

RELIGIOUS LIFE AMONG THE YOUNG.*

The subject "Religious Life Among the Young" was introduced by Mr. Gracey. He referred, first, to hindrances or discouragements in the way of Christian life among the young. Sometimes we speak as if these were practically extinct—things of a past age, because we now enjoy in the fullest sense religious liberty, and because no such thing as persecution in the severe sense of that term is now met with. Yet there are to-day serious hindrances to the religious life among the young.

1. There is the want of religious instruction and religious example in the house. Referring to the report on the State of Religion presented to the last Assembly, he said the tone of it indicated that family religion in our Church is far short of what it should be. The following statements were quoted:

"In no case are the answers so satisfactory as under this head." This fact indicates an unhealthy condition in this department of Christian life.

"One Presbytery reports: the practice of family worship is not general, and family training goes with family worship." Another says, "not forty per cent. hold family worship or make any attempt to teach the young."

"A fourth Presbytery gives a concrete case. The Session gives figures: Out of 118 families, 12 have family worship, 11 have reading, and 95 have neither the reading of Scripture nor prayer in their homes. And in 78 of these 95 silent families there are Church members."

No wonder that so many of our young people are growing up with very little regard for the claims of personal religion or the Church of God. Would Romanism show the zeal, devotion and loyalty that are found among its votaries to-day, if the children saw as little in their homes favourable to their religion? Would idolatry be as firmly rooted in the mind of the heathen, if the children heard as little of it from their parents as some children hear of Christianity in nominal Christian homes? Would Romanism be as strongly entrenched as it is to-day? Would there be such regular observance of ordinances, such loyalty to religious duty as we find exhibited in that Church, if the children heard and saw as little favourable to it in their homes as some Protestant children see in some of our Protestant and professedly Christian homes in favour of our pure and Scriptural religion?

2. The second hindrance is the tendency towards city life. As people are thrown more together and intermingle more, the family life is superseded, and its most precious duties and privileges are neglected. Superficiality and externalism dominate the life. Frivolous habits, fashionable customs, and the desire for a life of pleasure and show, gain the mastery. Under these influences, religion does not flourish. Religion demands self-sacrifice, labour, self-denial, conscientious attendance to certain duties and a continuous effort to improve our own and our neighbour's condition. But these demands are repudiated as unreasonable by those who have been smitten with the spirit of fashionable life in favour of pleasure, personal aggrandisement and display.

3. The modern form of industrial life presents a hindrance. The small shop, the isolated industry of the olden time, is gone. We have now centralization, large shops, scores and hundreds of men thrown together, thus increasing production. We have also large numbers of young women gathered together in large factories. This sort of life is not favourable to religion. Very often it happens that the most outspoken and talkative are those who speak in favour of scepticism and unbelief, who mock at piety and make merry over actions and speeches that are immoral or tend that way. The pious are usually more reticent, and so the feeling prevails that religion is unpopular. In such

an atmosphere the tender plant of religious life in young men or young women wilts and falls. It requires some decided courage and manliness to remain a member of a Bible class, to go regularly to prayer meeting, to be known as an active member of a Society of Christian Endeavour, while regularly associating with those who mock at such things. In too many cases there is a disposition to shrink from open acknowledgment of Christianity, to compromise the matter, or to yield the whole case to the opponent of religion.

4. A further hindrance is ignorance. Want of home training, neglect of Sabbath school, and the practical exclusion of the Bible from our common schools, accounts for this. That young man or woman who enters upon the journey of life without acquaintance with the maxims, proverbs, promises, precepts, and warnings of Holy Scripture, is under a great disadvantage, for he is easily misled with false views of religion and erroneous views of life.

