

OFFICIAL REPORT

Fifteenth International Christian Endeavor . . Convention . . . Washington D. C., July 8-13, 1896

PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT . . .
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OFFICIAL REPORT

OF THE

FIFTEENTH INTERNATIONAL

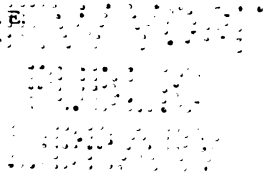
CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR CONVENTION,

HELD IN

CENTRAL HALL, TENT WILLISTON, TENT WASHINGTON, TENT ENDEAVOR,
AND THE CHURCHES,

WASHINGTON, D. C., JULY 8-13, 1896.

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PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT,
UNITED SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR,
646 WASHINGTON ST., BOSTON, MASS., U. S. A.
1896.

FIFTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES OF CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

WASHINGTON, D. C., JULY 8 - 13, 1896.



PRAISE God for the great Washington Christian Endeavor Convention!

It was decidedly the best of all our fifteen feasts of tabernacles; a gathering of power and promise.

The following pages present a picture of its scenes and an account of its events. Let us first take a review of its prominent characteristics.

Foremost—as was hoped would be the case—is its spirituality. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord,” was appropriately the “committee of ’96’s” motto. An unusual number of eminent evangelists gave earnest service throughout the Convention,—Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman, D.D., Rev. B. Fay Mills, Mr. C. N. Hunt, Rev. H. M. Wharton, D.D., Rev. Ford C. Ottman, Rev. F. M. Lamb, Commander Booth-Tucker, Mr. Ira D. Sankey, Rev. Ralph Gillam, and others. Boisterousness and frivolity were conspicuously absent. Over all the meetings brooded the earnest devotion and prayerful consecration that are more and more largely characteristic of Christian Endeavor. Not a few conversions were

made in some of these meetings. Thousands were quickened to a higher spiritual life.

Though held in a city of unsurpassed attractiveness to the patriot,

services in the other tents. A period of silent prayer preceded the preaching of the sermon by Rev. James I. Vance, D.D., of Nashville, whose subject was "The New Faith of the Old Gospel."

Sermon by Rev. James I. Vance, D.D., Nashville, Tenn.

TEXT.—May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? — *Acts xvii. 19.*

What is true religion? Christianity makes a distinct and unique contribution to the solution of that problem. Religion is as old as the race and older, but there is that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is ever new. We speak of the "old, old story;" we sing of the "old-time religion;" we read of "the faith once delivered to the saints;" but the fact is there is that in the Gospel which never grows old, and which to the men of every generation will go down under no other caption than "the new."

Worship is no new thing. Men have always worshipped something, somehow. Prayer is not new. Reverence, adoration, faith in the hereafter, is as old as the race. But as Paul preached Jesus Christ in Athens, the scholarly men said, "Here is something brand new, something that has never before suggested itself to the thought of the world in connection with religion; something out of the ordinary and commonplace." They were philosophers who said this; not twilight mystics, but men of profound thought, before the majesty of whose intellectual greatness the world still bows, and in whose presence certain agnostics of our day, who strut across the stage, squeaking themselves hoarse with "We don't know; we hope so, but we don't know," seem but pigmies.

These philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics, struck with the originality of Paul's faith, gathered around him and said, "May we know what this *new* doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?"

The Gospel is not novel, but new. This characteristic of his teachings Christ emphasized again and again. He approached man's religious life from new standpoints, punctured spiritual delusions, and upheaved effete customs. A common phrase on his lips was, "Ye have heard how it hath been said by them of old times, but I say unto you —" He spake as never man spake. Jesus was the greatest iconoclast that ever lived; and these people who boil with indignation in their frenzied hostility to everything that is new would have been found in the company that tried to cry down our Lord into silence.

