

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, OCTOBER 12, 1859.

Progress of Baptist Principles.

The Report on the State of the Denomination in these Provinces, on another page, will be read by many of the friends of truth with much gratification.

The progress of Christ's Kingdom is a subject of the deepest interest to all his believing people. Everything connected with the advancement of gospel truth concerns those who have become the subjects of his sovereign grace. Wherever the prayer "Thy kingdom come" is uttered, with an understanding heart, there the indications of an answer to such petitions are looked for with earnest solicitude; and when they come are warmly welcomed. It is but a low grade of piety which can rest satisfied with the slow progress which has yet been made in the work of conversion and reformation in the world.

The ultimate triumph of Divine Truth is plainly taught in the Word of God. All the Revivals of religion which have taken place in the Church, from the Day of Pentecost, down to those now in progress in Ireland and Scotland, are indicative of the approach of that glorious consummation when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

We often undervalue the good that is effected by the efforts of the church of Christ, forgetting the words of our Lord that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." When we remember this fact, and dwell upon it with that consideration to which it is entitled, how great should be our joy over such facts as those made known by the Report referred to. We find by a comparison of this with a similar report of last year that *Two thousand five hundred and seventy six persons* ("sinners") have been added to the churches, making a clear gain during the year of 2244 members. We could not venture to affirm that these are, without exception, "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" yet, we believe that no body of Christians exercise a greater amount of care in the admission of members to their churches. The precautions in the reception of new members to Baptist churches are such as are not laid claim to by scarcely any others. We are however aware that notwithstanding all these and the greatest amount of vigilance on the part of pastors and people there may be those received whose lives do not afterwards warrant the conclusion to which the church has come with regard to them. Making allowances for these drawbacks, there still remains abundant materials to give us some joy, similar to that of angels, over those sinners brought to repentance and introduced into the kingdom of God upon earth. We are quite aware that we may have some reflections which may tend to lessen this joyous feeling. The condition of the churches may lead some to sadness,—to perceive that there is not more of earnestness—more realization of the position occupied by Christians towards the world—more prayer—more self-consecration, more preparation for exerting a good influence on society; yet there is, after all, enough left of good done, to fill us with holy pleasure and gratitude to our Divine Master. If we could but believe that each of the new members was an addition of spiritual and moral power to the church, and that the whole body to which they had been recently united had been benefited by their reception, what vastly increased advancement might we anticipate in the future from such accessions. We commend the whole report to the serious attention of the brethren.

The progress in the churches seems greater than that in the number of ministers, and greater than in the increase of accommodation provided in houses of worship. *Eight* ministers have been ordained. *Five* new churches have been constituted, and *six* new Meeting Houses have been opened. These are all matters for thankfulness, yet let it be remembered they are but the externals of religion, the means to an end—the salvation of souls. If they are not accompanied by the operation of the Spirit of God in connection with the preached word, they are, comparatively, but of little value. The real progress of the church may be secured when no such outward manifestations are employed. Additions of numbers to churches do not always prove an increase of strength and power. When, however, accessions are accompanied by an increase of devotedness and prayer in all the existing members, then may we expect to see the fulfilment of the prophecy respecting Zion that "the righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name."

The Revival in Ireland.

The overpowering effects of this work has been such as to induce many to visit the localities where it has prevailed. A "special correspondent" of *The London Times* has been employed to attend and report on the subject for the information of the thousands of readers of that paper. A long leading article has also been devoted to the consideration of the subject. The tone of this writer is not such as to secure the confidence of the religious public. He evidently writes under the influence of prejudice against the whole movement.

A work on the Revivals has also appeared, entitled "*The Work and the Counterwork: or the Religious Revivals in Belfast*;" with an explanation of the physical phenomena, by Archdeacon Stopford of Meath." The author professes to account for all the physical phenomena on the principle of *hysteria*. His theory is certainly very plausible and may be the correct solution of many cases, but not of all; nor of the moral change produced being in connection with these attacks. He says:

"Even a stranger cannot fail to be struck with the earnest concern about religion which appears to pervade the people: as I listened to a street preacher during the dinner hour of the working men (the best sermon which I heard in Belfast) it was impossible not to be impressed with the earnest and reverent expression of countenance in all the working men and lads, who gathered round, perhaps 150 in number, faces so earnest I never saw before in any congregation. From house to house I saw much of the same feeling.

