

THE
PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 37.—JULY, 1896

I. THEOLOGY THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION.¹

THERE are some things relating to the supply of ministers of the gospel about which the leading Christian denominations are substantially agreed. It would be strange if any serious difference existed as to the first and great question of the source of the supply. It is written, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ministers are gifts to the church from her triumphant and ascended Lord. As the first verse cited from the Epistle to the Ephesians is a quotation from the sixty-eighth Psalm, the import of the statement of the apostle is that God has never left the church to its own resources in the matter of providing ministers, but has reserved to himself, under every dispensation, the prerogative of furnishing them. This divine arrangement keeps the church dependent on God in a matter upon which her very existence, as well as her growth and prosperity, depends; but it is a wise and gracious one, in that it secures with infallible certainty to the church, in answer to her prayers, an adequate supply of the right kind of ministers, and at the same time enables them to speak as the ambassadors of Christ. The second feature of the divine plan relates to the agency given to the church in the word

¹ Delivered as an inaugural address in Columbia Seminary, May, 1896.

VI. NOTES.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH: A CANDID CRITIQUE.

AN editorial comment, on the general subject of "The Institutional Church," in the columns of *The Southwestern Presbyterian* for April 2, had the fortune to catch the eyes of the managers of two leading reviews, and has issued in almost simultaneous requests for articles on the same line, but more elaborate. As the information then possessed was second-hand, letters were immediately written to three typical institutions with gratifying results. Although the purpose of seeking information at first hand was candidly avowed, with commendable promptness in every instance the information was sent, and in two was accompanied by personal letters of such admirable temper as would have removed prejudice if it had existed, and would have disarmed criticism had our object been less than truth.

The temptation is irresistible to quote a few sentences from them, if only to show the spirit which animates these brethren, and to remind the critic of his reciprocal obligation.

Rev. Dr. Greer, writing from Saint Bartholomew's Rectory, under date of April 20, says: "I send you by mail a copy of our last Year-Book, which will give you some idea of what we are trying to do in St. Bartholomew's parish. The phrase 'institutional church' seems to me an infelicitous one. All that we are trying to do in St. Bartholomew's is, to apply Christianity in a practical way to the life that now is. We did not undertake it by any vote of the church. We simply went to work to do what we could to help people in their struggles and difficulties, and one good thing led to another; but it has not led to a depreciation of the preaching function of the church."

Evidently, like Topsy, it simply "grewed."

In a similar spirit writes Dr. Dickinson, of Berkley Temple, Boston, under date of April 21: "I send you some printed matter concerning the 'institutional church.' I am quite sure that most of the objections to the institutional work are due to a misunderstanding of the aim and spirit of the movement. No one, I think, could honestly object to or oppose the work if he should thoroughly inform himself of the facts. We, of course, often differ as to methods in the old-time

churches. But the method is of secondary importance in the new movement. I am very glad that the subject is to be discussed in THE QUARTERLY, and am sure that, after reading over some of the papers which I send, you will give us fair and intelligent criticism. Such criticism is what we desire, as it is, of course, our aim, as it is the aim of others who may differ from us, to get the right thing. Man merely experiments in a large field, and by our mistakes some one will be the wiser, and the church eventually the stronger."

Dr. Scudder, of the Tabernacle, People's Palace, Jersey City, has kindly responded by sending us a number of pamphlets and posters giving most satisfactory information. We shall make as liberal use of this matter as the limits of this article will permit. To this first-hand information we would add, because peculiarly interesting to the writer, some facts furnished by Dr. Field, in *The Evangelist*, concerning "City Park Branch of First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn."

We make a passing comment on each, in the order named, before criticising some principles, apparently in differing degrees, pervading them all.

