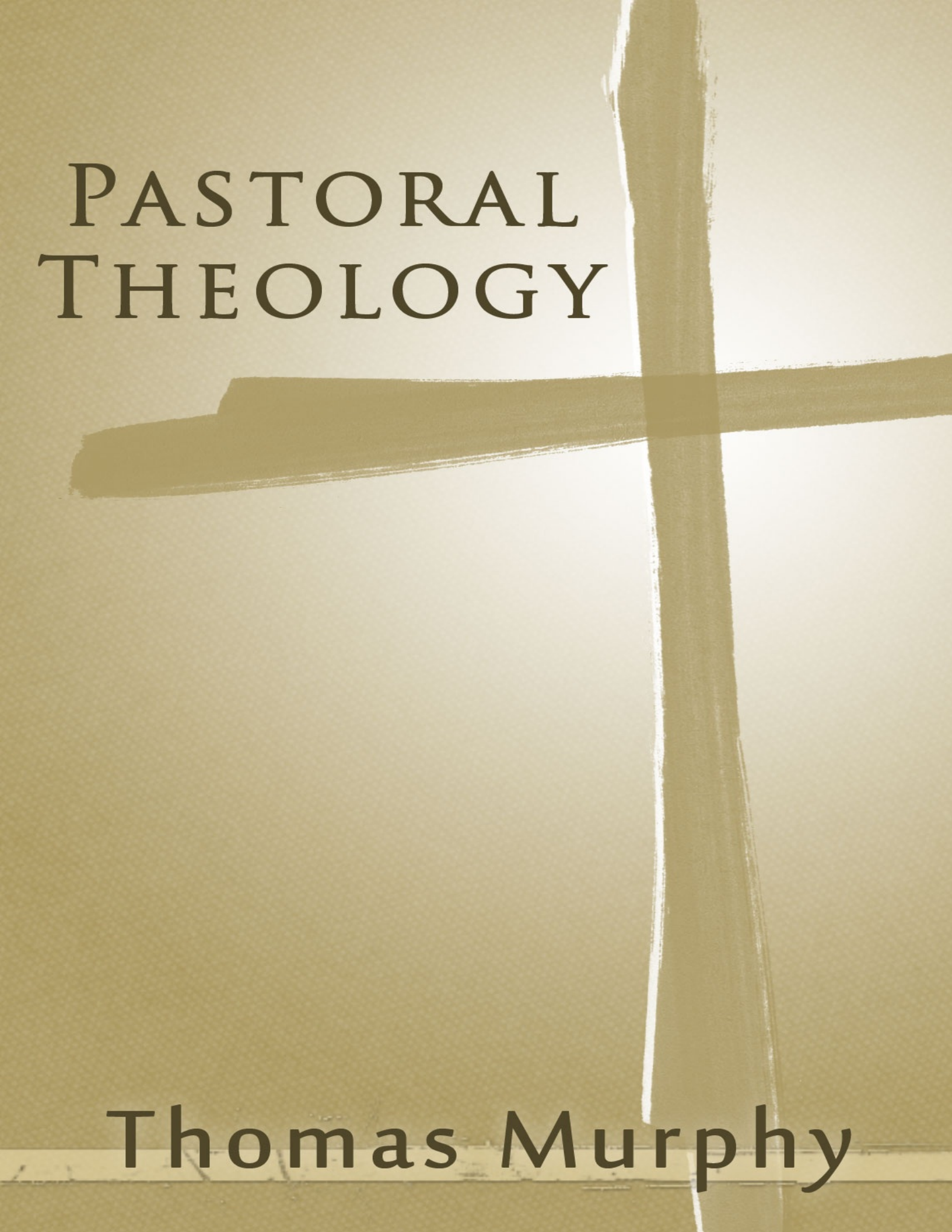
Pastoral Theology



Thomas Murphy

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Pastoral Theology

By Thomas Murphy

PREFACE

An additional book on the subject of Pastoral Theology is needed at the present time, because of the many changes which have of late occurred in the modes of carrying on the work of the Church, because of the great enlargement of that work, and because new and important branches of the subject have been developed within a comparatively few years. The field of ministerial operations has become wider, fuller of instrumentalities and more intensely active. The work of the Sabbath-school, the great schemes of benevolence which are in operation for building up the kingdom of Christ, and the various new agencies which are being matured for the extension of the blessings of the gospel, may be taken as samples of pastoral duties which could not have much place in older books on this subject, because they were scarcely in existence when such books were written. It is mainly with a view to meeting this want that the present work is undertaken.

