

Pastor and People.

THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME.

["What is His name?" asked a heathen woman of a missionary who was talking to her of Jesus. "Tell me His name again. I do not want to forget it."]

His name? Ah, sister of the darker brow,
The name of Jesus will not leave thee now;
Once taken to thy heart and memory
It will remain a joy and strength to thee;
We pity thee that thou so late hast heard
The name which has thy love and wonder stirred,
And we half envy thee the strange new bliss
Of learning all at once who Jesus is.

We heard His name in many a cradle hymn,
When eyes shone brightly which are long since dim;
Our mothers used to speak it in their prayers,
Our fathers found it helped them in their cares.
We learned to say it in our earliest years,
To make us good, and take away our fears;
And all our lives, in want or grief or shame,
We have been comforted through this dear name.

There is no other name that saves from sin
And makes on earth the life of heaven begin;
It binds us here below and those above
Together to the Father's heart of love.
It takes away from death its pain and sting;
And teaches the forgiven ones to sing;
It wakes the longing to be good and pure,
And give us courage bravely to endure.

The name of Jesus has most wondrous might,
'Tis inspiration, wisdom, guidance, light;
It summons men to duty secretly,
And, though none watch, they serve God loyally.
It is a trumpet-call, and the great crowd
Responds when some high truth must be avowed;
It makes all seek the right and shun the wrong,
And fills the soul with joy, the lips with song.

Who have not hearts to trust and eyes to see,
Dream not how much to them this name might be.
Salvation, hope and love of righteousness
Have they who know how Jesus Christ can bless.
The highest life of earth to them is given,
And everlasting life with Him in heaven;
O dark-browed sister who dost know His grace,
May we all see Him, one day face to face!

—Marianne Farningham.

STOCK-TAKING.

BY REV. JAMES HASTIE, CORNWALL.

As we are nearing the dividing line which separates the old year from the new, the time has come for stock-taking in the Lord's House, that congregations may know where they stand spiritually, and devise wisely for the future.

I shall furnish a few simple tests of spiritual progress and leave the reader to apply them and note the results.

1. *Sometimes numerical increase is a true evidence of spiritual progress.* "Sometimes," I say, and I say it advisedly, because this test is not always trustworthy. Here are two congregations, e.g., one admits to the communion table without hesitation liquor dealers; extends to manufacturers and vendors of strong drink precisely the same Church privileges that are given to lawyers, and doctors, and farmers.

In examining applicants, the matter of regeneration is not referred to; enough if the applicant possesses a fair moral character and a knowledge of the simple doctrines of Christianity. The other will admit no liquor dealer to the Lord's table, however wealthy he be or educated, while the necessity of regeneration is placed in the very forefront as a qualification for the communion table.

Need I say that it is almost certain that the former congregation shall outstrip the latter in numerical growth, but equally certain that it shall fall far short of it in moral power in the community.

Or, again, mere environment may make the numerical test of little value.

Take the city of Toronto, e.g. A new congregation in the rapidly-growing suburbs doubles itself in a year by the mere influx of those who were members and adherents of the Church elsewhere. A Church down town is stationary as to numbers, or diminishes, though under an abler minister than the other, because business establishments are steadily crowding families away from its vicinity to a distance, where they connect themselves with other Churches.

In the former case, rapid increase of members would not of itself prove growth in spirituality. In the latter case diminishing numbers does not necessarily prove backsliding.

Consequently, some ministers are getting credit for what they don't deserve. Others deserve credit where they don't get it. Still, in certain circumstances, 'tis proper to regard numbers as a test of progress in a congregation. So long as there is one soul unsaved there is a possibility of adding to the Church of such as shall be saved.

In the Parable of the Leaven and the Meal (Matt. xiii. 33), the duty of the saved to the unsaved is visibly set forth—by direct contact with the latter the former is to increase itself by accession and transformation. Just here many Presbyterians are criminally remiss in duty.

"Are there any Presbyterians in this neighbourhood?" they ask. If so, they expect those ready-made Presbyterians to come in, as fowl gather in to roost in the evening.

But, if not; if they find no ready-made Presbyterians there, they drop the matter, although there be scores and scores of people going to no Church.

