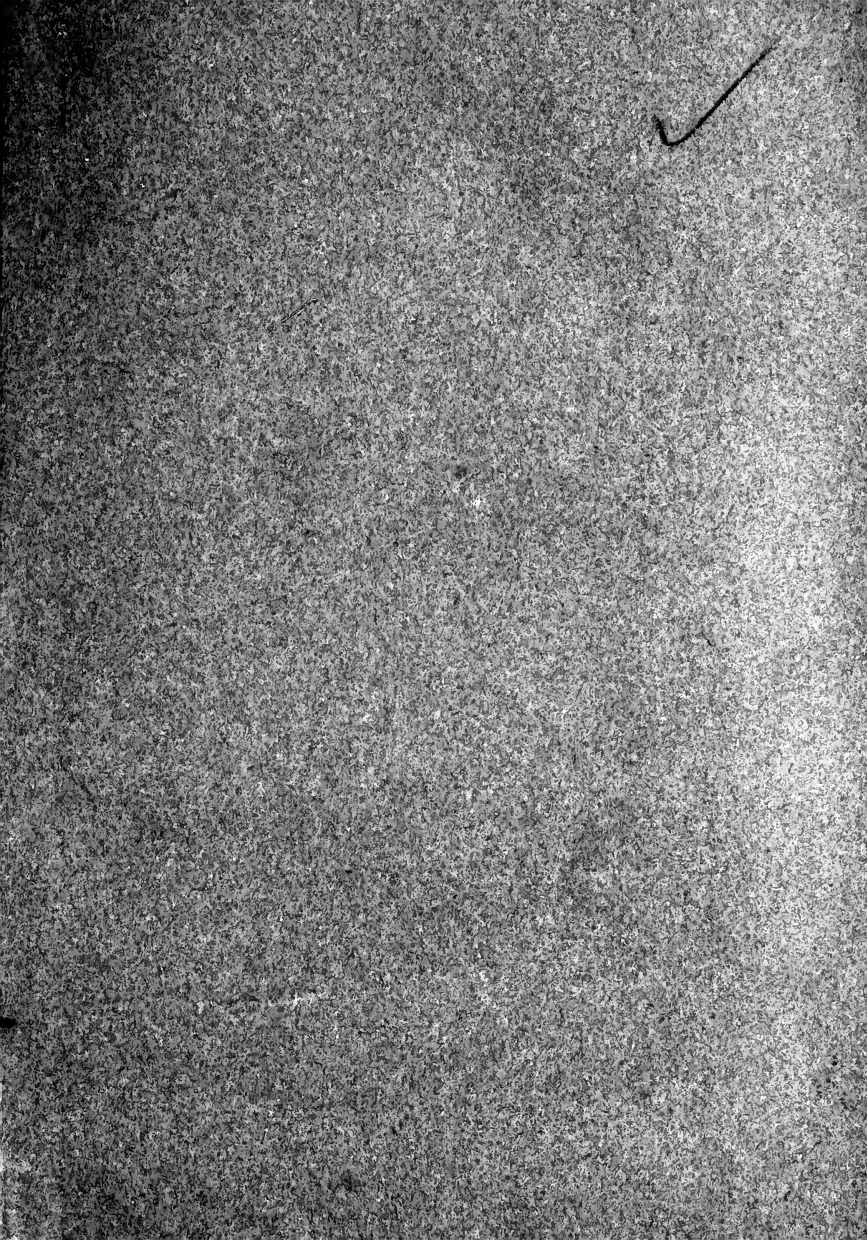




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“Revival Movements, and the desire to
which they give rise for private counsel
and guidance.”

A P A P E R

READ BEFORE THE

Church Congress

AT

STOKE-ON-TRENT,

BY THE

REV. RICHARD TWIGG,

RECTOR OF

S. JAMES'S CHURCH,

WEDNESBURY,

PRICE TWOPENCE.

REVIVAL MOVEMENTS.

THE importance of the subject to which the attention of the Congress is now invited can scarcely be overrated. It is one which concerns us all. It is one which deeply concerns the ministers of God's Word and Sacraments, because they have to consider it, both with reference to themselves and to the people committed to their care. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the future peace and prosperity of our Church depend to a great extent upon the action she now takes in this matter. Earnest prayer is needed that God would direct this movement (as I believe He has inspired it) to the saving of sinners, the edifying of the faithful, the good of His Church, and the advancement of His glory.