It is becoming that I should state the chief reasons which may justify me in attempting a task which is so responsible and difficult. My own experience as pastor for more than a quarter of a century of a large and growing church has brought me into personal and frequently repeated and anxious contact with nearly every practical question that can ordinarily arise in the ministerial work; and my church and presbytery, being composed of families of both city and country, have afforded peculiar facilities for becoming acquainted with the duties of the pastor in their full variety. Then during all these years the subject of Pastoral Theology has been a favorite study, on which I have endeavored to learn, not only from my own observation and experiment, but also from conference with many successful pastors, and from a treasury of scraps of recorded wisdom concerning the sacred office which I have long been accumulating and arranging for my own private use. There is one exceedingly valuable fountain of instruction pertaining to the subject from which I have been able to draw

abundantly. "When preparing for the ministry I enjoyed the very great privilege of listening to lectures and familiar conversations on the character, duties and responsibilities of the pastoral office by the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, who from his pre-eminent Christian wisdom, learning and experience was able to give such counsel on the subject as was of the highest importance. These lectures, unfortunately, were not written out so fully by the venerable author that they could afterward be published. Had they been, they would have proved to be amongst the most valuable of all the contributions made by that great and good man to the literature of the Church. While listening to these lectures 1 took very copious notes, which I have preserved as a sacred treasure, and by them have now been enabled to enrich these pages, sometimes using formal quotations, but more generally introducing their spirit and substance, and applying them either to correct or verify observations of my own. Advised by friends whose opinions I could not disregard, and justified, as I supposed, by such considerations as these, I set about this work, which has been one of great labor, but also of great pleasure.

My object from first to last has been a very simple one. I have not attempted to discuss questions of doctrine or order, or merely to theorize about subjects of any kind; but my single aim has been to present the duties of the pastor with as much fullness as possible, and to furnish such suggestions as might help toward their most successful performance. I have dwelt only on those things which are peculiar to the pastoral office, and which the young minister especially, though not exclusively, might need as aids in undertaking his great spiritual work. I have endeavored to present whatever experience teaches to be valuable as guides to success or incentives to earnestness in a work which pertains to the most momentous of mortal interests.

In carrying out this undertaking, in which I am sadly conscious of having come far short of my own ideal of what it should be, I have consulted everything on the subject of Pastoral Theology that was within my reach, but have also

relied very largely upon my own observation and experience as compared and corrected by the teaching of others. I have endeavored to learn from my own many failures, shortcomings, mistakes and omissions in the pastoral work, which I have had no difficulty in working up into lessons that might be profitable to others. As the teachings of Pastoral Theology must necessarily be made up to an important extent from the experience of many workers in the ministerial field, I have quoted largely from the writings of eminently useful and devoted ministers, living or deceased, in order that their names might add the more weight to principles which their lives have helped to define. I have endeavored to touch upon all points of duty which are likely to come up before the pastor in ordinary circumstances. Upon those which are of most importance I have dwelt more fully; to others but brief attention has been given. I have not intentionally shrunk from taking up any subject which my own experience has taught me the pastor is likely to need or to find of much importance.

Though I am a Presbyterian, and have necessarily looked upon every question treated from the standpoint of that system, yet it is believed that nearly every duty indicated or counsel given is just as applicable to pastors of other denominations. Some nomenclature had to be used; but, with that exception, the subject as it lay before me demanded scarcely anything but what was common to the duties of the ministry of all communions.

