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THE PASTOR AND APOLOGETICS.

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APOLOGETICS is that theological science which treats of the rational proofs that Christianity is the supernatural, and so the exclusive, the final—in a word, the absolute religion.

I. It is repeatedly said that, whatever may be the case with the professional theologian, the practical pastor has no need of, because no use for, this science.

Various grounds are urged for this objection. It is maintained, for example, that the truth of God does not require any defence; that if it did, its simple proclamation would be more effective than any argument; that apologetic preaching has often raised doubts which it has not resolved; and that on the preacher himself its influence has frequently been baneful, tending to make him critical rather than aggressive.

II. That there is much force in these allegations cannot be denied. The truth of God is eternal and immutable. How could human unbelief prevail against it? It is also self-evidencing. How could any human argument be so convincing as its own evidence? The preacher who discusses the scientific or the philosophical objections to Christianity may not answer them to the satisfaction of all or of any, and he will be sure to suggest them to many who otherwise would never have thought of them. The minister whose studies are wholly or mainly apologetic is likely to lose zeal and energy. Interest in the progress of a building will be sustained with difficulty if one is continually engaged in testing the foundations. It must be granted, therefore, that as spiritual illumination is more important for every Christian

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH.

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THE gospel is the power of God unto salvation. As there is no limit to his power, so there is no limit to the salvation which the gospel may bring. It covers all needs, individual and social. The gospel has not yet, however, manifested its full power, and there has arisen in the minds of many earnest and thoughtful people the question, Why is the church of Christ not more effective in bringing the promised salvation into the world? It requires no long study of church statistics to prove that she is not doing what she should; that for which she is commissioned, and that for which she is equipped.

The search for the lack of power has developed some new methods of church work. We shall never have a new gospel. Our message is unchangeable, but the ways that bring that message to the people should be adapted to the conditions into which it comes. This inquiry for more effective methods has resulted in what has come to be known as the "institutional church." It first emerged into view in the down-town portions of great cities, where the movement of population away from the church, and the radical change of the character of population, and the failure of ordinary methods of church work, had forced the question of church existence to the front. Pastors and a few faithful members found themselves in possession of increasingly valuable church property, with depleted congregations, and they were forced to ask, Is there not some way in which this valuable property can be utilized on the ground where it now stands? As a consequence, new ways of doing church work, adapted to the new environment, were developed, and churches which had been moribund were suddenly seen to take on new life and activity, reaching out in many practical ways toward the population whose waves were beating around their walls. That led to the larger question, Why not use church property uptown

and down town as it has never been used before? It had been the rule to have a church opened on one day of the week, with possibly a few evenings. No worldly business that was conducted on such principles could keep out of bankruptcy. If the church is a harbor of refuge, why not keep it open every day in the week? If it has Christian power, why not have it opened every day in the week? Why not make it a centre for far-reaching and hopeful activity?

Further consideration along this line led a good many earnest Christian workers to inquire whether the conception of what a church is for should not be enlarged? Too long it had been regarded as an ark into which might be gathered, here and there, a shipwrecked one from the wreck of society around it. Would it not be possible to save society? The church had largely been regarded as a means of bringing to individuals the good hope of eternal life. This ought to be its chief mission. But, in addition to that, would it not be possible to make of the church a redemptive force in the interests of the whole man and of the entire community? Hence, very gradually was evolved an enlarged conception; first, of the relation of the church to the individual. It is not enough that we should seek to save all men. That the men so saved may become a Christian force, it is necessary that all of the man should be saved, and, in order to save him thus, all means appropriate to such salvation should be employed. Hence the church should not only give the message for his soul, but should have instruction for his mind, and it should have sympathetic help for his body. If hungry, it should feed him; if naked, it should clothe him; if in prison, it should minister unto him. On whatever level he is found, on that level should the church go to him, even as the Master did when he was in the world. So that the people who are thus influenced by the church should not only have a title clear to mansions in the skies, but have better homes on this earth, be better content with their surroundings, and have the surroundings calculated to give them content.

The institutional church aims thus to do everything for the man that the man needs for his higher development for both time and eternity.

Again, in this larger conception of the church social relations are recognized. That is to say, the salvation of Christ is not

only for man—it is for men. The church should represent the body of Christ at work for the world's redemption, and so should aim, not only to save individuals here and there, but to save, regenerate and uplift the whole social life of the community, and so sanctify the homes. The church should become the centre of beneficent and philanthropic efforts. It should take a part in alleviating suffering of every kind, and in purifying society. No interest that is dear to the community should be neglected by the church. Not only saved souls, but enlightened minds, restored bodies, cleaner and more comfortable homes and home surroundings, better observance of laws, and more brotherly relations of man to man through the community, should be the result of a church thoroughly alive to its opportunity, and really determined to meet all its obligations to the individual and the community.

