

Correspondence.

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHURCH TIMES.

Dear Sir,—I most earnestly wish that some one better suited to the task had taken in hand the topics which, with your permission, I intend to treat. They are most important, and my inability to do them justice is readily acknowledged; but, as they have not been in any way set before our public, it seems better that they should be handled weakly than not at all. I venture, then, to ask you for a little space in the *Church Times*, that I may with all love and humility address a few remarks to my fellow Churchmen, and to those who are over them in the Lord.

I think it will be admitted that the *status* and prospects of the Church of England in this Diocese are not so highly cheering as they ought to be; and that in many sections of the Province, as well as in almost the whole of Prince Edward's Island, she has less hold upon the people than the Sects who oppose her.

Every true Churchman regards his own as the purest and most decidedly Apostolical branch of Christ's Universal Church: he knows the correctness of her doctrine, the unequalled excellence of her noble Liturgy, the piety of her ministers—the names of many of whom are, throughout all Christendom, familiar as "household words." He remembers with pride the many unanswerable defenders of the "One Faith" sent forth by her champions; and he knows by his own experience the power of her services to direct, to comfort, and to confirm,—therefore he gives her his allegiance and his love. He believes and trusts in the promises of Him who said "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He loves the Church then, but it is for Christ's sake. He hears with deep sorrow and self accusation of her weakness, and anon with joy and thanksgiving he marks her success. He prays for the peace of Zion, and labors for her prosperity.

We all claim to be Churchmen of this stamp.—While then we rejoice to know that our beloved Church has been the honored instrument of much good for her Divine Master, we lament that her career has not been more triumphant, her labors more abundantly successful. We feel that if she loses one disciple, or fails to make one where there is opportunity, she is weaker than she ought to be; and it behoves us to inquire into the causes of this weakness, and, if at all possible, to remedy or remove them. We have the word of the faithful Promiser, but we can claim no blessings unless we use the means He places within our reach. He will be with us, and give us prosperity, but the measure of it will be our own faith, wisdom, and zeal.

Is it true, then, that the Church *loses* disciples?—Yes; occasionally. The fact cannot and need not be denied. Is it also true that she fails to make disciples of those around her, who are often in gross darkness, sometimes in gross error? It is too true. If the reader cannot verify this from his own observation, statistics will verify it. They will show that while Methodists, Baptists, and others increase their numbers considerably every year, ours do not increase much, if at all, beyond what might be expected from the growth of families. The sects named live by what they take from us and pick up from the unclaimed and uncared for around us. They pursue an aggressive policy.—They seek in all their labors to gain converts, while we rest in a calm, conservative policy, a policy not at all aggressive, and not even sufficiently defensive.

To increase our numbers and by so doing to increase our influence, we must modify our policy. "It is right to learn even from an enemy." The same means that lead to increase among other bodies will with us. We can study their plans of action, and carefully avoiding whatever is reprehensible, adopt them so far and in such circumstances as they may prove necessary, more especially if we can do this without infringing upon the settled laws and usages of the Church.

First then, our Clergymen should break in upon the monotony of sermonizing. Their style is for the most part too correct and critical. There is in it too much of the didactic, the expository, the argumentative and purely theological,—while that which prospers most with others is the direct declaratory style—warnings, exhortations, reproofs, and appeals—given in the simplest language, but with zeal and energy.

The unparalleled success of Spurgeon, should not be without its effect upon our Clergy. To what do they attribute it,—his wonderful eloquence? He has

no such gift. In the two volumes of his sermons there is not a paragraph that even approaches the style of pure and lofty oratory, his attempts at flight are not majestic soarings, but most frequently ambitious, spasmodic jumps. Is it profound wisdom and knowledge. His knowledge seems superficial enough, and of wisdom we see no wonderful display. Is it then the correctness of his creed. We could hardly have a worse, for he teaches rejection of the young from Christ's Church, the plunging of the whole body under water as necessary to Baptism, the forcible salvation of some individuals and the damnation of others "for the glory of God!" Is there then in this creed aught to warrant the belief that it is to it his success is due? By no means! The secret is here, he is earnest. He is full of zeal, and his hearers feel that he believes in the importance of what he declares, and this ardor and sincerity beget confidence and assent. His language is plain, homely Saxon; it is at once understood, his meaning is ever clear, he appeals strike home to the conscience and the heart at once. Does not this show our Ministers that correctness of style may often be sacrificed with advantage, and that labored disquisitions will not reach the heart or captivate the mind like the plain and earnest utterance of the gospel message. Then as to subjects—they should be more frequently of the awakening character than they are. The fulness of the provision made in the plan of salvation for the whole world, the richness of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, the loving welcome that awaits the returning prodigal, the folly and madness of unbelief, or carelessness, and of delay in connection with religion. These things should, I believe, be more frequently and more warmly urged upon our own people, and those to whom our ministers may have access. But yet by no means must our peculiar tenets as to faith and practice be left unexplained, else our silence will be taken for consent to the views of others, or to that erroneous notion that these things are altogether matters of indifference. Look at the policy of others in what they call a "revival." They preach repentance and faith, they warn and they entreat until their hearers cry, "what must we do to be saved?" and then to end the matter they say "Ye must follow your Lord," by which they mean, "You must go down into the water," and so the pliable minds are bent, and the members are increased, and the seed of the "glorious work" (as it is called) is gained. Now we can, without imitating the transparent sectarian greediness of this policy, learn from it the proper way of acting with those who stand to us in the relation of seekers or disciples,—preach first as most important the blessed truths of the Gospel, deliver the message with which our Lord has entrusted His ministers, and then, as next important, state clearly the peculiar doctrines and practices of the Church, and defend them against the most usual and plausible objections.

