

WESLEYAN,

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Rev. S. ROSE, Methodist Book Room Toronto is Agent for this paper.

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1876.

FAITH IN GOD'S ALMIGHTINESS, IS IT DECLINING?

Every devout mind must be really grateful for the extent of the spirit of prayer in our day. But it is more than probable, painful as it is to be obliged to make the confession, that underlying this very general prayerfulness there is a sad distrust of the divine power and willingness to bless, save and rescue. Within the limit of common wants, Christian faith is vigorous and confident enough. When we step outside the ordinary pale of individual conditions, however, there is a hesitancy to accept the unqualified promises of the Bible. Here the mind halts, throws out its philosophical pickets, and either waits for reinforcements or sounds a retreat. Religion, as it gains in expanse, seems to lose in intensity. In days of great emergency, when believers were thrust into all kinds of difficult situations, they found it easy to accept the most liberal promises of God. In their estimation, no foe could overcome, no fire consume, no pestilence strike down the true believers, if we may believe the history of religion in ages long departed, or, indeed, if we accept the testimony of our own Methodist fathers. It is curious, equally instructive, to trace the history of religious faith, in this respect, from the beginning.

All down the Biblical ages, every form of speech was employed, every necessary demonstration was made to impress upon human minds the illimitable power of the Lord Jehovah, and its free exercise for meeting human necessities. While it was necessary to teach mankind through their senses, God revealed Himself in the person of the Covenant Angel, always in the character of majesty and eternal mightiness. Men came to look upon God through the medium of frequent stupendous miracles which they witnessed themselves or heard of from the lips of others. By deluge, by the arrest of the sun, by the descent of fire, by earthquake, by the infliction and removal of pestilence, by the translation of living prophets, by the resurrection of the dead, men learned God's power, and learning, believed. Christ came at an age when faith in God's energy was rapidly declining. This confidence He signally revived where hearers or witnesses were willing to be convinced. From that period of unbounded trust in God's ability and willingness to save, the church went on, gathering great conquests in faith and obedience. Again we see the church's faith in God declining, except in a general sense. It was necessary that new examples should be produced to show that Jehovah's right arm was gloriously powerful and ever exerted in behalf of the trustful. The Reformation opened, with its amazing displays of Providential interposition, in return for the people's re-invigorated faith. Believers lived, prayed, fought as under the immediate eye of the Lord and His sufficient guidance. While this soul-energy continued, Luther, wrestling with the Lord for Melancthon's life one day, and flinging his ink-bottle at Satan's head the next, was just a type of the prevailing mental simplicity which regarded the latter as a veritable, powerful devil, and the former as an ever-present and omnipotent God. There was but one remedy in those days for trouble—God's power to save and help—and this men as fully trusted in as in the rising of the sun or the springing of the grass in its season.

Once more the church's faith lost strength. As a general, national providence, England never yielded its trust in Jehovah. That would have been infidelity. But, beyond its Liturgy, the confession was seldom made of even that. Scotland, more stern, and having imbibed much of the spirit of the Reformation, declined in faith less rap-

idly; but even Scotland lost that religious faculty which sees in God a present refuge, and an almighty defence, though its hills never ceased to reverberate with the echo of His praises. As to Ireland, it was locked up principally in Romanism; while surrounding nations were but nominally Christian or actually Pagan.

Then came the great revival of the seventeenth century. Like flaming prophets the evangelists went forth throughout Great Britain and sped their way to America, calling on the multitudes to believe in God's power and majesty, as present here and now, to heal, succour and save. Through that faith the world was brought under a new era of the Spirit's grace and favour. While the simplicity of faith endured, men could believe of God anything that was good. They only wondered that signal mercy had not followed the world all through. If sickness came, God possessed balm; if sorrow, He had ways of bringing comfort; if crosses, He could give strength; if danger he could rescue. So God honoured faith by saving from sin and healing diseases in instances so marvellous that sceptics could only disprove by persistent denial.

