

# THE CHURCH AND PEOPLE.

Placed in the pulpit and pondered in the pew, the question most prominently before the Chicago religious community during the last month has been, in some form, "Is the church failing to reach the people, and if so, what needs to be done anew that the church may become the great elevating force in the community which of right it should be?"

Seeking to this question a comprehensive answer, which should present both the problem and its solution under the various side lights which variations of creed or method might shed, this "TRIBUNE" has asked of representative ministers of the great Christian denominations their conceptions of the present greatest needs of the church and of the ways in which those needs can be most amply met and in which the church may become a force of growth rather than a chance of waning. The statements which follow, it will be observed, all agree

church contents itself with opening its doors and inviting men to come in, so long will great masses remain outside. The people must be sought if they do not seek the church. This is the work of the whole church—not of the pastor only. The seeming indifference of the rank and file of the church to those outside robs the church of power. Somehow a personal relation, a relation of mutual confidence and friendship, must be established between the church and the people. This relation, in its initial stages at least, must be formed in the homes of the people. Every city church should have at least two pastors—one to preach and the other to meet the people in their homes.

6. Christian churches of all denominations in this city should form a federation for the purpose of district territory, securing a systematic visitation of non-churchgoing families, consultation concerning the seri-

different forms of government. So with the church or churches. Forms of administration and even creedal statements may without ignominy adapt themselves to local circumstances and environment. Indeed, they must do so or cease to be effective factors of real life. As a rule, such Christian nation has its national church. Here in the United States an official ecclesiasticalism is properly prohibited by the fundamental law of the land, yet the aspirations of our ablest thinkers are in the direction of some sort of an agreement along lines that shall embody the American polity on its spiritual side. It is felt by not a few among us that dogmas and methods of religious instruction based on medieval ideas concerning God and man and the social organism are at variance with the democratic governmental polity whose existence depends upon faith in humanhood and

## PROBLEM OF CHURCH POLITY DISCUSSED BY CHICAGO DIVINES

### THE QUESTION.

"Is the church failing to reach and to hold the people, and if so what needs to be done anew that the church may become the great elevating force in the community which of right it should be? Are new creeds needed or desirable?"

### THOSE WHO ANSWERED.

The Rt. Rev. William E. McLaren, Episcopal Bishop, Diocese of Chicago.  
The Rt. Rev. Samuel Fallows, Episcopal (Reformed) Bishop, Jurisdiction of the West and Northwest.  
The Rev. Dr. L. A. Crandall, Memorial Baptist Church.  
The Rev. Dr. Frank Crane, Trinity Methodist Church.  
The Rev. Dr. Howard Agnew Johnston, Forty-first Street Presbyterian Church.  
The Rev. J. H. O. Smith, Union Christian Church.  
The Rev. Dr. A. J. Canfield, St. Paul's Universalist Church.  
The Rev. Dr. F. W. Gunsaulus, Plymouth Congregational Church.

In one point—that the power of the church among the people is today greater, broader, more vital than ever before.

#### THE RT. REV. WILLIAM E. MCLAREN:

There is no doubt that in Chicago more largely, as in all large cities, the church, tent, and in many hundreds of smaller places, which take their form from the great centers, there is a diminished attendance upon public services. There is in our nature a man an inextinguishable hunger for God, but its intensity varies at different times. At present there is a tidal wave of indifference inundating the country, which is in part grounded in irreligion, and in part in dislike of phases of religious belief, which have dominated the minds of millions in this country in the past, and which in the present have lost or are losing their hold. The prevailing indifference is much more largely due to the decline of these systems than to any widespread positive objection of the religion of Jesus Christ. Their decadence is not the defeat of Christianity, but, on the contrary, the token of a better day.

The perpetuation of the policy of separatism, which is the opprobrium of Protestantism, is not likely to bring in a better state of religion among the people. The idea that any man has a right to make a church is repeated when any individual undertakes to make it over again. That is not the road to better, but to worse conditions. The real trouble is that the world will not take stock in a house that is so sadly divided against itself. The Christian forces must be visibly one if the world is to believe, and this is the solemn declaration of the founder of the church himself. Present divisions invite defeat, and you have only to go to the smaller towns all over this continent to discover that the invitation is accepted.

What we must come to is the divine idea of community, homage, and praise to the infinite one, the supreme majesty, the great God, as a means of honoring him, attesting our faith and fortifying our wills in the ways of virtue, and honoring him. The God idea is at the root of civilization, social science, family life, and is the conservator of all that makes life worth living. Worship is the public recognition that the neglect of worship is the sure road to religious indifference and final atheism, that is to say, to anarchy and barbarism. No nation can stand the neglect of God, and he will be forgotten if he is not worshipped. Worship does not consist in talking about it, but in doing it. It is the revival of true reverence and confidence in the religious instincts of our people and cause them again to respond to that hunger for God which is a part of their nature, and dormant now only for a season.

#### THE RT. REV. SAMUEL FALLOWS:

The church must not be confounded with Christianity. The latter is infinitely grander and larger than the former. The spirit of Christianity is not only not confined to the church, but may be dormant within it, while it may move in the hearts of men outside the church inclosure and the church confession. It may live and does live in organizations, in institutions, in movements full of good to mankind which are not distinctively carried forward under any church egi.

