

Retrospect and Prospect

A SEMI-CENTENNIAL SERMON

Preached by

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RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

On an occasion like the present, both retrospect and prospect are eminently in place. Accordingly I have chosen two texts, which respectively suggest a backward and a forward look. The first of these may be found in 1 Samuel 6:12: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The second occurs in Exodus 14:15: "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."

The first of these passages had its origin in connection with a public commemoration of a notable victory of Israel over the Philistines. In celebration of Jehovah's interposition for their help, "Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer ("stone of help"), saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

The second passage occurred in connection with the experience of Israel at the Red Sea's border. They had escaped from Egypt, started on their march to Canaan, and reached the border of the sea when Pharaoh, his heart again hardened, came down upon them in mad pursuit with his great army, determined to recapture them. All hope of advance, retreat, or flank movement being cut off, they were in desperate straits indeed. Just at this juncture the Lord said to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward," thus commanding them to undertake the seemingly impossible.

The lines of thought suggested by these Scriptures for this occasion are: Divine Interposition in Our Past and Divine Requisition for Our Future.

I. Divine Interposition in Our Past

That the hand of God has been upon us as a people in the past in a most signal way is evidenced in every stage of our history during more than fifty years. God was in that movement back in the fifties which resulted in the formation of the Free Methodist Church as truly as He was in the Reformation in the sixteenth century, which gave us Protestantism, or that movement under the Wesleys in the seventeenth century, which gave Methodism to the world. Like original Methodism, the Free Methodist Church was born of

A MIGHTY SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

The sources of the movement may be traced back to the early fifties, and to a widespread revival of the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Prominent among the leaders in that revival were Dr. Jesse T. Peck (later elected bishop), Dr. and Mrs. Palmer, of New York, and others of marked ability and spirituality.

Toward the end of that decade, Dr. J. W. Redfield became a prominent leader in the movement. Like a flaming evangel, he went forth preaching the gospel of a full salvation throughout New England, New York, and as far west as northern Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri. Through his labors the revival flame was kindled to intenser heat, and was spread more widely over the country. The work also struck a deeper vein, and moved on with greatly accelerated power.

Superficial and false religions were exposed. Worldliness in all the manifold forms in which it had become entrenched in the church, was strongly rebuked. Practical holiness was thoroughly preached, and its fruits were insisted upon. Pride and worldly conformity were shown to be forms of idolatry as hateful to God in professing Christians as worshiping the golden calf was in His ancient people. The Bible doctrine of

separation from the world was plainly set forth, and was shown to be of such wide and varied application as to forbid many things which the churches of that period generally regarded with approval. Among these were dancing, theater going, card-playing, horse-racing and other kindred diversions.

It was also maintained that, to fulfill the Scripture injunction, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," required separation from secret fraternities, with their extra-judicial oaths and blood curdling penalties; with their substitution of lodge morality for moral regeneration; with their Scripture-garbling and Christ rejecting rituals of worship; with their grotesque and often dangerous and indecent initiation ceremonies; with their false pretensions to antiquity and to connection with the events and characters of Holy Scripture; and with their sworn promises, as conditions of membership, to help and to defend each other in times of trouble, even in some cases to the extent of ever concealing and never revealing the secrets of a brother, murder and treason not excepted.

The Church's compromise with reference to the entertainment business as a means of replenishing her coffers was also strongly disapproved. Church fairs, festivals, grab-bags, lotteries, bazaars, and all the other forms of carnal pleasure which enter into and make up what the late Dr. A. J. Gordon named "the cooking-stove apostasy," came in for rebuke in the name of our holy religion, and were declared to be innovations in Methodism, forbidden by her general rules, and also out of keeping with the original spirit of the movement.

Freedom and spirituality in worship were likewise insisted upon, such as characterized Methodism in its primitive purity and simplicity. The then common practice of allowing a select choir, often made up of unconverted persons and sometimes of hired opera singers without even the fear of God before their eyes, to monopolize the singing, was declared to be a mark of Methodism's departure from her own original standard of worship, and a lowering of her spiritual tone, both of which were greatly to be lamented.

Formalism was also exposed and rebuked, and the freedom of the Spirit in public worship was earnestly contended for; that is, liberty on the part of all, when specially moved to do so by the Holy Spirit, to give spontaneous expression in the way of responses, the utterance of praise, and such other physical manifestations as have the warrant of Scripture teaching and example. Those who were active in promoting the great work of revival believed and taught, with President Edwards, that "Eternal things are so great, and of such vast concern, that there is great absurdity in men being but moderately moved and affected by them;" and that "whenever there is any considerable degree of the Spirit's influence upon a mixed multitude, it will produce in some way a great visible commotion" To oppose its operations is to grieve the Spirit, quench the flame of devotion, and court formalism and spiritual death.

Again, the promoters of this work insisted that Bible holiness should regulate even the personal attire of those professing it, and particularly among Methodists, all of whom were pledged by virtue of their church covenant against "doing what they know is not for the glory of God, as the putting on of gold, or costly apparel."

Discrimination between the rich and the poor in the house of God, as fostered and encouraged by the prevailing pew system of the time, was also disapproved and condemned as a barrier to the highest success of true evangelism. The custom of renting pews prevailed in that day among nearly all denominations, and this practice of commercializing the gospel, and of putting a premium on the "man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel," and a discount on the "poor man in vile raiment" (James 2 : 1-4), had brought such a flood of worldliness into the church as to smother its very life as a spiritual institution. In many parts of the United States not a single free church, with equal privileges for rich and poor, could be found in any of the cities and larger villages. Certainly there was need of reform at this point, and in no small degree the needed reform has been effected. We may thank God and congratulate ourselves that we have had some part in bringing it about.

Thus have I sketched in a hurried manner the things that were given the chief prominence and emphasis in the ministry of those noble men under whom the great revival of which Free Methodism was born, was promoted. They preached only those great cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures on which Methodism was founded, and insisted only upon those fruits of righteousness which the Scriptures enjoin, and to which all members of the Methodist Episcopal Church were solemnly pledged.

OPPOSITION DEVELOPED

But the current Methodism of the day was very greatly estranged from the simpler and purer type originally raised up. The work of revival and reform, however, was thoroughly radical, and for a time seemed likely to result in effectually recalling the church to its primitive purity and power. At length it acquired such proportions and momentum as to arouse elements of determined and formidable opposition; and toward the end of the decade, the lines became very closely drawn between the two types of Methodism in Western New York.

The opponents of the movement which aimed at the restoration of Methodism to its primitive standards were mostly, if not all, members of the Masonic fraternity and of other oath-bound secret orders, and incidentally the secret society question was the occasion of the conflict that was raging. I say *incidentally* it was this, but only incidentally. The real issue was the question of holiness, or entire sanctification. Masonic preachers had no use for holiness of the type preached by John Wesley, and either ignored the subject altogether in their ministry, or else treated it from the Zinzendorfan or from the Calvinistic point of view; and, as the slogan of the revival was that of "Holiness unto the Lord," or entire sanctification as defined and taught in the standard Methodist authorities, with practical separation from and non-conformity to the world as its chief corollary, the entire movement was a stinging rebuke to them, which excited their opposition to the point of bitterest hostility.

