

Messenger and Visitor

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As to Evangelists.

The question of the relation of the modern evangelist to the churches and their work, is one which has been much debated. This question came to the surface in our Convention recently held at Moncton, in connection with the report on The State of the Denomination, and aroused quite a lively discussion. But the differences of opinion expressed depended probably upon the points of view of the different speakers, rather than upon any radical lack of agreement as to facts or as to conclusions which known facts would warrant. In most cases in which Christian men differ in opinion, it will be found that the difference results from the fact that one man is talking about one thing while he whom he is addressing understands him to be talking about another. Each one sees and speaks of things from his own standpoint, but the standpoint of each is different, and so, to some extent, is the impression received. Accordingly, by no dishonest process of reasoning, somewhat variant conclusions are reached because the debaters are dealing with somewhat different data. The term evangelist is pretty well understood as denoting a class of men whose special work it is to go from place to place, presenting the gospel with a view to its immediate and definite acceptance on the part of those whom they address. But the term is broad enough to include men of very various gifts, culture and character. In fact there are few classes in which the individual variations are more marked than that which is denoted by the term evangelist. And as there are evangelists and evangelists, so also there are pastors and pastors. Because the working together of some one evangelist and some one pastor has resulted in a great and permanent blessing to the church which they united to serve, it does not at all follow that such results are to be expected from the co-operation of any or every evangelist with any or every pastor. And on the other hand, it would be hasty and unwise to conclude that because there are so-called evangelists whose assistance no pastor could with advantage accept, or because there are pastors who do not need the aid of an evangelist in order to the best results, that therefore there are not times when some pastors may, with great advantage to themselves and to the cause which they faithfully serve, seek the assistance of an able and experienced evangelist. Pastors, like other men, vary in respect to natural character and ability, and all have their limitations. They have their strong points and their weak points. One man is weak where another is strong, and vice versa. One is by nature and by grace specially fitted to do the work of an evangelist, another is predominantly an expounder of the Word, another a prophet, getting vision of things hidden from other men, another is by emphasis a pastor, shepherding the flock, and another is a ruler, endowed with large executive ability. Now the minister who has a great deal of the evangelistic quality in his nature, will not require to call in the aid of an evangelist; his particular needs will lie in other directions. But just the qualities which in his case are so prominent are lacking in some very able and faithful ministers. They labor arduously, they preach the Word with faithfulness and power, they pray and long and hope for the conversion of their congregations, but for some reason they do not quite get hold of the hearts and consciences of their hearers in such a way as to compel decision and action. Somehow they have not the key to the inner chambers of personality, and so in spite of all their deep desire and persistent effort on behalf of their people, they do not get into that close spiritual touch with them

which is essential to the full result at which they aim. To such a pastor, and to a church ministered to by such a pastor, the coming of an evangelist of the true type—wise, tactful, spiritual—is likely to mean an unmixing and immeasurable blessing. To the spiritually magnetic touch of the evangelist, heart doors that had already been ajar, though the pastor knew it not, open quickly, and doors that had indeed been closed and bolted, yield to the touch—not of a stronger but of a more tactful hand. Then, in the warmer atmosphere and fuller light of a real revival, pastor and people come to know each other as they have never done before, and the new and mutually helpful relationship continues after the evangelist has gone his way.

But though disposed to recognize an important sphere of service, in these days as in the past, for the evangelist, we are quite in harmony with what we understand to have been the aim of the writer of the report on The State of the Denomination, above referred to, that is to emphasize the importance of cultivating spirituality and evangelistic power in the church and in its regular ministry. This cannot be too strongly accentuated. The pastor and the church who are willing to lower the standards of Christian life and effort, and let all the chords of their spiritual life grow slack in the expectation that the church may by and by be tuned up to concert pitch by an evangelist, so as to resound with the praises of God for a season, are surely not playing the part of the good and faithful servant, and their reward will doubtless be such as they deserve. No pastor should be satisfied who is doing less than his best for the salvation of his unconverted hearers and parishioners, and no church should put its trust in any other human means than co-operation with its pastor in such spiritual service. The question of first importance in regard to the promotion of spiritual life in our churches and the salvation of souls, is not the question of how to secure the most effective evangelists, but the question of developing and making effective, through the ministry of the Word and the Holy Spirit, the spiritual forces and agencies in each individual church.

The Conflict With Evil.

The origin of evil is shrouded in mystery and the complete solution of the problem waits the fuller revelation of the future. But the evidences of evil in the world are plain and terrible enough. While we live here we must breathe an impure moral atmosphere and feel constantly the presence and the influence of the powers of darkness. But Christian men and women ought not to rebel at this, nor seek by shutting themselves up in monasteries and convents, or by otherwise withdrawing from participation in the world's life, to avoid the responsibility which God has laid upon them of living in an evil world. This is the Lord's prayer on behalf of his disciples,—“not that thou shouldst take them out of the world but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.” It is possible for men and women to be in the world and not be of the world. The children of light have strong grounds for confidence that they shall not be overcome by the powers of darkness. God's will for his children is, not that they should be removed from the conflict with evil, but that they should contend and overcome. They are the salt which is to season the world, the light by which its darkness is to be dispelled. Not a life that abandons itself to the strong currents of evil in the world to work the will of the flesh, nor a life that dwells apart in meditation and prayer, but a purposeful, strenuous life, that by living and loyal faith in Christ bears constant witness to the truth in the face of the world's crookedness and perverseness, and by keeping trimmed and burning innumerable lamps lit from the central sun of divine love, illuminate ever more widely and more brightly the semi-darkened world,—such is the life to which Christ calls his people.