In the treatment of some of the more important subjects a considerable number of rules or counsels are given, not with the expectation that all of them should be put in practice by each pastor, but with the hope that, while some of them may be adopted, they may all be suggestive and lead to something useful. Amongst the various plans which are indicated for the management of such important subjects as "conducting prayer-meetings," "the care of young converts," and "making collections for benevolent objects," each minister can select such as are suitable to his own judgment and opportunities, or he can experiment upon them all, or he can adopt as many of

them as are practicable. Sometimes I have simply endeavored to open the subject of some practical questions, so that each pastor may study it for himself in both its aspects, and then determine which to adopt, or modify it as he chooses, or correct extreme views, or decide upon some middle line of opinion or action as he may judge best. Among such subjects, the sections on "Hindrances and Helps to Pastoral Piety," "Written or Extemporaneous Preaching," and “Management of Voluntary Associations" may be named.

If my work, which is now finished, shall be so blessed by the kind providence of the Great Head of the Church as to find its way into the hands of a goodly number of those who are already in the gospel ministry or who are expecting soon to enter that sacred office; if it shall help them to a riper preparation for the pastoral work; if it shall cheer them ever so little under their many discouragements and help them to solve some of their many difficulties; if it shall assist in making their toils more easy and pleasant; if it shall aid in giving greater efficacy to the efforts which they may put forth in the cause of human redemption; especially if it shall contribute anything through them to the promotion of the glory of Christ our King, —if it shall accomplish these objects, even in the smallest degree, then there will be more than a recompense for the years of labor and of prayer which have been devoted to its pages.

THOMAS MURPHY
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CHAPTER I

NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY

WHAT IS PASTORAL THEOLOGY?

THAT department of study whose object is to assist the Christian minister in applying the truths of the gospel to the hearts and lives of men is called Pastoral Theology. It is "theology" because it has chiefly to do with the things of God and his word. It is "pastoral" because it treats of these divine things in that aspect of them which pertains to the pastor. It is practical because it relates to the work of the pastor as he is appointed to influence men by applying to them the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. In its more strict and definite form it occupies a peculiar field of its own; and it is well to keep clearly in view what that field is.

The special province of this study is not systematic theology, or the exegesis of Scripture, or ecclesiastical history, or the sacraments, or homiletics, or even the theory of the pastoral office as an institution of divine appointment. It takes for granted that all these branches of ministerial training have already been cultivated, and endeavors to teach how they may be best brought to bear upon the all-important work of gathering men into the fold of Christ and nourishing them thereby the food provided by the great Shepherd. Assuming that the pastor has been called of God to the sacred office; that he has had his mind furnished with the science of theology as a system of doctrines; that he has learned the methods of properly interpreting the word of God; that he is skilled in the laws appointed by Christ for the government of his Church; and that he has studied the art of sacred rhetoric,—assuming all this, it would assist him in the great practical work of bringing all his preparation to bear upon the edification of the Lord's people and the salvation of men. Its aim is not to make ministers thorough scholars, or even to guide them in the pursuit of ordinary literature and science; but, regarding them as men already well educated, it would aid them in the sacred art of bringing souls to Christ and training them for the glory of God.

In its broader sphere pastoral theology might include the art of preaching. That, however, is a department so great and important in itself that it has been made a distinct branch of ministerial training. Hence pastoral theology deals with sermonizing only in its most general aspects, and at the point of its immediate contact with the hearts of men.

The pastoral office is one of such overwhelming importance and sacredness that it cannot be successfully exercised unless it enlists the heart of the pastor. His heart, his whole heart, glowing with love to God and men, is one of the chief ingredients of its power. The cultivation of his heart, then, his personal piety, is the first thing that must be studied in this science of the gospel ministry.

Such, then, we may consider a general description of the subject of pastoral theology. It places the pastor immediately face to face with his work, and teaches him how to keep his heart in a suitable frame for its solemn duties. It shows him how he may best succeed as an ambassador of God to men, as a teacher of the holy oracles, as a leader in the sacramental host, as a ruler in the house of God, as a guide and comforter to troubled souls, as a watchman on Zion's walls, and as strictly responsible in all the relations and duties of his office.