The real issue was between a formal, worldly-conformed and popular type of religion on the one hand, and a vital, radical, uncompromising and Spirit-baptized type of religion on the other.

Various influences were in operation and on the increase within the Genesee conference in support of the modernized and fashionable type of Methodism, when, in the providence of God, certain changes occurred which tended to help on the work of revival in a remarkable degree. Asa Abell, Eleazer Thomas, Isaac C. Kingsley, and C. D. Burlingham, men who believed in, taught, and personally enjoyed the experience of holiness or perfect love, were placed in the presiding eldership, and many others of like faith and experience were closely associated with them in the prosecution of their work. In their district work these presiding elders put the subject of holiness as taught by the fathers of Methodism to the front, and urged not only the necessity of regeneration upon the unsaved, but also the privilege and duty of being sanctified wholly upon believers. Nor was this done in a merely formal and perfunctory manner, but with heaven-born zeal, and "in demonstration of the Spirit and in power." Multitudes were converted, and scores of both preachers and laymen "received the word with joy," sought and obtained the sanctifying baptism with the Spirit, and "began to speak with other tongues [though in the same language], as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Around the standard of holiness as uplifted by these godly men quickly rallied such ministers as B. T. Roberts, William C. Kendall, Joseph McCreery, Loren Stiles, Jr., William Cooley, Amos Hard, and others "whose names are in the Book of Life," all of whom were men of marked ability and of unchallenged standing among their conference brethren. Wherever these men went, revivals broke out, in which large numbers were converted, many were sanctified wholly, the church was quickened and built up, and Methodism became characterized by the power of earlier days. At the same time, spirituality steadily declined, worldliness as steadily and rapidly increased, and the primitive glory of Methodism constantly waned under the ministry of those who represented the modernized type of Methodism.

Under these conditions the "Nazarite preacher," as those who contended for "the old paths" of Methodism were contemptuously called by their opponents, began to be in demand in the conference to an extent which alarmed the "progressives" lest it should eclipse their glory and interfere with their prospects for position and income. Hence a systematic effort was inaugurated for bringing the more aggressive preachers and their labors into disrepute. They were branded as "fanatics," "enthusiasts," "false prophets," "spurious" and with even more offensive epithets than these. Their preaching was characterized by such expressions as "cant," "rant," "clap-trap," "arrogant boasting," "haranguing the people," and such other terms as would tend to bring odium upon it. Against their work were raised the old-time cries of "irregularity," "extravagance," "fanaticism," "wildfire," and so forth. From pulpit and press they were assailed and misrepresented with great bitterness, and in language of which the foregoing is the least offensive.

In fact, strong language was employed on both sides; but the use of terms offensive to refinement and decency is chargeable exclusively to the "Regency" party, as the opponents of the reform movement were called. In verification of this statement it is only necessary to refer to the files of the Buffalo Advocate and of the Northern Independent for the period in which the conflict was raging. But the movement had acquired too much momentum and secured too large a following to be suppressed by such measures; and "so mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed."

THE CRISIS

The time had come, however, when to most of the leaders in the work of revival and reform, it seemed wise to set themselves right before the general public; so far as practicable, with regard to the chief differences between them and their opponents. The official periodicals of the church being closed against them, so far as these issues were concerned, they had recourse to the columns of the *Northern Independent*, a paper published at Auburn, New York, whose able and fearless editor, the Rev. William Hosmer, allowed them free scope in defense of their cause accordingly in 1857, the Rev. B. T. Roberts wrote and published a paper entitled, "New School Methodism," which was a very able presentation of the case. In his clear and incisive style, Mr. Roberts set forth the departures of the Methodist Episcopal Church from her primitive standards, fortifying himself in each principal allegation made by ample quotations from her bishops, editors, and others high in the councils of the church. He also defined the position of the other party in terms which they never attempted to deny, and showed wherein the brethren whom he represented, disagreed with them. This paper was a dignified, straightforward and dispassionate presentation of the case, without one discourteous utterance or offensive epithet contained therein.

The publication of this clear and comprehensive statement of the points at issue gave universal offense, however, to the "Regency" party, and therefore furnished it the pretext for still more oppressive and unrighteous measures, which finally issued in those "proscriptions, prosecutions, and expulsions which led to the formation of the Free Methodist Church."

At the next session of the general conference, Mr. Roberts was brought to trial on the charge of "Immoral and Unchristian Conduct," for no other offense than having written and published the articles on "New School Methodism."

Acting in an associate capacity, and pledged to secrecy, the "Regency" men had been attempting to secure a majority sufficient to control the conference. Believing that they had now succeeded, they resorted to extreme measures, of which this was the beginning, with a view to stamping out what they were pleased to call "Nazaritism." Mr. Roberts offered to apologize for what he had written, provided the aggrieved brethren would deny its truthfulness. No one was inclined to offer a denial. Yet in the face of these facts he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be reprimanded by the Bishop. Think of it! An able and reputable minister of the conference declared guilty—guilty of "*Immoral and Unchristian Conduct!*"—and that for the publication of articles, the truthfulness of which not one of his accusers would deny. Moreover, what shall we say to the penalty? Whoever before heard of declaring a minister of the gospel guilty of unchristian and immoral conduct, and fixing no higher penalty than that of an official reprimand? Mr. Roberts meekly received the reprimand, appealed to the general conference, and then went to his circuit where he had a year of continuous revival.

This, however, was only the beginning of the more oppressive measures by which it was sought to crush out the work of revival and reform. At the next session of his conference, Mr. Roberts was again confronted with a charge of "Unchristian and Immoral Conduct," this time for "Contumacy," or disregarding the authority of the conference. It was charged that during the year he had republished and circulated or assisted in the republication and circulation of the articles on "New School Methodism!" He denied having been in any way connected with their republication and circulation. He also summoned one, George W. Estes, a lay man, who testified that he alone had been responsible for the republication and circulation of the articles in question, and that Mr. Roberts had been in no way connected therewith. In face of such conclusive evidence of the innocence of the accused, he was declared guilty, *and was expelled from the conference and the church!* Again he appealed to the general conference, and at the close of the conference session he went forth "without the camp bearing His [Christ's] reproach."

At the same session of the conference, Joseph McCreery was also expelled on a charge similar to that brought against Mr. Roberts. He also appealed to the general conference. At the session of the conference held the following year, the spirit of persecution ran high. H. H. Farnsworth and John W. Reddy, two excellent preachers who were known to be in sympathy with the progressive movement, were located, and Loren Stiles, Jr., John A. Wells, William Cooley, and Charles D. Burlingham, were expelled. The charge in the case of each preacher was "Contumacy" in having officially recognized one or both of the previously expelled preachers—in allowing them to speak from their pulpits, or take some other part in their religious services. So strong and bitter was the spirit of hostility to the expelled ministers that one man, Rufus Cooley, was placed under arrest of character for having prayed with B. T. Roberts in a private house. Fortunately he escaped prosecution for this daring offense. All the expelled ministers except Mr. Stiles took appeals to the general conference.

