

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### EVANGELISTIC WORK.

The following is from an able and well timed paper by the Rev. J. Munro Gibson, D.D., read at a recent meeting of the London (Eng.) Presbytery. Limited space, we regret to say, prevents the reproduction of the article unabridged. . . . The prime essential is *life*. There have been repeated efforts made by some of our leading scientific men to obtain the living from the not living; but no one has yet succeeded; and it is probable that no one ever will. Let us lay the lesson well to heart. Only life can produce life. When "the Gospel" is spoken of as "the power of God unto salvation," it is not the Gospel as a mere statement of truth. If it were, would not the easiest and cheapest way to evangelize a district be to placard all the hoardings with texts of Scripture in letters so large that they who run might read? We may take it for granted that something else than publication is needed—something more than either the printing or the preaching of sound doctrine; there must be *life* in order to success. And that life must overflow. There must not only be enough to keep the man himself alive, there must be a surplus. He must be a man full of overflowing of spiritual life. He must have some gifts of speech, of course. Speech, indeed, is not the only means of utterance which life has, but it is by far the most potent. The "tongues of fire" at Pentecost were the appropriate symbol of the power by which the Gospel was to be propagated, and no sooner were the disciples filled with the overflowing life than they all began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. There is no necessity for oratorical power; but there is need of ability to utter the life so as to bring it into contact with the daily life of the people. When the prophet stretched himself over the dead child, we are told that "he put his mouth upon the child's mouth, and his eyes upon the child's eyes, and his hands upon the child's hands, and so he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm." Even so must the evangelist be able to fit himself to the face and features and form of the daily life of the people. He must not soar away above them, nor pass by on the side of them; he must get close at them, looking with their eyes, speaking their language, taking them by the hand, stretching himself all over them. His whole soul must be in the work. It cannot be taken up successfully as a mere branch of Christian effort.

But a leader must have followers. He cannot do much work alone; he must be supported by a force pervaded by the same life as his own, and ready to co-operate heartily with him in the work. Sometimes a missionary will have so much life and power that by the blessing of God he is able to raise his own corps of workers from among his own converts. But to expect this as a rule would be to expect too much.

Everyone acknowledges that one chief reason of Mr. Moody's success is that wherever he goes he manages first to surround himself with a band of earnest workers from among the ministers and members of the Christian congregations in the region. This I believe to be the general rule in all cases of conspicuous success. To the necessity, then, of having at least one leader such as I have described there must be added the necessity of having a band of earnest co-workers.

What is our want as a Church? The answer might be given in a general way, by saying that it is more life that is wanted; more life in our ministers, more life in our Christian workers, more life in our congregations generally. That is true; but it is not much to the purpose. But may we not reply more definitely, that the chief drawback in our Church is the dearth of men fitted to be leaders in such work? I do not say that we have not such men among us; we have, and most devoutly thankful we should be for their work. But how many of them have risen from among ourselves? Those who are more familiar with the history of the Church may be better able to answer; but my impression is that they are very few. What is the reason of this? It surely cannot be that Presbyterians as such are not the men to lead in Evangelization work. Perhaps the best way will be to scan briefly our list of requisites in a successful leader, and see at what point, if at any, we break down. First, there was *life*. Surely that is not the point of collapse. Our life may be—certainly is—much feeble and less in

volume than it might be and should be, but we do have it. We have good evidence that there is much genuine life in our congregations. Then, as to the overflowing of it, we have, as we shall presently see, very scanty means of judging in this matter. But surely there is little doubt that many of our people have very much more life than is barely necessary to save them from death. Here, again, we may be behind, but we are not altogether wanting. The next requisite was *utterance*. The evangelist must be able to utter the life that is in him. Where do we stand here? Almost nowhere. How many of our people can, or ever do, utter the life that is in them? What chance do we ever give them to do it? True, there is no hindrance put in their way to go and find opportunities of Sunday school teaching and mission work, but what is there in our Church arrangements to give the slightest encouragement to any utterance of life except by the minister? Even in our least formal meetings who speaks but the minister, and who prays but the elder or deacon? What opportunity is there of finding out those young men, for instance, who are likely to be fitted for the great work of which we have been speaking? After a young man has been for a long time a member of the Church he may be appointed a deacon or an elder, by which time he has so well learnt the lesson 'o keep his mouth shut that it is a good thing if he do not object to take his part in prayer if called on. It is a great thing that notwithstanding all the discouragements we have such a noble band of elders, many of whom are ready not only to do the work of the Church, but to speak when occasion requires. But can we wonder that with this state of things prevailing among us, especially the almost utter silence and reserve of our people on that which is professedly the life of their life, need we wonder that beyond the circle of our office bearers we have so very few who ever (excepting in Sunday school teaching) venture to "hold forth the word of life?" By the bye, this very expression, as used among us, "doth a tale unfold." The expression, "holding forth," as used among us, is applied exclusively to the public preaching, that of the minister; whereas in the epistle it is applied exclusively to the people; and the inspired writer plainly suggests that unless the people "hold forth the word of life" the work even of an apostle will have been "in vain." (See Phillipians ii. 16.) And how much is there throughout the epistles as to the duty of exhorting one another, edifying one another, and so on; and how much value is attached to the fellowship of the saints. What opportunity do our people have of edifying one another? The minister is supposed to do all the edifying. We say that we "believe in the communion of the saints." We may well say we *believe* in it, for we do not *see* much of it; at all events, we are very careful not to give it too much scope. There may be, and are, exceptions, but as a rule in our Churches all the influences are against any freedom in the utterance of the Christian life; and the result is that there is not only silence in the meetings of the Church, but there is a prevailing silence on the subject of religion in private conversation. This reserve has a most disastrous effect in muffling and sometimes half-stifling the life of many of our people; and (which is the point before us) it absolutely bars the development of those talents which are necessary for taking a leading part in evangelistic work. I firmly believe that we shall never do our part as a Church in this matter until we break down the barriers of conventionalism, and give encouragement to our young men to utter the life that is in them.

