

Our Saviour taught His disciples on a certain occasion to attribute their weakness and their failures to their unbelief. "Lord, why could not we cast him out?" "Because of your unbelief." And He frequently impressed upon them the absolute necessity of faith, as the first qualification in discharging the commission which He was to give them as His ambassadors to the world. And when the Apostles had become sensible of the importance of faith and of their deficiency in regard to it, they join in their one united prayer left on record, "Lord increase our faith." Before they venture forth upon their new enterprise, as the heralds of Christ's Gospel, they unite in this one great desire of their hearts—more faith. This they felt was to be the great instrumentality by which they could secure "the victory that overcometh the world."

And if such faith was necessary to those whom the Lord sent forth to found the Christian Church, surely it is equally necessary in the work of extending Christianity now—in leading the Church to conceive aright the whole case of her relationship to the world, and the full extent of her obligation, in enabling her to exercise large hope and expectation because she believes the truths and predictions and promises of God's word, in awakening her to her glorious opportunities and responsibilities, in recognizing the new highways that the Lord is preparing for the preaching of the Cross to every people and kindred and tongue, in giving her clearer and larger conceptions of the requirements of the world and the possibilities of the Gospel, and in adapting her agencies to the necessities of the age, and prosecuting her evangelizing work with something like the self-denying energy that such a cause demands.

The Apostle's prayer then must still be that of the Church, "Lord increase our faith." Faith is the real spring of self-sacrificing effort. We might just as well expect a tree to grow without roots as the Church to abound in the work of evangelizing the world without faith. If she is to cast out her dead, and awake into new and increasing energy, substituting zeal for inactivity, and burning earnestness for languid indifference, there must be a "a strong-hearted, clear-eyed, vigorous-handed faith." Unbelief can never become the spring of generous enthusiasm, or the source of energetic self-forgetfulness. Without faith no heroic venture can be made in any undertaking whatsoever. It is only as by faith the Church becomes seized with the great inspiring ideas of Gospel truth, grasps the promises of the Word, understands that her very life is largely bound up with fidelity to duty, in ministering the Gospel to others, that she will hear, as she ought, the great commission, and be carried up to higher life and worthier service. Carey's words should have as much point now as when he first uttered them, "Expect great

things from God; attempt great things for God." No greater calamity could happen the Church of Christ than the weakening or drying up of her faith: for where doubt enters, energy dies away.

There are perhaps two extreme errors into which persons are prone to fall in regard to faith. The one is, in believing what we are not warranted to believe, and the other is not believing where God's word and providence are perfectly clear. In the one case, our undue enthusiasm might lead us into perplexing positions; and in the other we are landed in the cold region of positive unbelief.

No doubt by far the greater number fall into the second error. But there is some danger even in regard to the first. To give faith its true place in practical life it must be associated with sanctified reason. The age of true faith is the age of sanctified intelligence—of the conscientious use of the faculty of judgment. And so in practical questions the exercise of faith must run parallel with the exercise of research. Faith is not a meteor of the mind or a blind impulse.

When therefore any desirable proposition is placed before the mind requiring the use of certain means for its attainment, an intellectual process is begun as to whether or not these means are within our reach. To ascertain this we are required to take into consideration the theory of probabilities, to calculate fairly on contingencies and look carefully at the doctrine of inferences.

There is no doubt some danger that in doing "his we may take a too exclusively secular and commercial view in prosecuting the Lord's work, and the Church may become too much a piece of machinery and "dwindle into a little system of economics." On the other hand if we decline to give due weight to judgment in working out the most likely issues in connection with a broad view of probabilities, we may be guilty of presuming rather than believing; we may thus, in the exercise of what we call faith, be trying to force a premature pathway, prompted by the desire for indefinite expansion. If we discard the faculty of clear Christian judgment, we may find that the results of such action will be a work lacking in solidity and permanence. Faith is trust in God, after having followed a course of consistent and intelligent obedience to Him. It satisfies itself with the feasibility of a project as well as its desirability, and then gives itself to its realization with a devotion true-hearted and single-minded.

Some very devoted and earnest Christians, looking forth upon the demands of the world and the number of consecrated men and women who are prepared to devote their lives to this high and holy cause, think that the Church of Christ should assume the responsibility of commissioning all such who are qualified, to the