Our afternoon's discussion will be upon "Revival Movements, and the desire to which they give rise for private counsel and guidance."

I. "REVIVAL MOVEMENTS."—It is well known that they take place outside the Church, as well as within the Church. As one of the succeeding speakers will probably notice them, I shall refrain from doing so, for I know nothing of them by experience. Different opinions are held about them; but I trust that whatever view we hold we shall remember that if "some preach Christ even of envy and strife there are some also who preach Him of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, but the other of love. What

then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice.”

I shall confine my remarks to mission work in the Church of England, especially to the work of a first parochial mission.

And I cannot withhold an expression of thankfulness to God that He has blest this movement, as He undoubtedly has done, notwithstanding some irregularities which may have occasionally accompanied it. It is now no longer regarded as an experiment, tried by a few enthusiastic individuals, whose zeal has outrun their discretion. Several of our bishops have not only sanctioned it, but have taken part in it. And there are persons in every part of the country who attribute to it either their conversion to God, or their reconciliation with the Church of their fathers. Perhaps ere long it will become a recognised part of our diocesan machinery, and then there will probably be but few parishes in the country where a mission is not held under proper authority. One proof only need now be adduced to show the success of this great movement. It is seen in the fact that for several years past the subject has been brought before our Church Congresses, and has been discussed there with ever-increasing earnestness.

(1.) Too much attention cannot be given to the preparation for a Parochial Mission. It must begin with the parish priest himself, then with his workers and earnest communicants, if it is ever to be a blessing to the careless members of his congregation, or to his ungodly parishioners. Those who are preparing for a mission must “sanctify themselves.” “When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then

keep thee from every wicked thing." Besides this there should be frequent counsel upon the matter, much private and united prayer, and the coming mission should be made known in every way possible. While thus preparing for it, a blessing must be expected to rest upon the effort.

(2.) Much will depend, under God, upon the clergyman who conducts the mission. He should belong to the same school of theology as the parish priest who invites him, and should take care to strengthen his hands in every way he can, taking especial care to prevent any comparison being made between the permanent ministry of the parish and the temporary ministry of the mission. It must never be forgotten that a mission is held, not for the purpose of putting on one side (as if inefficient) the ordinary ministry of the parish, and the accustomed means of grace therein, but loudly to call attention both to the one and to the other. It is designed from first to last to supplement the work of the parish priest, not to supplant it. "To weaken the hands of the pastor is to weaken the cause of Christ."

(3.) "It is convenient" to begin each day of the mission with an early celebration of the Holy Communion. A short address or meditation may be given at this time with much advantage. In the forenoon a discourse upon the higher truths of the spiritual life is often delivered to the faithful. In the afternoon companies of workpeople, mothers' meetings, &c., and children (who ought never to be forgotten at these times) might be spoken to. In the evening, after due preparation by preaching in the streets, and house to house visitation, the mission service will be held in a free and unappropriated church. The sermon should be addressed to the unconverted. Earnest appeals should be made in it

to the consciences of the hearers, not merely to their feelings ; and the instant and unconditional surrender of the soul to God must be insisted upon. Whatever may be the nature of the after-meeting—whether it be for instruction, prayer, or conversation—the leading idea of the sermon should be kept in view. Sermon, address, instruction, hymns, prayer, conversation, all should press upon the conscience of the sinner the same divine truth. It need scarcely be said that it is best to avoid all controversial subjects during a mission, both in church and at home. It seems right to have a solemn service at the close of it for self-dedication and thanksgiving.

(4.) A mission generally leaves behind it much work for the parish priest. Some parishioners have to be visited and encouraged ; others prayed with and instructed ; others prepared for full communion with the Church ; to others work has to be given ; and all have to arrange that the good work which has begun may be carried on. This is the best memorial of a mission. In large parishes the revival movement should never cease. The evangelizing effort, to be successful, must be sustained. In this way will the parish priest learn to “do the work of an evangelist,” and will soon be able to pay to other parishes the debt which he has contracted in his own.

