

Mr. Johnston's first pastorate was Lindsay, where for six years he labored with a success and a degree of acceptance which it is given few men to enjoy. The weekly prayer meeting under his charge was one of the most largely attended in Canada, and another evidence of his efficiency in developing spiritual life in the congregation was the very marked and constantly increasing liberality of the people in contributing to the schemes of the Church. Besides his deep devotion and consecrated character Mr. Johnston presents a commanding and magnetic personality, and during his stay at Lindsay many and tempting offers came to him from the best vacancies throughout the Church. Ecclesiastically speaking he has been a much coveted man. His attachment to his first charge, however, and his conviction that he had still a work to do there led him to decline pressing overtures from Stratford, Toronto, Ottawa and other places, but a unanimous and enthusiastic call having been tendered him by St. Andrew's congregation of London a few months ago, he saw it his duty to accept, and is now their much loved and much admired pastor.

Mr. Johnston was honored by last year's Assembly, held at St. John, N.B., in being chosen as Assembly Preacher, and to say that he occupies a front rank among Canadian pulpit orators is a claim readily conceded by all who have heard him, and especially by those who have sat under his ministry. In him are combined many elements of power. For one thing he is an ardent and confirmed lover of the old Gospel, and while conversant with all the different phrases of so called advanced thought he pleads earnestly and continuously for the "Faith once delivered to the Saints." His grasp of evangelical truth is strong and clear and his devotion to it unbending.

When he stands up to preach all his intensity of conviction is at once recognized, and it gives him a hold upon his hearers that is decidedly unique. In delivery he is powerful and impressive. The whole man preaches, eyes and face and features, and arms and body, and at times both preacher and hearers are carried away by the passion of eloquence. His style of presenting truth is graphic, —one might also say pictorial. He deals little in vague generalization or dreamy abstraction, but brings his utterances down to relations which are concrete and practical. While by no means an anecdotal preacher he is apt at illustration making you see what he sees, and giving to his thought a body and visible outline which marks the man of gifted imagination. In short Mr. Johnston is a man of rare endowments for the work of the ministry. Physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually he has a first class outfit for his sacred calling, and thus far he has proved himself a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed." By his attractive personality and strong pulpit power he has already gained a hold upon the people of London that only an exceptional man can do, and in the event of life and health being spared, one may confidently predict for him a ministry of rich blessing.

The Moderator's Sermon.

OUR MARCHING ORDER.

TEXT.—"Go Forward." Exodus xiv. 15. 1. The circumstances under which these words were uttered are known to all. The children of Israel were on the beach with the sea in front, the foe behind and the lofty hills on either hand. It was there and then they were ordered to go forward and face obstacles and difficulties insurmountable by mere human effort. There must be divine interposition or all perish.

It is not my purpose to draw a parallel between them and the Israel of the present, but reverently to lift up the command of the Lord, who never changes, and apply it to our own lives. God most emphatically commands Christians, as individuals and as united bodies, to go forward in the Christian life.

When we endeavor to obey his command, obstacles great and numerous, confront us, not only at the outset, but all along the journey. It is a waste of time and energy to be combating those of the past. We must look the world in the face and recognize our present perils, foes, fears, difficulties, dangers and delays. In doing this we see,—

(1) *That the Present is a Researchful Age*—Mountains were scaled, continents traversed, oceans sailed and depths explored to unravel nature's hidden stores. Books are ransacked with lancet ready for use at every page, and the book of books is on the dissecting table under the microscopic gaze of critics both higher and highest. But alas! The scurrilous and venomous attacks of some manifest their incapacity to execute with justice the self-imposed task. Time, space, mind, matter, and life are all, all absorbing the eager attention of hard wrought students of nature and ethics. Nothing is left unturned, untouched and unexplored. Side by side with the struggle for life, there is a greater struggle to know life. We hear the sound of earth delving, water dredging, stone-breaking and microscope examining; yet that wonderful potency, life, which surely crept into this earth in ages past, remains, without the Bible, as inscrutable and as inexplicable as the unknown and unknowable.

These researches give a sort of expectancy to human minds as if dimly foreseeing a something new to replace the old revelation and all that pertains to it.

In the midst of all, humility, and not pride, should have possession of the workers who shout aloud that a law has been discovered to account for all forms and changes in nature. Evolution is that law. We, fathers and brethren, are commanded by the Law-giver to go forward as Christians proclaiming with unwavering, unswerving and unflinching fidelity the great Law-maker at the back of life, of man, of the universe.