St. Bartholomews has a church building and a parish house, both pictured on the covers of the Year-Book, under separate roofs, and apparently in different localities. The first pleases the eye, for it is at once recognized as "a house of prayer." This the tall spire, dominating the vicinity, proclaims, although it must be admitted that modern architecture is a trifle confusing, some buildings suggesting the conundrum, To what *genus* do they belong? churches being mistaken for banks, and courthouses for churches. A devout Catholic woman, for example, climbed the steps of our courthouse and parish prison (under one roof), with its spire and clock, devoutly crossing herself, and kneeling for her *Pater Noster* or *Ave Maria* before discovering her mistake. But to return: the parish house, the separate centre of the humane activities of St. Bartholomew's, seems only a private residence of somewhat imposing appearance. The Berkley Temple consolidates its religious and secular departments under one roof. "But admirably as the edifice is planned" (one only), "having in all twenty-one rooms," etc. The church of the Tabernacle in their erections appear to have confounded the secular and the sacred, or perhaps its advocates would say, have merged, harmonized, and unified the two, possessing a group of buildings. "In addition to the Tabernacle, which the church allows us to use as a public hall for lectures and entertainments, we have four buildings, which communicate freely

one with another, and are put to a variety of uses." The newspaper cut of City Park Chapel, were it not for a large cathedral window and a small cross at the apex of the roof, with its triple rows of windows, its turret, and what might be mistaken for a flag-staff, and its chimney-stacks, would, with the uninitiated, pass for a modern hostelry providing entertainment for man, if not for beast.

Now, without entering minutely into particulars, or instituting a comparison which might prove invidious, we note that soul-saving, in the biblical sense of the term, is one department of institutional church corporate work, but only one. To this is added a multiplicity of secular departments having to do with the body largely, or with the earthly conditions of "spirit, soul, and body." We quote from the account of one of them, and all are upon the same general plan, and, as we shall directly see, on the same principle, and seeking mainly the same ends by similar means. "For those who are intellectually inclined, we have a library and reading-room, together with facilities for debating societies, literary associations, Chautauqua circles, and university extensions; for lovers of athletics and amusement, we have two gymnasiums with senior and junior departments, hot and cold-water baths, swimming-tank, outside grounds for tennis and other sports, and an amusement-hall supplying a variety of healthful and innocent games; for musicians, we provide an orchestra, pianos, a brass band, and instruction in singing for both old and young; boys receive a thorough military drill, and lessons upon the fife and drum; girls are taught sewing, cooking, housekeeping, and dress-making; instruction in typewriting is given. A day-nursery accommodates poor women who are obliged to work, and do not know what to do with their little ones, and a kindergarten cares for neglected children too young to go to the public schools. A clothiery supplies partly-worn apparel to the worthy poor."

We observe, again, that there is mention of "rectors" and "pastors," Sunday services and choirs, prayer-meetings among church people and "the submerged tenth," church and mission Sunday-schools. This department is presided over by a staff of clergymen, one church having six ministers; but instead of the usual ecclesiastical terminology describing the governing bodies in these churches held to be an improvement on the old, we read of "boards of managers" and "presidents" of the same!

Again, we note that in this complex organization the soul-saving—we use the term in no invidious, but entirely in a serious, sense—de-

partment occupies larger or smaller space, and is given greater or less prominence according to the church. Doubtless where the spiritual life is low and creed at a discount, as in "The Militant Church," it is sunk altogether into mere humanitarianism; but in the churches named it is not lost sight of; is, in fact, claimed by some as the higher and ultimate aim of all the secular departments; the converted constitute the senior class to which all others and lower are preparatory! Once more, before advancing to criticism, we cannot better state the mother-idea of the institutional church than in the perspicuous words of its most prominent leaders. Says one: "All we are trying to do is to apply Christianity in a practical way to the life that now is." Another: "Thus the open or institutional church aims to save all men, and all of the man, and by all means."