Editorial Notes.

—It is a sign of the growing respect for law and order, that the regret expressed by Dr. Talmage in a recent sermon—that by-standers had not immediately dashed out the brains of Czolgosz with the butt of his own revolver—has met with almost universal condemnation. It was a snap judgment which the eminent divine will live long enough to repent. Anarchy is no cure for anarchy.

—Tuesday, October 1, is named for the formal opening of the new Brandon College building. From the College Quarterly we learn that the new building is a splendid structure, massive and symmetrical and admirably adapted for the purposes for which it has been reared. We trust it may be speedily filled with students from all parts of the Prairie Provinces.

—“Is the Puritan Decadent?” asks The Boston Congregationalist in its last issue, and the answer given is in the affirmative. It says, “One prominent reason why many of our Congregational churches have ceased growing in numbers is that there is little new material, unless it is gathered from without the Congregational circles. If we are to expect the continuance of childless homes or the small families of those who inherit the Congregational name, then either the denomination will dwindle or it must be recruited from other sources. Already the sentence seems to have been pronounced on the descendants of the original Congregational stock, ‘The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.’”

—The Congregationalist and Christian World gives an interesting account of effective missionary work done among a colony of Italians in an American town by a Christian lady, although she was ignorant of their language, and they were for the most part ignorant of hers. She presented them with Italian New Testaments in which they became so much interested that they asked for someone to instruct them in it in their own language. A man was brought from a neighboring town who preached to them. The Italians were so interested and so grateful that other meetings followed, until now the church to which the lady alluded to belongs has what might be called an Italian annex, and the results of the work are most gratifying. It is added that the Roman Catholic priest who had shown no interest in the Italians before, is now indignant at what he considers an invasion of his territory.

—St. John has lately enjoyed brief visits from two stalwart Christian workers, widely known for their labors in behalf of the young men and women of America. Mr. Fred B. Smith, of Chicago, spent Sunday, the 22nd, here in work for the Y. M. C. A. It was a memorable day for the young men of St. John. In the afternoon the Opera House was completely filled with men of all ages, who listened intently for upwards of an hour to a powerful argument and appeal in behalf of “A Strong Man,” from one who is himself a splendid example of physical, mental and spiritual manhood. At the close of the address a large number of young men intimated their desire to achieve such manhood as the speaker had outlined in his address. The second visitor was Rev. Clarence E. Eberman, the new field secretary of the Christian Endeavor Society, who preached in one of the churches on Sunday and addressed a mass meeting of young people at Germain Street Baptist church on Monday evening. Mr. Eberman is also a man of striking personality and he brought an inspiring message.

—Sir George White, the hero of Ladysmith, and by virtue of length and recognized ability of service, one of the most distinguished officers in the British Army, is like Lord Roberts, a strenuous advocate of temperance in the army. In India Sir George White was president of the Army Temperance Association, and in that capacity gathered statistics which demonstrate the value of total abstinence in promoting good conduct. In a body of soldiers in which the numerical proportion of the abstainers to the drinkers was about one to two and a half, the convictions by court-martial were one abstainer against sixteen drinkers. The idea that the hardest drinkers are the best fighters, Sir George denounces as a fallacy. The truest courage depends upon a sense of duty and self-control, which of course cannot be sustained by alcoholic drinks. There is no better soldier than the Turk who is a total abstainer and has generations of total abstainers back of him. General White points out another way than by its direct effect upon the soldiers, in which excessive drinking injures the army,—namely, by lowering the profession of arms in the estimation of a soberer class of men whom it would be of great advantage to the nation to have connected with the army.

—How Count Tolstolof regards the teaching of the Orthodox Church in Russia and its priesthood, may be understood from the following extract from a letter of his published not long ago in reply to the Russian Synod's sentence of excommunication against him:

“Understand Christ's personality as you will, still his teaching which abolishes the evil of the world so simply and easily and gives good to men so undoubtedly if only they will not pervert it—that teaching has been hidden, turned into coarse magical manipulation of bathing, smearing with oil, making certain gestures, conjuring, swallowing little pieces of bread and so on; and so on, so that after all nothing remains of the teaching itself. And then, when a man tries to remind people that Christ's teaching consists not in this sorcery, masses, tapers, holy images, but in loving one another, never returning evil for evil, never condemning others, never slaying one another, then those to whose interest it is to deceive raise an indignant clamor. . . . What is particularly horrible