"That there exists, at the same time, a counter-work dissonant to the Holy Spirit, and antagonistic to the Scriptures as our sole revelation from God, founded on delusions by which it is very difficult to avoid being deluded and sedulously propagated by means injurious alike to the welfare of souls and bodies, I shall have too painfully to prove as I proceed.

In pursuing his enquiry "how far these bodily affections are the natural and real expression of the feelings of the soul, or how far they are to be attributed to the morbid action of disease," he remarks:

"(1) That the bodily and mental affections in this movement are only the usual phenomena of a well-known form of disease, which, though it seldom prevails to its present extent, is yet quite capable in its nature of such extension. (2) That in its very nature it is antagonistic, and not favourable, to true religion. (3) That the use now made of this disease and its natural consequences is an outrage upon woman's nature, and subversive of the word of God as the sole foundation of our faith. (4) That this affection is only accidentally, and not properly, connected with true conversion; and that religious revivals can be, and ought to be, wholly disconnected from it."

"The heavenly light and joy, which is said to shine on the countenances of those who have found peace" is much relied on by those who defend the physical phenomena, as being of divine origin. But he says:—

"Few, perhaps, have seen this wondrous light shine so brightly as I have seen it in times past. But a knowledge of the realities of life is the greatest restraint on its delusions. The recollection of what I have seen makes it impossible for me to accept the 'spiritual' solution now offered of this phenomenon. I have, in former times, seen a countenance, not plain, and yet hardly pretty, transformed, after a paroxysm of distress, into a perfection of personal, moral, and intellectual beauty, such as I have never otherwise witnessed—such as I had never before conceived—such as I can now but imperfectly realize in memory. Time after time I have gazed for a moment in entranced admiration upon that resplendent vision of all that is beautiful in woman, heightened as it was by a brilliancy of intellectual light, and a flow of words of inexpressible beauty. But the stern call of duty interfered (for that case was entrusted to me by a friend), and I soon found that my control was as necessary then as in the paroxysm of distress. How movingly she would entreat me to let her brilliant thoughts and words have flow, as being the source of the most exquisite happiness she had ever experienced! An absolute injunction of silence and quiet never failed to bring it to a close. Many a time I have thus destroyed a vision on which I could have gazed for ever, and which I never expect to see again in like perfection. The highest perfection of that beauty was the expression of heavenly peace and joy. Yet in that case this had nothing to do with religion. It is not for me to attempt to explain it; but it evidently proceeded from natural causes, and cannot be regarded as a proof of spiritual illumination."

He partly acknowledges that "the general awakening to religion has arisen from the solemn feelings about religion, induced by the physical manifestations."

The Editor of the *Freeman* thinks the Archdeacon's pamphlet *one-sided*; but not intentionally so. "He is simply run-away with by his theory." He adds:—

"So far as we know, all good men discourage rather than invite the physical excitement, objected to as utterly bad by our author. Certainly, we should do so. And we admit the value of an earnest and devout warning; like Archdeacon Stopford's. But when we have asked ourselves and asked others who have witnessed the scenes referred to,—Can we think, speaking as men,

that the revival would have excited the same attention, have impressed so many persons, to all appearance savingly, and altogether been the great work it has been, but for these extraordinary scenes?"—the answer has been, and must be, "They have been a great instrument of good."

We shall now give a few extracts from the Special Correspondent of *The Times*, to show the spirit of the writer and the impression which will be given, concerning the revival, to the readers of that extensively circulated newspaper.

