

Pastor and People.

WHOM SHALL I SEND?

Oh, Spirit's anointing,
For service appointing,
On us descend,
For millions are dying,
And Jesus is crying,
"Whom shall I send?"

Ethiopia is reaching—
With scarred hands beseeching,
"Rend, Christians, rend
The chains long enthralling!"
And Jesus is calling,
"Whom shall I send?"

Lo! China unsealing
Her gates, and revealing
Fields without end!
Her night is receding,
And Jesus is pleading,
"Whom shall I send?"

Dark India is breaking
Her caste-chains, and making
Strong cries ascend
To Jesus, once bleeding,
But now interceding—
"Whom shall I send?"

Japan is awaking,
Old errors forsaking;
Haste your aid lend!
"More light," hear her crying,
And Jesus replying,
"Whom shall I send?"

While Israel's unavailing,
And penitent wailing,
All things portend;
Why, why our delaying,
Since Jesus is saying,
"Whom shall I send?"

The islands, once hating
His yoke, are now waiting
Humbly to bend,
"To bear help and healing,"
Hear Jesus appealing—
"Whom shall I send?"

—Rev. A. J. Gordon, D. D.

REPORT ON THE STATE OF RELIGION.

BY REV. WILLIAM FARQUHARSON, OUNGAH.

The following is the report on the State of Religion presented by the Rev. William Farquharson, Convener of the Committee, to the Synod of Hamilton and London:—

In presenting the report on the State of Religion your Committee take pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of reports from every Presbytery within the bounds and are specially grateful for the promptness with which the returns were forwarded. Most of these reports give evidence that the various Sessions have had a commendable zeal in honestly trying to answer the Assembly's questions. Huron leads the way in a clear report "with complete returns and full answers from every Session." Paris and Chatham follow closely with returns from all but three, and no Presbytery lacks answers from more than eight, except Stratford, who somewhat sadly brings up the rear with only one-half who have answered the roll-call. The complaint is made in some cases that answers are indefinite, yet the Synod may rest assured that, on the whole, the returns are the result of an earnest effort on the part of Sessions and Presbyteries to grapple with a vital question, one Presbytery especially expressing the conviction that "the answers are the precise pregnant statements of earnest men, who feel themselves vitally interested in the questions before them." Yet notwithstanding the earnest effort on the part of Sessions to present the facts, and the invaluable co-operation of the Conveners of the several Presbyteries in collecting and arranging the materials, your Committee feel their utter inability to give in a report any adequate idea of the state of religion within the bounds of the Synod. In the very nature of the case spiritual results refuse to be tabulated with mathematical accuracy, and the gathering together of bare facts is apt to become, so far as the report is concerned, a withered skeleton, cold and lifeless. Since then the value of a report on the State of Religion depends, not so much on the volume of facts collected as in the inspiration its discussion is calculated to give to all the courts before whose consideration it comes, your Committee, while noting with pleasure the improvement in the present questions over those of last year, would express the hope that next year would mark still further advance in the way of making them less categorical and more suggestive. They are convinced that it is this inquisitorial tone running through the questions, coming out boldly in former years in asking if ministers and elders were faithful in the discharge of their duties, and this year showing itself only in a more refined way in asking for the special encouragements they have had in their work that keeps many Sessions from entering into a more hearty discussion of the subjects, and thus makes the report on the State of Religion the colourless, soulless thing it is so often said to be.

The special difficulty of getting such questions to indicate the real spiritual life is well illustrated by the first on the list. For a moment we want to get into closer sympathy with the minister to know the heroic warfare he wages and to have our own zeal kindled by coming in touch with what has inspired him. So we gather together every Session in the land,