HISTORY OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY

This branch of preparation for the gospel ministry has always been considered most deeply important. In the best days of the Church it has been made very prominent. It was so at the first. When our Lord called his disciples to follow him, and then, during the years of his public ministry, educated them for their great mission, he laid special stress upon this part of their training. As he sent them out to their work he gave them special directions for their guidance. These instructions are recorded in the tenth chapter of Matthew, where they were doubtless placed to be of use for all ministers, as well as for the disciples in their first work. Afterward, when, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the apostles framed the order of the Christian Church, there was no part of it which received more attention than this. Three of the Epistles are taken up, mainly, with instructions to pastors in their sacred work. The immortal teachings in the Epistles of Timothy and Titus must ever be the model and the substance of all pastoral theology. It is most significant, and gives great prominence to this study, that so much of God's own word is directly devoted to it.

And so it has ever been in the writings of those who have had most of the mind of Christ and most love for his Church. They have endeavored to give the gospel its greatest success by making its ministers skillful in their momentous calling. Books of casuistry, books of practical piety, books of scriptural commentary, and books expressly devoted to the duties of the pastoral office have come from multitudes of pens enriched with wise and holy counsels for those who are to be the heralds of life to their fellow-men.

Moreover, this study has always occupied a very prominent position in all plans that have been adopted for the education of the ministry. For a long time candidates for the holy office received a very useful training by living in the families of active pastors. There they had an opportunity of learning by witnessing and taking part in the every-day work of the

ministerial life. This was an education that had many advantages. It was eminently practical. It was easily pursued, and made impressions that were very permanent. It was particularly adapted to give great skill in the department of pastoral theology. But there were difficulties in the way of this plan. Not all active pastors were suitable either as models or as teachers. Besides, this system of educating ministers was suited only to times when churches and candidates for the sacred office were few. When they had multiplied greatly, and when the duties of acting pastors had largely increased, then this old method had to give place to the present one.

Now, almost universally, our ministers are educated in theological seminaries. This plan has the advantage of securing the instructions of those who, from their own eminent piety and talents and learning, are best qualified to prepare others for the work of the gospel. Besides, the efficiency of such teachers of the rising ministry must be greatly enhanced by their being able to give their undivided time and thought to a profession which is the most noble of all human callings. In this way, moreover, there is provision made for the training of the largest number of young men. No matter how many of them are seeking the gospel ministry, they can all equally receive this ripest and best of teaching.

In all institutions of this kind great stress is laid upon pastoral theology as a branch of study. It is felt that no young man can be well fitted for the ministry until he is trained in the rules and the art of bringing the gospel practically home to the hearts and the lives of men. However pastors have been prepared for their great work, this branch of their preparation has always been regarded as of vital importance.

SOURCES OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Whence are the facts to be gathered upon which a system of pastoral theology can be founded? What principles are to be our guide in the pursuit of this study? From what sources are the rules to come by which the Christian minister is to be guided in his great life-work? There ought to be a clear understanding of these points. It will not do here to depend upon fancy or mere untried conjectures. On a subject with which such momentous interests are involved, and whose chief value consists in its direct applicability to some of the greatest duties of life, we must have guidance that we know to be reliable. What, then, are the principal sources of information on which we can depend in pursuing this study?

1. Manifestly, the word of God must be the chief and authoritative teacher of the rules that are to guide the Christian minister. In it are specified the great duties which must ever devolve upon him. What some of these duties are may be seen in 1 Tim. iv. 12-16, in 2 Tim. ii. 22-25, and in the whole of the second chapter of Titus. For instance, we find laid down such general principles as these: "Preach the word;" "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine;" "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine;" "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." These are examples of the many maxims announced in the inspired word for the instruction of the sacred office. It will be seen at once that these principles are very general and comprehensive in their character. They declare much, and they imply more. They are germs from which springs out a vast growth of wisdom for pastors. "Preach the word."—This tells of the Scriptures, and nothing but the Scriptures, as the source from which the preacher must draw his subjects. "Take heed to thyself."—What multitudes of duties as to personal piety and culture are included in this! "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers."—This lays open the whole field of pastoral,

parochial duties. Such are the comprehensive principles which the Spirit has given. They are also permanent. Whatever the circumstances of the times and places may be, these are applicable. And, coming from the great Head of the Church, they are of supreme authority. No rules of man must set them aside. All other plans for the guidance of the pastor must be shaped in accordance with these.