Now, in this matter, Presbyterians are condemned out of their own mouth.

If, as they allege, Presbyterianism, both as to doctrine and polity, is apostolic, surely the Presbyterian Church should lead the war in reaching all the surrounding meal and communicating to it its own rare virtues. If Presbyterianism is the best thing in the world for Presbyterians, is it not equally good for those who are strangers to its excellences?

What, then? We conclude that if sinners sit year by year under a Gospel ministry, and remain unsaved, that Church lacks the spiritual progress which Christ designs it to have. On the other hand, if souls are being converted proportionate to the means of grace possessed true spiritual progress can be predicated of that congregation.

2. *Contributions.* Not unfrequently a man's giving is a better test of his spiritual state than anything else is. Men there are who are ever ready to pray, to speak at meeting, to attend revival services, to accept office in the Church; but ask them for a contribution to a good cause, ask them to increase their present givings; and if you ask them once you will never want to repeat it.

Look at a collector's book after he has canvassed a congregation and you will make a discovery which will supply ample material for a long sermon on Christian stewardship.

Here is a man with an income of \$500 a year, whose position is as precarious as is his employer's temper—two dollars he has given. Here is a man worth twenty thousand dollars in money and lands, and has besides an income of fifteen hundred a year—he gives fifty cents.

Here is a name with \$5 opposite it. Next follows a name with \$1, a man this who could give \$20 more easily than that other could give \$1. Such a subscription list, I say, is a capital gauge of the spiritual condition of the several members of that congregation, assuming that the object in question is one deserving of liberal support.

Christ Himself accepts the validity of this test, and judges men by it.

Read Luke vii. 36-47, and you learn from Christ's words that this despised woman's abounding beneficence in pouring upon Him the costly ointment was not only a sign but also an effect of her profound love for Jesus. While the non-giving on Simon's part, who criticized the woman so severely, Jesus declared was conclusive proof of his religious indifference.

Similarly, again, Christ's reasons in Matt. xxvi. 6-13, re Mary and the alabaster box of spikenard which she broke and poured on the head of her Lord. This act, Christ declared, proved the genuineness and greatness of her love. Judas' querulous complaint against her Christ regarded as proof to a demonstration that the fault-finder had no religion.

If any further proof was needed that our contention is valid it is supplied by our Lord's picture of the last day, in the xxv. of Matthew (vs. 34-46), where the righteous are welcomed into everlasting bliss on proof of their generous givings when on earth; while those on the left are doomed to perdition for withholding their contributions when on earth!

A man's contributions, then, the contributions of a congregation, afford one excellent criterion of their spiritual condition.

3. *Peace and harmony I name as a third evidence of true progress in a congregation.* One of the titles given to Christ in prophecy is the "Prince of Peace." One of the benefits to mankind announced by the herald angels Christmas morning as resulting from the advent was "Peace on earth." One of the fruits of the proclamation of the Gospel the world over shall be, according to Isaiah, that men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—ii. 4.

On the eve of His death, and when sitting at the sacramental table, He laid down this rule of life for all His followers: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye love one another."—John xiii. 34.

On the other hand discord and disunion are specially noted as proof of the absence of vital godliness. Writing to the Church in Corinth, St. Paul saith: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and let there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, that there are contentions among you."—i. 10, 11.

And again: "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" iii. 3; and yet again: "When ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it."—xi. 18. Then to the Galatians he saith:—

"All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But, if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."—v. 14, 15.

The old receipt of the Apostolic age is as applicable to the Church of the nineteenth century as of the first:—

"Let brotherly love continue."—Heb. xiii. 1.

4. *The prayerful study of God's word is a fourth evidence.* In Deut. vi. 5 God enjoins the duty of loving Him with all our heart and mind and strength, and then proceeds to show how this can be done, viz., by treasuring up the Word in our hearts and teaching it to our children. See verses 6-9.

David's stability in the faith and his progress in divine life he ascribed to his close and constant study of the Divine oracles. See Ps. cxix. 97-105.

The ground on which the Bereans were declared to be of a higher order of Christians than those of Thessalonica was

because they excelled the latter in Bible study. See Acts xvii. 11, 12.