Where are we to-day? We heard a doctor in divinity recently appeal in a public assembly to another divine in support of an incident which he related. A helpless invalid, during the great Chicago fire, heard her niece describing with awful terror, the rapidity and force of the destroying element as it came down upon her dwelling. What could they do? No living aid was near, for all had fled. Throwing herself on her knees, the aged Christian cried—"O God, if you are going to save us, you must do it right now." It was a homely prayer, and surely simple enough. But it prevailed. Opening about the widow's house, like the calm sometimes seen in the heart of a tempest at sea, the fire swept round it, knit on the opposite side, and went its frightful way. The lowly house stands there as a token of God's power and mercy to this day. It means far more than Bunker Hill Monument.

But instances like this are almost as solitary as the house and women saved by miracle. Our religion, if it means anything of value, teaches that God is great, sufficient, willing to save. If He be not all this, our object of worship falls far below perfection. The world He made is under his government. Its laws he holds in His hands perpetually. Yet all our preaching will not fully convince those who hear us of the reality. Is this because of our superior knowledge? Quite the reverse. Our knowledge has reference to almost every subject but this. Wise men are, but in relation to God's character, very ignorant. The world by wisdom knows not God, and needs greatly that it should return to the first lessons of His faithfulness, goodness and power.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL OF NOVA SCOTIA has been dismissed. When the election of the Attorney-General came up in Guysboro, though under considerable pressure from different quarters, this paper, simply because it was admitted as a religious organ into families on both sides of politics, was silent on the questions at issue. The subject has ceased now to be a political one, and takes rank with others of a purely moral colouring. Knowing this much we consider it our duty to say that the Government which found it had made a very serious mistake in taking this man to its councils, deserves great credit for its determination now to respect the moral convictions of the people. May the day be very far distant when any of our Provinces will again be asked to accept as their first legal officer a man whose private life will not bear strict investigation. Governments owe it to the country to consult their sense of right and decency before seeking to add a very questionable strength to their own administration, by calling to their aid persons who cannot be admitted to a level with the first gentlemen in the land.

WESTERN GOOD WILL.—By information recently received we learn that some members of the Central Board who visited the East for the first time in October, are heartily pleased with the appearance of things in the Mari-

time Provinces. Without at all intending it, we have captivated good Brethren. There must have been very genial intercourse as well, or the generous words which now return, like blossoms of good seed, would not have been borne on the Westerly breezes. More and yet more of this fraternity will help us all.

YOUNG MEN'S WEEK. Providence has been doing much for the youth of christian lands during the last ten or fifteen years. After the agency of the Sabbath School has completed its work—that marvellous work which has attained to almost scientific excellency—our young people are followed into public life with much sympathy and practical watchfulness. Young Men's Christian Associations have just held their week of prayer for those who are the objects of their special care and defence. Many pulpits have—last Sabbath—spoken out words of eloquent cheer, instruction and warning, in response to the call of the Executive Committee. It is good to think that God is thus throwing around the first element in society a shield of protection—opening up to our young men a perpetual well-spring of happiness. In Cities, particularly, all this is needed. Here are their principal dangers, and here they ought to meet the strongest helpful influence. A letter from some thoughtful friend to a member of the Association in the vicinity to which a young man is to remove, might often secure for him consideration, when otherwise he might wander and perish.

It is quite possible the Presidential election for the United States may have to be settled through a patient count of Electoral votes. We hope nothing more serious will grow out of it, though certainly we have our fears. Both parties claim the victory, showing how closely party strength was waged in the contest. If a scrutiny were to be ordered now, as in our election disputes, what a mighty experiment would lie before the national politicians!

Prohibition seems to be commending itself more and more. A Rev. Mr. Gales, of Montreal, has been helping the good cause in Nova Scotia. Is it not remarkable that countries make rapid strides in Temperance reform till they reach just this last stage, and then some delay comes in to prevent Prohibition. There are subtle questions underlying the whole subject, or surely politicians could see their way clear to try an experiment when petitions measured by the yard are sent in to Parliament in favour of it.

The N. York Advocate intimates that Rev. T. Watson Smith is in that city 'delving' in all recesses where there is hope of reaching historic treasure to assist him in writing of the Methodism of our Provinces. "Delving" is the right word to use of Mr. Smith's labors. He toils patiently, and gets to the bottom of things sooner or later. His first volume would have been out before this but for the information that additional light might be thrown on his pages by American manuscripts to which he now has access.

The Nashville Advocate diagnoses a case: "A preacher has just stepped in and told us that only one copy is taken on the circuit to which he has been appointed.—And in that Circuit next to nothing has been done. Of course not—the Church is dead, or moribund."