2. The general nature of the Scriptures and their great doctrines must determine the way in which they are to be applied to the hearts of men. If the word of God were a mere theory, or system of philosophy, or announcement of ordinary historical or mathematical truths, then a cold intellectual presentation of it might do. But when it is regarded as a light sent down from heaven, as a life to quicken the soul, as a power to shape the whole moral being and everlasting destiny, as the grand instrumentality for saving men,—then it must be seen that no ordinary method of bringing it home to the mind will do. Its infinite importance demands that strenuous and varied efforts should be contrived for awaking to it the deepest attention. The pastor is an ambassador from God to his fellow-men. The nature of the Master who has commissioned him, of the message that he bears, and of the objects he strives to accomplish, must all shape his character and his work. From the general information of the Scriptures, too, there is light thrown on this subject by the examples of pastoral work therein recorded. We see how men who were directly inspired of God for this work discharged their duties, and their example becomes our guide. With almost the force of direct precept it comes to tell us what the Christian minister should ever be.

3. The character of that human nature with which the pastor has to do must also suggest the best methods of reaching it. The various aspects of that nature— its ruin, its corruption, its blindness, its prejudices, its longings, its aspirations, its susceptibilities, its sympathies, its strange varieties amidst certain common and abiding qualities,—these are elements which must be considered by him who would influence it through the principles of the gospel. The rules for the pastor's

guidance must be shaped in view of the wonderful nature with which he has to do. The more thoroughly lie is skilled in the workings of that nature, the greater will be his power in reselling it.

4. The accumulated experience of other workers in the same general field is a vast storehouse from which the pastor can draw instruction in reference to all his duties. Indeed, this experience, classified and framed in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures, is itself a system of pastoral theology. Men of sound and discerning minds, men full of the spirit of Christ, men whose lives have been spent in the most unwearied activity, have filled the office of the gospel ministry. They have given earnest attention to every department of their beloved calling. Whatever plans were likely to give success to their work they have tried. It would probably be very difficult to conceive of any scriptural method of building up the kingdom of Christ on which they have not experimented. Long lives of thought, of wisdom and of toil have been spent in striving to make the ministry more effective. What one man or generation of men has attained to has been made the starting-point from which others have gone on in efforts to improve in doing the Lord's work. Even mistakes and failures in devising and executing methods have proved of great value in adding to the general store of knowledge on the subject. All this experience, whether written or unwritten, has accumulated into an invaluable fund for the ministry. When it is sifted, and tested by the sure precepts of God's inspiring, and classified, it forms a system of rules by which the workman in the ministry may safely be guided. No wise pastor will neglect this help of experience derived from all those who have gone before him. He can no more neglect it than the artist or the mechanic can neglect those rules which the skill of centuries has wrought out for his assistance.

5. The laws and customs of the denomination with which he is connected must give some shape to the minister's study and work. The different modes of worship must influence the peculiar preparation to be made for them. The different forms

of church government will open the door into different classes of duties. The very spirit and doctrines of the denomination will necessarily give some direction to the life of its ministers. Different modes of performing the same great work, or even different kinds of services, may result from these denominational peculiarities.