"As far as we can make out, there seems no particular difference between this Irish and other religious revivals. These manifestations are perfectly well-known facts of religious life. There are local revivals going on always in the Methodist districts in this country; it is only when the spiritual inoculation is on a particularly large scale that it attracts notice, as it does now. There appear to have been a great many of the common effects produced on this occasion,—people struck in a moment with violent overwhelming impressions, which make them fall to the ground, where they lie stupefied or uttering cries. The feeling which throws the victim into this fit is said to be an intense sudden conviction of sin, which in an instant lightens up the darkness within, made visible by the momentary glare. The sinner starts back in horror at the cavern in which he at once finds himself; he sees death straight before him; the revelation of Divine wrath is too much for the mortal frame to bear, and he becomes insensible. This is "conversion." It is supposed that the dreadful vision is never parted with even when the victim has revived after the prostration produced by the first sudden sight of it, but that it accompanies him through life, and makes it, as it were, impossible that he should fall back into habitual sin again.

"It is difficult to measure exactly the praise or the blame of a whole religious revival like the present one in Ireland. Religion, unfortunately, hardly ever gets the aid of impulse and excitement without getting a great deal more of it than it wants, and being overwhelmed by its ally. But it does want a certain amount of this, and therefore when it gets it, even though the excess will be injurious, it will have gained an advantage to a certain point. A great many people have, doubtless, had serious impressions implanted in them at such times, which they never afterwards lose. Even the fanatical excesses of such a movement bear witness, amid their extravagance and their delusions, to the deep power of the religious principle in human nature, to its reality and life.

"There is nothing so new as what has been forgotten. We are so distant from the days of Whitfield and Wesley, and the great 'revivals' of religious feeling under their preaching, that the movement appears to be something quite novel. It is really a very old phenomenon; the great religious 'revivals' of history are well-known periods, but in the very form now witnessed in the province of Ulster instances can be cited of nearly a century ago. In America such 'revivals' are established 'institutions' in certain Evangelical churches; and periodical meetings are held for the express purpose of rousing the dormant and indifferent to the required pitch of enthusiasm. There are 'awakening preachers' and a whole machinery calculated to rouse the proper degree of mental excitement. With time and practice we may perfect the same sort of thing here, and by its working send as many lunatics to the county asylums as, according to the United States' census, it does in America itself.

BELFAST, Sept. 16.—The most recent phenomenon of the religious agitation in Ireland is a 'revival' of the 'monster meeting' of former days. The old machinery of politics is put in motion again in the cause of religion. In both it may be an object to increase or prolong an excitement, or prevent it from abating. For this something out of the common course is necessary. So as the ordinary political meeting was expanded to the dimensions of a Clontarf or Tara gathering, the usual devotional exercises of a quiet congregation can be magnified in their scale, and changed into a great day of field-preaching. This has just been done for the 'Revival' of the north of Ireland. After some months of reported 'awakenings' deepened religious 'anxiety' in individuals and communities throughout the whole province of Ulster, an attempt was to be made to concentrate the movement, and exhibit it in one extensive manifestation of 'the work.' The leaders of it would thus be mutually encouraged by being brought together, and those who might attend the ministrations would, it was hoped, be confirmed in seriousness, or even aroused to that 'deep conviction of sin' which is the necessary stage of transition to the final object of all awakening, an 'assurance of pardon.' These were the ends to be obtained at a 'great revival prayer-meeting for all Ireland,' held at Armagh on the 14th inst. The objects contemplated are described in the language of the advertisements and announcements of the gathering. But the style is not fitted for mere narration, and to give an account of the actual proceedings I must fall again into the modes of speech employed by the outside world.

"The meeting itself was to be 'for all Ireland,' and it was expected that eminent divines would attend it, specially, from 'the three kingdoms.' Rumour even included Mr. Spurgeon and singular combination—the Bishop of Exeter in the list. The result, in the present state of the public mind, might have been anticipated to be something extraordinary. But on the closest observation I could not so rate it. Belfast is a city of some 130,000 inhabitants, and is the head and centre of this movement; yet it would have been a very liberal calculation that could have been made 800 of the number that filled the 'great prayer-meeting' train.