The new in a doctrine is not always its damnation. It is well enough to revere the Fathers and to respect the way the thing has always been done. Still, the world can never get to anything better along that track. Suppose the Fathers had always acted on the principle that they must do the thing the way it always had been done? To-night we should be back in the year one. The best way is not the way it always has been done, but the way it never has been done; and the world has moved out into light only because every age has had some great souls whose faces were turned toward the morning.

The new in Christianity has ever been that which was hard to accept. We naturally read our customs, prejudices, and experiences into everything about us. Hence, when Apostolic Christianity preached its doctrines to surrounding Paganism and Judaism, the tendency was for the environment to project its preconceived opinions of religion into the new faith. The result was that very early Christianity was corrupted. Pagan feast-days found their way into the Christian calendar, Judaistic rites fastened themselves upon the Christian cult. There was a paganized Christianity, or a Christianized paganism. In so far as Christianity has failed, its failure has been due to the failure to apprehend and lift up into importance those celestial marks by which Jesus Christ has differentiated his Gospel from every other religion under heaven.

These marks are the "new faiths" of the old Gospel, and together they constitute the sum total of true religion.

What is true religion? What are its fundamental characteristics? It touches three realms in the individual life: first, that of the consciousness; second, that of conduct; third, that of destiny. What is true religion in its

contact with the inner life? What is true religion in its influence upon conduct? What is true religion in its conception of destiny? Dr. James Stalker has given this admirable summary of the religion for young men. He says, "Let it be not a creed, but an experience; not a restraint, but an inspiration; not an insurance for the next, but a programme for the present, world."

I do not see why we should have a different religion for the old and for the young, one sort of religion for men and another for women. God's salvation is one, a quality of life rather than a form of character, and identically the same for all, always. He has never saved but in one way. Therefore what is good religion for young men is good religion for all men, for all sexes, for all classes, everywhere.

Nevertheless, I think Dr. Stalker's admirable summary states but one side of the truth. I should rather put it this way: True religion is not only a creed, but an experience; not only a restraint, but an inspiration; not only an insurance for the next, but a programme for the present, world.

In the realm of consciousness, Christianity is not only a creed, but an experience. In the realm of conduct, Christianity is not only a restraint, but an inspiration. In the realm of destiny, Christianity is not only an insurance for the next, but a programme for the present, world. These are the new faiths of the old Gospel.

True religion is not only a creed, but an experience.

It is certainly a creed. Think of having a religion without a creed! Think of trying to believe, and having nothing to believe in! You might as well try to nourish an elephant with syllabub, or hang a planet on a moonbeam, as to have a religion without a creed. Creeds are to religion what the bones are to the body, what scaffolding is to a house. They are not life, but they are essential to life; and a vast deal of the minimizing of creeds that is indulged in nowadays is either palpable absurdity or sheer ecclesiastical demagoguery.

But creeds are nothing new. The world has always had its creeds—not so good, to be sure, in the quality of the truths embodied as the creeds of Christianity; but admirable, nevertheless. The dearth of the world has never been a dearth of abstract truth. The main trouble has been that the truth has been a thing apart from the life.

Christ teaches that a creed is worth nothing by itself. It must be incarnated. It must be clothed with flesh and blood. The place to keep it is not on a parchment page or a library shelf, but in the life. That is the glorious thing about the person of Jesus. He is divine truth clothed in flesh and blood. He is heaven's creed incarnated.

We must do vastly more than hold our creeds. We must experience them. When Nicodemus came to Christ to inquire the way of life, Jesus said, "Nicodemus, you must be born again. You are a teacher of the Jews, and are familiar with religion as a system. It must become your life."

To the woman at the well in Samaria, he said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." What are we to understand by that central and cardinal fact of the new dispensation—the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the believer's life—if it be not that our creeds are to become our experience, and our truths to pulsate with our life-beat?

Here is the mistake which many of us have made. We have deemed it sufficient to stop with an orthodox subscription. The Church has had too much of the spirit of a North Carolina elder, who was denouncing evangelists as unpresbyterian; and when asked whether the evangelists were not saving souls, replied, "Yes, brethren; but for God's sake, let's save them according to the constitution."

