

Messenger and Visitor

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Church Prosperity.

No church is truly prosperous without piety. There may be great wealth, large membership and a fine material equipment, but these are no indications of real prosperity. Consecration of heart and life, is indispensable to the highest well-being of any body of professed Christians, called a church. Nothing can take the place of real godliness as an assurance of true success in the promotion of the cause of Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt whatever that the chief glory of our common-Christianity finds its best illustration in the godly lives of its friends. Unspotted purity and an unswerving fidelity are marks of a prosperous church which can never be gained. Where there is meekness under injuries, self-denial for others' good, absorbing concern for the salvation of men, there you will find the presence of the Jehovah of hosts, without which there can be no real prosperity.

It was the piety of the primitive church that guarded her walls from 'Ichabod' being inscribed upon them. With a pious membership her glory could not depart. And what was true then, is true now. If there are divisions to be healed, evils eradicated, resources developed, the triumphs of the gospel extended, then seek to promote true piety among the members. Cultivate this, and all is well. This is the most encouraging 'token for good' which can possibly be shown by any church. Here and there churches have become extinct, and the reason is in most instances, lack of piety.

It may be a truism, but a truism that will bear repetition, if there is to be more church prosperity there must be more experimental and practical religion. A church member that gives a bribe or takes one for his franchise at an election, is shorn of his strength, in proportion to his position and standing in the community. He is not a true man, and a poor specimen of a Jesus Christ's man. The regnant principle must be love. More love in relation to God, to each other, and to the souls of men, must be in evidence. As a church is made up of individuals, the most effective means of binding its members together is a genuine love for each other. Union in feeling and action can be secured in no other way, and such union is the right arm of strength, to those thus united. In the regular performance of all the duties suggested by love one for another, on the part of its several members, a church would not only be 'fair as the moon, clear as the sun' but also 'terrible as an army with banners.' Such a church would be not only beautiful but powerful and successful.

It would be well indeed if the 'new commandment' were in greater force among the disciples of Christ. It is remarkable how much stress is laid in the Bible upon brotherly love, as one of the highest attainments of piety, as it confessedly is one of the most difficult. There may be much praying and working, much zeal and toil, much orthodoxy, much giving and serving, much patience and perseverance; all this and vastly more; and all may be found much easier of accomplishment than to 'love one another with a pure heart fervently.' Brotherly love is something added to godliness—at least in climax, for the soul will move toward God much more readily than toward his erring children.

And yet brotherly love is an indispensable test of godliness, for it is written: 'If any man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen,

how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' No one's godliness will have 'the guinea stamp' upon it until it develops itself in 'unfeigned love of the brethren.' Before any can be acknowledged as those who love God, they must first be recognized as those who love their brethren. The true standard of brotherly love is loving our fellow-Christians for the Lord's sake, and for their own sakes rather than for ours. To love them because they are like us, or because they agree with us, or because they are kind to us, is but self-love, and not brotherly love. True brotherly love does not consist in loving those who go with us, and serve us, and not love those who go not with us, and serve us not. It is rather to love our fellow-Christians because they are Christ's regardless even of their unlovableness in other respects. Such love is a vital element in true church prosperity. Brethren,—think on these things.

How to Deal With Drones.

In every bee-hive there are drones, the chief end of whose existence is to feed on the toil of the thrifty workers. Sometimes the latter tired of supplying the appetites of the drones, take them in hand in rather a summary fashion. The bees may give them warning or try them by court martial, but the end of all is that they are killed. It is a very convenient way of getting rid of unprofitable consumers, and among bees the plan works like a charm.

There are drones in churches, too, who are like the bee—drones in their perfect willingness to act the part of lazy gluttons—always receiving, but never doing for others. They live on from year to year faring well day by day—attending the services of the church, enjoying in a way, the preaching, the prayers and the singing, but never opening their lips in prayer or exhortations, or loosening their purse-strings with liberal hand to help on the work of the church. They cannot well be served as the industrious bees serve their idle consumers,—though possibly it might be well to make an example of some of the most incorrigibly idle, by withdrawing from them, on the ground of the lack of Scriptural evidence of true conversion.

Some of these unprofitable brethren are drones because they like to be, and would not be anything else under any circumstances. There are others, however, who do not take a hand in the work of the church, for the simple reason that they do not know what, or how to do. No one has taken pains to enlighten their ignorance, and they float along the current of church life in idleness because they really have no idea that there is any work in or out of the church which they can do. Exhortations to be up and doing they have heard times without number without for a single instant thinking that the words had a personal application. The exhortation goes in at one ear and out at the other, leaving mind and heart unmoved by the earnest plea.

