

gatherings of souls to Christ have been through the instrumentality of the living voice of men full of the Holy Ghost. It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

There are a variety of gifts and endowments, some of them valuable, some of them necessary to the ministerial office. Intellectual culture, that is most valuable; an intelligent acquaintance with the Word of God, some ability to teach others, and a new heart,—these are necessary to a man being really a minister of Jesus Christ. But over and above all these, it is the being filled with the Holy Ghost that constitutes the full and rich endowment for the glorious work of the ministry—for making men truly fellow-workers with God. On that the heart of the Church, of her ministers and members, should be intensely and in the first instance set. There are other things that are most useful, but the power of the Holy Ghost in the ministry is an absolute necessity. I quote a passage from a late writer quite to my purpose. He says, "Only where some men, more or less imbued with this primitive power have spoken the words of the Lord, not with the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, have sinners been converted, and saints prompted to a saintly life. In many periods of the history of the Church, as this gift has waned every natural advantage has come to replace it,—more learning, more system, more calmness, more profoundness of reflection. Everything, in fact, which, according to the ordinary rules of human thought, would ensure to the Christian Church a greater command over the intellect of mankind, and would give her arguments in favour of a holy life a more potent efficacy. Yet it has ever proved that the gain of all this, when accompanied with an abatement of the power of the Holy Ghost, has left the Church less efficient, and her elaborate and weighty lessons, have transformed few into saints, though her simple teaching by the Holy Ghost had continually reared up its monuments of wonder. This has been not less the case in modern than in ancient times."

Shall this, Fathers and Brethren, be in any measure exemplified in the case of our own Free Church? Shall we, whilst becoming consolidated, and growing in learning, both sacred and scientific, practically allow to drop into the background the great primary qualification for ministerial duty and success,—the being filled with the Holy Ghost? Alas for our Church, if such be the case! No talents and labours on the part of our Professors—no arrangements and regulations regarding the course of study—no intellectual and theological attainments in our students and ministers—will supply the want occasioned by the feeble possession of spiritual power, the absence of the fullness of the Holy Ghost.

It is not to be thought that I estimate lightly intellectual power, or the fruits of laborious study, in those who minister in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I utterly repudiate the idea of leaving the pulpit occupied by intellectual feebleness or uneducated ignorance. Talent, and learning, and eloquence, are most desirable, and to be highly prized, provided they do not constitute the whole of the preacher's equipment. It is well to consider what is power and what is weakness in the pulpit. You, magnificently intellectual, closely-reasoned discourse, and you glowing, eloquent oration, have riveted attention, and furnished an intellectual treat; but, if they have not convinced one sinner of sin, nor converted one soul to God, of all you eager, listening, admiring

crowd of immortal beings, they were but mere trifling after all, and can only be looked upon as utterly feeble and inefficient in regard to the great and glorious end that preaching is intended to serve. Thomas Chalmers, with all his mighty intellect and fervid eloquence, was a feeble minister of the Gospel till he was born of the Spirit, and endowed with power from on High. It is the large possession and manifestation of that which is fitted to do the work that is to be done by him who speaks in the pulpit, that is to be called power in the pulpit, as it is just the absence of it that is to be called weakness. Sometimes we have common truths and stale remarks addressed to congregations with all propriety of manner, Sabbath after Sabbath, and the people dead, uninterested, wearied exceedingly under the infliction. Sometimes we have uninspirited, but ingenious, active intellectualism, or eloquent declamation, interesting the intellect, or pleasing the taste of the hearers. Let the speaker, in such instances, but receive the Holy Spirit, so as to speak in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power, and what a change you would witness in the man, in the manner, and in the effects produced!

Let the Holy Spirit be communicated to ministers of the Gospel in the present day in the large measure in which He dwelt in those men whose preaching turned many to righteousness,—and there is nothing in Scripture to forbid the desire and expectation of that,—and conversions will be no longer rare and dubious things, but heaven and earth will again be gladdened by seeing numbers turning from sin unto God,—fleeing as doves to their windows.

