

## Our Contributors.

### SOME QUESTIONS ON THE MAIN POINT.

BY KNOXIAN.

"Ours is the leading congregation of the place." Very good. How many sinners did it lead to Christ last year? How many persons did it lead from lives of self-indulgence and selfishness to lives of usefulness and self-sacrifice? How many did it lead from the ranks of the camp-followers to the ranks of the workers for Christ? When you say "Ours is the leading congregation," always stop and ask: What does it lead men from, and where does it lead them to?

"Ours is the largest congregation in the place." Large in what? Do you mean large in numbers merely? A congregation large in numbers may be shamefully small in other respects. Is your congregation large in faith? Is it large in liberality? Is it large in its contributions for colleges, for home and foreign missions? Is it large in *soul*? There are small-souled congregations as well as small-souled men. How is it with yours? The mind is the measure of the man. The soul is the measure of the congregation. A million cowards would not make an army. A hundred million skinflints would not make a large congregation in the right sense of the word. A really large congregation has a large, warm heart, large faith, large working power, large liberality, large receptivity for the truth and a large desire to carry on Christ's work. A congregation of a hundred members may be very large; one of a thousand may be so small that you can hardly see it with a microscope. In what sense is your congregation large?

"Ours is an orthodox congregation." Glad to hear it. In these days of loose thinking and bogus liberality, it is a great thing to see a whole body of people standing loyally by the truth. But let me ask: How does your orthodoxy show itself? Does it exhaust itself in mere swagger about the "time-honoured symbols," the "good old days," the "church of the fathers," the "blood of the martyrs," the "claymores of the Covenanters," and all that sort of thing? Does your orthodoxy make you burn with a desire to maul the Methodists, pitch into the Episcopalians, punch the "Plyms" and banish the Baptists? If that is all that it does then your orthodoxy is a poor thing. It is on a par with the courage of the rough fellows who used to make a great noise at fairs long ago and shout for somebody to hold them. "Hould me, thim that knows me timper." While you are consuming with a desire to burn a few heretics some of the heretics may be quietly gathering in the people to their churches. Would it not be better for you to display your orthodoxy by working for your church, by paying something towards missions, and above all by trying to bring a few sin-laden men to the Saviour? Let somebody who has read the "symbols" defend them. Never mind the "good old days." Try to make the present days some better. The "church of the fathers" is all right. Do something for the church of your children. Stop masquerading in your grandfather's old clothes and give some attention to your boy. Your grandfather's clothes are perhaps too large for you. They do not fit well. Say nothing about "our martyred forefathers" until you do a little for the Master they served. They gave their lives for Christ and perhaps you don't give Him two cents each Sabbath. A man who gives a cent each Sabbath would make a poor show at the stake. Never mind the Covenanters. You are too light for a Covenanter. A man who won't give an hour's work for Christ would make a slim fight against dragoons. Men who don't read the Bible never fight for it. Only those who know the truth experimentally ever fight or die for it. Let your orthodoxy lead you to work for your church, to pray for your church, to perform deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice for your church. Keep the peace in your church, and above all try to bring within the fold some of your sin-stricken neighbours who know not Christ. The only kind of orthodoxy worth talking about in this practical age is the kind that produces a useful and self-sacrificing life.

"Ours is a cultivated congregation." Very good. Piety of any kind is good, but intelligent piety is always the best. Pray allow me to ask a question about the culture of your people: Are they in "a fine condition of Biblical culture"? as Brother Parsons would say. Some people who put on a good deal of style are not very well read in the Bible. Some ladies

who speak French with an accent more or less Parisian, and play well on the piano do at times become a little bewildered over a text in the minor prophets. They go on a wild-goose chase after Nahum, search long and painfully for Micah, and hopelessly hunt for Habakkuk. Not long ago one of the foremost public men of this country got Felix and Festus badly mixed in a public speech. The same gentleman could expound anything in politics from the Magna Charta down to the Franchise Act, but he was not at home in the Acts of the Apostles. It does not by any means follow that because a man is a prominent politician or a successful merchant or manufacturer, or distinguished lawyer or doctor that he knows his Bible. He may be as destitute of spiritual culture as Pound-maker—perhaps more so. It might be possible to find a university graduate who cannot say the Lord's Prayer correctly or repeat the Ten Commandments. When you say: "Ours is a cultivated congregation," just stop and ask what kind of culture. Is it Biblical? Is it spiritual? If so, thank God and rejoice.

"We have splendid singing in our congregation." That is right. The service of song is a delightful service. It is the most difficult part of public worship to manage in our day, and when a congregation has good singing it should be very thankful. But what do you mean by splendid singing? Do you mean that it is of such a quality that though it pleases a few very conservative people—excellent people perhaps, but rather too conservative on non-essential points—it gives the younger portion of the congregation an excuse for going to other churches or listening to the shocking irreverence of the Salvation Army? Would it not be better to modernize the singing a little and keep the young people—your own sons and daughters—in the Church? But perhaps you mean that your singing is the other extreme—so high-toned that nobody can sing but the choir. Your congregation praises God by proxy. That is not splendid singing. Good singing means singing by the whole congregation. The question of leadership is not the main question. Choir or no choir, organ or no organ, is a side issue. The real question is: Under what kind of leadership can we in our congregation have the best congregational singing? As a rule it will be found that in this country a choir whose aim is to sing well, and have the people sing too, is the best form of leadership.