The church itself (putting a part for the whole as to name) may be disloyal to the spirit of Christianity, and those who do not even bear the Christian name may transcend in their influence and activity the church membership in promoting Christian objects. The Earl of Shaftesbury had to carry the factory act, so important to the welfare of English children, against the apathy and determined opposition of the English Church.

In other great reforms the church, as a body, has been derelict. Ministers have had to bear the standard and the cross, and it was so in the slavery contest. The church is not united today in the temperance reform. But the truth is that in this, that the Christian religion is leaving society, however unfaithful the church may be. It is the hand of Jesus Christ that is writing elevating and uplifting in the books, rearing hospitals and asylums, building schools and reformatories. It is his voice which is lifted up in the cry of the oppressed, in the passionate demand of the poor for their rights in the earth he has created, of the laborer for his just share in the profits of his toil.

And always from the church some one comes to incarnate the spirit of the divine human Christ, and marshal those within and without for the contest for the rights of men. Always will be found earnest ministers of his who are trying to bring the church into vital relationship with the people, and the people into the church. They are more intent for the coming of the kingdom, of which the church is only a portion, and yet its most important portion. It is to be its preserving power. It is to be its undimmed and ever glorious light.

#### THE REV. DR. L. A. CRANDALL:

All will agree that the Church of Jesus Christ ought to exert a larger influence upon the people, but all do not agree upon the methods to be used in gaining this larger influence. I am not vain enough to assume the task of declaring who is right and who is wrong among those who differ thus radically, but will content myself with a few suggestions:

1. Stress of life is much greater than it used to be. This is especially true in our cities. Vast numbers of people have no time for rest except on Sunday, and prefer spending that day with their families or in the parks to attendance upon church services. The man who is anxious that the church should reach a larger number of people will do well to help them who are trying to secure a Saturday half-holiday for wage workers.

ous problems which confront the church, and a larger measure of cooperative effort.

#### THE REV. DR. FRANK CRANE:

As to "the needs of the church," that is a broad question, and, broadly answered, I should say that its needs are twofold. First, true insight as to the purpose of religion, and, second, an organization upon a different economic or financial basis.

1. Religion, in a nutshell, is to be preached for a church that answers to every human aspiration after betterment and the love of church of humanity in the name of the Highest.

For the five points of Calvinism I would substitute five points of common sense, formulated thus: 1. The universal fatherhood of God. 2. The brotherhood of man. 3. The redemption of society through the vicarious character of Christ. 4. The leadership of Christ. And, 5. The final triumph of good over evil, brought about by the faithful and vigorousness in this present world as a fitting prelude to whatever the future hath "of marvel or surprise."

#### THE REV. J. H. O. SMITH:

Christianity is a system of right personal relations. It reconciles men to God and brings about peace between men. The early Christian church was the grave of the relations between classes, and the rich and poor, the Greek and barbarian, met together in sincere love for God and for man.

Every association must have a constitution expressing the faith of those in the organization, and we might expect Christ to give the church a constitution, which is his authority. When the apostle said, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God," Christ said he would build his church upon this confession, and the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Paul said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Faith in a personal Savior, the son of God, was all that was required, but this included all that was necessary to salvation. It was not a question of what, but of in whom the convert believed. A theory of the atonement is of less importance than the fact of Christ's suffering for the world. The church is coming nearer Christ than at any time since the glory of the first centuries of its history, when pure. I suggest a new study of the New Testament, a return to the simple faith, the life taught by Christ. In the struggle to live in the fierce, continued business battle men have no time for philosophizing, and more and more is translating into human life the love of God.

#### THE REV. DR. HOWARD A. JOHNSTON:

In answer to the question, "Do you see that the church is failing to reach the people?" I would say yes and no. At the beginning of this century the church membership in this country was one in thirteen of the population; now it is one in four of the population, notwithstanding the marvelous growth of the population.

"Is there anything more the church can do to reach the people?" Yes, and there always has been since the dawn of Christ. Never yet has the church done its full duty.

"Has the church gone away from religion?" Yes and no. The church is imperfect. Members of the church are largely selfish, indifferent, unfruitful. Thousands who have taken the name of Christ are unconcerned about the salvation of other souls than their own. In so far as it may be said a church has the name to live, but is dead. In spite of this element of failure, the church has evidence of a true religious life. Never was the spirit of missions so vigorous as now, at home and abroad. We need broad lines of comparison. Compare the church of a century ago with the church of today. The larger influence of the church immediately appears.

There is one test which to my mind is all after the church's failure has been confessed—that is the fact that the ideal character in the Christian community is nearer to the character of Christ than ever before. A century ago churches were begun with lotteries. Eighty years ago the ministers always and the best liquor offered to them in the homes of the people. Forty years ago a statesman's private life was not allowed to reflect his public career, but the names of Farnell and Breckinridge, to name the higher demands of the people. The man who may command the highest regard of his fellow-men today is not a man of ideal character. A century ago churches were begun with lotteries. Eighty years ago the ministers always and the best liquor offered to them in the homes of the people. Forty years ago a statesman's private life was not allowed to reflect his public career, but the names of Farnell and Breckinridge, to name the higher demands of the people. 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