



# EDITORIAL



## EVANGELISM.

**M**ANY of our pastors in the rural communities are now in the midst of their protracted meetings, and it would be well if the mind of the whole membership of the Church could be centered on this work for a time at least. There is no question but that the one thing for which the Church exists is the salvation of men. If it should ever cease to make its contribution to this end, then "Ichabod" (the glory hath departed) should be written over its doors. Of course there are many things to be considered in connection with this work. It is not all accomplished when an individual has been led to make a profession of faith in Christ. The real work of salvation is then only just begun, yet this is an important part of it. Certainly this is the first part in point of time. You cannot develop the Christ-life in a man until you get him converted—no more than you can grow an ear of corn without planting the seed. And to get a man genuinely converted is an extra good start. Faithfulness in dealing with a soul here will clear the future pathway of many difficulties. The temptation is very strong sometimes to let down the bars mighty low to persuade a reluctant soul to step over, but the pastor who does this sort of work is only piling up trouble for himself. If a man's heart is not won to the love of Christ and of Christly things, it will be an exceedingly uphill business for him to walk in the Christian way. He is likely to go at a very staggering gait, constantly requiring to be coaxed, and will most probably fall at last into the practice of his old sins which he has never ceased to love. Better let the solem truth stand without compromise at the beginning. You may be able to report fewer professions, but you will have a stronger church.

And while we are at this point, we might as well admit that the "itch for numbers" has inured to the damage of the Church's spiritual life. The Methodist Church leads the Protestant world (at least in this country) in numbers, "Baptist Facts" to the contrary notwithstanding; but the quality of our membership is a far more vital matter. And by quality we do not refer to their wealth, or social standing, or culture, or intellectual training. We have no prejudice against these things and we have as much of these things as other folks; but the supreme characteristic which commends a man to God, and determines the quality of his church membership, is the purity of his life and the devotion of his heart to Christ and to His cause. Here is the point at which it should be our highest ambition to excel, and the foundation for it needs to be well laid at the point of conversion. It is still true with our people that the great majority of them are converted at revival services, and it is of the utmost importance that the lines of truth be clearly and closely drawn—drawn in love of course, but there should be no ear-marks of compromise with evil.

And then it needs to be remembered that the individual church—the pastor and his membership—must assume the responsibility for the conversion of its constituency. Imported help may sometimes be valuable, but to depend upon outside help is always ruinous. No church should be content to live a parasitic life. It cannot hang on to the peripatetic evangelist and expect to prosper. This is not said against the evangelist who may be earnestly trying to do the work which the Church has failed to do, but his very existence is a witness to the Church's unfaithfulness. We must practice the art of leaning upon the arm of the everlasting God alone. This work cannot be done without coming under the burden. The evil never goeth out but by prayer and fasting. The spiritual life of the Church must become a tremendous positive force, desires must become in-

tense, and the membership must get into the spirit of wrestling Jacob, before the conditions are reached in which souls are born unto God. A membership that is depending upon some one else to do the work never reaches this condition. That kind of a condition produces an atmosphere that is stifling to spiritual life and hangs heavy on the wheels of the Church's progress.

At this time let there be hearty co-operation between pastor and people in the work of bringing the unsaved to Christ. Let this be the greatest year in the history of the old North Carolina Conference—a year during which more souls shall be saved than in any previous year, and the spiritual life of our people greatly strengthened.

## THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WORD.

**T**RUTH is very often unwelcomed by wicked men. It runs counter to their desires and pictures results which they do not like to admit. It would be amusing, if it were not so tragic, to watch their attitude toward the announcement of its results. The truth is absolute. It is inwrought into the very constitution of things. Whether uttered or unexpressed, it remains the same. To fly into a passion, or to become angry, with the man who proclaims it, is to play the fool. If the speaker is silenced, or punished in any way whatsoever, the truth of his utterance is not thereby affected. Doom still waits upon the evil-doer and death still lurks in the pathway of the sinner. You may declaim against the man who preaches the doctrine of eternal punishment for the finally impenitent. You may say that he is harsh and unsympathetic, or hurl at him any other epithet that you will; but all this will not make hell any the less real and terrible. The truth stands there like an unwoundable ghost, and holds its ground when the tirade of abuse is past.

