is ever with her, have wrought out through generations for the purpose of bringing the children and youth to the salvation of Christ, of indoctrinating them in the principles of the gospel, and of training them in habits of benevolence. It is a

field of Christian enterprise on which God's blessing has most signally rested from the beginning. The work in the Sabbath-school is an easy one, inasmuch as there is no difficulty in understanding exactly what is to be done. There is no branch of Christian effort that will pay more certainly, more quickly and more abundantly, and the results of which will extend so far in both time and space. All can do something here, so that it is a field ready for the hand of every one. It is the best-known method of reaching abroad after the outlying masses of society and bringing them from utter disregard of Divine things into the saving power of the gospel. According as its mission is successful, it is training the rising generation in that path of virtue and godliness of which salvation is the crown. The young are its chief aim; and when it saves them, it gets them to devote their whole lives, with the bloom of their youth, to the glory of their Master.

A cause so noble as this may surely claim the co-operation of every member of the Church. All should become connected in some way with it, either as officers, teachers, missionaries to gather in neglected children, or as members of its classes. The aim should be kept before him by every member of the Church that not a youth or child in the whole community shall be left without the Sabbath-school. Means should be furnished by which its comfort and success will be secured. Prayer should go up daily from every heart that the blessing of God may rest upon it. Upon each member of the Church it is enjoined most emphatically: Go into the Sabbath-school and take a class, if there be one needing you; if not, go out and gather a class for yourself; if that cannot be done, then fill the place of some teacher who is necessarily absent for the day; and if that is not needed, then go into some adult class and both give and receive benefit by your presence. If you postpone enlisting in the Sabbath-school, you will become more and more indifferent to it, and then the children whom you might have blessed may either depart from its classes or pass away from earth while you delay. Oh, be *prompt*, PROMPT, PROMPT! for the work is great and souls are perishing.