II. Encouragements: Notwithstanding these hindrances, every pastor is cheered by the co-operation of many young people. Hardly a congregation that is not encouraged and carried along by the cheerful, buoyant and hopeful help of the young banded together in some way to promote the congregational interests. At the prayer meeting usually the majority are young people. Our Sabbath schools are greatly indebted to young Christians for the work that is done in them. And this new organization, the Y.P.S.C.E. is a stimulus and blessing in many a place, surprising those disposed to take too gloomy a view of things with the enthusiasm and evangelical spirit, that so many young people are disposed to exhibit. This great movement and the noticeable change in our colleges and universities in favour of religion as compared with what prevailed half a century or a quarter of a century ago, encourage us to believe that true religion is claiming great multitudes of the rising generation.

Practical Suggestions: 1. Revive and extend family worship. The hope of the Church lies in this direction. We shall never as a Church accomplish in this land what we should accomplish, until we get the homes made centres of Christian example and teaching.

2. Make the Sabbath schools evangelistic as well as educational. Teach by all means, but appeal to the children personally to accept Christ. In many cases this is the only opportunity for a personal appeal to the children. Many children are never spoken to about their salvation in their homes by their parents or their friends, and if their Sunday school teacher does not do it, they may pass through life without being personally urged to accept Christ.

3. Ministers ought to break down their teaching so that it will be intelligible to the young as well as to others. The common style of preaching is too formal, rhetorical, and high-sounding to the child, and sometimes to others as well. The preacher is too often on stilts; away above what is natural and practical; a sort of phantom, whose utterances and actions are only for show and not for practical teaching. What he says has a far-away sound, as if it belonged to some other sphere of existence. The plain and homely and easily intelligible is what is needed in our pulpits to-day more than the eloquent and high-sounding discourse that instructs nobody, enlightens nobody, convinces nobody.

REV. GEO. YEOMANS AND THE WIARTON CONGREGATION.

The Presbytery of Owen Sound at its meeting June 27th, accepted with many expressions of regret, the resignation of Rev. Geo. A. Yeomans of his charge of Wiarton, presented at last meeting and pressed by him, though a majority of the congregation had voted to ask him to withdraw it. The members of Presbytery gave full expression to their sense

of the value of Mr. Yeomans' work, both in the congregation and in church court, stating that every appearance he had made at Presbytery had deepened their respect. When he came to Wiarton it was one of the Presbytery's mission fields. At his settlement, an annual grant was given from the Augmentation Fund of \$300. The membership had declined so that only 48 members could be found. There had been no mission contributions, and the ordinary revenue was in debt. The church building was a small rough-cast structure, out of repair. A Y.P.S.C.E. was organized, small at first, which has grown strong, and able to carry on continuously its own meetings. As the pastor took an interest in the spiritual life of the people, additions were steadily made to the membership, at one communion 22, at another 17, at each communion less or more, until the number reaching 100, a proposal was made by the Congregational Church of the village, then becoming vacant, to form a union. The pastor offered to resign to allow a free choice, but a Congregational deacon stated they had made choice and chose Mr. Yeomans, recognizing him as evangelical and temperance in sentiment. The union being effected, the congregation became independent of augmentation. A new church was erected at a cost of \$7,000, and the work went on, until the membership of 48 had become 182, in addition to several Congregational members attending the church, but not yet united as Presbyterian members. The ordinary revenue is reported to Presbytery as not being behind, the pastor being regularly paid in full. An officer of the congregation bore testimony to his knowledge of conversions of young people in connection with the pastor's work, which would always be cause for thankfulness. The increase during the past year has been very large, 68 having been added to the communion roll, of whom 57 were by profession. Friction having arisen between the Presbyterian and Congregational elements, it was stated in congregational meeting had interfered with the work of the Sabbath school as well as of the pastor. Under the new circumstances, therefore, arising out of the meeting of Congregational with Presbyterian brethren it has been felt by Mr. Yeomans that a new pastor might be able to take up the work and carry it on in further steps of usefulness. Mr. Yeomans therefore leaves his work with the deep respect of very many in his congregation, and of the whole Presbytery, while the Presbytery feel that the great change in the congregation there, and the new church building now erected, will always be a monument to the pastor's earnest and useful work. He has not yet definitely accepted a new work, but wishes a release and a rest for a time before taking up a new work for which he is fitted by the ripe experience gained from past successful Christian endeavour.