And so what avails it to persecute men for the enunciation of the truth? What supreme folly is it, when you come to think of it! If you should succeed in suppressing its utterance, its effect upon your life would not be altered one whit. You may stop the clock on the wall, but that does not affect the pace with which time moves on. The world crucified the Christ as a malefactor, but He was just as truly the Redeemer afterward as He was before. You may kill the doctor for pronouncing your disease incurable, but that will not make the disease any the less malignant. Truth does not change to suit the whims of men, nor move its base because the battle rages.

At an exceedingly critical time in the national life of Judah, Jeremiah had spoken the Word of the Lord. Persecutions had made it impossible for him to speak longer face to face with the assembled people. He secured an amanuensis, and had him to write down the words that came to his lips under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The report of what had occurred was whispered about the court, and finally the book was read in the ears of the princes. Some sympathized with them, and others did not; but all agreed that it would be well to acquaint the king with the views of the old prophet. Some needful precautions were taken to preserve the life of the prophet and of his amanuensis in the event of the king's rising anger. The Lord hid them by putting it into the mind of the princes to send them into retirement while the parchment was being read to the king. Unlike his father, Josiah, the hearing of the truth only angered him, and like a petted child he cut the leaves in pieces and threw them on the brazier that burned in front of him. He is not the last fool who has thought to destroy the truth by refusing to recognize it. Men are still engaged in the same folly, and are still pressing on to destruction with their eyes closed and their

ears stopped. They laugh at the idea of its reality, stigmatize the messengers of God who bring them the truth with some deprecating epithet, and with an air of superior wisdom waive aside all the warnings of God. This is but the way of folly.

Jehoikim, the puppet king, burned the roll which the prophet had dictated, but the truth which it contained was not thereby destroyed. Nor was its proclamation to men seriously hindered. The prophet went to work upon a new copy, and made such additions to the original as the aggravated circumstances seemed to demand. We are reminded of the Irishman's fence. He built it four feet wide and three feet high. When asked why he built it wider than it was high, he replied: "Faith, if any one should kick it over now, it will be higher than it was before." So it is with the Word of God. It has often-times been kicked over—so the kickers thought; but each time it has grown larger in the world's view and in the world's life.

## THE PASSING OF BISHOP OSCAR PENN FITZGERALD.

**A**NOTHER one of our chief pastors has answered the final summons, and gone into the presence of the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. The secular press announce the death at Monteagle, Tenn., on last Saturday afternoon, August 5, 1911, of Bishop O. P. Fitzgerald. Some days before, it had been announced that he was critically ill—almost hopelessly so—and yet later reports had raised the hope that he would probably recover from the present attack; but God has willed it otherwise. Neuralgia of the heart is given as the immediate cause of his death. If he had lived till the 24th of August he would have been eighty-two years of age. For a number of years he had been in feeble health, and had been relieved of the burden of administrative duties. Nevertheless he continued to write for the press, and especially for the Christian Advocate (Nashville). Bishop Fitzgerald was born in Caswell County, North Carolina, August 24, 1829, and spent the earlier part of his boyhood days there. At an early age, however, he went into a printing office in Lynchburg, Va., and was never quite able afterward to get the "printer's ink off his fingers." He was licensed to preach in Macon, Ga., in 1853. In 1867 he went to California and spent a number of years on the Pacific Coast. He was Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of California for four years, 1867-1871. While in that far away country he was elected editor of the Pacific Methodist and the Christian Spectator. In 1878 he was elected editor of the Christian Advocate (Nashville), and held the position for three quadrenniums till he was elected Bishop by the General Conference of 1890. He wielded a facile pen, and won his way into the hearts of thousands of readers who never saw his face or heard his voice.

During his episcopate he presided over the North Carolina Conference only one time—at Elizabeth City in 1898. We believe that his coming was providential. The session promised to be a somewhat stormy one. Many went to it with grave fears touching certain strained relations. The atmosphere threatened to become electric, but the Bishop came preaching and praying for peace, and under his guiding hand the tension passed. Blessings on his memory!

Bishop Fitzgerald was not what the world would call a great preacher. His thinking was not of the profound type. He wrote much, but it was mainly of the discursive and devotional kind. He was unusually gifted in character sketching, and these with his "Life of McFerrin" and "Dr. Summers: A Life Study" will probably be the most enduring of his books. He was a man of deep spirit-