Messenger and Visitor

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NEED OF REVIVAL.

There is we believe in many Christian hearts at the present time, an ardent desire for a general revival of religion. The need of such a revival is felt to be manifest. The tone of spiritual life in the churches, to speak generally, is far from being what the more spiritual of their membership could desire, and the hearts of pastors are sometimes saddened and discouraged as they contemplate the apparently small results of their labors. Many are longing and praying for a fresh manifestation of divine grace and power, which shall quicken their own spiritual life and give deliverance from the lethargy of worldliness which to so great a degree rests upon the churches.

There is no doubt good reason for the existence of this desire for the revival of the spirit of grace in our churches, and there is hope also in the fact that such a desire is being so widely and strongly felt. The materialism that cares only for the present and seeks its good things in this world is making itself strongly felt in the life of our churches. The conditions of life in our country have changed greatly within the past generation or two. A great many things crowd in upon us today which were unknown in the days of our fathers. There are so many things in the way both of business and amusement to think about and to take part in, if we will, that it is very easy to neglect the interests of the spiritual life. The change makes itself strongly felt even in the quiet country village, and far more in our towns and cities where a much larger proportion than formerly of our people are now to be found. How much smaller relatively is the place which the church and the services of religion fill in the lives of our people today than they did fifty or even twenty-five years ago our older readers will clearly understand. The spirit of unbelief and of wickedness manifested itself then perhaps quite as strongly as it does today. But the Christian of that day was under less temptation to become occupied too much with things that are worldly without being distinctly wicked. Then the Bible, the religious newspaper and the church services occupied a much larger place in the thought and life of the individual Christian and the family than they do today. Now there is the daily paper and many other periodicals, the ubiquitous magazine, the current fiction and other literature, good bad and indifferent, all claiming attention; and it is so easy for the Christian to fall into neglect of his religious duties, to find the newspaper or the novel more entertaining than his Bible, to lose his interest in his religious paper and so also in the principles and the work for which it stands. And so it comes to pass with many nominal Christians that the place of business or amusement is much more attractive than the prayer meeting and his zeal for Christianity is measured by attendance once on Sunday in fine weather upon the services of the church and a more or less liberal contribution to the church's finances.

It cannot but be evident to those who give thought to the subject that, under the influences noted above, there has been a decline of spiritual life and power in our churches, that the power to impress itself effectively on the life of the community, through the testimony of word and life charged with vital faith and burning love, is largely absent, that the line of cleavage between the church and the unbelieving world has grown almost imperceptible, so that it is little wonder if the worldling questions why he should seek a change of heart, if people who have professed a change of heart live, so far as he can see, exactly as he does. Surely there is need of a mighty and deep spiritual revival in our day. And as one thinks of present conditions and of the influences under which these conditions have been reached, he is perhaps almost ready to despair of seeing a day of such power that the church shall find deliverance from this paralysis of worldliness, and receive power to bear effective witness for the truth. But the fact that there are many who are not "at ease in Zion" ministers hope of a coming day of the Lord. Even those who seem so dominated and controlled by the worldly spirit are not so much at ease as they seem. It is not possible that men and women who have experienced the regeneration of the Divine Spirit, to fill their hearts to satisfaction with anything or everything that materialism has to give. The spirit of this world is strong, but there is a Spirit which is stronger. The Christian's hope of victory for himself and for the church is in the power of that Almighty Spirit, therefore our hope shall not be put to shame.

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REJECTED AT NAZARETH.

The passage from Luke's gospel, which furnishes the topic for study in the International series of lessons for next Sunday, gives us a brief report of one of our Lord's sermons or addresses and the effect upon his audience. The place is Nazareth, the town in which Jesus had been brought up and where, as boy and man, he had spent some thirty years of his life. It is now probably about a year after his baptism, during which Jesus has been preaching the gospel of the kingdom mostly in Judea. Recently he had come to Nazareth to spend a Sabbath among his old friends and townsfolk and worship with them as of old in the synagogue. It was by invitation doubtless of those on whom devolved the duty of conducting the synagogue services that Jesus read the lesson for the day and proceeded to address the people. As a teacher whose words and wonderful works had made him widely known and much talked of throughout the country he would naturally be called upon to perform these services.

When Jesus first entered upon his ministry we are told that, like John, he preached, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But here, in this sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, we recognize another and a deeper note. It is not merely a gospel of repentance and of preparation that he preaches, but a gospel of grace and fulfilment. The passage read and expounded by our Lord is quoted in Luke somewhat freely from the Septuagint rendering of Isaiah 61: 1-2, and differs somewhat in phraseology from the passage as we have it in our Old Testament. The words are part of a message addressed to Israel in exile. It was spoken as a word of comfort and of hope to a people poor and broken-hearted and shut up under hard conditions, by reason of enforced exile, from the land which the Lord had given to their fathers. It was a glorious gospel of deliverance and liberty that the prophet proclaimed, "an acceptable year of the Lord" and a "day of vengeance of our God" a day in which the glory of the Lord should be seen upon Israel, and Israel should see and be lightened and her heart should tremble and be enlarged, and she should know that the Lord was her saviour, and her redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. The glorious vision which the prophet saw and declared had its partial fulfilment in the restoration of Israel from the Babylonian exile, but its adequate fulfilment must wait the coming of the Christ. Now the time had come for the reading of this prophecy in a fuller light and for the realization of its larger hope. Material conceptions must give place to spiritual. The truth must be proclaimed as never before that the bondage from which men need deliverance is a bondage of the spirit, that no chains forged by human or satanic power can really bind the man whom God's truth has made free, that deliverance means something vastly greater than an escape from temporal servitude in Babylon to a temporal reign in Jerusalem, that the redeemed of the Lord are those who, whatever their outward condition may be, have been delivered from the bondage of Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The time had come when the old conception of the kingdom of God, partly false and wholly inadequate—as that of a temporal reign of God's people on earth, must give way to the conception of a spiritual kingdom into which all the children of light, both Jew and Gentile, should follow the Christ in that way of sacrifice which leads to sovereignty. The time had come for proclaiming a gospel to the poor in the largest and divinest sense, a gospel unlimited by human jealousies and distinctions, but flowing freely from the Infinite Fountain of love and reaching to the uttermost of human need.

