

REVIVALS.

MR. EDITOR,—In your issue of March 17 is a letter from "An Anxious Inquirer," in which he acknowledges revivals of religion as right and scriptural, yet complains of the methods by which they are conducted in some quarters, and asks if he is right in regarding such methods with suspicion.

As one of those invited to reply, I shall briefly express my views on this subject. Although the language used in the letter referred to savours slightly of prejudice, the exception is well taken. Equally with the pastor, the evangelist requires to cultivate reverence in approaching God as well as tact in dealing with men. It would seem that a lack of these on the part of the evangelist in question caused "Anxious Inquirer" to write, and gave him something to write about. The fact, I think, is universally granted throughout our Church that *special* as well as ordinary means of grace are desirable. In expressing my humble opinion as to how such special services should be conducted, I shall make a proposition and briefly reply to the two most likely objections which would be raised against it. The proposition is this. *Every pastor should be the evangelist of his own congregation.* See 2 Tim. iv. 5.

The first objection to this is that the extra exertion would be likely to prove too much for the pastor. This has some force when applied to the work of preparing addresses, for here the pastor is at a disadvantage when compared with the itinerant evangelist, who, for the most part, has his sermons and talks prepared beforehand, so that he does not consider it any burden to preach night after night.

In order to overcome this difficulty the pastor could get a brother minister to assist him, but, if possible, should avoid getting a succession of ministers which would have a tendency to divert the attention of the people from Christ to the comparative merits of the men who declare his message.

The second objection is that the majority of our ministers have not the necessary gifts for successfully conducting a revival. They are not cut out for that sort of work. Let me ask if they have ever tried? If they have not the objection should not be urged. If they have, and failed, the failure is more likely to be found in a lack of faith and prayer than in the lack of talent. He is not considered a successful farmer who cannot use the reaping-hook as well as the sowing basket. Neither is he making full proof of his ministry who fears to enter upon this most important part of ministerial work. That this is the most joyful part of a minister's labours needs only to be mentioned; experience confirms the statement.

Do we not wonder, then, at a minister who has toiled faithfully in the ordinary ministration of the Word, and has been the instrument in God's hand of conducting so many of his flock to the very threshold of the kingdom, I say do we not wonder that he should then send for a stranger to welcome them in? The pastor's place, especially at meetings of this kind, is sacred, and cannot be properly filled by any other person. He knows his people. Many are the cords of sympathy which proceed from the anxious hearers, all finding their terminus in the heart of the pastor who addresses them from the desk and invites and urges them to seek refuge in Christ. Along these unseen wires flash the recollections of former scenes, conversations and sermons of which the present utterances are a forcible application. While excitement should be carefully avoided, downright earnestness cannot be dispensed with. In order that these may be properly regulated, by all means let the pastor himself stand at the helm, and the congregational wrecks to which your correspondent alludes will not be so likely to take place.

Should it be asked, where, then, is there a field of labour for the evangelist who is not a pastor? Dr. Cochrane could answer this question better than I could. I think he could point out many mission fields where the services of a pastor cannot yet be obtained, and where the evangelist could do a little *pastoral* work in addition to that for which he may be specially qualified.

COUNTRY PASTOR.

MR. EDITOR,—"An Anxious Inquirer" must have been asleep in some corner if he does not know that our old methods of church work are too slow for the close of the nineteenth century. There have been such revivals of zeal and fervour among the hosts of Satan and such devilish ingenuity in devising, energizing and en-

forcing measures for propagating error and vice with the aid of modern appliances of science and art that the Christian Church has been asking: Are we as earnest and active as we might and ought to be? The enemy are coming in like a flood; can nothing more be done to turn the tide and rescue the perishing? If, as most agree, we are shut up to the use of the ordinary means of prayer, praise, preaching and personal dealing, are we as sacredly and authoritatively confined to the old-fashioned methods of using these means? Is not formalism so sinful, and monotony so soporific and dangerous, as to warrant an honest effort to escape from these by varying somewhat the ordinary methods of work and giving to them extraordinary intensity and activity? Nay, are we not pledged to some such course by our prayers for revival? If we are in earnest about the matter will we not work for it as well as pray? Is there not a woe for those who are at ease in Zion, and a promise that when she travails for souls she shall bring forth children? Excitement? Would not a little more of it about matters so momentous be beneficial? True, Presbyterians love to have things done "decently and in order." Would to God we had more of it, for I see things infinitely worse every day than your correspondent describes. His "exceedingly painful" case was evidently a mistake arising from stupidity or other innocent cause; but are there not many for whom revival scenes have little attraction, who on the Sabbath pose as saints and on the week day as sinners and worldlings. With the most improved methods, whether ordinary or special, there will ever be defects and drawbacks—flies in the ointment. Still all agree that the fewer of these the better. And just here I would like to ask why this work is left to noisy "bands" or travelling evangelists of whom we know little or nothing and whom our ministers cannot see their way to fall in with, but after whom many of our young people are led away, perhaps never to return, also heads of families and others from curiosity or real desire to see more earnest efforts put forth to awaken and save the careless. If such efforts are needed and so many of our people and ministers—whom it would not be fair to charge with being inexperienced, flighty, fond of excitement and temporary spirits, but really lovers of ease, disloyal to Christ and the Church, believe in them and resort to them,—why does not the Church make arrangements to have them conducted in an orderly manner? If they are of the importance and value which many claim, and outsiders are doing the work in unsatisfactory ways, why not make provision for them in a way to gain the confidence of all who love to "worship in the beauty of holiness"? Isn't it time this matter was put in a shape to meet the honest difficulties of many of us?

