

declared that, notwithstanding this semblance of vitality, there was no real life within. The Church at Sardis had "a name to live," and that was all.

And is there not something significant and instructive about all this? Do we not find a similar condition of things among modern churches? A particular church, let us suppose, is blessed with a season of revival. The cause of God is rapidly extended; new congregations are organized; sinners are converted, and the whole church feels the impulse of a new life. Then the news spreads. "The —— Church is prospering greatly;" and thus she gains a name—a reputation. So far, all is well. But after the season of revival there often comes a season of reaction, when deadness and supineness take the place of vitality and power. The usual round of duties may be observed, but not with the same earnestness as before. The Word of God is no longer as bread to the hungry; the Lord's Table is no longer a place of hallowed fellowship with the risen Lord; and the prayer-meeting becomes a place of formal service, rendered in well-meaning platitudes, rather than the ante-chamber of heaven where wrestling Jacobs prevail with God. Profession still flourishes, but vital godliness has declined; and we cannot wonder that the Saviour, looking upon such a church, should say, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." There it stands, looking like "a tree planted by rivers of water,"—its branches many, and its leaves still green; but alas! death and rottenness hath smitten it at the core, and when the Master cometh seeking fruit He findeth none.

The danger of a church seems to increase in the ratio of its growing popularity, and such is the danger which now threatens that wondrous creation of Divine Providence which men call "Methodism." Small in its beginnings as a grain of mustard seed, it attracted little attention; it was too insignificant for the notice of the great; but that grain of seed possessed a vitality which the world could not resist, and soon it shot forth its branches and grew up in spite of every effort to repress it. Then followed the era of persecution, and the infant church was cast into the furnace of popular fury; but with them in the furnace was one like unto the Son of God, whose presence controlled the fury of the devouring element, and preserved his chosen unscathed amid the fire. And thus while men looked that they should have been consumed, lo! they emerged from the furnace as gold seven times purified, radiant with the beauty of holiness and adorned with the glory of God. The small one had become as David, and David as the Angel of the Lord, and Methodism took its place foremost among those agencies which had destined for the moral renovation of the world.

Then began the era of prosperity, and, let me add, of real danger. Methodism could no longer be ignored, it was too powerful for that; and so, from being a small and despised sect, it assumed the position of a large and influential denomination. Men not only treated it with respect, but began to sound its praises: "This is the power of God," said one; "This is the true apostolic succession," said another; "Methodism is Christianity in earnest," cried a third. The simplicity of these people, their honesty, their godly sincerity, their self-denial, were held up as examples to others, while their