We have substituted ecclesiastical machinery for Holy Ghost energy. We have mistaken pleasurable emotions and approval of pious efforts for regenerated life. There is many a man who will applaud to the echo Daniel's allegiance to God, but who will not make the first effort to live Daniel's life. That is not Christianity; it is only baptized paganism. You can't make a

lawyer out of a ream of legal cap and a copy of the State code. You can't make a physician out of a box of pills and a case of surgical instruments. You can't make a merchant out of a show-window and a full-page advertisement in the Sunday morning papers. Neither can you make a saint out of the Shorter Catechism and the Prayer-Book.

True religion is an experience. It is God in the life. It is not so much copying after Christ as it is having Christ formed within you, the hope of glory. The denominational name is not the great thing. The experience is the same for all churches. What makes one a child of God in the Presbyterian Church is precisely the same as that which makes him God's child in the Baptist, Methodist, or Episcopal Church. It is the experience of God's life. The trouble too often is that we lift our denominationalism into undue importance. Men come into contact with our ordinances and forms, and are made churchmen. We need Christians rather than churchmen; and it were as easy for a boy to become an astronomer by looking through a telescope as for one to become God's child by subscribing to a creed.

Wanted: A religion that is not only a creed but an experience, a religion that incarnates its convictions until its truths pulsate with the heart-throb of its own being.

True religion is not only a restraint, but an inspiration.

It is certainly restraint. It is manifestly a poor religion that does not put fetters on vice and curb the unholy appetites within us. The Gospel frowns down on all that is sinful, saying to every disciple, "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." Calvary is not in conflict with Sinai. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law.

"In vain we call old notions fudge,
And bend our conscience to our dealing;
The Ten Commandments will not budge,
And stealing *will* continue stealing."

But there are numbers who stop here. Their piety exhausts itself with a restraint. They regard religion as a pruning-knife whose only mission is to lop off their excesses and debaucheries. If you ask them what it means to be a Christian, they will tell you that it means not to do so and so. They dwell much on what they must surrender. It is a dreary prospect that confronts them,—sacrifice, self-denial, Puritanism. Christ moved on away beyond that. He substituted the "Thou shalt" for the "Thou shalt not." He taught that religion was to be a restraint, to be sure, but a restraint only because it had become a glorious inspiration. He put a spring in the step and a song in the heart of all those who follow him, when he said, "If ye *love* me, keep my commandments." Here is a black abyss of awful danger, and yonder is a man running from it with all his might. You do not need to build a barrier to keep him from toppling over the brink into that black pit of horrors. His safety is in that which speeds him in the other direction. There are Christians who crawl as near to the brink of the non-permissible as possible, and who think that the Gospel's mission is to exercise some sort of restraint that will keep them from falling quite over. The true Christian needs no such restraint. His face fronts away from evil. He is running Godward with all his might. His inspiration is his restraint.

I do not believe that religion was ever intended to be an incubus to life. We have trouble enough without making our faith an additional burden. The Gospel is intended to help us front life's duties with courage, endure its misfortunes with serenity, surmount its obstacles with hope, and achieve its victories with humility. What an unspeakable blunder to quench all this with the dismal creed that one's piety is as potent as it is sombre, and that glory and gloom are synonymous!

Away with all such. The religion that God gives is an inspiration. He curbs the evil by enabling us to fall in love with the good. The religion that would capture the world must be an inspiration. The faith of those heroic souls whose sacrifices and martyrdoms have glorified the history of the Church has

been not merely a restraint, but an inspiration. The men and women who this hour, in far distant heathen lands, amid privation and persecution, proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, have for the sustenance of their souls not a dismal restraint, but a glorious inspiration. While Parliaments and Senates, while statesmen and sovereigns, have let a year and a half go by in discussing what shall be done to stop the atrocities of the brutal Turk and minister to the pitiable sufferings of stricken Armenia, a woman more than seventy years of age, with a red cross on her breast, has crossed the seas and mountain wilderness, carrying bread and love to the starving thousands of that smitten land. God bless Clara Barton! Hers is not a religion of restraint, but of unconquerable inspiration.