call the minister to the front, and in the presence of the elders demand an answer to the question: "What special encouragement have you had during the year?" Is it any wonder, though, the answer is disappointing? Alas, we looked for fire, but there is scarcely even smoke. No sound of the battle afar, no rallying cry inspiring action. You would never imagine there had been the faintest struggle. Smoothly flows the course of the minister's life as that of the good boy's in the Sabbath school novels. We are told in the reports that he is encouraged by "full and attentive congregations pressing on to hear the Word;" his hands are sustained by the "hearty co-operation of elders and Christian workers;" "his heart is made glad in witnessing large accessions to the communion roll." Christian Endeavour Societies rally round, and with their enthusiasm help on the good work. "Peace and harmony prevail in Session and congregation." One has his spirit refreshed through "the ministry of kind ladies in visiting the sick and relieving the needy." Another has his soul stirred by the inspiring music from a "new organ;" a third is delighted with the increased spirit of liberality that has paid off "burdensome debts," and perchance gives himself still more substantial encouragement, and thus we are assured that "while all have ordinary encouragements there is no indication of a discouraged minister within the bounds." We are charmed with the picture and fondly linger on its details, but life's stern realities soon awaken us to the consciousness that we are still in the flesh and have not yet entered into our rest.

Turning to the second question and reading: "What cheering indications of spiritual blessing have the elders enjoyed in their service?" we wonder how the elders will stand the examination. Ruling well the Church of God, taking the oversight of the flock and faithfully dealing with the enemy are duties the performance of which often do not call forth answers in such glowing terms. With a good deal of curiosity we turn to the reports, but the merest glance is sufficient to show that the amount of cheer he receives is far less than what is reported to fall to the lot of his clerical brother. The exuberant tone of joyousness is all gone, and once more we are back to prosaic reality. A few from every Presbytery thoughtfully acknowledge blessings received in connection with district prayer-meetings, official visitation or work in the Sabbath school, but the greater number, with marvellous contentment, assure us that what encourages the minister will do for them, while a goodly number sit in dumb silence saying not a word. Hamilton Presbytery suggests that the lack of joyousness in their answers is due to deficiency in service, but your Committee would rather believe that the changed tone is fully accounted for from the fact that in many cases the ministerial elder wielded the pen, and most naturally, in the one case wrote according to feelings, in the other according to sight.

Of far more importance than encouragement or discouragement is the question: Do these encouragements lead or those discouragements drive to a throne of grace? A vital question, and yet so far as the regular meeting of elders and ministers for united prayer is concerned, the reports give conclusive evidence that the good habit has never taken deep root in our Synod. Only twenty-two Sessions report regular prayer-meetings on Sabbath morning or evening for such a purpose; a few meet occasionally, but the greater number make no attempt whatever in that direction. This lack is much to be regretted, and yet to conclude that Sessions who have no such meeting have less interest in their congregation or are even less spiritually-minded than those who have would be a great mistake. Want of a vestry and the distance between elders' residences render such meetings in many cases practically impossible.

The important work of the Session in ruling in the Church of God is brought out in two questions, the first of which asks: "What is the character of the religious oversight of the families of the congregation on the part of the Session?" To a good many Sessions the question seemed to be perfectly answered by stating that the oversight is of a "general character," "kindly in tone," "Christian in spirit and conducted for the welfare of the flock." In so far all are agreed, but if you ask further what means are used to bring the Session in touch with the individual families, the answers vary according to the more or less perfect organization of the congregation. In all cases the minister visits the families, most of them making the round of their congregations once, some twice, while a few actually ring every door bell in their congregation three times in the year. Perhaps one-third of the congregations are divided into districts and a goodly number of these from every Presbytery are able to report that elders visit the families under their care, in some cases as often as three times in the year, enquiring after their spiritual welfare and praying with them. In most cases when the elders make no such regular visitation, they take a "general oversight of the families in their neighbourhood and visit the sick." In all cases it seems to be the rule to have personal dealing on religious questions largely with the minister, many of whom are said to "deal individually with members of families and catechise the young."

The other question regarding the government by the Session deals with the keeping of the roll. Is it annually purged? From the great majority of Sessions comes the assurance that the work of revision is done at least every year, while in the exceptional cases it is purged once in two years, or "at least occasionally." Fain as Sessions are, to believe that their flocks, like their children, are stainless, the exami-

nation of the roll presses on their attention the existence of unfaithful members, the all important question comes how to deal with them? One Session bluntly replies: "Strike them off if stubborn," but most realize that a more gentle spirit is needed in ministering to a soul diseased. Several, indeed, confess laxity in dealing with such cases. A Session in Paris Presbytery declares that "the old-time discipline is hardly practicable in these days." Yet whenever action is taken the Christian way in which the erring are dealt with leaves nothing further to be desired. In the kindest possible way he is approached first by minister or elder individually. That failing a deputation of Session deals with him or he is called before them by citation, and only when all the persuasive power of the Church fails is the member cut off from Church privileges, and even that action is taken in the hope that "the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." As the result of such faithful dealing, many report their joy at being permitted "in the spirit of meekness" to restore a tempted brother, though the sad fact is also noted that in some cases the only apparent result is the hardening and embittering of the party dealt with.