"Our socials are always a very great success. There was a tremendous crowd at our last congregational soiree." How many people attend your weekly prayer meeting?

### WHY THE MAJORITY OF CHURCH MEMBERS TAKE SO LITTLE INTEREST IN THE WORK OF THE CHURCH.

BY REV. J. C. QUINN, CARBERRY.

What are we to understand by the work of the Church? Briefly this: 1. The proclamation of the Gospel and "teaching them to observe all things" commanded. 2. Social prayer services. 3. The instruction of the ignorant outside and feeding the youth within the Church. 4. Looking out, encouraging and directing enquirers. 5. Missionary effort to arouse and interest and save the careless, etc., at home and in heathen lands.

The variety of work thus indicated will afford scope for the love and ability of the entire Church. It can never be accomplished by the few at present bearing the burden and heat of the day. Nor does our blessed Master intend that it should be performed by the few. He has left on record His instructions, and among many we note these: "To every man his work," "Occupy till I come," "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Is the majority of church members to stand idle all the day? Let us consider the question at present demanding attention: "Why the majority of church members take so little interest in church work?" It may be asked: Why introduce this question? What is the present state of the Christian Church? Does the Church manifest herself as a strong, healthy, vigorous, aggressive body? She is neither strong, vigorous nor aggressive, taking the New Testament model of a church as our guide.

The most hopeful among us must admit that there is weakness in the Church of to-day. Her membership in many cases does not furnish Biblical evidence of having been born again. This is our opinion, an opinion based upon the visible worldliness, selfishness and self-complacency of many within the Church.

There is want of relish for true Bible study and simple Gospel truth. Many desire entertainment rather than spiritual profit.

The line of separation between the Church and the World is not clearly marked and visible. Many church members are exactly like the worldly around with the single difference that their names are on our church rolls. The worldliness of the Church may also be seen in the means resorted to to raise money for religious purposes. It is not by any means an uncommon occurrence for a Christian church on both sides of the Atlantic to utilize some purely worldly amusements such as amateur theatricals and the social dance, and bazaars, lotteries, etc., for the purpose of raising funds.

When we contemplate the work of the Church as indicated in the Great Commission, we are met at the very outset by the startling fact that the majority of church members takes very little interest in the work of the Church. How is this? Looking at purely worldly organizations we observe some that have attained a large measure of success. If we examine the reasons of this success it will be found that it arises from the fact that the members of the particular organization referred to, each and all, take a deep, abiding and practical interest in its work. Each feels it to be his duty and privilege to do his best in the interests of the organization. He is careful to maintain the institution efficiently and to observe its several laws as they affect himself personally and relatively. In the working of the organization each takes a personal pleasure, and the success of the whole is a matter of satisfaction and congratulation to all the members. This principle will apply with equal force to the organization known as the Christian Church with this difference that the success of the Church arises not solely from the interest taken in her by the membership, but chiefly from the fact that Christ is in the Church as the source of life, power, purity and success.

But while it is emphatically true that the success of the Church depends largely upon the presence of the Lord Jesus, it must ever be borne in mind that the Lord Jesus works through certain channels and by the use of certain means, and expects on our part as intelligent creatures, saved by His grace, *hearty and constant well-directed co-operation.*

This truth is very largely lost sight of by most church members. Consequently, very generally over the Church, there is a practical setting-aside of the injunction laid upon believers to do personal work for Jesus. "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard" is disregarded as if it were not one of Christ's chief commands laid upon His disciples.

We have in the Scriptures several illustrations of the co-operation of the human with the divine in the working out of God's plans. Take, for example, the capture of Jericho. The Lord promised to give Jericho into the hands of Joshua. At the same time minute instructions were given to Joshua on the carrying out of which success attended his work. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, *after* they were compassed about seven days."

The Church has been placed in the world as a light in a dark place, as a live body amidst surrounding deadness and corruption. Her work is to "give light and to save life," to advance her members in Christian attainments and to rescue dead souls around. As in the case of the siege of Jericho the whole camp had something to do, parents, children, commanders, captains, soldiers, priests and Levites; so, in the greater siege of the Jericho of worldly sin, the whole Church in her membership. Members have each a work to do, and upon the prompt and intelligent performance of it in accordance with divine precept will depend the successful issue. There must be strict conformity to the instructions given by Christ on the part of each member. "He that doeth the will of My Father." In a word, each one must see to it that he believes in a personal, present Jesus, must know the truth and in every-day life must *do* the truth. This strikes at and lays bare the root of the matter. It is here that we discover the source of weakness on the part of the Church. In the case of the majority of church members, religious truth, the *truth* as it is in *Jesus*, is kept quite apart from daily life activity. Life in private, life in the home circle, life in business, life on the farm, life in the camp and on the fishing ground, life in the office, life in professional engagements is one thing; but religious spiritual life is kept quite distinct. Is such a life the life enjoined and