

# SOME THINGS CHURCHES ARE NOT MEANT FOR.

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AMONG the most influential institutions in the United States are the churches. They are felt in one way and another, not less in little towns in Nebraska, with memberships of say seven men and sixteen women, than in St. Louis, New Orleans or New York. All that affects them possesses interest, and we may venture to speak of them here as a whole, and without regard to differences among themselves. We take in the newest and the oldest, the greatest and the least of them. We propose to hint at some things for which churches are not adapted nor intended, and we do it in the interest of them all, for even the worst of them is better than none.

1. They are not for berths for pastors. *They* are public servants. They and the buildings in which they officiate are for the people. It is only in a secondary sense that we can talk of "Dr. Jones church." It is no more his than the Senate house belongs to the Senate, or the town hall to the officials. Probably the phrase is not often seriously misunderstood; but it would be nicer to talk in some other way. Dr. Jones may not be impressive or magnificent, and I might like to be associated with something greater than Dr. Jones or Dr. Jones may be excessively small and even disagreeable; and it is a pity to tempt me to run away from a good thing because it seems to be "Dr. Jones."

2. Nor are the churches for the amusement of the people. That is a very good and proper object, especially as so many are hard worked. But the churches are no more for this useful end than colleges for making clothes, or ships of war for dredging oysters. The better tailors the college makes the worse scholars, and the better the war-ship the worse for collecting oysters; and the better fun the church makes the worse it is as a church. Of course you cannot "boys" from taking their "girls" and using the evening

service for other uses than its primary; but that does not affect the solid statement.

Now it is extremely easy to allege that the drones, stupid, sleepy-heads who barely disturb the slumbers of the "old fogies" who sit under them, have an interest in pushing this doctrine. Admitting this, it is still true that the churches are not for diversion, and that it is better that men should take their amusement (if we may borrow a figure from another place), "straight" than take it diluted with religion.

3. Nor are they advertising mediums. What belongs to the people—the church family gathering there—and to the end for which they are gathered, may be "intimated." As to the other things, have we not a ubiquitous press? What printer refuses his type for proper payment? Why should the pastor take the bread out of honest men's mouths? Of course the attendants may do an amount of advertising on their own account; may exhibit their own wares; proclaim the paying business they are doing; and get themselves under the public notice. But that is the individual ingenuity; the church cannot help it, and good sense and good taste generally keep it in check.

4. For the churches are not for promoting private business. If Mr. Tonsure "joins" in the hope that he will get the shaving and hair-cutting of the members; Mr. Scrivener that he may draw their wills; Mr. Dentifrice that he may fill their teeth and his pockets, and so on through dry goods, soft goods, pills, and potatoes, the churches are the worst, and so are the people. Why, my dear sir, it is not Presbyterian potatoes I want, but good potatoes. Nor is it any mitigation of my annoyance over a very bad pair of dear shoes, that the seller is sound in the faith. My shoes are not sound. What good, honest man wishes to throw his religion into the scale to supplement light bread, or too say in effect: This is a bad bargain you are getting, but then—I am a good churchman? As long as churches are used to make, or to repair business characters, there will be now and then conspicuous failures. The very best hospitals have to turn out some "incurables."