FRENCH EVANGELIZATION.

To meet the salaries of the missionaries of the Board and the maintenance of the schools, together with necessary repairs now being effected on Colligny College, the sum of \$10,000 is required by the first week of August. The date appointed by the General Assembly for the Annual Collection is Sabbath, 30th July. It is earnestly hoped that, where missionary associations do not exist, the collection will be taken on this Sabbath in every congregation and mission station throughout the Church, and the amount forwarded without delay. The Board are desirous that the Mission Schools should be maintained by our Sabbath Schools, and ask a collection from every one of these on behalf of the work. In past years the Mission has been greatly helped by the generous gifts of many individual friends throughout the country. Never before was their assistance more needed than now; and with confidence we appeal to them to aid in making up the required amount. All contributions should be forwarded to the Treasurer, addressed Rev. Robt. Warden, D. D., Box 1839, Post Office, Montreal.

Christian Endeavor.

DANGER OF BECOMING HARDENED.

REV. W. S. M'TAVISH, B.D., ST. GEORGE

July 30.—Acts 19: 9; Mark 16: 9-14.

The same sun that melts wax will harden clay, and so the preaching of the Word is sometimes a savour of life unto life, and sometimes a savour of death unto death. The Word which makes a deep and abiding impression for good upon one heart will sometimes render another more callous than before. So Paul found it at Ephesus, and so it has been found everywhere. Some believe; divers are hardened.

I. What is meant by becoming hardened? (1) It means "to become less sensitive to moral and spiritual impressions. There are times in the life of everyone when truth makes a deep impression upon him. There are times, too, when a special dispensation of God's providence, such as a protracted sickness, or a death in the community, makes a vivid impression on the heart—usually in youth. But, if an effort is made to forget the truth or dispel the impression made by the dispensation, the heart becomes less sensitive and impressible, and if the sinful course is persisted in, the heart becomes so callous that it seems almost impossible to affect it.

Many a man might say with Thomas Hood:

"Now, 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy."

(2) It means also that the reproofs of conscience are less keenly felt. When a person is young and tender his conscience is easily roused with thoughts of sin and danger. That inward monitor warns against wrong doings which may be contemplated, and it mercilessly reproves and reproaches when a sin has been committed. But if these reproofs and warnings are allowed to pass unheeded, conscience, too, begins to slumber, or to use the apostle's phrase, it is seared as if with a hot iron. If one refuses to rise for three or four mornings after the alarm-clock has roused him, it will cease to awaken. A young man may be ashamed to be seen with a glass of intoxicating liquor in his hand, but if, in spite of the remonstrances of conscience, he continues to tipple, he will soon become utterly indifferent as to what men may think or say, and, what is worse, he will have little or no regard for his social, his moral or his spiritual standing. (Jer. 8:12). So it is with every sin that is indulged in in spite of the admonitions of conscience. An awful risk is run by anyone who persists in sin after conscience has warned him that such a course is wrong.

II. Wherein lies the danger? (1) The soul may be left to itself, and, if so, its condition is pitiable indeed. When Paul found that he could not convince the hardened hearts in Ephesus, he left them to themselves. God's spirit will not always strive with man. How deplorable was the condition of King Saul when the Spirit of the Lord departed from him. How sad is the condition of any man when the Spirit ceases to strive with him.

"There is a time, we know not when, a point, we know not where,
That marks the destiny of man to glory or despair."

(2) There is a danger of sudden and irremediable destruction. He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. 95: 7; Heb. 3: 13). Let the history of Pharaoh, Balaam, Herod, Pilate, Judas Iscariot and Nero serve as a beacon to warn the impenitent everywhere.

A well-cultivated mind is, so to speak, made up of all the minds of preceding ages. It is only one single mind which has been educated during all this time.—Foutenelle.

* Address by Rev. H. Gracey, at a Conference on the State of Religion of the Presbytery of Kingston, held in Madoc, July 6th, 1893.