Fellow Endeavorers, if your religion is to bless the world it must quit thinking of what it needs to sacrifice. It must be song, not dirge. There must be some magnetism, some glory-crown, upon it that will transform its very defeats into victories. It is said that a brave British officer led his regiment through the darkness of the night, over a dreary trackless waste, guided only by one bright star, on which he kept his eye steadily fixed. In the gray dawn of the next morning, when the battle was joined, he was the first to fall, mortally wounded. As his superior officer leaned over him, the dying man's brow was mantled with a blush of pride, as he said, "Did n't I guide them straight, sir?"

May we see the star, my brothers. May the glorious hope with which God dowers his children shine out so bright on the sky yonder that it shall be our guide through all the wilderness and night of this lifetime. Then what matters it if death does come in the morning. It will be given us to look up into the face of him who is the great Captain of our Salvation, and say, "Did n't I guide them straight?"

Wanted: A religion that is not only a restraint, but an inspiration; a restraint because it is an inspiration.

True religion is not only an insurance for the next, but a programme for the present world.

It is certainly an insurance for the next world. Think of a religion without a hereafter! It is like a kingdom without a monarch, or a nation without citizens, or a ship without a sea on which to sail. Think of religion without the supernatural! It is stark idiocy. A good woman in Nashville, where I live, has a sceptical husband. He is troubled about the supernatural; can not believe in the supernatural. Some time ago she went to one of our pastors, and, telling him of her husband's spiritual difficulties, asked him to preach a special sermon on "The Supernatural." He consented, and laid himself out in the construction of an elaborate discourse that would annihilate the most pugnacious scepticism of the supernatural. The Sabbath morning came for the delivery of this masterly piece of pulpit apologetics, and the good woman was there early, and with her infidel husband occupied a conspicuous seat in a front pew. Hardly had the text been announced and the preacher well begun his introduction when his sceptical auditor dropped his head and started for the land of Nod. He slumbered soundly through the entire sermon, awaking only to catch the flashes of the closing pyrotechnics in the preacher's peroration. The minister left his pulpit that day a sadder but a wiser man, convinced that the only effect of his sermon had been to make a supernatural fool of himself in attempting to discuss religion with a man who began by denying the existence of the supernatural, without which there can be no religion.

But religion is not all supernatural and hereafter. It is a mistake to suppose that the Gospel is only a scheme by which to dodge hell, or a contrivance by which to get into heaven. Selfishness is none the less damnable because it gets itself baptized with the name of religion. True religion is vastly more than insurance against fire in the world to come on the one hand, or an endowment policy for the hereafter, on the other.

It is chiefly a programme for the present world. Christ taught this unmistakably. He said something about the hereafter, to be sure, but only enough to assure us that it is there, and that the way to attain the best there is to be and do the best here. When we are converted we are started out on service.

We are not to be so much concerned about getting up to heaven as with getting heaven down to earth. All that Christ had to say to the woman taken in adultery was, "Go, and sin no more." When Zaccheus was converted, instead of regaling his religious imagination with visions of the bliss of paradise, he gave half his goods to the poor, and to all whom he had defrauded he restored fourfold. No wonder the people began to ask whether the end of the world was at hand. If a few conversions like that were to take place here in Washington, we would begin to suspect that the millennium was just over the hill-top.

Wanted: A religion that is not only an insurance for the next, but a programme for the present, world; that goes about doing good now; that can exchange its surplus for a trowel and melt its dogmas into deeds; that founds asylums and hospitals, visits the sick, comforts the disheartened, clothes the naked, and that by thus making this life worth while, makes heaven a surer heritage.