After following the Session in all their arduous duties, we naturally ask: What provision is made for organizing the rest of the congregation for Christian work? or putting it in modern phraseology: "What societies are formed in connection with the congregation and what are they accomplishing?" Though it is true every Christian by the very name he bears is laid under obligation to devote himself and all his powers to his Lord. It is equally true that if no systematic effort is made to call forth and direct activity along certain special lines many talents will be buried and much useful energy will be almost wasted through unskilful application. To find work for every Christian and to have a Christian ready for every needed work is the laudable object of the various societies. The number of such societies is almost legion, and from the mass of materials presented it is exceedingly difficult to formulate an intelligible report. Some Presbyteries give with exactness the number of branches of the various societies within their bounds, while as many content themselves with general terms from which no accurate returns can be tabulated. To add to the confusion, societies having the same end in view seem to exist in different Presbyteries and even within the same Presbytery under different names. The following summary of the reports, however, it is hoped will be sufficient. Several congregations in every Presbytery have yet no society in connection with them.

A few Sessions in London Presbytery and one in Hamilton are all that report societies for the purpose of "directing attention to the evils of intemperance and developing a sentiment in the direction of total abstinence and prohibition." In the great majority of congregations there are missionary societies of some kind. Besides a general society for the Schemes of the Church, about two-thirds of the congregations have an auxiliary to the W. F. M. S., while Kintyre seems to be the foremost in the Synod in organizing a Young Men's Missionary Society. The interest of the children is elicited in the cause of missions by a variety of organizations, Boys' Mission Bands, Girls' Mission Bands, Little Gleaners and Cheerful Givers. Through all these agencies valuable work is being done in gleanings information, in deepening the interest and developing activity in mission work and in increasing the spirit of liberality. By many Presbyteries special and kindly mention is made of the work of the W. F. M. S. in "fostering an interest in the missionary cause and in making most tangible contribution to the missionary Schemes of the Church."

Several congregations have Ladies' Aid Associations which are reported as doing a good work in raising funds either to swell the ordinary congregational revenue or secure some needed improvement for the plan of worship or remove a burdensome debt. In addition to any work of that kind the ladies of St. Andrew's Church, London, take on them the praiseworthy duty of ministering to the temporal wants of the poor, and in the Church generally such societies do good work in welcoming strangers and in various ways promoting "good will, friendliness and sympathy." Energies in a variety of directions, social, literary, and religious are awakened by King's Daughters, Young People's Guilds, Social Unions, Young People's Associations, Young People's Social Unions, Prayer Circles, and Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour, while one congregation in the Presbytery of Hamilton develops what may be called muscular Christianity, by means of a Cricket Club. All these societies are spoken of as accomplishing much good, while the returns are all but unanimous in praise of the work done among the young people by the growing Society of Christian Endeavour, through whose instrumentality a Session in Hamilton Presbytery testifies that "souls have been saved and the young transformed from careless sinners or silent Christians into busy workers for Christ."

(To be continued.)

DO YOU?

How do you spend the Sabbath? Do you commence a journey on that day? Or if the trip is a long one, do you start off Saturday evening? Do you spend part of the precious day reading the Sabbath newspaper, with its scandal and gossip? Is it the day to go to a dinner party, or give one? Is it the day to drive out to get the fresh air? Is it the day you visit, or are you known to your calling friends to be "at home" on that day? Do you open and answer business letters on that day? Do you prefer novels and magazines to the one Book? Do secular affairs and society topics form the staple of conversation? Exodus x. 8, reads, "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy." Do we remember? Do we keep it holy, as God has commanded? Let each one examine his own heart and answer—not us, but God.