Following both sessions of the conference at which the expulsions occurred, a large number of laymen met in convention and solemnly protested against the action of the conference in excommunicating reputable preachers for no other offense than loyalty to what had always been the distinguishing doctrines and usages of Methodism. This action on the part of the laymen was soon followed by many of them being "read out" of the church, as having "withdrawn"—a method wholly unwarranted by the Discipline, which had never been adopted before, and has never been employed since.

While these events were occurring in 1858-1860 in the east, similar conditions were developing in Northern Illinois. The time would fail me to tell with any detail of the labors of Dr. Redfield, supplemented by those of Seymour Coleman in this region; of those noble men, C. E. Harroun, Sr., J. G. Terrill, E. P. Hart, Joseph Travis, George Fox and others among the preachers, and of J. M. Laughlin, W. D. Bishop, I. H. Fairchild and others, among the laymen, who enthusiastically rallied to the standard of Bible holiness as presented by those courageous and progressive leaders. Nor can I pause to dwell on the mighty outpourings of the Spirit attending the labors of these godly men, resulting in gracious and extensive revivals of old-time religion; of the determined opposition and persecution manifested by those who held the reins of power in the church; of the wholesale denunciations of what was called "Redfieldism," the proscriptions of those in sympathy with the reform movement, and the policy of "reading out" as "withdrawn" those who sympathized with or participated in the work inaugurated. In short, it was substantially a repetition of what had occurred and still was occurring in Western New York.

GENERAL CONFERENCE ACTS ADVERSELY

The year 1860 came at length, and in May of that year the general conference met to which the expelled preachers had appealed. The hope of all the oppressed brethren turned fondly toward that gathering, believing that when their cause should be presented there, their wrongs would be righted and redressed. In this, however, they were doomed to bitter disappointment. The general conference refused to entertain the appeal of Mr. Roberts, which came up for consideration first. With heart oppressed and with spirit grieved, that good man turned away, saying, "I appeal to God and the people." And who that knows the sequel to the history can doubt that God and the people have entertained his appeal?

The refusal of the general conference to entertain the appeal of Mr. Roberts being taken as an indication of what might be expected in case of the appeals still pending, they were all withdrawn. The news soon spread abroad that the general conference would not consider the cases that had been appealed to it, and then followed hundreds of withdrawals from the church, both of preachers and laymen. Another convention was called, this time of both preachers and laymen. It was held at Pekin, Niagara county, New York, where, on August 23, 1860,

THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH WAS ORGANIZED

and B.T. Roberts was elected as its first General superintendent, an office which he continued to fill, by virtue of successive elections with great grace and acceptability until summoned to his heavenly reward.

It was a long and painful period of travail out of which the new church was born. It was a live, spiritual birth, however, manifesting a remarkable degree of vitality from the beginning. Even in the darkest of the conflict that preceded the formation of the church God was with His oppressed and persecuted children most signally, and at its ultimate formation, they, like Samuel after the notable victory over the Philistines, could say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

The divine interposition in our denominational history has been evident all along the way in

OUR PRESERVATION AND UNHINDERED PROGRESS

in face of opposing forces that have sought our overthrow. This opposition grew in the first place out of those circumstances which led to the formation of the church. It may appear somewhat invidious to mention these matters further here, but it is not so intended.

Fidelity to facts requires me to say that those who opposed and persecuted before the new church was formed, doubled their diligence after that event. They were not satisfied with having driven the objects of their dislike from their church home so that they were compelled to find a home either with some church not committed to the line of things for which they had been thrust out, or in the organizing of a new branch of Methodism which should embody those principles. No sooner had the new church been formed than the spirit of opposition became, if possible, more bitter and relentless than ever. What the opposition had aimed at before the separation, appears to have been the whipping of those who were regarded as "fanatics," "enthusiasts," "madmen," "fools," etc, into a tame subjection to ecclesiastical authority, however unrighteous that authority might be used. But when it was discovered that the outcome of that course had been the organization of a new branch of Methodism, and that many were turning to it as a refuge from oppression and a more congenial church home, the opposition kindled to a greater intensity, and spread its influence more widely, even to the extent of influencing other churches generally against the movement.

Accordingly in the beginning of our work well nigh all the ecclesiastical powers of the country were against us. In many cases, also, this opposition went to the extent of inciting the civil powers to interfere with our worship and our work, and the cases of unwarranted arrest of both preachers and laymen, and of both men and women, are matters of public record. I now speak of occurrences, some of which my own eyes witnessed. A single instance will illustrate the humiliation and inconvenience to which unoffending parties were sometimes subjected.

At a camp-meeting adjoining my father's farm, an officer with a posse of several men came on the ground with warrants for the arrest of four of our preachers. Three of the preachers were on the ground, and the other, who was what we now call district elder, was in our home but a few rods away. When the warrants were served the preachers offered no resistance, and readily consented to go before a magistrate and be bound over to the County Court. With no occasion for it whatever, the officer slipped the handcuff's on the district elder, and then in order to humiliate the preachers and the camp-meeting people the more, he led him to the camp, where he and the posse who came with him marched the arrested preachers around in front of the tents to make an exhibition of them. Like Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail, however, they were able to pray and sing praises amid it all, and I remember very distinctly how the district elder as he stood before one of the tent doors, held his hands aloft, rattled the chains that bound him, and shouted "Hallelujah!" with a genuine heavenly ring. The ministers were bound over to the Court, but when the time came for their trial, there was no one to appear against them, and the somewhat heavy bill of costs was assessed by the Court to those who had arrested them, and had then placed under bonds for their appearance. Those fellows were glad to get off with no more serious consequences, since it was a clear case of malicious arrest, and on the officer's part, of seriously abusing his authority.

In those days our people were shut out of the churches their money had largely helped to build, and when they took to preaching in the schoolhouses, all usually went well until some disaffected preacher or layman would incite the atheists, infidels and Roman Catholics, and occasionally the members of other churches, to oppose the using of the schoolhouses for religious purposes. Then these places would be closed against us, and we would betake ourselves to private houses, the streets, the woods, rented shops, farmers' barns, occasionally to the court-houses and theater buildings; and I recall one instance of a large and excellent service being held in a church horse-shed, the people seated in wagons and carriages and clinging to the timbers of the shed, while the rain was falling copiously without.

But even in these places we were not immune from the spirit of persecution that raged against us. Attempts would often be made to break up the services; under false complaints the officers of the law would be induced to interfere, and arrests and imprisonments would occur; and sometimes the brethren would have their harnesses cut to pieces while they were engaged in worship, while in other instances malicious mischief would be done to other property of the worshippers, or to the property in which they

assembled for worship. We also were caricatured and misrepresented in the secular papers, and occasionally maligned even from orthodox pulpits. The children of our people were not infrequently victims of this spirit of persecution at the common schools, and I could relate some things of this character from my personal knowledge that would seem incredible.