It may be said, will not the effort to make the church thus the centre of all social and civic forces be at the expense of her spiritual vitality? Will not the tendency be to secularize religion rather than to sanctify the community? And will not the spiritual life of the individual be better conserved by concentrating the efforts directly on that life than by requiring such efforts to be diverted in the interest of things that are temporal? There are two replies to this criticism.

First. The very opposite is the aim of the institutional church. It endeavors to make all days sacred, and to consecrate all time and all forces to the service of God instead of having a church at work on the Sabbath, and one or two evenings in the week. It proposes so to sanctify time that every day shall be the theatre for Christian activity, and the lives of all God's people be claimed, consequently, for missionary service.

The second reply to the criticism is an appeal to facts. The churches which have engaged in these broad lines of church activity are not the churches where the prayer-meeting is deserted, where the ordinances of religion are neglected, or where spiritual life is at a low ebb.

It is, of course, not claimed that there are no institutional churches which do not dishonor these fundamental principles, but that church is truest to the ideals of the institutional church which ever keeps to the front spiritual and eternal things—and lives for them with such overflowing energy, and with such a

philosophical insight into the relation of things temporal to things spiritual that in its wide sweep it takes in every interest of man and men.

The spirit of the institutional church being as thus sketched, the form which it will take will vary according to conditions, and may very well be left to take care of itself. Given the right life at the centre the tree will develop according to its kind.

In general, however, the institutional church idea stands for, first, open church doors every day of the week. Church property should be the best investment in the community; but to make and keep it so, it should be utilized for the community, not in an occasional service, but in a constant ministry. Within its sacred portals there should be a welcome to the passer-by at any hour of the day, and to its altars frequent service should attract the weary and heavy laden.

Again, the institutional church stands for free seats. This, indeed, is by no means an essential part of its programme. It is an economic matter that should be left to the determination of circumstances. Rented pews may be administered in a free pew spirit, and even free seats may degenerate into frigid formality. But the idea for which free seats stand should certainly be considered. For every worshipper in the house of his Father there should be a cordial welcome, and an opportunity without patronage or humiliation to worship that God in whose presence human conditions fade into insignificance, and before whom all the worshippers are one.

Again, the institutional church stands for a plurality of Christian workers. The time has passed by when the duty of the church to the community is met by hiring a man to conduct two services a week, and to preside at the prayer-meeting. All the Lord's people should be his priests, and while it is not possible for every Christian to give his time for Christian work, personal activity to some extent should be expected of every one who has taken the vows of Christ upon him; and there should be, in addition, such a force of paid workers in every church as to enable it to accomplish the needs set forth in the earlier part of this article. As a rule, it has been found that the churches in our great cities are successful in their work according to the number of their workers. A band of consecrated men and women moving in and out through a community, teaching.

healing, comforting, guiding, constitutes a moral force that cannot fail of its results.

And, finally, the institutional church recognizes the fact that it has a ministry beyond the bounds of its own communion—to all the community through educational, reformatory and philanthropic channels. It should be the friend of the schools, of the asylums and hospitals. It should give the inspiration for higher civic ideals, for greater devotion to the welfare of the city, for a stronger moral sentiment, that would result in the enforcement of all wholesome laws, and that would put restraints on the evil passions of men. In a word, it should be such a force in every community that not only would individuals who come within its radius be made better and happier, but the whole tone of society would feel the uplifting power of its presence.

What, now, is necessary to realize the ideals herein set forth? Only this: the consecration of every believer in Christ to some personal and definite service for him. Given the spirit for such service, and the ways will be found, and they will adapt themselves to every local need.

As has been said, the church is not a field, but a force. The field is the world. The millennium will soon come when every follower of Christ realizes that such following implies a place in the army, and an active march for duty; for the battle is not to be won by the officers of the army. We have depended too much upon them. Let the privates fall into line. Napoleon once sought to storm a narrow pass, where only a few men could be employed. He turned to his faithful old regiment, "I want a hundred men to volunteer from the line to storm that pass. I can use only a hundred, but a hundred I must have. Before you volunteer I will tell you the truth. It is most likely every man will go down at the first shot. But I must have you. Now, a hundred men from the line, forward!" And they came; not a hundred men, but the entire regiment, and rang their rifles at his feet, ready to die for Napoleon.

Our Captain wants volunteers, not for a narrow pass, but a world-wide field, and for the noblest service that the sun looks upon. But he wants not a hundred men, not a hero here and there. He wants the regiment. When the regiment advances under the inspiration of his leadership the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.