

PASTORAL CHAT

In my morning devotions I read the first three chapters of First Corinthians. It helped me. I discovered that Paul, great as he was, did not think of himself "more highly than he ought to think." He did not want the people to take him too seriously. Neither did he want anyone to take themselves too seriously. I came out of my meditation with the feeling that if all Christians would take Christ Jesus more seriously and themselves less seriously the Church would be more effective and the world better off. Suppose you give these same chapters a careful, sympathetic reading and see how it affects you. I know one's mood has a lot to do with his interpretation. That's one of the wonders of the Bible, viz., that it is not just a printed page, a hard recording of facts as history: it is a living voice which speaks according to one's need, if he has an ear to hear.

I am proposing a discussion not an argument. I hope we are able to distinguish the difference between an "argument" and a "discussion." Well, so that there may be no doubt as to what is in my mind, let me tell you the distinction I make. A discussion is a process of thinking cooperatively, so as to get the advantage of each other's ideas and thoughts. An argument is an effort to sustain your own view of a thing by facts, or, regardless of facts as the case may be. There is really a difference.

Now, we are ready for the topic and here it is. What constitutes, or, what are the constituent elements of "A Great Church"? I am presuming you would like to know the occasion for the discussion. A few weeks ago I was visiting in the home of one of our finest women. Said she, "I am glad you are not always talking about this great Church. I don't think we have a right to think of it that way. It takes more than a lot of people to make a great Church." These may not be her exact words but I certainly did not miss her thought. Later I heard one of our deacons eloquently describe our Church as "A Great Church" and he proceeded to explain how it came to be so great. Now, who is right? If a lot of you will write a short essay on "What Constitutes a Great Church and Why" I'll read every one of them and see if, all together, we can arrive at a general understanding. The fact is, I think, it might become the basis of a profitable series of mid-week discussions when we shall have finished our "Church Night" program. Please get busy and let me know what you think. Remember it must be in writing. I can't remember oral expositions.

I like friendly criticisms. O, it may hurt for awhile, but if you feel that someone is trying to help you, whether you agree with them or not, you feel the warmth of their affection and even an old man's heart responds to that. Yesterday, Sunday, was a day of friendly criticisms, all from fine, friendly women. It began with friend wife. By-the-way, don't expect me to name the others for it might embarrass them. But if you doubt my veracity come to me privately and I'll tell you. When we got home yesterday morning my wife said, "you mispronounced Kachins. You called it KACH'-ins. It is Ka-CHINS." She's right. So—for once—I'll not argue.

Yesterday afternoon I met, in the hall of our Education Building, three of as fine women as I know. Said they, "We have a crow to pick with you." My hands went up—figuratively. Said they, further, "We want you to quit calling yourself a poor preacher." Did you ever hear about the preacher who, in process of uniting a couple in marriage, said to the man, "Do you solemnly promise to love, trust and obey the woman whose hand you now hold, until death you do part?" The man answered, "I wilt." So say I. It was just before a wedding so I could not explain my evident humility. The fact is that in a recent deacons' meeting I was paid such glowing tributes that it made me feel exceptionally humble. One of the deacons even likened me to President Roosevelt. If I knew his politics I'd know how to take it, but maybe this is a case of "Ignorance is bliss" so I won't inquire.

The third one came after Church last night and was to the effect that I should cease weakening my arguments by personal maneuvering and saying, "Of course, you don't have to believe it." I tried to explain to her how it had come about but I'll end this by again saying "I wilt" and a promise "to try" to do better.

Since I have "my neck out" I'll add one more. The fact that The First Baptist Church in Wichita stands aloof from other Churches of the city is to me a source of humiliation and grief. I give those who are responsible for it credit for being honest and conscientious. At the same time, I know from the Inspired Book and from the pen of the Apostle Paul that it is possible to be honest and conscientious and still be mistaken and misguided. Before you read this—if you do—the Wichita Council of Churches will have launched another drive for funds to support a much needed cooperative work in the city of Wichita. I was appointed to serve on one of the committees. When I went to the first meeting it proved to be the "Committee on Church Gifts." I tried to explain, as kindly as I knew to explain, and asked to be relieved. I left the committee; they were kind and gracious but I am not "relieved." Some day our Church will have to be courageous enough to re-face this whole matter. The Pulpit Committee, which presented me to you for your consideration, will not have forgot that I asked them, in our con-

ference, about Inter-denominational Cooperation. Hence, my stand in this matter is nothing for which I need to apologize.

I remind you again that I sometimes say to my wife, "Remember you do not have to tell everything you know." When she reads this paper she will say, "Physician heal thyself" and when she does I'll say, "Wife this is not everything I know." Everything I have to give I am giving to "The Church." Therefore, I want "My Church" to make her largest possible contribution to the Kingdom of our Master. I do not believe it can be done by an effort to discredit all other Churches and insulate ourselves. If I felt that way about it I'd join a Church, or start one of my own, which worked on that basis. I know some will think it "awful" but it is a thing about which we need do much praying. And, in spite of it all, I'LL BE LOOKING FOR YOU NEXT SUNDAY.
