

III.  
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

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OTHER things being equal, the congregation best supplied with the Church paper are the best informed in what they need to know for their own prosperity, and for what they are called to do in promoting the general interests of the Church. Will every pastor do his utmost to increase the circulation of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT among his people. He will find it a helper.

THE PULPIT AND MODERN  
THOUGHT.

TO define the exact province of the pulpit is no difficult task if we are content to accept the Bible as the law-book on this matter. There can be no misunderstanding as to Paul's repeated injunctions to the youthful Timothy. He is to take heed unto himself and unto the doctrine. There are certain truths he is to command and teach. He is to keep that which is committed to his trust. He is to "avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." The range of pulpit teaching is wide enough in all reason, but it is manifest there are some things to be avoided. What the exact duty of the pulpit is, in these days, is a matter of deep interest to those who hear, as well as to those who preach. That the doctrines of scripture are being somewhat seriously criticised, by men of eminent scholarship and culture, is true. But this is no new thing under the sun. The word of God from the first has been a "tried" word. This age has not originated the charges it makes against the word of God. The gospel was counted "foolishness," and the preaching of the cross was a "stumbling-block" from the beginning. And the statement made in that first age of Christian teaching is not altogether out of place to-day. The world by wisdom knows not God. Apart, however, from the discussion of the great questions involved, it is no uncommon thing to meet with a hint that the preachers are either unable to meet the difficulties of modern doubt, or afraid to give utterance to what they believe. In a word, they are incompetent, or cowardly, or both. Now, without staying a moment to defend the pulpit from these charges, may we not ask a simple question,—a question that is as appropriate as simple: What is the legitimate province of the pulpit? Surely *the business* of the preacher is to preach. To discuss, to debate, to enter into controversy, is not preaching. It may be a pleasant pastime to knock down men of straw, or even of more substantial material, but this is not preaching. A man is not necessarily a coward who refuses to shoulder arms at the rattle of every drum and fife. The preacher's business is to preach. That is, to tell something, not to call everything in question. The pul-

pit has a message from God to men. It has declarations to make rather than questions to ask. Its province is to preach the preaching God has given it. The preacher is not an unraveller of controversial knots, but a declarer of the mind and mercy of God to men. And to such as want the pulpit to forget itself and become a platform of debate, and would have the preacher become a wrangler, Nehemiah's answer is surely enough, "I am doing a great work; why should the work stay while I come down and talk with you?" Call this cowardice who will, it seems to us that the pulpit will prove itself valiant and wise by faithfully abiding in that work to which it was called. The surest defence of truth is the declaration of truth. Give it free play, and it will hold its own, and gather glory round its brows, spite of all who mock and deride. The discoveries of modern science could not have wrought a thousandth part of the prevalent unfaith, but for the lamentable ignorance of scripture truth that abounds. The seeds of doubt have been sown in the soil of ignorance. Men who dabble with science and are content to be ignorant of revelation are sure to be at sea. The preacher of to-day need have no fear of the march of science, but he may well be afraid of ignorance. And no grander service can be rendered to the cause of truth than that the pulpit should make it very plain that we are not following "cunningly devised fables," that these gospels and epistles are not "guesses at truth," but truth. The truth as it is in Jesus is its own defence. Let that be preached, and all will be well.

ONE pastor writes:—"I am well pleased with the paper and wish every member of my congregation to read it." That pastor does not need to be told that the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT will greatly help him in his pastoral work. He has shown his faith by sending us twenty new subscribers.

REVIVAL.

THE term "revival" is one that is frequently used now-a-days in some sections of the Christian Church. It is frequently said that the present is specially an age of "revivals of religion;" that "revivals"—as they are called—are a characteristic feature of it. It is a question, however, whether the word so employed is correctly employed. What is usually intended when a revival is spoken of? It is chiefly this: that there is a great deal of movement and excitement in a religious community; that large numbers are turned to God; that multitudes renounce their wickedness, and implore divine forgiveness and grace. That is the customary idea. Now, is that the true view of a revival? We think not.

Look at the etymology of the word. A "revival" is a making alive again. It is the restoration of life when it has been lost, or the quickening of it when it has become dor-

mant. It is not the imparting of life for the first time. It is the bringing back of what has been once enjoyed. And so it is not quite proper to say that a revival of religion consists in the conversion of the unconverted. A revival is something that pertains to Christians, and not to non-Christians—to those within the church and not to those without. Still, it is true, that whenever a genuine revival of religion takes place, its effects almost invariably reach beyond Christians, beyond the Church. A revived Christian Church is the one divinely-ordained agency for the saving of men, and the saving of men almost infallibly follows the revival of Christians. But we must distinguish between the tree and its fruit. We must not confound a revival with its consequences. A revival is for Christians, and not for non-Christians.

Now, a revival in this sense is very often needed. There is no law, no ordinance of God, that makes it inevitable that Christians should deteriorate in their spiritual life. There is no good reason why they should lose their fervor, their energy, their activity. It is possible for them to be always advancing and never retrograding. But, as matter of fact, it never occurs that either individuals or communities are always what they should be. Every Christian believer knows of seasons of comparative unfruitfulness and deadness. There are hours when he seems to have gone back altogether, to have lost all that was most precious and desirable. And what is true of believers personally, is also true of societies of believers. The churches often become formal, and frigid, and worldly. And so there is need of a revival.

Is there not a general need of revival in some directions now? Look at the churches and Christians of our lands. Who will say that they do not need a stronger faith in God than they manifest? Who will say that they do not need a more vivid perception than they now enjoy of Him as a real, living God, a presence ever dwelling with them, a power working in and for them? Who will say that they do not need a deeper sense of their obligations, obligations to their God, obligations to their fellows? Who will say that they do not need more courage, more daring, more enthusiasm, more chivalry in the service of their Lord? Any observant mind—any mind that can see what exists, and compares it with what might and should exist—will readily confess that the standard of spiritual life to-day is very low. It is no lower, perhaps, than it has almost always been. It is higher than it has generally been. There has been a constant improvement. But we must confess that the Christianity of Christ and the New Testament has never been fully incarnated yet. Our actual religion has always fallen far short of the ideal. We need to be revived, to be quickened, stirred up anew.

But the query comes: How shall a revival be obtained? How shall a Christian believ-