These drones are not, of course, entirely blameless for their inactive lives. Yet, something is to be said in their behalf. They would be more active if they had a clearer perception of what they ought to do. As it is, they have only the vaguest notions of Christian duty. One of these said to the writer 'I earn money and pay for the support of a pastor to do this work.' And so all the exhortations to Christian activity or personal work of any sort falls upon unheeding ears. 'It is not in my line,' is sometimes heard when they are urged to 'lend a hand' by taking a class in Sunday School or leading a prayer meeting, or visiting the sick, and so they grow up and thrive upon others. They are great receivers but very poor dispensers.

What these idle, but not unwilling brethren need is specific instruction in practical Christian service. Not all Christians are fitted, by nature, to speak or pray acceptably in public. Some have a loud call to keep their mouths shut on most occasions. But there is not one of God's true children but has a mission of some sort; and it should be the aim of the pastor assisted by the counsel of capable brethren, to find out so far as he is able, what the different members of his flock can do best, and set each at his own suitable task. Few persons even among the drones, would refuse to undertake a special service at the pastor's request; and that which begins with a simple compliance with the pastor's wish, may become, ere long, a religious habit, and a

source of genuine satisfaction and spiritual growth. General exhortations to Christian activity, though good and needful, are of little value to the inactive members unless followed up by specific directions, personally given, as to how, to do it.

Such oversight of the pastor would, at first, involve much additional labor on his part. But in due time it would greatly lighten his toil, and is one of the elements of a long and successful pastorate. Besides, in due time it will greatly lighten his toil, for an aroused and active membership would relieve his hands of many cares that now oppress and well nigh overwhelm him. By all means, brethren look after the drones. Give them something to do for the Master. Let them fatten by their own industry.

Editorial Notes.

—The presence of children in public worship is not as general as formerly. There is a cause for this. The causes may not be the same in every instance. With some attendance at the Sunday school is regarded as sufficient. The Sunday school is a splendid supplement to church attendance, but the poorest possible substitute for it. The best Sunday school for a child, if there can be but one, is a seat in the family pew beside its parents at the ordinary services of the church.

—The news from the Bloor St. church, Toronto, of which Rev. J. D. Freeman is pastor, will be received with much pleasure by his friends this way, many of whom have greatly missed his genial presence. The MESSENGER AND VISITOR, has good reason to speak well of his helpfulness in the past and rejoices with others in the success which is crowning his efforts in 'the Queen city of the west.' The Toronto letter from his facile pen will be read with interest.

—The Sunday School Times says, "If you want to fix a thing in your own mind, tell it to another. He may not retain it as his own, but you will." A skilled teacher said to his pupils in urging them to "talk back" to him by question and comment, "You may forget all I say to you, but you'll not forget all that you say to me." There is a good deal of good common sense in this. We get into ourselves what we draw out of others. It is reciprocity in mind products. Whatever we are politically, we should be free traders, religiously.

—The Baptist Commonwealth has the following good story: A certain writer of the newspapers telegraphed to one of the metropolitan papers to know if they would accept certain matter. The managing editor replied: "Send 630 words." "Can't be told in less than 1200," telegraphed the reporter. As quickly as the wire could bring it, the answer came back, "Story of creation of the world told in 600. Try it." We wish some of our correspondents would use the condensing machine just a little. It would be helpful in so many ways.

—We were glad to note in the last issue of the Watchman, in the brief sketch of the church at Bellows Falls, Vt., a very kindly reference to two of its pastors, both of them men from the Maritime Provinces, Rev's C. R. B. Dodge and C. W. Jackson. Of the former the writer says, "he had been the beloved pastor for twelve years doing a great and good work." Of the latter, "that the church is united and very happy in the present pastorate, realizing that they have again a choice and spiritual leader in the Rev C. W. Jackson." Mr and Mrs. Jackson have found a warm place in the hearts of these warm-hearted people. We are glad to make these references to two such worthy men. If they cannot be with us we are glad to note the appreciation of others for themselves and their work.

—In referring to the criticism so freely expressed in certain quarters, of the Theological Seminaries as being away behind the times in the instruction which young men are supposed to get at these 'schools of the prophets'—a professor has this to say. "Men come here who have given themselves to missionary work, sincere and devoted, who have never read the New Testament through and who do not know the prominent Old Testament stories, and we are expected to do all the case requires, in three years." In speaking of 'teaching ministers,' he says, "They are called 'dull,' 'dry.' Our Baptist churches are crazy for excitement, and impatient of thinking. This discourages the young men from study. The harvest is a lot of ill-fed, untrained, nervous church members." We have felt that something of this spirit was creeping into our churches in these Provinces. May God forbid.

A Week of Prayer for Missions Abroad.

At the Tenth Annual Conference of the Officers and members of the Foreign Mission Boards in the United States and Canada, which was held in New York January, 1903, it was decided to ask all Christians to join in a week of special prayer for