And, then, why should we not have in our College a department for the training of young men whose powers of utterance have been developed in our congregations; not to prepare them for the work of the ministry, not to make them versed in theology, or in church history, or in the ancient languages, but to drill them in the efficient use of the English Bible, and train them in the presentation of its truth in a clear, simple, and illustrative manner? I would not have them invade the territory of the other students. I do not say that the other students should not invade theirs. Such a department in the college would be a great boon to all students for the ministry. Some of us, in looking back to our college course, feel that if we had only such a training, we should have learnt, before entering the ministry, some most needful lessons which we are only beginning to learn now. Such a course of instruction need not be long; it could be given at such times as to be available even for some

who were otherwise occupied during the greater part of the day; and thus, in the course of time, we might have from among ourselves a body of workers who were ready not only to co-operate, but to take the lead even, in pioneer mission work.

Moreover, freedom given to the utterance of life would not only develop some leaders, but very many more helpers than we now have. Instead of taking our Sunday school teachers at hap hazard, as we often do, not knowing whether they have any powers of "holding forth the word of life," we should be able to lay our hands on those who had already proved their gifts. The weekly meetings of the congregation, and the private intercourse of Christians would bring out those who not only had life but had the power of uttering it and bringing it to bear upon others; and it would be found that these are a much greater proportion of the whole that is generally supposed. According to our present methods, it is only a small minority that are not possessed of a dumb spirit. If we had genuine fellowship of the saints, we should find that the majority could speak, while only a small number had to live the life of mutes, perhaps we might even find it as at Pentecost, that "they all began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

If only we all went to work in this radical manner, turning our congregations into salvation armies, without however, either titles, or tinsel, or sound of drum, with only "tongues of fire," loosed to speak as the Spirit should give utterance, there is no reason why our congregations should not all become centres of aggressive work, attended with all the success of itinerant evangelization without its transiency.

### IF I HAD KNOWN.

Not long since we met a lady whose sad face told the story of great mental suffering. Entering into conversation with her, we found her bowed down beneath the weight of a sorrow from which there seemed to be no relief. She said:

"The Lord has laid his hand heavily upon me. He has taken from me the light of my eyes and the staff of my old age."

And then, in a few words, she told of the death of a son, a promising lad, after an illness of only a few hours, and concluded by saying:

"O, if I had only known he might die, how differently I would have trained him! He received no religious education. I have been so absorbed in gaining the meat that perisheth that I have neglected the more important eternal things. O, if I had only known!"

This experience speaks for itself. We need add but a word of warning to all who have in their hands the training and welfare of young, immortal souls. O, see to it, dear friends, that your children are early taught the way of life through Jesus, the only Saviour. Seek first the riches of that kingdom above for yourself and them, and God will provide for the meaner things of this earthly life.

### LIVING IN HOPE.

What hope? The hope of perfect resemblance to Christ in heaven. But let us remember that this is awarded only to such as delight in spiritual things here. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." This is the day of His appearing. He invited us to look unto Him. Obeying Him, we become like Him in as real a sense as are the glorified in His immediate presence. We are now "the sons of God," though the future completeness of moral conformity baffles our power of conception. Still, the resemblance begins here; and "from glory to glory," even as by the Spirit of the Lord, we advance in likeness to Him.

SOMETHING like home that is not home, like alone that is not alone, is to be wished, and only found in a friend, or in his house.

How apt are men rather to think of the preacher than of themselves. If half the criticisms which are ill-spent upon the ministers of Christ were spent by the hearers upon themselves, how much sooner might they arrive at the blessing.—*Spurgeon*.

A SMOOTH sea never makes a skilful mariner: neither do uninterrupted prosperity and success qualify for usefulness and happiness. The storms of adversity, like the storms of the ocean, arouse the faculties and incite the invention, prudence, skill and fortitude of the voyager.