It is pathetically instructive to read Luke's account as to how the gospel which Jesus preached was received by that Jewish congregation in the synagogue of Nazareth. The people had never before heard such preaching as that, and as they listen wonderingly they cannot but feel that these are words of grace and truth. Their hearts and consciences are assenting to the words spoken. Then comes the spirit of doubt and cavilling. Who is he that thus teaches with authority as if he were a prophet of the Lord? Is it not Joseph's son, the carpenter? And here they stumble. Then when Jesus tells them that it is their own doubting, cavilling spirit that hinders them from receiving the larger gifts of God, just as it was such a spirit in Israel of old which prevented the people receiving all that the prophets could have given them, their unbelief breaks forth into a fierce wrath which would have destroyed the man who had spoken unto them such words of grace and truth as never fell on human ears from any other source. How true and how pathetic a picture it is in miniature of the attitude of the unbelieving world toward the Christ and his gospel!

Editorial Notes.

—According to a statement contained in a late London dispatch, it has been discovered that the waters of the famous hot springs of Bath contain radium in appreciable quantities, and this fact it is thought by some physicians may account for the cures which in certain instances have followed the use of the waters.

—It is stated that the late Simon Zandes of Indianapolis contributed to Baptist mission work a few years ago a sum amounting in the aggregate to more than $30,000. Mr. Zandes was a Presbyterian and gave generously to his own denomination. Being asked by a Baptist minister how he came to give so largely to Baptist mission work, Mr. Zandes is said to have replied, "After careful thought I have concluded that a dollar given to Baptists would go farther than in any other place where I could put it."

—"One reason for the lack in our days of mighty revivals," says the *Baptist Commonwealth*, "is that we have not the faith or patience to wait. We fix days and hours and practically say to the Lord that we are so busy, and have so much to do that we cannot wait. We appoint a week of prayer and say, in effect, we can only come together and pray for one week. Indeed, we are so impatient that we cannot give even our one annual week of prayer up to that purpose, but must needs turn it into a preaching meeting, or a talking meeting, or almost any other kind rather than one of simple prayer and waiting. In our ordinary gatherings for prayer, if there come a pause, the minister or leader becomes impatient and sends forth his exhortation to "fill up the time," and the brethren and sisters begin to look about and get fidgety and nervous, just as if to be silent and wait upon the Lord for a few minutes were an offense against the Spirit."

—The Board of Governors of Acadia College held a special meeting in Wolfville on Thursday, at which some important business was transacted. A communication for the MESSENGER AND VISITOR which, we learn by a telegram from Wolfville, was mailed to us on Saturday, and which probable contained some reference to the meeting, has for some unexplained reason, failed to reach us in time for our present issue. A dispatch to the *Sun*, however, states that the purpose of the Governor's meeting was to devise means for relieving President Trotter of some of his administrative duties for a time that he may give his attention more fully to the prosecution of the Second Forward Movement on behalf of the college. It was arranged that in the absence of Dr. Trotter in connection with this work, Dr. Keirstead should be the acting head of the Faculty in respect to the management of the internal affairs of the college, thus avoiding any suspension or delay in respect to the work and discipline of the college, relieving the President of care and responsibility on this score and leaving him free to devote himself to carry on the work so well begun in connection with the new Forward Movement.

—The question as to with whom the power of ordination properly resides was raised not long since by a correspondent in our columns. As the question is one of some interest, we quote an editorial expression of opinion on the subject from a recent issue of *The Journal and Messenger* of Cincinnati, a paper which is generally regarded as one of the most strictly orthodox of Baptist journals in America. *The Journal and Messenger* says: "We cannot assent fully to the declaration that, 'according to our ecclesiastical polity the power of ordination is vested in the local church.' We do not deny that a local church may elect from among its own members one who shall occupy the place of elder or bishop. We do not know but that some of the early churches did so elect. And if the election is all that is meant by 'ordination' then the local church may have ordained; that is so far as we know. But we have no example of such ordination, nor have we any precept vesting the power of ordination, as it is usually understood, in the local church. So far as the New Testament throws any light on the subject, the power of ordination is in the hands of the eldership. A church may have no eldership and in such case it has no ordaining hands. It is useless to tell us that it can borrow the hands. That is a fiction. There is no such transfer of authority known to the New Testament. If anyone thinks that he can cite a case in which a church, as such, ordained an elder, we shall be glad to consider the passage in which it is held to be taught."

—It is very evident that if all our churches retained a active members all who are baptized upon a profession of their faith the numerical strength of the churches would be much greater than it is and their spiritual life immeasurably fuller and more effective. *The Interior*, of Chicago, a leading Presbyterian journal, has been making an examination of the various denominational year-books, and its comparison of statistical figures showing the number of new members received during the year with those indicating the actual gain in membership leads it to remark:

"The one point at which we should concentrate our best endeavors now is the retention of members when once received. Our additions upon profession of faith amount to about 65,000 yearly, and our net increase over deaths and depletions to a little more than one-third of that number. Our Southern brethren add over 10,000 a year upon pro-