

And as it was in the beginning, so has it been in later days. Bands of men, whose heart God had touched, have been of priceless importance.

From such bands all those religious Societies have arisen which are the most marked feature perhaps of the modern Church of Christ, and which are covering the world with a network of Mission effort. Such bands devised these imperfect but most blessed associations, and such bands of heart-touched men carry them on still.

From such bands, too, all the great religious movements of modern days have arisen also. The Reformation itself, the great Revivals since, the great movement which clustered round the great Wesley name, and those great movements which have been linked with such names as Simeon, Romaine, Cecil, and Newton, on the one hand, and with such names as Keble and his fellows on the other.

And from such bands of living and devoted men must doubtless spring those yet vaster movements (we may hope) by which the Heathen, Mahometan, and Jewish systems are to be finally broken up and melted down; by which the whole earth is to be covered with Christianity; and by which the Church of Christ shall be herself (if I may so say) re-converted, and brought into that glorious livingness, lovingness, and simplicity of truth, by which she shall be enabled for the vast work which God and man are demanding at her hands. And oh! may God's Spirit raise up and weld together such bands of men as the exigencies of the mighty Present and of the mystic Future do so terribly require.

I might go on to almost any length enforcing the lessons with which this pregnant line of thought and meditation so abounds; but I would leave it in its suggestiveness, to be followed up by others. First, may the number of the truly heart-touched ones be everywhere multiplying, and God's touching of men's hearts become more decisive and more strong. And then may those thus touched not hold aloof from each other, but let them unite in twos, in threes, and yet larger bands; let them unite for conference, for encouragement, and, above all, for prayer, for such prayer as will endure no nay and no delay. Let there be such bands of heart-touched men as this in every congregation, in every deanery, in every diocese, in every college, and in every neighbourhood. And oh, what results will follow! All that the Church needs will come, and all that the world needs too. Strength will come instead of weakness, love instead of distance, unity instead of suspicion and bitterness, clear counsels instead of bewilderment, joy instead of anxiety, thankfulness instead of discontent, oneness in the delighted and satisfied enjoyment of what is essential, instead of the persistent following of things which (though perhaps in themselves indifferent) tend far more to the injury of the Church than they do to the salvation of any human soul.

