

Messenger and Visitor

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CONCERNING REVIVALS.

The fundamental idea of revival is the quickening and increase of life. A revival is not a resurrection but a resurrection; not a recall of the dead from the grave, but a restoration of the feeble to fullness of health and strength. The revival does for religion what the springtime does for the orchards. During the winter months life in the orchard is dull and stagnant. Stripped of their foliage the trees stand bare and gaunt. There is something spectral about them as they creak in the wind or rattle their icy fringes in the blast. But when the springtime comes with its magic touch, the sun-kissed buds are stirred and begin to draw for sap. Vessel after vessel all the way down to the root excites his neighbor, until, touched and thrilled, the generous bosom of mother earth yields up its sap, which, rising through the tree, becomes in it a vital force to clothe it with verdure, steep it in fragrance, deck it with blossoms and load it with precious fruit. A revival of religion means the emergence of the soul from spiritual sluggishness and barrenness into the bloom and beauty and fruitfulness of abounding spiritual vitality.

The revival is primarily a life-movement in the church. Its presence is marked by a more acute and vivid consciousness of God, a deeper peace, a holier joy, a more passionate love for Christ and a mightier yearning for the salvation of the lost. These conditions would constitute a revival, even though no conversions accompanied them. Sinners may be converted in a community where the church is languid, weak and cold. God fulfils himself in many ways. An insensible church cannot altogether block his paths of power. His Word is quick and his Spirit mighty when we are dull and pulseless. Yet it is true of course, that the larger displays of saving grace are always coincident with the revived spirituality of God's people. Kindle the smouldering embers of the church's life into vivid glow and the fire spreads. The darting flame, seizing upon the inflammable material that is always at hand, envelops the community in its holy blaze.

The genuine revival is a work of God. It is a vital process and all vital processes are divine. Physicians understand this. When the patient is down with pneumonia mechanical appliances are resorted to. Poultries are ordered and hot water bags and cotton wool jackets. Medicines are given with a view to fighting the hostile germs through the avenues of the blood. Nourishment in concentrated form is supplied with frequency. But when all is done the doctor says: "Everything now depends upon his vitality. We cannot tell what the result may be. If the heart is able for its work we shall expect recovery. He is in the hands of God." It is because a revival of religion is a vital process that it is such a subtle thing. It may fail to come when the most elaborate preparations in the way of organization and machinery have been made. It may flame forth in power and splendor where no such preparations have been thought of. Torrey and Alexander are toiling tremendously for a revival in London. In the way of organization nothing is lacking. They have a great hall, a great fund, a great choir, a great crowd, a great group of committees. Yet the results are meagre. The evangelists are earnest, the audiences are interested, but the note of power is lacking. How different the case in Wales. Without any organization, with no human leadership, the whole Principality is aflame with religious fervor. The people gather under a common impulse. Meetings open of themselves and somehow get themselves closed. Ministers come and go. The people pray and sing, and exhort and rejoice. And God saves sinners by thousands. The Welsh people have been honoring G-d. They have cast themselves in helplessness upon His Sovereign power, His Sovereign wisdom, His Sovereign grace. The result is one before which we stand in awe.

It is reported that Dr. Francis E. Clark has sent an invitation to Evan Roberts, the Welsh evangelist, to be present at the Christian Endeavor Convention which is to meet during the coming summer in Baltimore. There is no intimation yet that Mr. Roberts will accept the invitation.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHRISTIAN WORK?

Any one who is at all well acquainted with church-work is aware of the fact that there is at the present time general dissatisfaction among church workers with the results that are being attained. In some quarters there is a confident optimism that better days are coming, while in other quarters there is a dismal, pessimistic feeling respecting the prospects. Because of this situation we find men on every hand sincerely seeking to discover the cause of the present difficulty. The most lamentable feature of the situation is that all or nearly all, seem eager to shift the responsibility on other shoulders. Perhaps the most hurtful tendency is the very popular one of attributing the present situation of the church to those who are not church members and who make no pretence of actively serving its interests.

The facts are familiar to every person. If a church is not succeeding in the work it elects to do, if people are passing its door and refusing to contribute to its expenses, if its services are dead and lifeless and its organization dwindling, whom do the members of that church blame? Themselves? Very rarely! The responsibility is usually placed upon those who persist in passing by and who will not come in. We may very well ask the reason for the shifting of responsibility.

When Jesus called his disciples he did not call them to a position of authority from which they could dispense the privileges of religion, but he summoned them to a life of service in which they were to become "fishers of men." He did not say that because he was the Messiah men ought to seek him, but he felt that because he knew the power of God in his life he was responsible for imparting that to men who were being lost without it. But because he sought men and brought to them that which was the power of God to salvation they began to seek him and to acknowledge in him an authority unique in its character. As was his experience so has been that of his disciples. Over and over again when men in the spirit of Jesus have eagerly sought their fellows and have brought to them effectively the message of Jesus, men have been ready to acknowledge their power and their right to authority. But when men have lost the power to bring the message of Jesus to the hearts of others and when the passion for the highest welfare of humanity has died out, there has survived an ecclesiastical organization with an assumption of authority unbearable in its arrogance or detestable in its peevishness. Men have never been ready to recognize the authority of any church that had come to that state. It is however a symptom of such a condition when it is possible for us to seek to blame people outside the church for the failure of its work.

