

CONGREGATIONAL METHODS OF WORKING.

We Congregationalists need to broaden out our work and vary our methods. We need not lose our denominational characteristics, nor try to be like some other denominations; but we can learn useful lessons from these. It is interesting to note how our work in the past has seemed to be limited by providential circumstances. The congregation at Scrooby was shut in by its environments, and could not carry the Gospel freely to others. Its work was to nurture the families of those who already believed. The Pilgrims in Holland were shut in by their environments and limited to the same work as at Scrooby; they could not reach and influence the Dutch by whom they were surrounded, and with whose tongue they were not familiar. The Pilgrims at Plymouth were shut in by their environments and limited to the same work of nurturing their own flock. The scattered Indians were inaccessible. As emigration to New England, for a long time, was largely composed of non-conformists, who agreed with the Pilgrims in their views of Christian doctrine, it resulted in the work of the Congregational churches being largely a nurturing of those who believed the Gospel, and only needed to be led to open confession of Christ.

Thus, historically, the Congregational church has been a church of Christian nurture, rather than of aggressive missionary work. And when at last the missionary spirit was kindled in the church, it operated, not by calling the church into active effort for the heathen around it, but by reaching out to heathen far away, through missionaries specially appointed and supported by the church—a process tending at once to relieve the church from a sense of responsibility further than contributing to the missionary treasury, and thus to lessen rather than to increase the personal activity of the individual members. Since that time Ireland has poured her hundreds of thousands into New England, and they have found homes on every side of our churches, and our churches have influenced them little, if at all,—indeed, they have tried to influence them little, if at all. A great mass of people who never attend church, who have no settled belief, who are totally unlike in character the unconverted in Christian families, with whom our church has mainly dealt in the past, has gathered around our churches, and live as if there were no churches and no God, and until recently, our denomination has done little for them. Out of this mass of ignorant unbelief, the Methodists, especially, and the Baptists, to some extent, have brought large numbers by their vigorous proclamation of a free Gospel; and they have thus swelled the ranks of their churches with a most

prolific class of people, whom our denomination never reached, and who, under the preaching of a cultivated, refined, and conservative ministry, never would have been reached. The lesson is one not hard to learn, however hard it may be to practise. The Congregationalists must henceforth be more aggressive in their work among the heathen, by whom they are surrounded, and not be satisfied with taking care of themselves and their own children exclusively.—President Cyrus Northrop, in *N. W. Congregationalist*.

“WRITE THE VISION, AND MAKE IT PLAIN.”—I believe it is true that in many congregations there are intelligent persons, who, after months, and it may be years, of attentive listening to the pulpit ministrations, do not have a clear and definite conception of the way of salvation through Christ. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He has sent His ministers upon the same errand. The object of their preaching should be to explain the way of salvation, and to lead men to walk in it. Any preaching that leaves the people in doubt as to how they may be saved, or fails to press upon them the necessity of immediate acceptance of Christ as a personal Saviour, is poor preaching, however eloquent and learned it may be.

Probably no living man has been more successful, as a minister of the Gospel, than Spurgeon. His church is constantly in a revival condition. All the year round, and every year, he is leading people to Christ in large numbers. His success in building up his church and promoting permanent and healthful growth, and in inaugurating and carrying forward many and varied lines of Christian work, is also phenomenal. No man has kept nearer the heart of the Gospel, in his pulpit ministrations, than Spurgeon has. He has preached Jesus, and not much else. He has not discoursed much to his people about science, or literature, or current events. But he has made marvellously clear and attractive the vital doctrines of Christianity, and he has pressed them home upon the hearts and consciences of the people with wonderful power.—Rev. H. S. Mills, in *Treasury for Pastor and People*.

“CHURCH EXTENSION.”—Our fathers were not slow to take advantage of the freedom accorded to them by the Act of Toleration. They set to work, and soon covered the land with “great and fair meeting-houses.” It is computed that by the close of the year 1700 no fewer than 2418 places of worship had been erected. A pretty considerable scheme of church extension, when you remember it was initiated and carried out in the space of twelve years. I have not been able to ascertain the sum expended upon these buildings; but tak-