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THE CHURCH AS A FIELD IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP.

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The Christian doctrine of the Church as a field in religious leadership is set forth explicitly by the Apostle Paul. Writing to the little company of Christians gathered in Corinth,—an obscure association of humble folk in a great metropolis of commerce and culture,—the apostle defines the sphere which he anticipates that the new organization will fill. Is it to constitute a group of separatists, a company of saints, set apart from the bustling, struggling, ungodly world of unconverted Greeks? Is the Christian Church to be a refuge for the elect, a harbor from the storms of the time, a place of retreat from the sins of the world? On the contrary, the apostle, with the most audacious confidence, commits to that little group of Christians the religious leadership of their time and place. Instead of counselling a retreat from Corinth, he proposes to them the more heroic task of the conquest of Corinth. Surveying the tumultuous life of the great city, its trade and commerce, its culture and art, its philosophy and games, he does not say to the congregation of disciples: "Beware of these seductions of the world; seclude yourselves in your own province; separate yourselves from this secular, pagan, perilous life." On the contrary, he says, "All things are yours; the world, and life, and death, and things present and things to come;" all are yours,—to be cleansed and redeemed by the new ideal of the Christian faith. The problem of the Christian, as Paul saw it, was not to save himself from Corinth, but to save Corinth itself. He carries this teaching of the universalism of Christianity into details. He begins by observing the divi-

sions which had already begun to manifest themselves within the Christian Church. Some said they were of Paul; some had joined themselves to Apollos; some followed Cephas; it was the beginning of sectarianism; the first approach of the sin of schism. How does Paul regard these barriers to religious leadership? "They are all yours," he says. The sects are, as it were, cross-sections of the Church which, like cross-sections of a tree, give a true picture of its life looked at horizontally, but a very imperfect picture of the tree in its longitudinal growth. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, show the rings which mark the growth of the tree; yet below these cross-sections run its roots into the soil of history, and above them spreads the foliage waving with each breeze of the time. What, then, is the field of Christian leadership among the controversies of the sects? "They are all yours," answers the apostle. Yours is not a provincial but a cosmopolitan faith. Yours is the great confession: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." To cut a tree into cross-sections is to cut it down. To grow, to outgrow, to grow toward the light is of the nature of a living church, which may be the shade and refreshment of many souls and bear at last that good fruit for which it grows. Nor does the apostle limit this new religious leadership to the interior unity of a comprehensive church. Beyond these sectarian diversities which threaten organized Christianity, he sees the great unorganized and diversified social life which makes up what he calls "the world." What is to be the attitude of the little congregation toward this world? Must the choice be irrevocably made,—that choice which has been so hard for many a Christian,—between religion and the world? On the contrary, answers the apostle, the world also is yours, not to run away from, but to subdue. The Christian life is not a way of retreat, but a way of victory. The Christian character is not a monastic, run-away goodness, but an aggressive and conquering goodness. Lawrence Oliphant once said, that the type of man which England most needed was a spiritually-minded man of the world, a man, that is to say, who can be in the world and understand it, but maintain among the affairs of the world a spiritual mind. What Oliphant said of England in the nineteenth century is precisely what Paul said of Corinth in the first. That bustling world of commerce and trade, that mingled mass of power and sin, made to his mind good material for the work of a spiritually-minded man of the world. "It is all yours,"

he says, not to fear or to condemn, but to interpret and redeem. The aim of a Christian is not to save himself out of a wrecked world, like a rat running from a sinking ship, but to bring the world itself, like a battered but still seaworthy vessel, with all its precious cargo of tasks and hopes, safe to port.

And not alone the world is within the province of the Christian, but the more subtle and elusive interests of personal experience. Life, the apostle goes on to say, is yours. The whole complex experience which the individual encounters, the life of the mind, of the will, and of the heart; the emotions, ideals, temptations, which make life a hidden drama, an adventure, a risk, a battle,—all this is yours, if ye are Christ's. No experience is too trivial, no happiness too perfect, no tragedy too devastating, to be ennobled and illuminated by Christian insight and serenity. The field of religious leadership is the whole of life. And death, the apostle proceeds, is yours; its perennial enigma, its baffling mystery, its desolating solitude,—all this, even if not interpretable, becomes endurable and chastening as it is held in the greater mystery and encompassing peace of the Christian thought of God. "Oh death, where is thy sting! Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ." And, finally, this interpretation of experience gives him a sane and wholesome view both of the present and of the future. "Things present," the apostle adds, "things as they now are, with their pitiful incompleteness, and things as they are to be in the better future, all these are yours." The Christian is a rational optimist. He looks back, and in the slow processes of history;

"Step by step, since time began,
He sees the steady gain of man.