(2) *It is a Speculative Age*—Whilst researches are being made, there seems no great trouble in accounting for the mysteries whereby we are surrounded. Speculation is rife and theory rampant. They are thrown upon mankind with a coolness quite astounding, seeing that the ground is an over-shifting one, that true workers begin to-morrow morning where they leave off to-night. We are told that there were great tides and rapid rotation of the earth during early geological eras; that sun spots are connected with magnetic disturbances; that various causes can be assigned for the glacial period; that there is a substance or medium called ether pervading the universe, that the Aryans belong to Asia, and with equal confidence that they are indigenous to Europe. We are presented with half a dozen theories regarding the movements of glaciers, we are given a theory of hunger, we are assured that there can be, and that there cannot be, thought without language, we are supplied with theories respecting the origin of meteors, and we are furnished with speculations as to the cause of light emitted by animals in the oceans; and then speculations are thrust upon us touching the body, the soul, the Creator, the Redeemer. Thus in the midst of the speculations of men, the Church of God is to advance, meeting these hindrances at every step.

(3) *This is a Doubting Age*—It naturally follows from the last mentioned attitude of men's minds. There is doubt spread abroad whereby men become indifferent to everything invisible and eternal. Doubt is cast on the existence of heaven and Almighty God. Men doubt Moses, doubt David, doubt Isaiah, doubt Malachi, doubt Matthew, doubt John, doubt Jesus of Nazareth, doubt their own souls; and doubt the creative and administrative power of the eternal God. Thus its cold and withering blasts blow over the young in the Church and chill them; over the aged and stun them, over the weak and destroy them. Still the Church marches on, holding up, high as Heaven's heights, before a doubting world, the banner inscribed, "Thus saith the Lord."

(4) *This is a Rushing Age*—By day and by night steamers whistle, trains rumble and electric wheels roll through our streets. There is a rush in business, shops, factories, and ever in domestic circles. There is a sharp, keen, even bitter, competition in every business department throughout the land. The telephone calls up in the twinkling of an eye, some one miles distant; replies must be sent with equal haste, and thus the mind is kept in an excitable expectant state. The nervous system of man is strained in this pre-eminently fast, rushing and hurrying age. Insane asylums are alarmingly full of inmates who are more or less deranged by this soul and body trying rush of humanity. What is the result? That little time is left, or, at all events, given to Christ's kingdom upon earth.

(5) *This is a Worldly Age*—As one meditates upon the all-absorbing tendencies of the people after pleasure, wealth and money, without any care or thought for their never-dying souls, he is awed at the weakness of our race. To attain an object, crimes are planned and perpetrated in this very Christian Canada, that are a disgrace to a nation, and show morbid minds under the tremendous grasp of this world and its perishing wealth. Name, honor, relatives, friends, and eternal life are all sacrificed in the acquisition of mammon: whilst even in villages and country districts, many indulged in questionable amusements, which dampen Christian ardor, Christian zeal and Christian love. What do people mean by playing progressive euchre in this land of Churches and Gospel privileges? Social life, as it exists in far too many quarters, is deadening, demoralizing, damning, and most assuredly stands as a barrier to the onward march of the Christian Church.

We have no sympathy, however, with those would-be holy and select few who segregate themselves from Christ's army, and who endeavor to keep out this worldly spirit by artificial defences, for these tendencies are in our homes, churches and everywhere; and no standing aloof from the rest in the cause of Christ can either remove or eradicate these evils, whilst such an attitude grows into spiritual pride and pharisaical hypocrisy. We want men and women who stand on Christian principles, sensible and helpful, vigorous and hopeful, rather than the little carping of "Do not this," "Do not that."

All these obstructions must be encountered; some suggest that aid be secured from other religions, such as Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It does not manifest good judgment of human nature to regard these as devoid of all truth and morality, for man was made in God's image, and wherever found he still retains clear marks of his Creator. Canadian students are this day studying the classics of Grecian and Roman idolaters, and Chinese literati never cease instilling into youthful minds the moral sayings of their great sage. But I listened to dissertations by aborigines in Formosa, though not so beautifully expressed, that actually embodied the substance of the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth commandments. To know these human emanations, and frankly acknowledge the good in them, is manly, noble and Christian, but when we are asked to stoop down and borrow, as if in need of additions, we calmly, coolly, yet indignantly, refuse to compromise one chapter, one verse, one line, or one word of Holy Writ—refuse to place divinity on a level with humanity. To demand this of us reminds me of the Chinaman who brought three rusty tooth-pincers to sell. "One," said he, "is for the front, the second for the middle and the third for the back teeth." But I answered, "these three are for the lower, have you any for the upper teeth?" He stared. I showed him bright, shining steel forceps for upper and lower, right and left, front and back, sound and decayed—one perfect set, nothing wanting, complete in every particular. He disappeared. Thus I regard the three religions of China as the three old pincers, and the full set of American