Of course some of the grosser forms of opposition emanated directly from the rowdy elements, and so it must not be inferred that I am charging all that has been mentioned under this head directly to professors of religion; but the spirit of religious opposition and persecution ran high, and it was this chiefly which “stirred up certain lewd fellows of the baser sort” to heap upon us the grosser indignities in the foregoing count. In the midst of all of these things, however, the Word of the Lord mightily prevailed, the work of the Lord greatly prospered, the persecuted ones were filled with peace, love and holy joy, and as a people we were enabled to say, in the words of John Wesley, so often uttered amidst the persecutions which raged about the heads of the early Methodists, “The best of all is, God is with us.”

To a greater or less extent this spirit of opposition has continued to the present day, and the progress of our work has ever had this as one of its greatest obstacles to overcome. So that such indignities as have just been recounted are still common, for such are now but rare occurrences, and these usually in rude frontier regions of the country; but the opposition in these days is of a more polite and refined character. Usually it takes the form of ignoring us in the community; of ostracizing us socially; of creating an undercurrent of prejudice and hostility that largely circumscribes our influence; and of inducing people to shun us as they would shun a pest house. It is this more silent and refined species of opposition to our work that has been most difficult to overcome, and that has done us most harm. When our foes opposed us openly, and with coarser weapons, we had some of the advantages of a fair fight; but since they turned to fighting from ambush, and by more refined and strategic methods, it has been much more difficult to overcome their influence.

Nevertheless, having obtained help from God, we continue unto this day witnessing for holiness and radical reform, and, in the main, “walking by the same rule and minding the same thing” as that for which we were raised up in the beginning. We have constantly enlarged our coasts and strengthened our stakes until we are now contributing to the advancement of the kingdom of God among men with a degree of effectiveness that is recognized and appreciated by good people generally. With forty conferences averaging nearly a thousand members of the church in each; with prosperous missions in India, Africa, China, Japan and San Domingo; with one college and seven seminaries, two of which are doing the freshman year of college work; with a new, beautiful and well-equipped publishing house doing a prosperous business; with \$2,635,774 worth of church and parsonage property; and with two well-managed orphanages, and two excellent old peoples’ homes in this country, besides several orphanages and schools in our foreign mission fields: with these things and many others which might be mentioned as our available resources for doing our part in the promotion of God’s work on earth, does it not look as though the appeal of B. T. Roberts to God and the people had indeed been entertained?

In view of the forces that have been arrayed against us, and considering the great unpopularity of the truths we have felt called to emphasize, as well as of the strictness of our disciplinary requirements, is it not marvelous that we have been able to accomplish so much? While our growth and achievements have not been great enough to be an occasion of self-gratulation, they have been sufficient to warrant us in erecting our Ebenezer stone at the end of half a century, and saying, like Samuel of old, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;
If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:
Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:
Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:
Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.
Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.
Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers:
the snare is broken, and we are escaped.
Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (Psa. 124).

DIVINE HELP IN OUR MATERIAL NEED

The divine interposition in our history has also been manifest in helping us to meet the material and financial needs of our work without resorting to questionable methods. For half a century we have stood solidly against all such modern expedients for the raising of money to carry on the work of God, as pleasure-parties, fairs, festivals, carnivals, grab bags, lotteries and so on, even to the renting of pews as a source of income to the Church. We have held that the whole system of inducing men to give for religious purposes by appealing to their love of carnal pleasure or to their vanity is contrary to the New Testament, and also a serious and weakening compromise on the Church's part. By God's help we have been able to pursue a more excellent way. Hence we have erected and maintained our church buildings, carried on our Sunday school work, sustained our home and foreign missions, supported all of our benevolences, and provided for the holding of from seventy-five to one-hundred-fifty camp-meetings and conventions yearly, without ever going into the entertainment business, or in any other way making merchandise of the gospel, in order to accomplish these ends.

"How have you done it?" some will inquire. "Are your people wealthy?" I answer, "Far from it; as a rule they are poor." "Have you had prestige and influence with men of wealth?" I reply, "Very little, for the class of truths we preach, the strictness of our disciplinary rules, and the simplicity and unconventionality of our way of worship, are, as a rule, very unpopular with such classes, exciting either their haughty contempt or their disdainful commiseration. "How then have you succeeded in meeting the financial demands of your work?" I answer, "(1) By dispensing with pomp, show, and extravagance of all kinds, thereby keeping expenses at a minimum; (2) by keeping the blessing of God so upon our people that they maintain a practical consecration of themselves and of their means to Him, and cheerfully make sacrifice of their time, energy and worldly goods, rather than have His cause dishonored by neglect, or by compromise with worldliness; (3) by having faith in God and men, and going to the public with a straightforward presentation of our cause, whenever necessary, and asking aid of those willing to give for the sake of the cause we represent." Nor have God and the people ever failed us yet. In this respect, therefore, may we say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

KEPT FROM PREVELANT CORRUPTIONS

Then again God's blessing has been interposed from the beginning to preserve us as a people from the prevalent corruptions of the age. This is particularly true with reference to our doctrinal standards. We have never yet had occasion for a heresy trial of any note. We have never found it necessary to preach any other than the old-fashioned gospel preached by the fathers of Methodism; nor have we discovered any evidences that this gospel is so timeworn as to require superannuation—that that is, provided it be preached "in demonstration of the Spirit and in power." All other preaching of it ought to be superannuated, and the sooner the better.

The work of the higher critics has in no wise lessened our faith in the Bible as God's word for us. For all that sane and constructive criticism has done and is doing to divest the Scriptures of those things that veil their true meaning to the common reader, we are devoutly thankful; and for all that boastful and destructive criticism has done or can do to eliminate the supernaturalism of the Bible, we have nothing to fear, as relates to the final outcome. Its enemies may seek to undermine and overturn its divine authority; to magnify its alleged inaccuracies and discredit its teachings; to persuade us that not Moses but Hammurabi was the author of the Ten Commandments; that the various books were not written by their reputed authors nor in the ages claimed for them; that their records of miraculous intervention are but folk-lore myths and Oriental fancies; that Jesus and his gospel are reducible to mere naturalism; thus resurrecting and revamping the exploded theories of Bauer, Strauss, Renan, and their respective schools. Nevertheless, that old Book remains to us what William Ewart Gladstone so aptly termed it, "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." With Dr. James Orr, of Free Church College, Glasgow, we believe that "The Rock of God's truth stands fast, and that Jesus, His gospel and the Book that sets forth both are still, let men gainsay as they will, the spiritual powers that hold in them the hope of the world's future."

Moreover, we have suffered very little from the false and senseless isms which have multiplied during the past fifty years like the frogs and lice of Egypt. Eddyism, Dowieism, Millennial-Dawnism, Tongues-ism and the twenty other prominent isms which the latter half of the nineteenth century produced, and all of which have drawn their votaries chiefly from the churches, have scarcely interfered with our work, or made any unsalutary impression upon our people. I believe that in this respect we have demonstrated the truth

expressed in the title to one of Dr. Steele's booklets, "The Baptism of the Holy Ghost the Conservator of Orthodoxy in the Church." At all events we have been remarkably preserved from the influence of those specious and subtle errors whereby many in other religious denominations have been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. This is another ground for the raising of our Ebenezer on the present occasion.

