

IV. EVANGELISM.

The Evangelistic Awakening.

By Wentworth F. Stewart, D.D. Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati. 1905; net 75c.

The Evangelistic Note.

By W. J. Dawson. Fleming H. Revell Company, New York. 1905; net \$1.25.

The Perennial Revival.

By Wm. B. Riley. The Winona Publishing Company, Chicago. 1904.

Evangelism, Old and New.

By Rev. A. C. Dixon. New York, American Tract Society. 1905; price, \$1.00.

These books may be grouped as representative of "the evangelistic movement" of our day and a sign of the times. A new literature on "Evangelism," "Revivals" and "The Holy Spirit" is fast growing up about us which is symptomatic of a welcome change. "Evangelism" is the watchword of the hour. Conservatives and liberals alike have accepted the term and with one voice, if not one mind, are calling for aggressive evangelism. A little while ago evangelism was in general disfavor. The multiplication of professional evangelists, the abuse of the evangelistic method by confining it to periodic and spasmodic efforts, the unstable and disappointing results that followed such services, amounting in many instances to reaction, the questionable methods, unsane and unhealthy and often mercenary, of many of the "evangelists," the tendency toward fanaticism and false "holiness" ideas, often proving divisive and hurtful to the churches, these and many other things which will suggest themselves, caused large numbers of earnest and intelligent ministers and church members to become passively averse, if not positively repugnant to the whole idea and movement of evangelism as it was known in the generation now passing away. Moreover other adverse or neutralizing influences were at work during that period which are now giving place to something better. From the beginning of the prevalence of the scientific spirit and the

application of the historical method to the study of religion we have had "an age of doubt," a reign of the questioning spirit. Many of the doubters were earnest seekers after truth, loving Thomases indeed, but their doubt was benumbing and neutralizing. Then criticism was largely hostile in spirit and destructive in method. Commercialism was rampant and raging, dazzling men's minds with dreams of sudden wealth, and blinding their vision to spiritual things. The world had become intoxicated with the "get-rich-quick" idea, all interests came to be considered in terms of revenue, even evangelical churches, grown rich, grew correspondingly worldly, pulpit and pew were more or less dominated by the over-powering commercial spirit, and so the prophetic note was hushed, the Spirit was quenched and worldliness prevailed.

Now a sea change has come over the world. The solitary voices in the wilderness which proclaimed the early advent of a great spiritual revival have become a mighty chorus. Indeed these auguries of the prophesying heart are beginning to make good. The signs are abundant that the barren period of doubt, negative criticism, purblind commercialism and galvanized evangelism, is giving place to an era of genuine revival, purified faith, quickened moral fervor, true and vital evangelism and an imperious popular demand for civic righteousness. Let us thank God and take courage.

The little volume which stands first in this list aims to give a general view of the present evangelistic situation—approaching the subject historically to indicate what has led up to this condition; but especially to set forth the fundamental principles that need emphasis and suggest the conditions of acceptable and successful evangelism in the future.

The author, as Dr. George Elliott informs us in the introduction, has been a successful pastor and is "now one of the most forceful leaders of men among the younger presiding elders of Methodism." He has shown himself not merely a master of methods, but of aggressive

evangelism, and "better still, a dynamic center of inspiration." In "part first," three chapters, he gives a suggestive analysis of the present state of evangelism, deals in an intelligent and appreciative way with the current awakening, and points to the signs of hope in the outlook. In "part second," six chapters, he shows what the evangelist ought to be and what he ought not to be, to be truly useful; what the management, methods and dynamic of meetings ought to be; what the message should be to command attention and accomplish its purpose; the need and opportunity of the evangelistic pastor; the increasing demand for the evangelistic church that evangelism may become constructive, and, lastly, that world-evangelization involves a vital evangelism at home and abroad.