6. The circumstances of the times are another element which must be studied in constructing a system of pastoral theology. "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep," is a scriptural intimation which must guide us here. The peculiar characteristics of the period in which we live are a deeply-important subject for the minister to investigate. The great principles of the gospel are ever the same; these cannot change or be improved. But there is change in man, and change in the obstacles which are ever rising up in the way of the truth. Each age of the Church has its own work to do and its own important questions to solve. There are times of peculiar errors, such as Arianism, Popery and Ritualism; times of the prevalence of special sins, such as intemperance and Sabbath desecration; and there are times of dominant fashions and customs that are detrimental to godliness. There are states of society which are characterized by great ignorance, and others by special enlightenment. There are periods which are distinguished by particular tendencies of thought and aim, such as skepticism or utilitarian worldliness. There are also certain forms of religious activity and benevolence that prevail in each age. The Sabbath-school, at the present time, calls for a class of ministerial duties that were formerly unknown. Modern enterprises of benevolence make demands upon the pulpit which were not heard of in past ages. All these things must be carefully observed by him who has been placed as a watchman in Zion. He must look far and near, and learn from all the movements of both friends and foes.

There may be other sources of pastoral theology, but these are the principal ones, and these should be very diligently studied for the guidance of the minister's life-work. An intelligent view of what that work is, and of the principles upon

which it rests, will contribute greatly to success in the discharge of its duties.

NECESSITY OF THIS STUDY AS A BRANCH OF TRAINING FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Pastoral theology comes to the help of the young minister, and spreads out before him the teachings of Scripture, the accumulated experience of ages, and all other information that may have a bearing upon the successful pursuit of his calling. This knowledge it lays before him in a systematic form, so that he can easily find information on whatever point he chooses. In this way there is needful guidance furnished him before he has had opportunity of making experiment for himself in the various branches of his work. He is not left to go unaided through the whole process of investigating what is scriptural and what unscriptural; of trying what is wise and what unwise, and of proving for himself what is practicable or impracticable. If each young minister were under the necessity of working out this tentative process for himself, there would necessarily result innumerable mistakes and failures. Then there would be discouragement, and perhaps serious evils that otherwise might have been avoided. This study comes, chiefly to the inexperienced, as a comparatively safe guide. Aided by it they need not work in the dark, but with the light of Scripture and experience beaming around them. They can go upon ground that has been tried and proved to be substantial.

Moreover, plans and experiences are here accumulated and presented to the minister which he might not himself have thought of, and which it might have taken him many years to discover. In this study are unfolded successful methods of spiritual and mental culture, of sermonizing, and of performing other work of the gospel ministry. It points out scriptural plans that have proved effectual in awaking interest in divine things; helps that many have found reliable are indicated here.

No less important are its warnings of what should be avoided. The mistakes into which others have fallen, the failures and the causes of failure, are among its instructive

lessons. Proved means of overcoming difficulties, or of avoiding them, are here suggested for the relief of the overwrought pastor. This vast store of experience ought not to be lost. When it is spread out before the minister at the commencement of his life-work, and diligently studied by him, it will prove of incalculable value.

All possible helps should undoubtedly be furnished the pastor, that he may thereby work to the greater advantage. If his work is toilsome, and is thus made more easy; if it is trying, and may in this way become more pleasant; if it involves the greatest interests, and these things may make it more successful,—then surely such helps cannot he too diligently used. The same amount of pastoral labor may thus be made to accomplish greater results. And in this way, too, time may be economized. And when it is considered that the work of the minister is to cultivate the heart, to cultivate the head, to preach, to lecture, to visit the sick and sorrowing, to attend to the aged and the young, to assist in ecclesiastical affairs, to be busy outside and inside of his church, and to discharge many other duties, then it will be seen how important it is to use all means to make his time go as far as possible. He should have every help in a work so complicated and so momentous.

The lawyer, the physician, the teacher, the artist, the farmer, the machinist, all have their books of instruction to assist in the practice of their calling, and the study of these leads to the higher proficiency. Undoubtedly, they become far more successful by the use of these aids. How much more needful is it that this art, the highest and most important of all, be studied and guided by well-matured rules! It is a holy art, and its results will be eternal—how can it be too carefully cultivated?

IMPORTANCE OF THE OFFICE, AND OF THIS PREPARATION FOR IT

The nature of the office of the gospel ministry is such that its duties cannot be too thoughtfully regarded. It is an office which was established by Christ himself, the great Head of the Church. Its commission is held from the authority of Heaven, and its duties are connected with the kingdom of God. Would it have been ordained by this special appointment of our Lord for any other than the most important ends? What dignity it receives from the consideration that it has not come from the contrivance of human wisdom, but that it emanated directly from Jehovah! Do we know of any other office, held by mortals, that can be compared with it in grandeur?