Brethren, our God has graciously been with us and manifested His pleasure toward us during the half century we have left behind us as a people. The degree in which He has helped us, and signified His pleasure in us, has been somewhat in proportion to the degree of our fidelity to Him, and to the work He raised us up to accomplish. I doubt if any branch of the Christian Church can point to a better record of fidelity to first principles, and to their high calling of God in Christ during the first fifty years of its existence than can the Free Methodist Church. Local defections there have ever been, greatly to the grief of the church as a whole, but that we are backslidden as a people none can truthfully affirm. As one who is acquainted with our work east, west, north, and south, I can bear testimony, to which I am confident my colleagues will agree, that our preachers and laymen generally are a God-fearing, consecrated, holy and spiritual people, denying themselves and making great personal sacrifices for the advancement of God's kingdom on the earth.

Let us not boast in these things, however, but rather let us humble ourselves, watch and pray, and exhort one another daily, lest in the very event of our self-gratulation Satan and the world should insidiously enter and steal away our hearts from the simplicity that is in Christ. Let us remember that the present is indeed a critical time for Free Methodism, even as the semi-centennial of the Methodist Episcopal Church was a critical time for that body. In the later instance, self-gratulation caused a very perceptible waning of spirituality, and opened the floodgates for worldliness in its manifold forms to deluge the Church. Is it to be wondered at, after all, in lieu of this fact, that the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification became so unpopular about that time in the Methodist Episcopal Church that the period was signalized by the expulsion of those ministers and laymen who were used of God in an eminent degree for the promotion of the doctrine and experience of holiness within her borders?

A NEW CHAPTER IN OUR HISTORY

Do these remarks sound like unkind reflections? Be assured they are not so intended. They state substantially the same verdict that was recently endorsed by the very conference which originated the excommunications to which I have referred. At the celebration of its centennial anniversary last fall, the Genesee conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church did what it could do at so late a date to make amends for the wrongs of fifty years ago in the expulsion of B.T. Roberts and others from the conference and church. That body had previously requested our Genesee conference to send a fraternal delegate to us at their centennial celebration. This was the first time in half a century that they had ever expressed any inclination toward fraternal relations with us. Our Genesee brethren accepted their invitation and sent as their representative Benson Howard Roberts, A. M. son of the late B. T. Roberts, A.M., whom the celebrating conference had expelled half a century before.

He was treated with the utmost courtesy and cordiality. His address before that body was one of the finest, most courteous, courageous, diplomatic and effective addresses of the kind I have ever known. At the conclusion of its delivery, according to report, there was general weeping, accompanied by fulsome expressions of praise to God and commendation of the speaker.

The Rev. Ray Allen, secretary of the conference, responded on behalf of the body, as arranged for previously. In connection with his response, and in eminently well-chosen and touching words, Mr. Allen presented Brother Roberts on behalf of the conference with the parchments of the Rev. B. T. Roberts, his father, which were surrendered at the time of his expulsion. It is said that the vote of the previous day authorizing this act was carried with great applause.

At the time when that vote was taken, Secretary Allen also read a historical sketch of the conference; and, in touching upon those events which led to the split and to the formation of the Free Methodist Church, he paid the following tribute to the brethren who were expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church at that time:

"This heroic treatment might have seemed necessary at the time, but looked at half a century later, it seems unjust, and therefore exceedingly unwise. Those expelled brethren were among the best men the conference contained, and scarce any one thought otherwise even then."

He also further said: "The troubles of the Genesee conference were not cured by a surgical operation. Following 1859 came the darkest years of her life, and her membership steadily fell year by year until in 1865 it was at the lowest level ever reached. She then had only 7,593—a sadly wasted figure! In 1866 she began to amend, but the territory which in 1859 held 10,909 members never got back to that number again for nineteen years. Truly she came up out of great tribulation, and it is to be hoped she washed her robes white."

Following the reading of Mr. Allen's paper, the conference voted to restore the credentials of all the preachers who were expelled at that time, the vote in favor of their restoration being unanimous. *Thus has the Genesee conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church finally vindicated the men whom it expelled, acknowledged its mistake in expelling them, and so far as it is possible after the lapse of half a century, washed its hands from the grievous wrong done to them and to all who were affected by that wrong. Surely it is an occasion of great satisfaction to the Free Methodist Church as a whole that this step has finally been taken. The membership of both churches should unite in singing the long meter doxology. Moreover, this bit of recent history will relieve anything I have said from the appearance of vindictiveness or retaliation. And again we have reason to say, with profoundest gratitude, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

PERILS THAT NOW THREATEN US

I have remarked that the present is a peculiarly critical time for Free Methodism, and I now wish to dwell a little further on that thought. Two perils now threaten the welfare of our branch of Zion.

The first is the fact that the first generation of Free Methodists has nearly all passed away, and a new generation has succeeded, which has never known by personal experience the cost at which our freedom as a people was purchased, and many of whom, I fear, have no clear and well defined conception of the distinctive mission for which God raised us up in the beginning. As it is said of the Hebrew people, in the days of the Judges, "There arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel," so there is danger that, to a damaging extent, this history may repeat itself in our case. If the celebration of our semi-centennial anniversary shall have so emphasized the calling and mission for which we were originally raised up, and shall have so instilled into the minds and hearts of the younger generation which must henceforth guide the church's affairs, those principles which were dearer to the fathers than life itself, as to secure their like devotion thereto, much will have been done to prevent the defection that is so likely to ensue when a new generation becomes charged with the church's administration.

There are several points at which defection tends to manifest itself, and at which every possible safeguard should be interposed. One of these points is laxity in regard to the Sabbath. There is scarcely anything that has a more direct and invariable tendency to occasion defection from God with an individual or with a community of individuals than lightly esteeming His holy day. Someone has said, "He that remembers not to keep the Christian Sabbath at the beginning of the week, will be in danger to forget before the end of the week that he is a Christian." I must confess that I have looked with alarm upon the tendency among some of our people to deviate from a strict observance of the holy Sabbath—at the tendency manifest to make the day in part at least a day for social visiting, for the free discussion of secular business; for the writing of social and business correspondence; for unnecessary journeying or unnecessary preparations for journeying; for the patronizing of the post-office, the cheese factory, the creamery, and so forth; and for doing a dozen or more things that could and should be done before the Sabbath, but are purposely left over as odds and ends of work to be done on the Lord's day.

Another point at which danger threatens is in reference to worldly conformity, particularly in the direction of adorning the body "with gold, and pearls, and costly array," which is repeatedly disapproved by the Scriptures. We started out to be a plain people, modest and simple in adornment, as also in all manner of life. And such we are, too, very generally, unto this day. Yet some there are, as there ever have been, who have not enough of divine grace, or of respect for the feelings of their brethren to keep them from straining the general rules at this point. The cases of flagrant disregard for our rules are very few; but those in which there is a manifest tendency to overstep the spirit of the Discipline by aping the devotees of senseless fashion so far as possible without immediate peril to themselves is much more common. There are those who abstain from the wearing of gold, pearls, feathers, flowers, and so forth, but who will wear unseemly and sometimes immodest imitations, indulging a degree of vanity and extravagance

therein which are altogether out of keeping with the genius and spirit of Free Methodism. Here is a point at which worldliness threatens to make damaging inroads upon us, and regarding which we must repress every encroachment of the foe, and that without compromise.