If these things be so, Fathers and Brethren, then comes the vastly important question, Whence or how is this spiritual power—this endowment of the Holy Spirit—to be obtained? It comes not by nature. Education cannot give it. These may fill our pulpits with cultivated, clear, powerful, cold intellect, or with glowing eloquence, but with nothing greater or better. The Holy Ghost is the gift of God. But, though the free gift of God, given according to His sovereign will, there is an important sense in which they who receive this precious gift have to do with the abundant obtaining of it. First, there must be belief that it is according to the will of God that His ministers be abundantly endowed with the Holy Spirit. There must be a clear, deep, solemn conviction and feeling of this. Then there must be a waiting for this gift, as the little Church at Jerusalem waited after the ascension of the Lord. Having received the promise of the Spirit, and the command to tarry at Jerusalem till they should be endued with power from on High, they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. Ten days they thus waited, prayed, expected, believed. It was a waiting with minds earnestly exercised, longing, entreating, believing that the promise would be fulfilled,—not a waiting that lays aside all earnest care about the thing waited for,—not a praying for it with more than half a doubt whether the prayer will be answered. You do not doubt that the first preachers of Christianity were men of faith and prayer, and that their preaching converted multitudes. All the ministers whose preaching has turned many to righteousness have been men of faith and prayer. John Welsh prayed the third part of his time, and was unwearied in study. He would often spend whole nights in prayer. It is through such faith and prayer that men are filled with the Holy Ghost,—that they are endued with power from on High. If we have not received

this power, then the question is worthy of consideration. Why have we not received it? Have we searched out, and with a strong and lively faith believed what the Word of God teaches regarding ministers being filled with the Spirit? Have we prayed for the gift of the Spirit as those ministers prayed whose preaching has been so powerful in convincing and converting sinners? When we think of our closet exercises, of the nature of these exercises, and of the time we spend in them, do we not see the reason why we have only a little strength? Were we often, much, long, near the Throne, we would become penetrated with the Divine love, purity, power,—we would bring away a large and increasing measure of the Holy Spirit; for it is when we are lying low before the Throne in humble, earnest, expecting desire and prayer that the Holy Spirit communicates himself to us. If we give ourselves to prayer like those ministers whose preaching has turned many to righteousness,—if the brethren in the eldership join with us in this, and in stirring up all the praying people,—God's true children in our several congregations,—to ask God with many persevering, believing prayers to pour out His Holy Spirit abundantly on themselves, on the dead, souls around them, and especially on us who are God's messengers of salvation to perishing sinners, we are persuaded that there will appear a power in the preaching of the Word, and an abundance of fruit from it in the conversion of sinners, that will fill heaven and earth with gladness.

THE CHURCH AT HOME.

India.

RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMISSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR UNITED PRAYER, WITH REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT STATE OF INDIA.

While we have to direct the attention of the Ministers and Congregations of the Church to the annexed Recommendation, we are well aware that the state of India has been made the subject of fervent supplication on Sabbath-days, in many a sanctuary in Scotland, ever since the sad tidings of mutiny and massacre reached our shores. We trust that universal humiliation and prayer, in accordance with the following deliverance of the Commission, will mark the solemn assemblies of our people, through the whole of Scotland, as Sabbath-days and hours of prayer return.

Faithful prayer and penitential turning to God have much to do with the stability of our empire, both at home and abroad; and when a nation, or when a national Church mourns for sin, and seeks the favour of the Most High, as with one heart and mind, avoiding mere formalism, and using everywhere earnest and fervent supplication, then, above all, does the Word of God warrant us in expecting forgiveness and favour for that nation and for that Church.

Missionary effort may, for a while, seem to languish, and hazardous, around many a Christian's and many a Christian Missionary's family in India, may the morning break and the shadow of evening fall; but let the Churches of Christendom surround the Great Mercy-Seat, and pray unceasingly for every Missionary, for every Christian, and for every friend of Christians in India, and God will arise for their deliverance.

Christianity in India may seem in the greatest danger, but this very period of darkness