The Church paper is a kind of curri-cumb to a Circuit. Every Cavalryman knows that a horse well-cared keeps brisk on half hay. It saves line upon line to circulate a Religious Journal. When our list runs down on any work it's a sign of death by mange there.—Richmond Adv.

Precisely. Where a good Church paper has once had a free circulation, and is reduced to a few names, it may be taken for granted that some one (unless through special mercy) shall be called in to read the funeral service. We always notice that a good state of piety sets people to enquiring for wholesome reading, and vice versa. People may argue as they please, but that is what it means—death or indifference.

THE WAR has lulled for a season. We fear it is but a lull. English papers are pondering gloomily over a speech recently made by the Czar of Russia. We quote a concluding sentence or two from the speech which may carry its

own meaning to our readers. Russia has begun tremendous wars before with similar language.

"In a few days negotiations will commence at Constantinople, and my most ardent wish is we may arrive at a general agreement. Should this however not be achieved, and should I see that we cannot obtain guarantees necessary for carrying out what we intended to demand from the Porte, I am convinced that the whole of Russia will respond to my summons, should I consider it necessary, and if Russia's honor require it Moscow will lead the van by its example. May God help us to carry out our mission."

JOHN MARSHALL, Esq., the worthy son of a worthy Methodist Minister of the same name, died last week in Halifax. He had been for many years an official of great value in the Custom House of this city. It is believed that his conscientious devotion to his duties helped to undermine his constitution. He died of abscess on the brain.

HALIFAX DISTRICT.

At a Convention of Ministers and Laymen, to be held in Grafton Street School Room on Wednesday and Thursday, 22nd and 23rd inst., the following order of exercises will be observed—

WEDNESDAY.

10 o'clock a. m. Prayer Meeting and address on the objects of the Convention. Conducted by the Chairman of the District.

2.30 p. m. Consideration of Divine promises in regard to the results of Ministerial and general Christian work. Addresses by Revs. R. Brecken, Geo. Johnson and others.

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit as essential to the fulfilment of the promises. Addresses by Revs. E. B. Moore, J. Strothard and others.

7.30 p. m. Sermon by Rev. J. Coffin, to be followed by addresses from Rev. C. Parker and others.

THURSDAY.

10 a. m. Personal Consecration. Addresses by Revs. G. Shore, G. F. Day and others.

How best to reach the Individual Conscience, by J. B. Morrow, Esq.

2.30 p. m. Thanksgiving Service. Addresses by Rev. J. McMurray, E. Lloyd, Esq., Revs. J. Scott and L. E. Thurlow.

7.30 p. m. The best means of conducting religious services and promoting Christian work. To be introduced by Rev. S. F. Huesia.

The public are invited to attend. It is hoped that all will come in a prayerful and expectant spirit. A. W. Nicolson, Chairman.

As will be seen by our English Letter, great good is resulting at home from District Conventions assembled to consider and prepare for the work of revival. A movement among ourselves, in the same direction, is yet but in its infancy.

THERE are but few who know the extent to which our Methodist ministers and their wives in these lower Provinces, have contributed to the literature of the day. We are sure of, at least, six good volumes from this source within the last year or two. Yet not one of the books carries the real name of the author.

We greatly regret to learn that the new Parsonage at Wallace has been totally consumed by fire. The fire, it appears, began in the barn adjoining the house. Rev. A. Morton, the Pastor, was absent in Pictou at the time. This was a fine building, just finished within a year or two. We have not heard whether there was any insurance.

THE BOOK ROOM has received its Fall Supply of Books and Stationery, for both Wholesale and Retail trade, equal to any assortment in the country. Full Catalogues will shortly be issued. The sales, we are glad to say, keep up wonderfully considering the times. A good, fresh, cheap article continues to command patronage, and this the managers are determined to keep in supply. For winter reading, home decoration, Christmas and New Year's presents, there is no better chance than is furnished here. See advertisement of periodicals this week.

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

METHODISM AT ALDERHOT.