We are also seriously threatened with worldliness in the form of covetousness. Covetousness is idolatry. The age of worshipping the golden calf has passed away, but the age of worshipping the golden dollar seems to be at its meridian. The itch for wealth is a contagion, and spreads like any other contagious disease.

Covetousness may take the form of cupidity, greed, parsimony, or hoarding; but whatever its form, and howsoever it may seek to disguise itself, it is a horrible and deadly plague. A peculiarity of the case is, that he who is most badly smitten by it never imagines himself to be afflicted with it, but fancies his neighbor is the victim and himself immune. No other form of worldliness has ever so afflicted the Christian Church as this, or is half as difficult to reach with the gospel remedy, or to check by disciplinary measures. This is one of our gravest perils. Let us ever be keenly awake to its insidious advances, and let us rebuke it and deal with it after the apostolic manner.

But there is yet a second peril peculiar to the stage now reached in our history, namely, that of settling down in self-satisfaction, and attempting to live upon our past record of faithfulness. Any church which makes this mistake will soon become static. Then rapid decline will follow, which nothing can avert. A number of religious denominations could readily be named in illustration of this principle, were it proper, but it is not right. And right here, brethren, is the gravest peril of the Free Methodist Church today. We have made a good record for loyalty to first principles for fifty years, and have done fairly in the way of evangelistic enterprise; but if we henceforth fall into the way of looking backward and living on our past, which is a very natural tendency, our days of denominational efficiency are numbered. I am persuaded better things of Free Methodism for the future, though I thus speak.

This leads me naturally to the line of thought suggested by my second text-

II. THE DIVINE REQUISITION AS TO OUR FUTURE

“Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward.” Progress in all that makes for higher living, improvement upon all that Jehovah has deposited in rest with us heretofore, advancement in all that contributes to a broader and more efficient evangelism—these are included in the divine requisition for our future as a people.

“Go forward, is the great command;
The threatening dangers all must yield
To them with earnest heart and hand,
Who mean to die or win the field.”

“Go forward, e’en though mountains rise,
And interpose their form sublime:
Scale their high summits, and thine eyes
Shall see from thence that brighter clime.”

ADVANCEMENT IN HOLINESS

God is calling the Free Methodist Church to go forward to a higher type of experimental and practical holiness. There can be no true progress on the part of any church only in so far as there is general progress in the experimental knowledge and practical manifestation of holy character on the part of its membership. Here is the secret of much of the weakness of the Church in the present age. The masses of those who have professed faith in Christ are allowed to rest in the fact of having been once converted, instead of being urged ever forward to higher and definite attainments in the realm of grace. To the large majority of Christians, not excepting even those whom the various churches regard as in the class of Christian Workers, Hebrews 5: 12-11 is highly applicable: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age

[perfect, in margin], even those who by reason of use *[perfection, in margin]* have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

It will be an evil day for Free Methodism if ever this condition is allowed to become general with her membership. Hence the imperative demand that all our people be constantly urged to “leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1).

Nor is it sufficient that we of today should measure up to the experience and standard of an earlier time, for we live under the increased light of a culminating dispensation; and increased light and opportunity always bring with them corresponding obligation to a higher type and a clearer manifestation of holy character.

To illustrate: David was “a man after God’s own heart” in his day, but David’s standard of holiness falls very far short of what is required even of a babe in Christ in our time. Benjamin Abbott was a holy man of God among the early Methodists of this country, and yet he habitually used tobacco. The light of the Twentieth century shows us “a more excellent way” and calls us to walk therein. George Whitefield was an able and eloquent divine, who lived “in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ,” and yet he was a slaveholder, while in the light of today slave-holding would lead us to discredit a man’s profession of having even the fear of God before him. So we must ever beware of measuring the heights of holy living to which we aspire by any of the characters of an earlier period, or by any other standard than that of Jesus Christ.

We must also beware of allowing our people to fancy that when they have received the sanctifying baptism of the Holy Spirit, they have attained the ultimate reach of Christian experience. Those who are “made perfect in love” have a still higher perfection to reach after and attain, namely, “the perfecting of the saints” “till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph.4:12,13). In proportion as we are enabled to keep the rank and file of our people “filled with the Spirit” and pressing ever on toward the final realization of that exalted ideal, and only as we are enabled to accomplish these ends, shall we furnish the world with that manifestation of scriptural holiness to which we are called.

A BROADER AND MORE AGGRESSIVE EVANGELISM

Again, “Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward,” suggests our duty to advance in the matter of an ever-broadening and more aggressive evangelism. Would we fulfill our part in the Church’s great commission? The divine direction is, “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19); also, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The field is here very clearly outlined. It includes the “whole world,” “all nations,” “every creature.” And in Acts 1:8 we are cited to the divine equipment for this tremendous task, to the method to be pursued, and to the program devised by the great Head of the Church Himself for its accomplishment. Hear it: “But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you”—the great dynamic of world-wide evangelism; “and ye shall be witnesses unto me”—the means and methods to be employed, that of witnessing unto Christ by the Church as a whole; “both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”—the divine program to be followed.

These Scriptures present us with the scheme of Jesus Christ for the evangelization of the world. Now what we need as a church is so to educate our people according to that plan, for the making effective of which Jesus died and rose again, ascended on high and sent forth the Holy Spirit, that they will be in full sympathy with it; will become ardently enthused by it; and will be so broadened in their conceptions of it as to be delivered from all littleness and narrowness of thinking, praying, planning, and executing in the interest of Christ’s kingdom.

O brethren, have we not been too small in our conceptions of the work to which we are called? Have we not been too narrow and exclusive in our sympathies? Have we not been too sordid in our inspirations and too circumscribed in our evangelistic efforts? Have we not been too much at ease, or too much absorbed in worldly affairs, to admit of the highest possible achievements in the interests of God’s kingdom on the earth? Have we not been deficient in the faith that asks, labors for, expects and realizes great things, even “signs and wonders” in the accomplishment of our God-given work? Have we not been too much lacking in zeal, enthusiasm, ardor, and whole-hearted, practical devotion to the work of winning

the world for Christ? And have we not been too fearful lest Mr. Worldly-wise-man, in his over-weening estimate of prudence, propriety and the praise of men, should be shocked and should turn to assailing us with offensive epithets?

Beloved, we shall do well to emulate the spirit and example of John Wesley, who, when excluded from the pulpits of the Church of England, betook himself to the fields and to the streets and lanes of the cities, and, as a flaming evangel, went everywhere throughout the British Isles preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and saying, "The world is my parish." We should also emulate the example of the early Methodists, whose devotion to the work of saving men led to the observation regarding the secret of their success, "They are all at it and always at it." This was the spirit that led Dr. Chalmers to define the Methodism of his time as "Christianity in earnest."