"There could be no doubt that all the passengers by the great prayer-meeting train had not the same object. On arriving at Armagh, fully half the number, instead of turning into the prayer-field, close to the railway-station, left it behind them, walked into the town, and dispersed into the houses and side streets. I saw them go certainly; I did not see them return. Why should they have come at all, then, it may be asked? 'Sixty miles for eighteen pence' is the answer. The prayer-meeting train was a cheap opportunity of doing a little worldly business. And I felt slightly 'soid,' after hearing so much of Belfast piety, to find it so much alloyed by Belfast thrift.

"The services consisted of addresses of sermons alternating with hymns. Nine or ten reverend gentlemen relieved each other in the work of the afternoon on this, the chief point of the meeting. The addresses that excited most attention were those of the Hon. and Rev. B. Noel, and the Rev. Mr. Moore, of Ballymena, the place where the movement is said to have commenced. The platform was intended to be the centre of the day's proceedings; the best preachers spoke from it, men of education and training in their office. But such an agitation cannot be entirely controlled by the regular ministers of the different church. They approve it, and go with it; but there are extremes to which moderate and well-educated men, however pious, cannot go. Yet they must accept the co-operation of a host of ignorant fanatics, and of no inconsiderable number of those zealots whose zeal is half imposture, or always ready to slide wholly into it. Some of the clergy are beginning at last to see this, and are endeavouring, though far too timidly as a body, to check the horrible abuses that have lately sprung up amid this 'revival.'

Mr. C. Kirkland of Canterbury gives a somewhat different account of the same scenes. After detailing some cases in a letter to the *Freeman* he says:

"When an archdeacon speaks he is sure to have an audience. This is one advantage of an exalted position in the Established Church. Archdeacon Stopford has spoken eloquently on the Irish revival, and he has commanded universal attention, but certainly not universal approbation. He has endeavoured, by the aid of much learning and equal ingenuity, to identify the physical prostrations attending that movement with hysteria. There are few who believe that he has succeeded in establishing his theory, and your able and elaborate review of his work will tend to confirm the unfavourable impression which it had previously created. On Wednesday last I was present at a large open-air prayer-meeting for all Ireland, in the city of Armagh; and as the mysterious phenomena which have excited so much attention in connection with the 'quickenings' were exhibited in various forms, I will endeavour to test the archdeacon's theory by a few facts of which I was an eye-witness.

"Among the various instances which I saw there was one that did resemble hysteria. There was wringing of the hands, the unearthly scream

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"Severitas" in the Provincial Wesleyan.

A writer in the *Provincial Wesleyan* of last week, signing himself "Severitas," favours the readers of that paper with upwards of two columns of animadversion on "Spurgeon, the Christian Messenger and the Iron Wheel—Do they ever persecute?"

He seems very angry with us for inserting amongst our Selections on July 20th! a short extract from one of Spurgeon's Sermons on the doctrine of perfection. The writer indulges in the ministerial, or editorial, "we" and no doubt wishes it to be understood that he speaks on behalf of others besides himself. It is in a similar strain, and probably from the same pen, as an article some time since signed "Wesleyan Methodist," which denounced us because we noticed as "a good sign" that our Wesleyan friends were about to have some special instruction on the subject of baptism, in the story of Anna Clayton; as we supposed for the purpose of bringing the body to some degree of uniformity in the administration of that ordinance; there being many in the connexion who, notwithstanding their teaching to the contrary, believe that immersion only, is baptism. It would seem from the great length of this letter and its language, that the writer has allowed the matter to rest on his mind until he could no longer restrain himself, and then, has permitted his pent up wrath to burst forth in one stroke, with which he hopes to bring down Spurgeon from his high pedestal, to annihilate the *Christian Messenger*, and banish 'The Great Iron Wheel.' It may perhaps have given "Severitas" some uneasiness that *Methodists will read Spurgeon's Sermons* notwithstanding his antipathy to Arminianism; but we do not think they will be at all less inclined to do so by the publication of these strictures on that popular preacher.

His reference to "The great Iron Wheel" we think very injudicious. Those who have not read that work, will, of course, now want to know what is in it to render it so obnoxious to Methodist ministers. He advises Baptists "If they would attain that glorious future to which they think themselves destined," to "cease to slander their neighbour's reputation from the pulpit, and the press." "Let them,"