But chiefly, and above all, Sir, I think we need in this diocese a distinct class of Ministers to those we now have. I rejoice to see that the reports lately presented to Convocation in England contain a suggestion of the very thing which I have long thought necessary for the Church in this Diocese, that is, the establishing of a corps of travelling home Missionaries. It is confessed that at home the parochial system, though infinitely better than any other, is yet not in every case able to meet the wants of the people, and if this be true in England, where society is in a settled state, where every league has its hamlet, and every hamlet its Church, where funds are so abundant, and parochial schools to be found everywhere, must it not be still more true of poor Nova Scotia in which everything is directly the opposite.

It is on all hands confessed that our Clergy have too much to do, and yet we do not wish their labors less than they are at present. The sphere of labor should by less, the parishes more circumscribed. The present system of extensive missions which from necessity the Church has to adopt, is one that in a great measure wastes the energies of the Ministers. The principal station may have service once a week, and the outstations in rotation on Sunday afternoons, so that there is often an interval of from four to six or seven weeks between the services in those places, and of course such an amount of ministration is quite inadequate, while even this so occupies the time and exhausts the powers of the Minister, that his home congregation suffers.

While A. B. C. D. E. & F. are attached to the parish of B. it is clear that the people of B. who have the burden to bear in all financial matters, and from that and on other grounds the first claim upon their pastor's services, must continue to forego them in

a great measure, that he may attend to the outposts, and yet what is the result. Do we not find that the congregations at these stations on the Sundays when they have no service, are in the Baptist or Presbyterian meeting house. Do we ever find them as warmly devoted to the Church and as zealous in maintaining her charities in proportion to their means as the members of the central church? I think it is seldom or never found so, and this fact proves at once that the present system is not suited to the wants of these outstations. There are also in every parish or mission other places much in need of regular attendance, which the Clergyman in charge is totally unable to give. Such places the Methodist itinerants or the ever vigilant Baptists find out, and after a few sermons sweep the community into their own net, and appoint a lay reader or exhorter to keep them there. Thence after there is no opening for the Church Clergyman even if his engagements should permit him to look after these localities. His presence would be esteemed an intrusion; or if a hearing should be given he would not dare to preach on the distinctive principles of the Church. As a lover of peace and a man depending in many ways for his happiness upon those around him, he feels it best to avoid even necessary controversy, to be silent about infant baptism, immersion, and the evil of divisions in the Church of Christ, and his silence is to all intents and purposes a tacit approval of the views of those whom he addresses. In such localities, and I know several such, the opinion is held universally and carefully inculcated upon the young, that the Church of England is a mere Ecclesiastical machine, without life or vigor, that if it even did do good, its day of power and usefulness is past—that she is a blind guide, dead in formality, popish and abominable.

Can we submit to this? Can we afford to fold our arms in contemptuous disregard of what is thus going on day after day before our eyes. We cannot and must not. We must be up and doing, else these opponents will work us still more serious injury. If we hope for the continuance and well being of our Church in the Diocese, we must contest every inch of ground with the sectaries. The parochial clergy cannot do this, but a band of zealous and devoted travelling Missionaries could and would do it. If sent into the remote settlements, where opposing agencies are in most active operation, they would soon under the blessing of God effect a marked change. In places where there are now regular services at long intervals, they would come with the prestige of novelty (the power of which others can appreciate,) and by a series of awakening discourses arouse the attention and seek to gain the hearts of the people, pointing them to the Lamb of God. And when an interest would be produced and indications of good become manifest, then bind up the wheat in the garner, then clearly set forward our Church's views and defend them, and urge upon the people the duty of consistency and uniformity, of love to their venerable mother and her time-honored services. And finally, with the approval of the Incumbent and the Bishop, either appoint proper lay readers or urge them to meet for worship among themselves every Sunday, rather than swell the audiences at the dissenting chapels, until they can be again visited. Such an arrangement I hold would give us all the benefit of what is called "a revival" in each locality without any one of its evils. No mere animal excitements, no bedlamite confusion, no immoralities, none whatever of that profanity which is so often witnessed under the name of devotion.

A travelling Missionary of the kind contemplated would know no fear but of offending his Divine Master. He would also be in every way independent of the people, and could, therefore, more readily engage in the asserting of Church doctrines and the confuting of error than any located minister. He should in every case preach extemporaneously, partly to remove the ridiculous notion that Church Clergymen have not this "gift," but chiefly because his congregation will be composed of plain, unlettered people, upon whom the simplest statement of Gospel truth would have infinitely more weight than the most elaborate composition. He should also be able and willing to preach once a day, and to spend his time during his engagement solely in the work of his office. To enable him to do this, he should be free from all pecuniary, parochial, or household cares. He should, during his stay in any locality, live among the people, learning their tastes and wants, and gaining their love by accepting their hospitality, and showing forth in private the fruits of the Spirit, practising before their eyes that which he preached.