ANOTHER ANXIOUS INQUIRER.

MR. EDITOR,—I read a short article in your interesting paper of the 17th March on the subject of "Revivals." I heartily agree with the writer in his remarks. He modestly asks for information as to whether it is right to "hire an evangelist who comes into the congregation and gets up an excitement, and makes up a list of conversions, and there the first part ends," etc. He has attended some of those meetings, and gives a description of the strange proceedings, wondering greatly that such things should be permitted in a Presbyterian Church. The love of *novelty* is one of the evils of the present day, and *innovations* have got into our churches so that, sad to say, the "old time religion" is no more! Our churches are turned into music halls, and music (so-called) takes the principal part of the service. The younger part of the congregation select pieces for themselves, in which they can sing solos, duets, etc., accompanied by the organ, quite irrespective of the quiet, sober-minded worshippers. Our simple psalm tunes do not require the aid of an organ (which *might* be tolerated) if sacred music were sung in which all the people who had any voice could join.

Our old psalms and paraphrases seem to be exploded, and *hymns*, often of the most puerile kind, have taken their place, and, along with the unsatisfactory modern style of preaching, make church attendance impossible to some of us.

I mourn over the decadence of the grand old Church of our great Reformer, and earnestly trust that the Lord will bring about the time when she will be as powerful as ever in proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to perishing men.

AN OLD-FASHIONED PRESBYTERIAN.

March 29, 1886.

THE SERVICE OF PRAISE.

Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee.

MR. EDITOR,—In your issue of the 17th ult., you ask in a paragraph on "Musical Taste and Culture," "Why is it that in the service of praise many worshippers fail to join?" Allow me to give what appear to me to be some of the reasons.

1. The idea of worship in connection with singing is rapidly disappearing from this part of the service. Seldom now is a minister heard saying, in giving out the psalm or hymn: Let us worship God by singing. Nor are hymn books always compiled on the principle that the sole object of singing in the sanctuary is to render praise to God. The tendency is from praise to music. Many go to church as they would go to a concert, not to take part, but to listen. And it is sad to see how this is in some quarters encouraged by having sung pieces of music, solos and anthems, in which the people are not expected to take any part, and by advertising gifted singers to sing "at morning and evening service," thus turning the house of God into a concert room. How different would it be if the idea of worship in this delightful part of the service were always as prominent as it should be, and led by some one competent person who appreciates and feels the sentiments he utters, and all the people made to feel that it is their privilege as well as duty to take part in offering to God the sacrifice of praise. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips," Heb. xiii. 15.

2. Another reason may be found in the use of matter which lacks divine authority. Has any minister such authority for calling upon the people to sing hymns of mere human composure? And are the people under any obligation by divine authority to sing them? Hence it comes to be optional with them, if not a matter of indifference, whether they sing them or not. "We have no doubt," says a writer, "that this radical defect in the entire system of hymns has wrought gradually, but efficiently, to produce the state of things we now witness and so many deplore."

3. Fondness for fine, scientific music is another reason. This has ever followed in the train of hymns of human composure. Hence the selection of tunes oftentimes which, if not unfit for worship, are above the people's ability to use. "The associations of every-day musical training and recreations are readily transferred to the Sabbath and the sanctuary. It is all the singing of songs—men's songs. These may differ in their subject, but they are one in their origin. Hence, unlike those who use the Word of God alone in singing His praise, there is no particular sense of incongruity in treating hymns as other songs are treated—that is, made the more vehicle of music, instead of employing music to deepen the impression of the sentiments uttered." The music is everything, the praise is too much overlooked. Hence the people listen to the fine music, and those who should lead them in God's worship are sometimes found apparently singing to their own glory rather than to the glory of God.

5. The last, though not the least, may be found in the far too general neglect of psalmody in the home. How seldom now is the singing of praise at family worship heard. Were it observed more generally the members of families would be trained to engage in singing to God's praise, and would be prepared and the more disposed to take part therein when they go to the sanctuary. Dr. J. W. Alexander, in his "Thoughts on Family Worship," thus refers to this important matter. "We believe that the revival of psalmody in the house would contribute to train voices for the sanctuary. It is mournful to think that a service that was so precious to our ancestors, and which they made sacrifices to enjoy, even when under the sword of persecution, *should die out in many Christian families* in those days of peace." "Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints."

A. WILSON.

March 19, 1886.

THE increase in duty on imported liquors, necessitated by the deficit in the public revenue, is virtually a temperance measure. Whatever makes intoxicants less easily obtainable necessarily reduces their consumption. Not a few who find that such questionable luxuries are beyond their means will contentedly dispense with their use.