We shall fail to fill out the plan of God in providentially raising us up as a people unless we can infuse the evangelistic spirit, first into our preachers, and then into our laymen, to the extent that they will be moved with a passion for men in some measure at least like that of Christ and the Apostle Paul. We must have faith, enthusiasm, and a spirit of determined, holy effort, that knows no hopeless fields, no people unworthy of our time and energy, no conditions too hard or too discouraging, and no limitations except "the uttermost part of the earth" and the measure of our ability to carry or send the gospel thither.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

This means that we must "go forward," not stand still or retrograde, with respect to the foreign missionary work. Myriads of voices are calling from the darkness of pagan lands, and from the very ends of the earth for us to bestir ourselves and send them the light. And shall we be deaf to any of these myriad voices thus beseeching us?

"Shall we whose souls are lighted,
With wisdom from on high,
Shall we, to men benighted,
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation! O salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth's remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name."

EVANGELIZE THE NATION'S FOREIGNERS

But I would speak more particularly now of aggressive evangelism in our own land. There are vast populations within our own borders which as yet we have made no effort to reach with the gospel of Christ, and this general conference will have missed one of its greatest opportunities if it shall fail to do something definite in the direction of planning to make Free Methodism effective in evangelizing the vast number of alien peoples who are settling within our land. Nearly ten millions have come to us within the last decade and the influx from every part of the world still increases. They are arriving at the rate of over a million a year.

Multitudes of them are as ignorant of true religion as the most benighted heathen people. Moreover, many of them bring views, traditions, customs, manners, and habits that are decidedly un-American and anti-Christian. They must be enlightened and evangelized, or they will ever be a growing menace to all that is dearest and best in our American life and institutions. Patriotism, philanthropy, and the love of Christ who died for all men, alike appeal to us as a people to be up and doing with reference to this great problem. It may not be much that we can do, but we can at least make a beginning—as much of a beginning as we made at first in our foreign missionary work—and who can foretell what the end will be? Both God and men of means help them that help themselves.

PROBLEM OF CITY EVANGELIZATION

Then there is the problem of city evangelization confronting us. No other problem before the Church of Christ today presents a greater or graver challenge than this. The cosmopolitan character of the

population in a great city; the congested state of society, and of industry and business; the complexity of industrial affairs and the fierceness of competition along all lines of human activity; the constant inundation of municipal affairs by social, civic, and political corruption, with paralysis of conscience resulting therefrom; the squalid condition of the poor who every where abound; the oppressed condition of the working classes by greedy, soulless corporations; the death-dealing character of the saloon and brothel, both of which are allowed to run full blast either according to law or in spite of law; the open gambling hell, with its gilded attractions, luring men in order to rob them, and then driving them to madness or suicide or both; the Sunday-theater, of every grade, from those most approved and best patronized by the wealthier classes to the lowest and the most ribald of the vaudeville type—these and a hundred and one other abominations characteristic of modern life in the great centers of population, present to the churches of the land the most appalling problem of the present age.

Surely some scheme ought to be devised for making the Free Methodist Church, though it be not so large and strong as many older denominations, a more aggressive and effective force than it has ever been in the cities of our land.

Brethren, we should remember that the strength of any religious denomination as a factor in molding society at large and putting a righteous impress upon the nation must ever be in proportion to its strength and efficiency in the chief centers of population. Measured by this standard, has not our work come largely short of what should have been accomplished? Have we not been inclined to shun the great cities? Has not our faith been too small to attack the problems that challenge us in these centers? General Superintendent Roberts used to say that the Salvation Army had superseded us in this particular field, because of our lack of faith and aggressiveness. If that has been our reproach in the past, let us resolve that it shall be so no longer. We have the best thing on earth to offer mankind as a panacea for all life's woes; let us then go to all men therewith, particularly in the great cities of our land, where sin abounds as it does not elsewhere, and where want, and woe, and misery, and despair hover with black and hideous wings over the masses, depriving them of light, love, peace, comfort, and hope, and ever urging them on in their blindness to deeds of desperation.

The Church of today is fast learning that her call by Christ, "is not into the temple, but into the streets; not into the cloistered life, but into the open life; not to a part of life, but to the whole of life." And any branch of the Church that fails to do what it can for the betterment of men in all that affects them for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come, must largely fail of answering the end of its high calling of God in Christ. The social, moral and spiritual needs of men and women in the great cities are presenting us a challenge which we cannot fail to heed without incurring the Master's disapproval and doing ourselves irreparable harm. Let us beware lest, in this respect, we should bring upon ourselves the curse pronounced upon Meroz of old.

ADAPTATION TO CHANGING TIMES AND PROBLEMS

Then God is calling us as a people to advance in the direction of adapting our efforts and methods to the changed and constantly changing times and problems. The times do change, and with the changing times comes the solution of many of the problems that once challenged attention, while new problems press to the front demanding the attention of the Church and the application of its wisdom to their settlement. Slavery was a live and burning question in the United States when the Free Methodist Church was organized; but that question was settled many years ago. The policy of national Reconstruction was a vital question for a number of years following the Civil War; but the progress of the years has pretty effectually solved that problem also. The warfare between science and theology was a problem the Church of Christ had everywhere to grapple with forty years ago; while today the verdict of advanced scholarship on both sides is that the occasion of the clash in former years was chiefly in the fact that both sides forsook their legitimate domain, meddled with things foreign to their calling, and erred in supposing that they had respectively arrived at the last word that could be uttered regarding the subjects with which they were called to deal. Between true science and legitimately developed theology there is no warfare. What seems at times to be such, is conflict due rather to their misunderstanding of each other, and that chiefly because each side but partially understands itself.

The great problems challenging the Church of today, and which press for her most immediate action, and call for the employment of her utmost resources are: (1) The speedy evangelization of the world by earnest home and foreign missionary effort; (2) the destruction of the infernal liquor traffic; (3) the

dissemination of truth respecting social purity, particularly among the young, and the driving of impurity in all its forms, and especially in the form of the "white slave traffic," to its native hell; (4) the application of the golden rule to the adjustment of the strife between capital and labor, and between employers and the employed; (5) the Scriptural adjustment of the vexed and ever vexing question of marriage and divorce throughout our country.

These are a few of the great and grave problems confronting us now in a sense in which they did not in the beginning of our history. We cannot settle them, but the Church of God as a whole is responsible for their settlement, and we must do our part toward the accomplishment of the desired end, or we shall be "weighed in the balances and found wanting." It is possible for us to spend so much of our time simply guarding "the ancient landmarks" that we shall fail to get into the procession which is marching against these modern citadels of hell, commissioned to their destruction. God forbid it, though I thus speak. But we must beware of becoming fossilized through failure to advance.

"New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward
Who would keep abreast of truth."