II. Mission work, when blest by God, generally gives rise to inquiry, and to a desire for counsel and guidance. I say *generally*, but it is not always so. There are some souls impressed by mission services who go at once to God in private prayer, and will not go from Him, nor let Him go from them, until He blesses them. The following story, told by one of the speakers at a former Church Congress,

illustrates what I mean. He said, "Some years ago it was my duty to take part in a mission at a village in Herefordshire. After one of the sermons the preacher invited those who felt concerned about the state of their souls to meet him in the adjoining school-room. It was soon quite filled. I was directed to go and speak to different persons while prayer was being made. I came at last to a young man, who was deeply moved. I knelt beside him and spoke to him. He asked me to go and see him on the following day. I did so, and put to him the same searching question I had done on the previous evening. He said, 'I think I can answer your question satisfactorily. I once listened to a sermon preached by Bishop Wilberforce in the chapel at Cuddesden College. I shall never forget it. I was arrested and awakened by it. I did as the preacher told me to do. I went, after the service was over, into my own chamber, and did not leave it until I believe I had made my peace with God.'"

Generally speaking, however, earnest mission services create a spirit of inquiry. The question is again asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And it is in answering wisely the different questions that may then be put to him that the skill of the missionary is chiefly seen. An inquirer comes to him; he has listened to the powerful preaching of the Word; he believes it; has been moved by it; is convicted by it. He sees his danger, but knows not clearly how to escape it. He is unable to apply to himself the promises of God, for sin has paralysed the powers of his soul, and made him unable to "lay hold on eternal life." His question, whatever his words may be, is, "What

shall I do to be saved?" Now in this crisis of his soul's history he may be directed in one or other of four ways.

(a.) In the first place he may be told to go and wrestle with God in private prayer until the burden of sin is removed. He does so. His chamber becomes to him what the banks of Jabbok were to Jacob. There "he weeps and makes supplication;" and, like the sorrowful patriarch, he not unfrequently continues in prayer through the weary watches of the night.

"With thee all the night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.
Wrestling, I will not let thee go,
Till I Thy Name and Nature know."

But at last, like Jacob, he "prevails." The darkness is past, and the true light shineth. "The sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings." He finds the God of Bethel, and goes on his way rejoicing. "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." May we not hope that this is the way in which numbers of our devout church-people have found the Lord? They have been walking for years in "all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They are ready to help their clergymen in all good works. They think little (perhaps too little) of their feelings. They are more anxious to *be* right than to feel right. But if they were asked to say how and where they first sought and found the Lord, would they not reply that they were drawn to him by the secret influences of the Holy Ghost, and that they sought and found Him, either in their own chambers, or in the courts of the house of the Lord. I believe I have given in these few words the faintest outline of

the spiritual history of many who are fallen asleep in Jesus.

(b.) Again. Through God's mercy many souls are now able to date the beginning of their religious life to that most important period—a confirmation season—one of the revival times in a well worked parish. Both old and young are prepared for the sacred rite, and at last are invited by the pastor to see him privately, not merely that he may see how much, or how little, of his instruction they have retained, but that he may pray for them, and with them, and teach them to exercise (as they promised in Holy Baptism to do) their latent gifts of repentance and faith. Like others who have been moved by his appeals, they timidly accept his invitation. He does what he can with them; he takes them by the hand, and leads them to Jesus, and ere long, like the young daughter of Jairus, they are gently raised by Him to newness of life.

It is thus with some awakened souls at a mission. They come and see a spiritual friend. They are met upon their own ground; every question is answered; every difficulty is removed. The invitation, "Let us pray," is soon given, and gladly, though silently, accepted. The penitent kneels down, and, in broken language, prays; and this is the burden of his prayer, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." It is not long before his head falls upon a Heavenly Father's bosom, before he feels a Father's arms around him, and a Father's kiss upon his lips..

(c.) There is a third way. There can be no greater help to a parish priest, nor greater blessing to his parish, than a body of devoted laymen, who exercise their different gifts

under his direction. According to his advice they sing in church as choristers, read the lessons, hold cottage lectures, read to and pray for the sick, seek out the unbaptised, teach in the Sunday school, or commence mission stations. Under him also they meet from time to time for mutual prayer, intercession, and "giving of thanks." I am quite aware that what are commonly called *prayer meetings* are somewhat unpopular; perhaps more so than they deserve to be. But I do not wonder at it, for so many things are necessary to carry them on efficiently. But when they are thus carried on, they are helpful to many, and of much use in certain parishes during a parochial mission. It is a matter of experience that an awakened sinner will sometimes go of his own accord into a prayer meeting who cannot be persuaded to go either into his own chamber or into his pastor's study to seek the Lord. With hesitating step he enters the room where prayer is wont to be made, and quietly takes his place. The solemn hymns, the unstudied prayers, the earnestness of those who are present, and the whispered words of the missionary while kneeling at his side, deeply move him, and at last "break every barrier down." The sinner is humbled. The heart is broken and contrite; the cry for mercy is humbly made; the gift of faith is bestowed and used; divine love is infused into the soul; praise trembles upon the lips, and at last the believing soul gratefully exclaims—

"Oh! that the world would taste and see
 The riches of His grace;
 The arms of love that compass me
 Would all mankind embrace."