He looks forward, and foresees the progress of righteousness, fraternalism and peace. And so, with a confidence born of his faith, he throws himself into the service of things present and becomes the creator of things to come.

When we turn from this large doctrine of the religious leadership of the Church to the story of its history, we find ourselves confronted by a most depressing and humiliating fact. The field of religious leadership has been often and deliberately restricted and confined; human life has been departmentalized into secular and sacred, the Church has been side-tracked as at some way-station of the trunk-line of human progress, the spiritual leadership of the world has been sur-

rendered, and the apostolic promise "All things are yours," has often been unheard. Precisely as the monks once fled from a lost world to the security of their cells, so many a later Christian has prized the Church as a rock of safety, an ark of personal redemption, a retreat from the spirit of the age. And what has been the consequence of this run-away faith? The inevitable consequence has been the loss of leadership in a world thus forsaken. The work of the Church has become specialized, technical, detached from the world; and the work of the world has become uninterpreted, unconsolated, unredeemed, by the Church. The contrast is like the scene which meets one in a European town with its market-place thronged with a chattering, bargaining crowd, while a great, silent cathedral looks down upon the scene. Within is prayer, incense, worship, miracle; without is trade, toil, duty, life. One may lift the heavy curtain which hangs on the church door and go in to God; and lift it again and come out to man; but between the sacred and the secular the curtain hangs; or, as happens in multitudes of cases, one may stay outside altogether in the warm sunshine of work and play, and leave the dim aisles of religion to the theologians, the reactionaries, and the sentimentalists.

What, then, must happen if religion is to be in this present age anything more than a picturesque survival of outgrown faith? There must be a new recognition of the apostolic teaching concerning the field of the Church, an expansion of that field to cover all the real interests of the modern world, its science and politics, its literature and art, its work and play, until all these varied expressions of social action are held in the sphere of Christian duty, and controlled by the apostolic promise: "All things are yours."

Consider, for example, the field of theological study. Theology has been, for the most part, restricted to the limits of a historical science. It has confirmed and transmitted the records of revelation. Its sources of authority have been found in the Bible and in the Church. On the one hand has stood the Protestant maxim: "The Bible, and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." On the other hand has stood the saying of Thomas Aquinas: "One cannot have God for his father who has not the Church for his mother." These historical sources remain perennial, precious, and unexhausted. The Christian record and Christian tradition give continuity and momentum

to the Christian life. But is theology claiming all that is justly her own when she limits her work to the perpetuation of a record and a tradition? Are not these original streams of revelation expanded and refreshed by new evidence flowing into the broad channel of modern life? Is there not a theology of philosophy and of science, of ethics and of art? Does not theology comprehend the mystic's vision and the worker's duty, the interpretation of nature and the service of man? "All this is yours," Paul the theologian says to the theologians of today. Theology is a living science of spiritual biology, the queen of the sciences, as she was once called, a queen long exiled from her dominion, but now called to claim her throne.

It is often and anxiously asked in our day why the study of theology fails to enlist the loyalty of competent young men; and many admirable reasons have been suggested for this ominous decline in the ministry. The call of commercialism, the spirit of science, the new attractiveness of other vocations, have added their part in alienating young minds. But is it not more probable that the fault is with theology rather than with the times or men? Spiritual susceptibility, moral idealism, religious emotion, the spirit of sacrifice, all these natural traits of opening manhood, which have satisfied themselves in the profession of the Christian ministry, exist in young men as much as ever. Youth is much what it has always been,—ready for hard service, responsive to the call of the highest, with the prison-house of worldliness not yet closing round its visions and dreams. The single case of the medical profession, with its constant appeal to modest heroism, is sufficient to prove that young men are now, as they always have been, undeterred by hardship or poverty from devotion to ideal ends. The reaction from theology, then, may be not because it seems too high or too large or too heroic a calling, but, on the contrary, because it seems too restricted, too small, too protected a pursuit. A healthy-minded young man does not find himself solicited by a vocation which seems absorbed in sectarian controversies, or ecclesiastical machinery, or sentimental emotion. He is looking for a task which is challenging, masculine, large in itself and enlarging him. He wants to be near the centre of the real interests of his time, not segregated with Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. He is looking, in short, for a field of leadership; and must find it in the great troubled life of his own age with its pressing problems of the world, and life, and death,

and things present and things to come. If the Christian Church is to be a field for religious leadership, theological education must adapt itself to this demand of the modern mind. Its curriculum must comprehend not the wisdom of the past alone, but the not less momentous issues of the unprecedented world in which a young man finds himself today. Economics and sociology, the new philanthropy and the new problems of the family and the state, are essential parts of the equipment of the modern minister. A German writer has lately said, that the purpose of Jesus Christ was to save man from the theologians; but a more just interpretation of his mission would include even those whose limitations seemed to him threatening to spiritual faith. Jesus came not so much to save man from the theologians, as to save the theologians themselves. If theology is to be a field for leadership in this present age, it must write over the gates of its schools the apostle's promise: "All things are yours."