The new faiths of the old Gospel! Let our religion be all of this and it will need no further defence. We have various kinds of evidences for the divine origin of the Christian religion,—prophecies, miracles, providences, evidences external and internal. It seems to me there should be something in the Gospel itself to certify its divinity. The sun does not need to prove that it shines. It just shines. So, if Christianity is of divine origin, there should be that within it that would ray out the divinity; and there is. Let the Gospel be itself and it will need no other apologetics.

Ninety-nine hundredths of all the attacks made by infidelity are directed against a caricature of Christianity. Men have gone down into their prejudices and preconceived opinions, and brought up a conception which they have called the Gospel, and they have attacked that.

Infidelity has taken it for granted that Christianity is only a creed, a formula of words, a dry, dead dogma, and it has pitched into that. Perhaps it has rendered service of some value in exposing mental frauds and heaping sarcasm on the pharisaism that professes more than it puts in practice. Christ himself has done as much.

But wait till the creed becomes an experience, wait till the truth takes hold of the life, substituting base passions, transforming character, begetting higher ideals; then infidelity's guns are spiked. Let the sceptic himself get an experience of God in his own life, let him form a personal acquaintance with the Almighty, and he will get a conviction of the reality of religion which all the devils of doubt can not quench. Infidelity has taken it for granted that religion is only a restraint, and it has ridiculed the endless forms, the petty rules, the prayers and liturgies, the sacraments and vestments, with which the mortal would fain fit himself for immortality. But wait till a man's religion becomes an inspiration. Watch it lifting him out of selfishness and vice, and sending him out to do the best and most self-sacrificing things for the world. Infidelity has no ridicule for that, and its shaft falls harmless from an unnerved hand.

Again, infidelity has taken it for granted that the Gospel is only an insurance for the world to come. It has denounced the *a fortiori* God who brings creatures into existence to be damned; or after he has done his utmost, can only keep a certain proportion of them out of the torments of hell-fire. It has branded as infamous the God who, sitting safe in some distant heaven, sates his greed for adoration on the prayers of his victims, while humanity writhes in the throes of innumerable ills.

But wait till it gets a better conception of God. Wait till infidelity sees divinity, in the person of Jesus Christ, coming down into the lost world to carry out a programme of infinite sympathy and transcendent relief for suffering brothers and sisters. Infidelity can not criticise that God. Then wait till men and women baptized with the Christ-Spirit go about the same blessed ministry, reaching out helping hands to all around them, and finding God in the pauper at their door and the consumptive in their hospital. That Gospel is not infamous; it is divine! It needs no trumpet blast to announce it, for itself is its sufficient vindication.

You say you can not believe in the hereafter. It is far more important that you believe in the now and the here.

These are the new faiths of the old Gospel. They clothe Calvary with perennial rejuvenescence. This is the sort of religion for which this Christian Endeavor movement among the youth of militant Christendom stands. We do not make creeds; we try to be the creed. We do formulate rules that shall act as barriers to keep us from falling into the devil's domains, but we try to get so far over on God's territory that no barrier shall ever be needed. We have a blessed hope for that life beyond death's shadow, but we believe it is to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for immortality that the gates of light swing large and free. We believe that the things which unite us are greater than the things which divide us, and so we stretch hands electric with the fellowship of grace across denominational walls, and salute one another in the new faiths of the old Gospel,—not only a creed, but an experience; not only a restraint, but an inspiration; not only an insurance for the next, but a programme for the present, world.

With that experience surging within us, with that conduct making seraphic every ministry, and with that destiny arching its glory across our pathway day by day may we go back to our churches and homes from this place where we have seen the Lord.

We shall need him to go with us. He himself is the Gospel. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the life, our experience. He is the truth, our inspiration. He is the way, our example as we try day by day to make religion a programme for this present world.

Don't you see what it all comes to at last? The "new faiths of the old Gospel" means, not the dead Christ, but the Christ of Galilee and Bethlehem and Calvary alive in you and me who walk the earth to-day.