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—Our work has greatly extended and prospered at this great centre of military life. It is but a few years since it was begun, and now it can be compared favorably with almost any recent extension of Methodism. In many forms it makes provision for the temporal and spiritual necessities of the soldiers. The results have been visible in many sound conversions, and the diffusion of gracious influences which, as the troops are removed, are felt far and wide, almost to the ends of the earth. Last week witnessed the dedication of a new and beautiful chapel for the use of the soldiers at Alderhot. Its cost has been about £10,000, and is nearly paid for. It has a fine memorial window, to commemorate the services to the church and to the cause of God in the army of the late General Sir Hope Grant. The window was unveiled by General Sir Thomas Steele, and the opening sermon was preached by Dr. Funshon.

A MODEL MISSIONARY MEETING has again been held in Exeter Hall, in behalf of the two London Districts. We referred to this gathering last year, and would again direct attention to the enlistment of the services of the children who filled the spacious gallery, and sang missionary odes and hymns with great beauty and spirit. The immense Hall was crowded, and the speakers in adapting themselves to the younger portion of the audience, succeeded to admiration in delighting everybody, and securing a time of great enthusiasm and liberality. Revs. G. T. Perks, Dr. Punshon, W. O. Simpson and Jackson Wray were the famous men who were so successful in their addresses at this excellent meeting.

THE LEEDS ANNIVERSARY

including Breakfast, sermons, and public meetings, occupied over an entire week, and has been even more successful than in former years. The wonderful and gracious excitement, the enlarged liberality of our people in Leeds, and its neighborhood, sends a thrill of hopefulness throughout all Methodism, and it affords sure ground of encouragement, that the income of the society will not in the future be diminished, but probably augmented.

DISTRICT MISSIONS

and revival services on a very large scale are being organized in almost every part of the United Kingdom. The effort will be on a scale of very great magnitude, and will probably touch every circuit in Methodism. A whole-day meeting is called in some central town, and as far as possible the ministers of the District are present, together with the office-bearers and others, to discuss the best ways of doing the work, and to secure the wider descent upon all, of the power of the Holy Spirit. In future letters, more distinct mention will be made of some of these important meetings, and of the revival work in which as a church we are engaged.

AN UNUSUAL NUMBER

of missionary brethren are at present departing to their several fields of labour. Some are veteran ministers who have again and again proved their devotion to the cause, a few are men of good renown in the Home work, who for a season are going abroad, and many are fine hopeful youths, trained at Richmond, and consecrating their lives to the Redeemer's service. In my present circuit I am brought into closer contact with many of those missionary brethren, and not unfrequently witness their departure upon their voyages, and can testify to the sacrifice made by many, in parting with children, relatives and friends for long periods of years, if not for the whole of life. The true heroic spirit is still with our brethren, and is constantly called into exercise.

THE SWORD

is not yet drawn. The past fortnight has been a time of extreme uneasiness and direful rumors, securities have fallen, and confidence is greatly shaken. But war is not declared, and Russia pauses before taking so terrible a step, as a declaration of war against Turkey. It is well known that the Serbians are helped by Russian men and money, but Turkey dare not provoke a quarrel on that account. The attitude of England is considered doubtful. Our Government intensely dread Russian aggrandisement in that direction, but the nation will not sanction a war for the maintenance of Turkish power, with its present wretched misrule, and deplorable impotence. Our wishes and opinion do not appear to weigh much in the Councils of the Great Powers at the present crisis. There is yet some hope for a peaceful solution of the problem, but on the quiet there are unmistakable signs of preparation for war, even in England. The moment is intensely critical and from many hearts, the prayer is going up, "Give peace in our time O Lord, because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou O God." G. E. Oct. 30, 1876.

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE MINISTERS OF THE N. S. CONFERENCE.

DEAR BROTHERS.—The period is now approaching which it is usual for us to employ in special efforts to promote the revival of the work of God; and there is no question of greater importance to us, as having a manifest bearing on the success of these efforts, than that of our ministerial efficiency.

It is sad to know that the normal state of many of our churches is one of disheartening indifference to the church's great mission of saving souls. This indifference, growing, as it does, out of spiritual decay, operates as a contagion, and surrounded by it on every hand, we are in great danger of yielding to its influence, and relapsing into a mere official and perfunctory manner of discharging the duties of our sacred office. We can avoid this only by seeking and maintaining a most vigorous, mature and active spiritual life. Two facts should be ever kept in view

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