"While the open or institutional church is known by its spirit of ministration, rather than by any specific methods of expressing that spirit, it stands for open church doors, every day and all the day, free seats, a plurality of Christian workers, the personal activity of all church members, a ministry to all the community through educational, reformatory and philanthropical channels, to the end that men may be won to Christ and his service." Had time permitted larger inquiry, we should like to have fully investigated the history of the "institutional church" and its probable connection with the marked religious movement in England, initiated and represented by such thinkers as Coleridge, Maurice, Kingsley, and Robertson. According to Principal Tulloch, of Scotland, these writers belong to one school, however in minor points they may differ; and in the general order named, transmitted more or less moulding influence to each other. American religious thought in the last fifty years has, perhaps, been influenced by English writers next to German. Now, whether the historical connection of the institutional church with the "broad-church" movement is distinctly traceable or not, there seems to be such an affinity of ideas as to suggest kinship, perhaps descent. Take, for instance, Coleridge's definition of religion, and we are reminded of the central idea of the modern invention: "Religion," he says, "was designed to improve the nature and faculties of man in order to the right governing of his actions, to the securing the peace and progress, external and internal, of individuals and communities." "Again, hear Robertson," says Tulloch. "His aim was to see every subject in the light of the gospel, to show how Christ had grasped the problems of thought and of society at their root, and given forth fertile principles

applying to all time." We might have imagined we were reading some of the institutional literature sent us: fertile principles cultivated and trained by uninspired men into practices and methods, changing with the kaleidoscopic movements of each age! Again, creeds, according to him, never speak last words: "The time might come when they would cease to be adequate; the solution that was fitting to one age might be unfitting to another." But passing from these natural and plausible speculations as to theological origins, and taking the institutional church as a finished product (as complete as anything professedly "growing" can be) and fearlessly challenging criticism, and its implied rebuke of Christendom for its obsolete and effete church methods compelling it, we shall now, without any great expansion, state our objection in the way of suggestion rather than of elaboration.

1. It strikes us that in the institutional church pastoral influence is dissipated, if not wholly lost. The church and congregation have not one shepherd, but many; two in two examined, six in one. It does not mend matters, that one is chief of staff. Lord Chatham once said in one of his splendid parliamentary orations, "Mr. Speaker, confidence is a plant of slow growth in an aged bosom"; it is in all adult bosoms. Yet this confidence, the result of personal contact with a minister in life's joys and sorrows and religious experiences, finding him everywhere trustworthy, loving, wise, and sympathizing, is at the root of the wonderful personal influence built up along an individual pastorate over a single church. We are aware that collegiate pastorates are common in one branch of the church. How well it works we do not know; our own observation of it in a limited field is not encouraging. Co-pastors too often create parties in a church; but this is our point—where two or six ministers are in charge of one flock, one of the most potent factors in the upbuilding of Christian character, the personal influence of a good man in constant touch with all his people in all things, is sacrificed.

2. The multiplicity of secular departments, carried on under the presidency of the staff of clergymen, must turn them aside from the duties of their special calling.

The office of the deacon, as related in Acts vi., was specially created, that the apostles might, as thus relieved even of the congenial duty of ministering to the necessities of the poor saints, give themselves exclusively "to prayer and the ministry of the word." How these ministers, even by division of labor, can give time and

thought to all these secularities and find leisure and spirit for the duties of the office to which God has called them, and to which they were ordained; how, in a word, they can be faithful shepherds to immortal souls on the swift passage to their eternal destinies, passes our comprehension. Dr. C. C. Jones, of Georgia, labored all his best years, by pen and lip, for the evangelization of the African slave. Receiving not one dollar of compensation for his self-sacrificing labor of love among the lowly, he was necessarily compelled to manage his own estate. The position of a Christian master, burdened with a sense of responsibility as he was, was no sinecure, but laid to his hand almost as numerous and varied cares as belong to an institutional church. He, with painstaking care, looked after the physical comfort and spiritual interests of his people; his life was, in fact, shortened by anxiety in a season of uncommon mortality among them, in which he, ministering to body and soul night and day, although an invalid, spared not himself. Now this Christian philanthropist once said with much feeling to the writer, "No minister ought ever to burden himself with the management of a plantation; the distractions are almost fatal to any right discharge of the gospel ministry." It cannot but seem strange how any one appointed to "prophecy between the living and the dead," passing with his congregation out of time into eternity, can allow himself to turn aside to even the general supervision of a gymnasium, or pawn-shop, or savings bank!