There is an old Indian legend that once the Great Spirit visited his people, and, before he went away, promised to return again. That they might recognize him on his return, he left his image on the stone face of the mountain. It is said that one old Indian gazed constantly upon the stone face by day, dreamed of it by night, and looked often and anxiously into the faces of his brothers and sisters to see if he could distinguish its lineaments there. At last, after the nation had been purified by peace, they looked into the old prophet's face and discovered that all unconsciously it had been transformed into the likeness of the Great Spirit, who had returned and become incarnate in his rapt follower.

Only a stumbling story of a heathen people, but it is the parable of Christ and his disciple. May we long for his coming with such intense yearning that directly we shall be what we would see, and until the old, old story of Samaria and Gennesaret, of Capernaum and Bethsaida, and of the Christ who glorified these holy places with his blessed presence shall live anew in the faiths of us who try to follow him.

The hymn "Scatter Sunshine" was sung, and then Mr. Shaw began the consecration service with a brief but earnest address urging all his hearers to take Jesus Christ into their lives and live as he would have them live.

Then each state, territory, and foreign land represented in the Convention was called upon, and one delegate from each arose to his turn and responded by a verse of Scripture, or of a hymn, or by a word of greeting and love, renewing vows of loyalty to the Saviour. In a number of instances the whole delegation arose and recited the chosen text in unison, or sang the verse.

It was a most beautiful and impressive service, and a spirit of deep reverence pervaded the whole vast assemblage. At the close four

verses of the hymn "Just As I Am" were sung softly, sweetly, as a prayer.

Then came the Mizpah benediction, the hymn "God Be with You Till We Meet Again," and the last meeting at Tent Williston was a thing of the past.

Tent Endeavor.

Tent Endeavor held the largest crowd in its short but eventful experience the closing night. The throngs were early entering its openings, and long before the hour for the meeting to begin arrived the streamers were a-tremble with the vibration of the songs poured out beneath them. Half a dozen different hymns were being sung simultaneously in different sections of the audience, and yet no inharmonious results were observable. In the seating of the delegates the representatives of the various States were grouped together, the various State delegations having been divided into three parts, so that each could be represented in all of the three tents, where such important exercises were to be held. When the regular praise service began the singers who had been following their own leaders joined right heartily, under the baton of Mr. Excell, and after "Keep Step with the Master" was rendered a grand chorus outpoured, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

The presiding officer, Secretary John Willis Baer, announced that Rev. F. W. Gunsaulus, D.D., of Chicago, who was expected to have delivered the sermon, was unavoidably absent. He read a telegram announcing that death in Dr. Gunsaulus's church prevented his attendance, and a great chorus of regretful exclamations arose, but quickly changed to pleasurable applause when Rev. Dr. Wm. Patterson, of Toronto, Can., was announced to take the noted Chicago preacher's place. Mr. Excell sang, by request, "Let a Little Sunshine In." There was singing by the Hampton Octette. Again the Endeavorers were treated to the peculiar singing heard only among Southern negroes. Now plaintive as a wail, now joyful as a pæan, the voices of the boys arose in quaint unison, and there was no one in the audience, probably, who was not touched or impressed by the singing. The devotional exercises were conducted by Rev. Thomas Marshall, D.D., of Chicago, Ill., closing with a strong and impressive prayer. Mr. Baer, in a few complimentary words about the choir, announced that it would sing the anthem, "Awake the Song." The music was rendered in a truly splendid manner, and the applause was so great that the anthem was repeated. There was more applause when Mr. Baer announced that the composer of the anthem was Mr. Excell.

That popular Canadian trustee, Rev. William Patterson, then preached the sermon. He was received with a glorious Chautauqua salute. His eloquent sermon was suggested by the "prophesying upon dry bones" of Ezekiel, and was an earnest presentation of the power we all can gain through brave and entire obedience to the Spirit. "It is better to be a man," said he, "than to be an angel. We can do a