Then the objects for which it was established are such as to claim for it the highest consideration. Its grand aims are to exalt Jehovah, the Creator, Redeemer and Judge of the world; to overthrow the power of Satan, the prince of all evil; to save mankind from sin and hell; to banish vice and all other evil from the earth; to bring true happiness to the lost children of Adam; to build up a glorious Church amidst the ruins which sin has wrought; and to prepare citizens for the heavenly world who shall behold and share the infinite blessedness of the Son of God. Surely it must be a calling of no ordinary importance which God has appointed for such ends. Who can describe its solemn grandeur?

The interests committed, in a most important sense, to this office are such as may well lead him who holds it to seek every possible help in the discharge of its duties. These interests are unspeakably momentous. They pertain to Christ's kingdom and to the honor of Christ himself. They have to do with human destiny and with the eternity of human souls. They involve time and eternity, earth and heaven.

The fact that God has committed these interests preeminently to the Christian ministry clothes the office with an importance and responsibility that are most solemn. He

does not conduct them directly by his own omnipotence. He has not seen fit to commit them to the hands of angels. He does not chiefly prosecute them by any supernatural agencies, but by the ministry of men whom he has ordained to that office. He has appointed men to be his heralds to their fellow-men. Then what overwhelming importance does this give to the thorough training of ministers for their great work! What emphasis is there in the startling assertion of the devoted McCheyne: "A word to a minister is worth a word to three or four thousand souls sometimes"! How unbecoming to undertake such an office as this without all the assistance that can be derived from the word of God and from the wisdom and experience of the most devoted of men!

Who is sufficient for such a work as this? This question must become the more solemn to the minister when he considers the many defects that are found within himself. His unbelief, his infirmities, his ignorance, his sloth, his cold-heartedness, his many temptations,—all rise up as hindrances in the way of his progress in the spiritual work of Christ. These demand of him the most diligent preparation and the most efficient aids.

Then we must also consider the obstacles that he will meet with from the world, and from those whom he has been appointed to influence by the self-denying truths of the gospel. How shall he be prepared to meet them? He will have to do with hearts that are hard, and cold, and blind, and utterly insensible. In the exercise of his ministry he will have to encounter sweeping currents of worldliness. He will be surprised in his work by meeting with stupidity of heart, the deep enmity of sin, dark Satanic influences, and with the most desperate opposition to God and everything pertaining to God. Would it not be foolhardy to enter into such encounters without the most careful training? For all this need there not to be weapons drawn from the armory of God, weapons brightly polished?

This work is too urgent for each pastor, as he enters it, to be under the necessity of going through a long process of experimenting for himself. It is too great and arduous for any

one to undertake it without all the help that may be gathered from the teachings of those who have gone before. It is too momentous not to awaken a desire for all the assistance that may be obtained from men, from experience, from the past, from Scripture, and, above all, from the Divine Spirit of all wisdom and strength.

A very high appreciation of his office is one of the first qualifications for him who would be an efficient pastor. Without this there will not be that thorough practical preparation for its duties that is requisite. And it may be safely said that it is not possible to over-estimate the grandeur of this calling. It is an office that may be little thought of among men, but it is highly esteemed by God and by angels, and its results extend away into everlasting brightness. It is the highest and grandest office in the world. It is an office which an angel could not hold—a calling which constitutes man a helper with God. It is an office the faithful discharge of which is, of a truth, to be followed by the brightest crown, and which has a sure promise of a place near the throne of the glorified Immanuel. As the minister appreciates the work to which he is called, so will he fall down before God for help in its duties, and so will it call forth all his energies, and so will he strive to equip himself for the undertaking. As he prizes it, so will he become imbued with its spirit, and love it, and find its avocations growing into his greatest pleasure. A man who has but a low estimate of the work of the ministry, or who looks upon it as a mere profession, should never enter the holy office, or, if lie be already in it, should leave it. A high estimate of the importance of this calling is a necessary qualification for holding it. Whoever has this will strive to be thoroughly skilled in every department of the work which he considers the most exalted of all human vocations.