What, according to Paul, is the secret of Timothy's marked superiority as a Christian? Is it not because from the cradle he has been fed on the sincere milk of the Word? Now, does not this prove beyond question that one of the surest evidences of spiritual prosperity, as well as one of the best means to gain it, is the prayerful study of God's word? When revival services do not result in a marked increase of Bible reading 'tis safe to say that there was more of the human than of the divine in such a revival.

5. *The conversion of souls I name as a fifth evidence.* Surely I need not spend time proving that the prime purpose of Christ's mission to earth was to rescue the perishing; that all the agencies necessary to accomplish this grand purpose are now at the Church's disposal; that wherever an unsaved soul is found that soul should have the Gospel pressed upon his attention.

All this is indisputable.

But, I want to guard against the mistake often made, viz., that unless souls are being converted every Sabbath the Church is declining, the pastor is a failure, and God is not being glorified.

While conversion of souls is one of the prime purposes of the Word and ordinances, a purpose whose importance cannot be over-estimated, it is not their only design.

Rooting and grounding believers in the truth, building up saints in their most holy faith, helping them to add to their faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness charity—is no less the design of the Gospel, and when being realized is a good evidence of spiritual progress.

The birth of a child into the world is a momentous event, an event fraught with vast possibilities. But, are a parent's duties to that child all discharged when the feeble little creature becomes an inhabitant of this world?

Has it not afterwards to be fed and protected night and day to be educated in secular and religious learning, to be helped to get a start in life, etc.?

And are these subsequent matters of little or no account, or to be lost sight of in the presence of the initial event of birth? Surely not.

For a time the main work in a congregation may be not so much to plant new trees in the Lord's vineyard as to prune and develop fruitage in those trees already there.

In doing this the pastor and his co-labourers are doing a grand work, Christ is seeing of the travail of His soul, the Holy Spirit is being honoured, God the Father glorified.

But, while this subsequent work is to be faithfully attended to, still the conversion of souls should never be lost sight of for a moment.

Nor, in order to secure conversions, should it be thought indispensable that a stranger come upon the scene, or that peculiar methods must be employed (though sometimes novel means should be resorted to). Conversions should be expected in connection with all the ordinary means of grace—the prayer meeting, the Sunday school, the sacraments, the preaching of the Word by the pastor.

Everything necessary to this end is within the reach of pastor and members that is within the reach of the itinerant evangelist. Why, then, not expect present results? Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase. Should any one year pass without any conversions coming to the knowledge of the pastor or his associates, a searching enquiry ought to be made, and prayer—importunate and continuous—be offered to God till the spirit of life descend and vivify the dead bones.

Many other criteria might be given, but these may suffice for present purpose, viz.:—

Numerical increase where this is practicable.

Liberal contributions.

Peace and harmony in the Church.

The prayerful study of God's word.

The conversion of souls under the regular means of grace as well as when extraordinary are employed.

WAITING.

Waiting is a test, as well as action—sometimes, perhaps, even more than action. For there are more ways than one of spending the time of suspense. Doing picket duty may not be as exciting and may not seem as heroic as taking part in a charge; but faithfulness on guard is as necessary for success as is bravery in battle. Many an army with victory within reach has miserably failed by growing listless in camp; and many another in desperate straits has won brilliant triumphs by using every moment of delay in preparation for the crisis to come. Waiting need not mean inaction. The wise virgins had to wait with the foolish, but they waited to some purpose.

In Christian work we expect to wait sometimes for the harvest, but there is urgency about the sowing. Why should Christ have held back His followers from the work? The time was short; he had emphasized the need of making most diligent use of it; the disciples were not without experience; they had had the Master's own training; they had the fresh inspiration coming from the cross, the empty sepulchre, the risen Lord; were they not ready with just the message the world needed? In hardly any way could the necessity for the Spirit's help have been more forcibly shown than in the command to wait for Pentecost.

Unlike the waiting for earthly plants to mature, such tarrying is certain of its object, if the delay is for that only, and if the gift of the Spirit is earnestly sought. With the Spirit shed abroad as it is to-day, let us be sure that any lingering arises from divine ordering, and not from indifference or slothfulness. Waiting in prayer and watchfulness will surely be followed by zealous work and great results.