In *The Evangelistic Note*, Dr. Dawson, a leading Congregational minister of England, tells in the opening chapter, the story of the events that led him to resign a great London parish and enter upon the evangelistic work which has made him so useful and famous in England and America. In the other thirteen chapters he gives us the addresses he delivered during the great Plymouth Church meeting last year. The volume as a whole will be found to carry a message of vital and exceptional value to Christian ministers and workers of all denominations who are interested in the efforts now making for a re-awakening and a re-enlisting of the churches in a great forward movement for the evangelization of the world. But nothing here will be surer to command the attention of the reader, especially if he be a live minister, than the story of the radical change wrought in Dr. Dawson's own ministry in the direction of a more distinctively evangelistic note in his preaching. It seems that it was primarily, under God, the result of a Free Church Council Meeting which resolved itself into a midnight expedition to the slums of Brighton. This led Dr. Dawson to invite the evangelist Gypsy Smith, to hold meetings in his church, which, in turn, gave rise to a procession through the crowded section of London, headed by himself, his deacons, and two Salvation Army bands;

and which gathered in devotees of the saloons and dance halls, and brought them to the church for a midnight service. When he stood up to give out "Rescue the Perishing," and saw and heard those people from the slums, who doubtless had learned the hymn in Sunday-school in their childhood, take it up and sing it with feeling, and tears, he was stirred to the heart as never before. It followed that several hundred of these people avowed a purpose to reform and begin a Christian life, and, ultimately, the temper of his church and the nature of his ministry became distinctively evangelistic. "I came to see," he says, "that it was not worth while being a minister unless I could get the old Wesleyan evangelistic note into my ministry." The outcome, we know, has been the restoration of the note of reality to his preaching and the reawakening of a keen joy and absorbing interest in the ministry, which for awhile he was seriously disposed to abandon for literary work. That story has a moral. From this man's experience every bright, aspiring, book-loving, ambitious young preacher should take warning and learn a lesson. A minister devoid of the passion for soul-saving, of the joy that comes from bringing men into the kingdom of God, can find nothing that will keep it from stooping to worldly ideals that take the heart out of evangelism.

In *The Perennial Revival* Rev. W. B. Riley, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, himself a wide-awake evangelistic pastor, makes a plea not only for evangelism, but for what, by a sort of misnomer, he calls "a Perennial Revival." This he claims is "the Normal State for the Church of Jesus Christ." Those who oppose it "set themselves against apostolic religion and the apostolic church." "The springs of revivals which have characterized recent centuries have been too much after the wet-weather sort; they have opened only at a certain season and remained in action for a very short time." After telling of a lad that had seen the waters troubled at a "certain season" and others stepping in to be made whole, while he must remain outside in his paralysis, and

knowing that when the waters grew quiet it would be a twelve-months before the opportunity would return, he says it was "the very bitterness of that experience that gave origin to the idea of this book" and "emphasis to a ministry which for twenty years has sought as assiduously to reach men's souls in the dog-days of August as in the set season of January." In fifteen chapters he pleads earnestly, if not always wisely and well, for the "Perennial revival," citing as its warrant "the primitive church" and "the apostolic spirit," showing the relation of "prayer" and "the enduement of power" to it, how the "results" are to be husbanded and made continuous and constructive, how street preaching, "pew rentals," "Bible study" and "giving" stand related to it, and how it is to issue in "the reformation of society," and "the evangelization of the world."

The books are all inspired and pervaded by a kindred spirit but commend themselves to our attention all the more because of their differences of view and style and make-up. There is unity in diversity. They represent variant types and classes of mind, but they make a common and powerful plea for what the world desperately needs—a vital Christian evangelism.

GEO. B. EAGER.

Evangelism, Old and New.

By Rev. A. C. Dixon. New York. American Tract Society. 1905. \$1.00.

This little book seems to be the substance of various sermons addresses or articles dealing with a subject which the author's well-known ability and success as an evangelist pastor well qualify him to discuss. Those who know anything of Dr. Dixon's personality and work will not need to be told that his point of view is that of the old evangelical faith. The inspiration of the Bible, the deadly sinfulness of man, his need of salvation by the vicarious atonement of Christ, the necessity of the new birth as a work of the Holy Spirit, are all here and unhesitatingly presented as fundamental. Conviction,