3. The methods of the institutional church are calculated to secularize the church itself, turning it aside from the obligation resting upon every Christian to be in his or her sphere a messenger of tidings to lost men. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature," is the order of the Captain of our salvation to every private as well as officer in the "sacramental host of God's elect." The worldiness of the church membership in the world all the week surely need not be intensified by organizing them as a church for more secular work. They will be but too apt to quiet conscience for neglect of spiritual work by the plea of church work of an easier kind.

4. Human nature being what it is, the secular departments of the institutional church are almost certain to overshadow the sacred. With the best intentions, and under the most cautious management, this will inevitably occur as a general rule. And for the reason that but imperfectly sanctified as the mass of church members are, they will take more kindly to the one class of activities because more congenial than the other. Church services may be thinly attended, but

church entertainments draw out the strength of the church and congregational membership.

5. The institutional church is not modeled on the New Testament church. This will not be claimed by its advocates. Indeed, one boldly takes the ground that so far from any form of church government being imperatively ordained, in the New Testament none is discoverable. "I do not believe that any particular ecclesiastical system has any substantial ground to stand upon in the Gospels, and very little, if any, in the writings of the apostles. These forms of organization (churches now existing) and government are man-made. They may have been divinely directed, as I believe all great movements of the race have been, and they have been useful for certain great ends; but the only reason for the existence of any form is to be found in the needs of the age which it serves, and its fitness to meet those needs, rather than in any authoritative formula emanating from Christ or his apostles."—(Rev. Charles A. Dickinson's sermon.) Closely akin to this is another view, perhaps identical with or a part of it, to use a term somewhat unsavory in some quarters, the church of each age is an evolution produced by innate tendencies, environment and survival of the fittest. "Our aim, as it is, of course, of those who differ from us, is to get the right thing. Man merely experiments in a large field, and by our mistakes some one will be the wiser and the church eventually the stronger."—(Letter of same.) "We simply went to work to help people in their struggles and difficulties, and one good thing led to another."—(Letter of Dr. Greer.) "As the work goes on it goes forward. It cannot go on without going forward. No good work can. It goes forward, however, upon the old lines, and if some things seem to be new, the newness which they exhibit is the newness of evolution and not of special creation. It is simply that kind of newness which results from growing, and which, as it grows, encounters new needs and emergencies, and provides new methods to meet them."—(Year Book of St. Bartholomew church.) We hardly know how to meet this idea of church organization, which swings away from all *jus divinum* claims and makes the organization of the Christian church as much unprovided for by its founder as the constitution of an institutional cricket club, and leaves the form of the divine society, his chosen instrument for the evangelization of the world, to the wisdom and caprice of devout but erring men of each generation. Man his own church-maker! Who will credit this?

Were we writing an essay on church government, as laid down in the New Testament, we would controvert these assumptions by the sure word of Scripture. But, to be brief, is it not probable that so important a matter would have been provided for in the forty days between the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, in which it is related he spake unto them concerning the kingdom of heaven, or that he would have given directions by his Spirit to the apostolical founders of his church? In any event, however denominations may differ in interpretation, all are agreed that some general scheme at least is outlined in the New Testament for Christians in all climes and ages. Certainly officers are mentioned and sacraments are ordained, their qualifications and duties prescribed, and the principle of the part appealing to the whole in disputed questions taught in the Jerusalem Council of apostles and elders of the mother Hebrew church, and delegates from the Gentile church of Antioch. Surely the omniscient Christ knew the peculiarities of every age, and if he has ordained any form of church government in his word it were to impugn his wisdom to attempt to improve upon his model! Where, too, do we have any intimation that, after the church had been finished by apostolical hands, each generation of Christians were at liberty to re-fashion it to suit the times and needs? Furthermore, human nature is in all important respects the same in all countries and centuries; men are born and die, sin and suffer, and need the same old gospel, and why should entirely different methods be needed to apply gospel remedies for the monotonous wickedness and woes of humanity.