There can be no such feeling on the part of a Christian man, nor on the part of a church composed of Christian men. For these know that they possess in the Gospel a power which the world cannot know and which it cannot give. There will be among such men no disposition to shirk the responsibility for the success of Christian work. If the results are not satisfactory they will acknowledge one of two things. Either the Gospel has lost its power or we do not know how to proclaim it effectively. We are not ready to accept the first alternative. Rather, thousands of men will protest that by the Gospel of Jesus they have been brought into a life that is eternal. We are accustomed to avoid the second alternative by pointing to the correctness of our doctrine, or the conformity of our practice to an accepted standard. Such is not the test which Jesus propounded. He said "By their fruits ye shall know them." We must begin seriously to question our methods. We will doubtless find that to preach successfully the Gospel of Jesus we will need more than right doctrine and the accepted polity. We may perhaps discover that the power lies in the possession of that wonderful force which we call the love of God.

Jesus gave his followers the command to make disciples. The question is, can we do it?

TORONTO BAPTISTS AND THE NORTHWEST SCHOOL QUESTION.

There is little room for doubt that the Baptists of Ontario are as a body ready to utter a vigorous protest against legislation by the Dominion Parliament imposing a separate school system on the new western Provinces. The Baptists of Toronto, at all events, are not willing to be silent in the matter. Last week, in the Bloor Street Baptist church of that city, a large and representative meeting of Baptist citizens was assembled to consider the situation which is involved in the Autonomy Bills now before Parliament and to give expression to their views. Mayor Urquhart who is a prominent Baptist, connected we believe with the Walmer Road church, presided. A resolution, moved by Mr. D. E. Thompson, K. C., and seconded by Professor H. F. Tracy, Ph. D., was carried unanimously by a standing vote, protesting against the proposed educational legislation and expressing the hope that the Government would so modify the Bills as to leave the whole educational future of the new Provinces to their own determination. In moving the resolution Mr. Thompson said that Sir Wilfrid Laurier had himself observed the spirit of conciliation in the speech made at the introduc-

tion of the Autonomy Bills. That was the true spirit with which to approach such a subject. If it were a matter of passion or prejudice that was behind the agitation now rising against the Bills it would pass away, but if the measures were found to be an invasion of inherent rights that would be another matter, and politicians would find it a serious thing to deal with. Under the powerful leadership of Hon. George Brown the Liberal party had made a stand for the principle of local government and Provincial rights. The Liberal party was returned to power in 1896 on that stand, and while the party admitted the right to remedial legislation it did not propose to use it. To pass the Autonomy Bills now before Parliament would be a complete reversal of the policy both of the Liberal leader and the party. "If Sir Wilfrid Laurier is sincere in his suggestion that the provisions of the British North American Act cover the ground, why not leave the question to the Act? But if it does not cover the ground the clauses referring to separate schools are unjust," said Mr. Thompson. The bringing forward of such legislation after a general election was a great surprise to the country. If it had been known before the last election that such bills were contemplated, "if for one would have voted against the Government, even though the Opposition had no policy on the question. It is the Government and not the Opposition that is on trial in an election." "If Sir Wilfrid Laurier had told his policy in advance he would have come out of the election twenty short," declared Mr. Thompson. The ante-election rumors of a deal with the Roman Catholic church were not believed. They seem plausible now, though he would not say any bargain was made. In conclusion Mr. Thompson said that such legislation should not be introduced until the country had been heard from.

Editorial Notes.

By an anonymous gift of \$1,100,000, recently received, Union Theological Seminary, New York City, is said to become the most richly endowed divinity school in the world. The new gift to Union includes a very choice building site on Morningside Heights, near Columbia University and the tomb of General Grant, and the plans of the directors include the immediate erection of new seminary buildings on this property.

The attention of those interested is called to the notice on our ninth page which states that owing to the death of our lamented brother Nalder, Rev. A. Cohoon of Wolfville has consented to resume the work of the treasurer of denominational funds for Nova Scotia for the balance of the Convention year. It is to be regretted from one point of view that this work must be laid upon shoulders already quite sufficiently burdened, but we can all feel assured that the work will be well done.

The First Avenue church Toronto, the congregation to which Rev. Alex. White, formerly of Main St. this city, ministers have recently reopened their splendid church edifice after extensive repairs and renovations including upholstery, painting and additional lighting, and an adjoining lot has been secured for future Sabbath school enlargement. Negotiations are on foot for installing a new pipe organ. Pastor White has a large number of friends in this city who will rejoice to learn of the prosperity of the work in which he is engaged.

Contrary to its most invariable experience, the American Baptist Missionary Union is unable this year to obtain all the missionaries which it is ready to send to the Foreign Field. *The Watchman* learns that an appeal has been received by the Union from the recent conference of South India Missionaries for ten new men in the near future to occupy important posts. "The Union," *The Watchman* says, "really needs about forty men to meet pressing calls for help. It would be glad to send at least twenty if they were available, but as yet the officers know of but ten who are ready to go."

President Harper of Chicago University, who recently underwent an operation for internal cancer, will, it is said, as soon as he is able to leave the hospital, return to his position and duties as President of the University. The reports as to the results of the operation would seem to afford small ground for hope of Dr. Harper's permanent recovery. But with that indomitable industry and force of character which have always characterized him, the distinguished educator will resume work and make the most of whatever time may yet be granted him, in the interests of the cause which he has hitherto so ably served. It is said that Dr. Harper will work to complete in detail plans for the future of the University, which he has had in mind for more than ten years, but which he has never yet fully made public.

It is said that all the Chinese in Canada have come from the Province of Canton, and it is at the solicitation of the Chinese of Montreal that a mission has been started by the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Macao of that Province. It is gratifying to learn that many Chinese in this country have so high an appreciation of the value of the gospel to themselves that they are eager to have it sent to their own people. The efforts put forth to evangelize the Chinese in Canadian towns and cities will no doubt have far-reaching and