And if this expanded definition of theology is one condition of religious leadership for the Christian Church, another and more essential condition is to be found in an expanded definition of the Christian ministry. The Christian Church is not a mechanical or an architectural construction. It is an association of souls, a school of life. The aim of Jesus Christ was not to build a machine, or organize an institution, but to communicate to other lives the power of the life of God. The theologians have described what they call a scheme of salvation, but the method of Jesus was not comprehended by a scheme. His way of saving people was through a Saviour. To save men who should in their turn be saviours was his hope. He had, what the author of *Ecce Homo* called, a passion for personality. On that rock he built his Church. For their sakes he sanctified himself. The Kingdom of God was to him not a form of government, but a form of life, an organic, growing, expanding, spiritual vitality; penetrating the mass of the world like leaven; spreading to overshadow the world like a great tree. Jesus was not a law-giver, but a life-giver. "I am come," he says, "that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." The Christian Church, that is to say, is nothing less than the organization of souls for social redemption. It is the association of those who come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give their lives a ransom for the many. It lives by the contagion of personality. It exists to create re-

ligious leaders. But if all this is true, may it not involve an expanded definition of the calling of the ministry? Priests there must always be to administer the ordinances of worship, and prophets to speak the message of the spiritual life; but does the ministry of Jesus Christ fulfil its function in no other way than by talking? Is the field of leadership in the Christian Church to be that of exhortation and inspiration alone? Or is it more consistent with the teaching and example of Jesus Christ to reckon among his ministers that great and increasing number of the servants of Christ who are consecrating themselves for others' sakes in self-effacing and effective service? Is it by preaching alone that the field of religious leadership is to be reaped; or is it when the word is made flesh that men perceive its grace and truth? Was John Wesley a minister of Christ as he preached in the fields, and not John Howard as he worked in the prisons? Is the ministry of Christ restricted to the utterances of the pulpits; or does it utter itself also in the work of the settlement and the slum? When a young man in our day deliberates, as so many do, whether he shall enter the Christian ministry or give his life to social service, is he choosing between two professions, or rather between two departments of the same profession, in each of which the same motives and ideals are essential to efficiency? In short, is not the Christian Church as a field for religious leadership a much larger sphere than many of its apologists are apt to believe? "The field," as the Master himself said, "is the world; and the good seed are the children of the Kingdom." But these children of the Kingdom may be as varied in their service of the world as the scattered seeds of spring-time are varied in their promise of the harvest. By word and by work, by speech and by sacrifice, by exhortation and by education; by proclaiming the Kingdom of God and by creating the better world of man; in the pulpit and in the press, in prayer and in politics; in every invasion of Christian idealism into the tumultuous and disordered commercialism of our day; in industrial fraternalism and social peace;—in a word, in the spiritualization of modern society lies the field of religious leadership now open to the Christian ministry; and the Christian Church is offered under such circumstances the greatest chance in all its history—and perhaps its last chance—to determine whether it is to be a side-tracked, ineffective survival of an outgrown way of life,

or to enlarge its functions and expand its ministry to cover the entire area of the spiritual interests of the modern world.

No one can thus contemplate these bewildering possibilities of Christian action under the conditions of the present age without a disturbing, yet stimulating, sense of unusual power. Sixty years ago Strauss asked his famous question: "Are we still Christians?" and he answered: "No." A much more timely question would, however, turn from the past to the future and inquire: "Are we as yet Christians?" Have we half used the dynamic of the Christian faith in its diversified applicability to the changing needs of the world? The power of the Christian faith is a majestic source of spiritual energy which, like some great source of water-power, may serve in various ways the changing desires of the successive generations of men. At one time it may be merely an object of admiration or adoration; at another time it may satisfy the thirst of the world; and then again, as the resources of civilization multiply, the same power may be harnessed into the wheels of industry and move and light the multitudes, as they are borne upon their way with little thought of the power by which they go. And what are the Christian churches, set in the quiet corners of the world's life, with their varied forms of worship, and their different ways of work? They are the power-houses, where this spiritual energy, flowing down from the heights of the past, is converted into efficiency and leadership and distributed along the wires of human work and need. And as the power radiates into the homes and toil and darkness of the world, and finds its field of leadership in the whole complex civilization of the time, it is as though the wires sang their message above one's head: "I am come that all these may have my life, and may have it abundantly."