6. But the final and most potent objection to the institutional church is that the very principle upon which it proceeds even in soul-saving is anti-scriptural; and in several vital respects. As a friend of ours, a strong thinker, observes, the institutional church puts the chief emphasis where Christ and the apostles do not put it; namely, on human misery, and not on human guilt. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners primarily, not to alleviate human miseries; even his healing of diseases was in the character and office of a deliverer, from not only a sin but all sin's consequences. In this sense he not only "was wounded for our transgressions," but "carried our sorrows." Indeed, healing was meant to be proof of his divine mission. "The works which I have done in my father's name, they bear witness of me." "That ye may know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins he said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed and walk."

Again, there is in it a decided tendency to exalt body-salvation above soul-salvation, the temporal above the eternal. Other-worldliness may be a term of reproach of old-time preachings, but it has its justification in our Lord's great question in spiritual calculus, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It also by the emphasizing of the visible and temporal discounts faith, the grand principle of Christian living, "The evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for," which deals not with the visible but the invisible, not with the temporal but with the eternal.

Finally, it reverses the gospel method of saving the sinner and society. This is from centre to circumference, that from circumference to centre. This saves the individual first, and through him betters the masses; that would better the masses in earthly conditions as the first step towards the spiritual salvation of the individual. Scripture salvation of the adult begins in the question so intensely personal and individual that it does not allow the entrance of so much as a thought of the wife of one's bosom, or the children of one's loins. "What shall *I* do to be saved?" But God's answer is wider than the question: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*" (family). Saved himself, consciously, from the curse and dominion of sin, the first instinct of the saved sinner is to save others—his own, as nearest and dearest, first; then all others within reach. The incoming of sanctifying grace makes the man better all round—a better man, husband, father, son, friend, citizen, toiler—and lifts all belonging to or dependent upon him to a higher plane. This is God's plan for bettering human conditions and improving the masses, as secondary to fitting men for immortality.

We would not be understood as being inimical to philanthropical enterprises founded and supported by Christians as such; but our contention is that the church, in her corporate capacity as a spiritual body and organized for specific ends, has no business with them.

In putting on record these criticisms we would not be understood as questioning the sincerity and Christianity of the advocates of the institutional church, or as denying their assertions of success. But we desire to lift our voice against this last specious plea, by no means confined to the subject under discussion. It seems to be taken for granted, if an institution does good, that it must be right, and that if our conception of Scripture teaching conflict with it, our exegesis must be reformed. Now, to cast the balance fairly between the good seem-

ingly accomplished by departing from Bible teachings as interpreted by principles of common sense, and the evil bound to be evolved in the long run, requires of us the prescience of the All-wise. It is altogether better and safer to go by the law and the testimony; that is, by their natural, unforced meaning. We especially commend these thoughts to our Southern Presbyterians.

"Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed
Make enemies of nations who had else,
Like kindred dewdrops, mingled into one."

Only the imaginary Mason and Dixon line once divided North and South, but our peculiar institution constituted no "narrow frith," but "mountains interposed." The mountain barrier has been levelled by the stroke of revolution; intercommunication and intertraffic, and interchange of visits, and even of populations, are bringing about interfusion of ideas in politics and religion. Now, as, according to our information, the institutional idea is spreading in the upper sections of our one country and the germinating theological ideas in which it probably has its origin and justification, it may not be amiss to ask our own people to follow, in regard to all reforms in church methods hailing from a northern latitude and traversing our traditional conceptions and practices, the Scripture rule: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

New Orleans.

R. Q. MALLARD.

THE MEMPHIS ASSEMBLY.

The Assembly was aggressive from start to finish. The Presbyterian Church in the United States inherits a conservative temperament, dwells in a conservative section, breathes a conservative atmosphere, and is considered to be one of the most conservative ecclesiastical bodies in Christendom. The recent Assembly demonstrated that this pronounced conservatism does not prevent aggressive action along all the great lines of church effort.

The preceding Assembly at Dallas, Texas, had been characterized as "the declining Assembly," because of the negative answer which it gave to much of the business presented for its consideration. There was evident an apprehension that the Memphis Assembly would follow in the footsteps of its predecessor, and many thought one of the commissioners had sounded the key-note of the court for 1896, when, on the second morning, he prefaced a report with the story of an old