

## MISCELLANEOUS SECTION.

### SYMPOSIUM ON THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH.

#### V. As Supplying a Need of Mixed City Life.

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OUR Divine Master said: "New wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved." What is the thought underlying this expression? Namely, the preservation of the balances between the outward and the inward. How to make these harmonize is the intricate problem. It does not need the backing of argument or figures to say that Christianity is advancing. It is preeminently a missionary religion—aggressive and progressive, and destined to embrace the world.

I think we shall agree that the Church has outgrown much of her old machinery and methods. Foot-stoves are superseded by steam radiators. Horse cars by electric trolleys. Men do not cross the Atlantic Ocean in side-wheelers to-day. The side-wheeler was all right once. It was man's best navigation. The demand now is for the ocean greyhound. Only the swift and floating palace suits the transatlantic voyager. The methods of business popular fifty years ago carried into mercantile life to-day would bankrupt the concern. That meant no advertising—no delivery—no selling goods by sample, and really no competition.

The methods of religious work of one hundred years ago attempted to-day would seriously handicap the Church. The changed conditions of society demand new methods. Many of our churches are dying because their officials are conservative and will not sanction changed methods.

The drift of many of our churches is "up-town." What do we mean by "up-town?" It may mean cleaner

streets, less congested localities, and brighter homes. When a church that has been large and strong begins to disintegrate by the "up-town" trend, those who remain to care for it thus depleted have a feeble concern on their hands. Take New York and Brooklyn, and in the upper wards you have many churches. Some of them but a block or so apart from each other. Some of them are splendidly equipped edifices, with erudite and eloquent preachers in their pulpits, and large congregation representing social power and great wealth. But "down-town," among the dense populations, the churches are few and struggling. Many of them could not exist at all but for the aid rendered to them by the different city church extension societies.

The writer of this article has strong convictions on the subject. Many years have been spent in the pastorate of churches in the cities in the East and West. He is persuaded, after much thought and prayer, and no inconsiderable observation, that the *best* kind of church for the solving of the "down-town church problem" is the Institutional Church.

I am aware that every new movement in the Church of God has to meet with opposition. I will not stop to supply the illustration. There are ministers who are ready to pulverize the advocate of this order of church.

They call it "a display of spectacular Christianity"; "An attempt on the part of the Church to tickle the community into heaven." I have never considered the right sort of an Institutional Church as "spectacular." But if I thought I could bring men to the Church and to regeneration of character through Jesus Christ, I would be willing to adopt a little of the spectacular. If I thought I could guide a man to heaven by tickling him once in a while, I should be willing to do it. Anything legitimate to save men.