MUST MEASURE UP TO BROADENING OPPORTUNITY

Brethren, the present is an age of unparalleled opportunity; and God is calling the Free Methodist Church to "go forward" in availing herself of every opportunity the present offers for extending and intensifying her influence in the direction of helping to bring a fallen world to the feet of Jesus Christ. We have advanced too far beyond our youthful period as a people to be found spending our time on the non-essentials of religion, or in "strewing rosemary on the graves of forgotten things." In connection with everything else we have to do, we must never forget that our high calling is to secure the moral and spiritual salvation of men, and to "spread Scriptural holiness over the land."

The world never before offered such opportunities for great achievements in this direction as it does at present. Resources and facilities for making gospel evangelism effective for the world's salvation are so multiplied that to be content with a low aim and with moderate achievements would be to show ourselves deserving of superannuation for ineffectiveness. The doors of the whole world are now open to the gospel of Christ. All the discoveries and products of human genius are available as aids to the church's accomplishment of her mission. Railways, steamboat lines, telegraph lines, telephones, printing presses; universities, colleges, seminaries, and schools of every grade; art, music, missionary organizations, Sunday-schools, young people's societies, women's organizations, the laymen's movement, and the general interest felt by nearly all governments in whatever makes for the moral uplift and development of benighted races; these are among the means and facilities by which the Church of Christ may reasonably hope to accomplish the evangelization of the world within the next generation, if faithful to her calling. If any branch of that Church shall prove recreant to its trust in view of such opportunities and facilities as are available at the dawn of the second decade of the twentieth century, it will assuredly be cast aside by the judgment of God like reprobate silver.

WHAT "GO FORWARD" MEANS TO US

The command, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward," is one of deep, high and broad significance, in view of all these things. To us it comes as a call to "go forward" to an abler and more effective ministry of God's word; to a more clear, positive and ringing testimony to Jesus Christ and to the fullness and power of His salvation; to a better organized and more effective evangelism; to a greatly increased appreciation and utilization of music as an aid to the accomplishment of our calling; to the organization and unification of our young people in the interests of missions and of whatever makes for the salvation and social betterment of men and women around us; and to the practical enlistment of all our people in some kind and department of gospel work.

The modern laymen's movement should especially appeal to the Free Methodist Church, because of this Church having been brought into existence chiefly through the activities of laymen at the beginning, and

also because of its having always stood for the rights and liberties of the laity, as against all unjust use of ecclesiastical power to circumscribe their activities in the work of God, or to oppress them in any way. Heaven help us, that we may know well our calling, our opportunity, our obligation, and that we may be wise enough so to answer to them all as to win from the divine Master His "Well done" at last.

CONCLUSION

Brethren, it is eminently fitting that in our capacity as a general conference we should have set apart this day to celebrate and memorialize the signal mercy of God who hitherto has been our help. How great and numberless have been the divine interpositions on our behalf as a people! Well may we here erect our Ebenezer, our "stone of help," our monument of gratitude and praise, and publish to all the world that "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

It will be well for us, and for all our people, also, to remember that "'Hitherto' means more than it says. It is a look forward as well as back and sees the future in the past. Memory passes into hope, and the radiance in the sky behind throws light on to our forward path. God's 'hitherto' carries 'henceforward' wrapped up in it. His past reveals the eternal principles that will mold His future acts. He has helped, therefore He will help, may not be good argument concerning men; but it is valid concerning God" (Maclaren).

Let us gird ourselves then for the tasks, toils, and trials that are before us, confident that He who hath helped us hitherto will help us to the end. The great Head of the Church has said for the encouragement of His people throughout all ages, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

We should remember, however, that in the future as in the past, the divine interposition for our help will be conditioned upon our fidelity to the divine requisition regarding the opportunities and responsibilities confronting us. Only as we heed the command to "go forward" have we any right to expect the mighty working of God on our behalf, and through us on behalf of others. Had Israel of old continued to advance by faith in God, they might have entered the promised land very soon after the passage of the Red Sea. Instead of this, they listened to the faithless spies, became disheartened, looked back, longed for the leeks and onions of Egypt, provoked the divine displeasure and were doomed therefore to wander in the wilderness until the carcasses of that generation had been left to molder in the wilds they had so long traversed.

What a lesson is this for us! How it behooves us to beware, lest doubt, fear, discouragement, or love of ease should occasion our becoming wanderers in the wilderness! Our danger is that of living in the past, glorying in achievements already wrought, and substituting past loyalty for fidelity to present opportunity and coming responsibility. May God help the whole Free Methodist Church to gird on her pilgrim robes anew and begin a mighty forward movement, along all lines of Christian activity, and to renew and press the battle against sin and darkness, and for the spread of "righteousness and true holiness,"

"Till comes the King in royal might,
To crush the wrong and crown the right."

and to gather the saints into His everlasting kingdom.

It is said that when Admiral Dewey's flag-ship headed the fleet that sailed against the Spanish in Manila Bay, a subordinate officer hailed the Admiral and shouted, "There are mines in these waters!" The Admiral shouted in response, "Steam ahead!" After a little farther progress had been made, the subordinate again shouted, "The mines are charged!" Again the Admiral shouted the command, "Steam ahead!" Still later it was announced to the Admiral, "These waters are full of mines and we shall be blown to pieces!" or words to that effect. "Steam ahead!" was the quick and stern reply. And steam ahead they did until the Spanish fleet was within range of their guns; and when the order was given to open fire on the foe, the gunners, carefully drilled for just such an occasion, opened their batteries on those splendid Spanish ships, and continued to pour upon them such well directed broadsides as soon demolished most of them and compelled the surrender of the rest.

That was indeed a famous victory. It could never have been won, however, had not the crew on board the Admiral's flagship had the faith and courage to "steam ahead" at the word of the commanding officer, regardless of all the perils in their way. As Admiral Dewey gave orders to "steam ahead" in the crisis of

the Spanish-American war, and that regardless of the dangers in the way, so God Almighty is saying, to the Free Methodist Church, in words that come ringing down the ages, "Go forward," and that regardless of the obstacles that confront and threaten her. If those who are piloting our ship of Zion will be as obedient to the heavenly calling as Admiral Dewey's men were to his orders, we shall yet sail into port with colors flying, and with a record of victories won that infinitely surpass that of Dewey in the battle of Manila Bay.

I have somewhere read of a gate across one of the roads of ancient Rome which was operated by the action of an underground spring. When closed, it seemed to one unacquainted with its mechanism effectually to bar all passage; but if the charioteer would drive straight ahead unmindful of its presence, the weight of his advancing steeds would operate the subterranean spring, and cause the gate to swing back on its hinges just in the nick of time to enable the chariot to pass unimpeded on its way. As that gate apparently obstructed passage on the ancient Roman road, so there are and ever will be apparently insuperable barriers in the way of the Church's progress toward the final accomplishment of her God-given mission. But faith in God is adequate to overcome all barriers. Let the Free Methodist Church, like the well instructed Roman charioteer, advance as if no barriers appeared to obstruct her progress; let her remember that the King's order reads, "Go forward;" and let her also bear in mind that "The King's business requireth haste." Then, pressing on to the accomplishment of her mission, the barriers will vanish before her, and allow her free passage as she goes forth, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."