(*d.*) I believe the fourth way is referred to in the Prayer Book. The Church teaches us that when a penitent sinner opens his grief to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word, he will receive, through him, the benefit of absolution. "Our Lord Christ has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him." The testimony of departed saints, the writings of our own divines, the experience of many in our own time (and the number is daily increasing) are clear upon this point. There is still power in the ministry of reconciliation. It is a matter of no doubt with some—it is a blessed reality. And so awakened souls at a mission, "who cannot quieten their own consciences," at last resolve to use this means of grace; they "open their grief," and they "receive the benefit of absolution." The following lines of Faber describe the happy experience of more than one soul:—

"I cried out for mercy, and fell on my knees,
 And confessed, while my heart with keen sorrow was wrung;
 'Twas the labour of minutes, yet years of disease
 Fell as fast from my soul as the words from my tongue.

"And now, blest be God, and the sweet Lord who died,
 No deer on the mountain, no bird in the sky,
 No bright wave that leaps on the dark bounding tide,
 Is a creature so free, or so happy as I.

"All hail, then, all hail, to the dear, precious blood,
 That hath worked these sweet wonders of mercy in me;
 May each day countless numbers throng down to its flood,
 And God have His glory, and sinners go free."

Which of these four ways is the best way? I suppose each of us would call that the best way through which

he had himself found peace with God. I suppose a clergyman would say that was the best way through which most penitents were brought to the feet of Christ. But, surely, both past history and present experience teach us that the Holy Ghost has used and still uses all these means. Let us be thankful that this is the case, and careful not to disparage one of them. One cannot lay down any rule upon the subject, but, perhaps, under God, one of the surest ways of forming a noble, faithful soul is to direct it first of all, in order to quieten the conscience, to wrestle with God alone until the burden of sin is removed; then to lead it to "make confession with the mouth of the Lord Jesus," until freedom of utterance and holy liberty be obtained; and lastly, when, in course of time, it yearns for complete deliverance from the inbred sin with which it is tied and bound, to permit it to open its grief to some minister of God's Word, who is neither young, nor unlearned, nor indiscreet.

But one word more, and I have done. In most of our parishes mission work is a necessity. Our present parochial system (admirable in itself) has done all that it can do. The overworked, and too often underpaid, parish priest is struggling against difficulties of all kinds, and yet there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of souls beyond his reach. What, then, is to be done? Let a mission be held; encourage him; hold up the hands which hang down. Let the Bishop send clergymen and laymen to preach in the church, and schools, and streets, and houses; and let it be known that he sends them. Let us thus attempt to "compel" sinners to come in to the gospel feast. Missions will not do everything, but they will do a great deal. They will show us that spiritual death

is amongst us—that spiritual life can only be given by the Holy Ghost—that He still speaks by the prophets—that He still works through the Word and Sacraments.

Thank God for what the Church has been able to do during the last few years! But much remains for her to do. She has battles still to fight. She has victories still to win. But “to be more than conqueror” all that she needs is to be faithful to herself and to her God.

If the church were to arise in all her strength; if she were to shake herself from the dust which still clings to her raiment; if she were to cease to trust in an arm of flesh; if she were to go forth in the strength of the Lord God, she would “move the land.” Sinners would be converted, and live. Her sons and daughters would come to her from far; the faithful would go on to perfection; those whom she has alienated by coldness and neglect would return to her, and say, “Receive us into thy bosom,” and once more she would become the “joyful mother of children.

One’s heart is full while we think and speak of her, and “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak.” May God still bless the dear old Church of England! May God choose her as the instrument through which He will dispense spiritual light and life to our countrymen! May she be the centre around which shall reunite the different communions in our land! These blessed days may come. Some of our children may live to see them. And should they ever gladden their eyes I will venture to foretell what there will be. There will be a spiritual and united Church—a self-denying, Christ-like clergy, obeying with cheerfulness the godly admonitions of spiritual fathers, who teach more

by holy example than by precept—a loving, generous, and devoted laity. There will be glorious victories over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ's kingdom will be extended, and His glory shine throughout the world.

“THY KINGDOM COME!”

“His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”





