

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## WHAT PURPOSE IS SERVED.

By Rev. Thomas Nattress.

Without looking up the Blue Book the personnel of the General Assembly's Committee on Church Life and Work, I should like to inquire what purpose is served by answering questions that are asked of sessions.

There is an odd exception, of course, the quality of the questions, as for example, the 6th question, under the Sociological: "Specify any ages in sociological sentiment or practice which have affected the church's life and work." To a question like that one can answer perfectly, that "A higher moral ideal is present.... Intermarriage of Protestants with Catholics has not been good for the Church life of either party."

If there is true religion in the midst of each, the difference does not necessarily blight the life or spoil the church relationship of either.... Immorality and intemperance are frowned upon, but not in an I-am-holier-than-thou fashion.... The church recognizes good influences of an exogenous character more than she once the populace recognize the honest devotedness and righteousness of the teachings of the Church.

It pictures the righteous indignation of a faithful old Scotch minister being asked: (1) "Is the obligation to observe the Sabbath as part of moral law preached faithfully frequently to the people?" (2) "Are you educating your people in the total abstinence?" (3) "Are people instructed as to their responsibility for those around them, giving no hope and without God in the world?" (4) "Are the people instructed from the pulpit in the principles of Christian citizenship?"

One would have been a milder man in his sort had he contented himself with, "Havers, man what else is there for?" Is the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada degenerating?

Assessing by the fact that some of the questions asked by the committee are questions asked last year or year before, where the same answer necessarily holds good, consider the class of these questions. (1) "Do your people show a kindly spirit towards their neighbors?" which, being interpreted, would ordinarily mean "Is your neighborhood a fit place to live in?" and would be applicable in China as in any other country. (2) "How many of our homes are directly affected by intemperance?" One is tempted to say "We are not divulging secrets," the answer being more civilly, "the percentage is very small." (3) "Does the wealth hinder the application of the Golden Rule to our relations with fellow-men?" Presumably, it

always has done—along with a few other thirsts about which no questions are asked—more or less. Why not ask, "Do you teach original sin, and thereby keep your ordination vows?" Or has the fact of original sin been eliminated?"

Other questions asked simply beg the question of the intelligence of sessions, boards of management, Sunday school teachers and officers, and pastors of churches, especially the questions under the head of Church Extension.

My own session always answers the questions on Church Life and Work. But let us have done with mediocrity in the matter of the questions asked. Presbyterian conveners have difficulty in getting returns for the simple reason that sessions have lost confidence in the utility of the Assembly's Committee.

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## PULPIT PREPARATION.

In response to frequent enquiries, Rev. Mr. Campbell, successor to Dr. Parker in the pulpit of City Temple Church, London, writes as follows to the British Weekly:

From time to time correspondents write asking me for hints on sermon preparation, public speaking, and the like. I am unwilling to say much on these themes, because I cannot claim to be an authority on any of them, and do not care to recommend my own methods as suitable for others. I can only state in a few words what I have found useful in my own case. I have always been a hard reader, but have never read with a view to the pulpit. Actual preparation does not take me long, if I am in good health, and I do not know what it means to hunt for a subject. Life is so full and interesting, and the Gospel of Christ so many-sided, that I cannot but agree with Phillips Brooks, that the wonder would be if one could not find some aspect of it about which to speak to one's fellows two or three times a week. I think it better to make general rather than particular preparation, to be full and ready, rather than to hunt up one particular subject and work away at it until it is preached. I mention this with some hesitation, because it has obvious disadvantages, and would be scouted in the sermon class of a theological college. Its chief drawback, perhaps, is that if the preacher is physically below the mark everything suffers, because he is unable to concentrate his resources at the necessary moment. It has been said that no mental exercise is so exacting as extempore preaching, and I can well believe it. On the other hand I have proved by experience that long laborious preparation only results in pulpit failure, so far as I am concerned; I have tried it once or twice for special occasions, but never with com-

fort either to myself or to my hearers. If I have ever preached any good sermons it was not because I knew beforehand that they were to be effective. I avoid special sermons and great occasions as much as possible; in fact one's shrinking from them is almost morbid, and I am ashamed of it. No one admires more than I do the man who can rise to them, and feel equal to his task. Many correspondents wish to know whether I use notes. One gentleman is under the impression that he once heard me read a sermon. He is mistaken. I never used notes until after coming to the City Temple, when I tried them for a few months, but found I could not get on with them. I had been recommended to use them on the ground that with advancing years my memory would not continue to be what it is now, and that I ought to be prepared for the change; but I found them a hindrance rather than a help. A sermon is not so much an affair of memory, after all, as a presentation of a case. It is not repeating something, but saying out what you have been thinking, and using everything around you to help you, even the expressions on the faces of the people. I hold myself at liberty to address myself to any particular man whose expression reminds me of some difficulty that ought not to be passed over. To do this it means that notes must be discarded; they are only in the way. Better have a clear idea of what you mean to teach, and then get as closely as possible into touch with your hearers, so that they may preach the sermon along with you. I therefore never use notes, except when referring to special facts or figures, and these I place where I can get at them when they are wanted without having them before me. Sometimes I take a book into the pulpit and read a passage from it. These, in brief, are my methods. I give them to my questioners for what they may be worth.

PRESBYTERIAN PULPIT  
ECHOES.

Rev. W. A. McIlroy: "The faith which is to lift the world must arrive at service. It must do something. Man is saved to serve."

Wm. Armstrong, D.D.: "In every genuine revival there has been a revival of increased liberality of brotherly love and of interest in men."

Rev. Robert Young: "A neglected opportunity can never be regained. There is a certain time in every one's life when a chance to accomplish some good comes, and if neglected the opportunity is gone forever, so if we wish to live wisely we should do what lies nearest us now."

Rev. J. W. H. Milne: "By no means can we elude deadly tempta-