It may be added that this subject demands special attention in this practical and active age of the world. The present is emphatically an age of restless energy. Men are not satisfied to rest in mere theorizing, but everywhere the tendency is to carry out ideas into operation. The whole tendency of human

thought and energy is to advance, to add to the conveniences of life, to awaken every power into activity. There probably never was such an age of energetic progress. Everything indicates it. All are awake to it. In arts, manufactures, mechanism, government, science, agriculture —in everything— there is intense motion. There is no standing still. It requires wakeful observation merely to keep up a knowledge of what is going on in the world.

A similar activity exists in the Church. It is one of the most hopeful signs of the times that the people of God are becoming more and more alive and diligent in the work of Christ. Denominations seem to be emulating each other in active zeal for the progress of the kingdom. In enterprises of benevolence, in reforms, in missions, in plans of evangelistic work and in efforts to spread knowledge and save souls, there is more and more vigor.

Now, this active spirit of the age must be carried into the work of the gospel ministry. The pastor must partake of it in order that he may keep up with the grand movements that are in progress, that he may be successful in his office, and that all his powers and influence may be exerted in keeping that restless activity leavened with the truth of Christ. He must work hard, and work with the advantage that all possible helps can give him. Amid the keen rivalries and activities of the age he must know how to work, and how to keep up with the rapid currents of human life.

And all the more need is there for thoughtful attention to this subject at the present time, when young men are trained for the work of the ministry, not amidst the activities of pastoral life, but in the retirement of the theological seminary. Very loud is the call for the seminary to redouble its efforts in this part of the training of its young men. It must not allow them to go out unfurnished in this respect into a world seething with motion. It must see to it that no part of their training be more thorough than that which prepares them to meet an intensely practical age. In the seminary students should be prepared to exercise great skill, not only in the Book of God and the book of the

human heart, but also in the pages of a living world. The more fully the work of training is in the hands of seminaries, and the more stirring the times and fierce the battle for the kingdom, the more diligently should such institutions apply themselves to the work of fitting their students for immediate and intense activity corresponding with the spirit of the age and of the Church.

MODE OF TREATING THE SUBJECT

In constructing a system of pastoral theology it should ever be kept in mind that the object is not to afford assistance in the usual branches of culture. It is not to make young men more accomplished in the ordinary amenities of life. It is not to train them up to a riper scholarship. It is not even to make sure of their Christian character, calling and devotion to the work of the gospel. All these are indispensable as prerequisites for entering upon the office. They are taken for granted.

1. Not these, but all those things that are peculiar to the character and necessary to the highest success of the pastoral office, are the subjects of which it should treat. Everything that might animate and guide and assist the pastor in bringing home the truths of the gospel to the hearts and lives of men is its appropriate theme. The subjects on which it should endeavor to throw light are such as these—What is the great and direct work of the pastor? What can be done to enkindle or intensify his own heart's zeal in that work? What rules can be adopted to give the greatest success? What things should be avoided? What opportunities should be improved? What agencies should be used? What holy arts should be tried? What principles should be adopted as a guide? In what manner should its duties be performed? Everything of a practical nature that can tend to make the minister of the gospel a more perfect workman should find its place in a system of pastoral theology.

2. Only such plans of work, rules for study and principles of ministerial life as have been well tried and proved wise should be inculcated. Mere guesses, speculations and theories should be avoided. The work of the young pastor is too pressing for him to spend time in plans which may very soon prove worthless. Too many principles of the sacred calling are settled to make a resort to those which are doubtful necessary.

Fancy might easily be indulged here to any extent, but it would probably be found a waste of time and energy. The

young minister wants to know with some certainty what it is practicable and necessary for him to do. His own experience will doubtless teach him much afterward. But what he looks for in the instructions of pastoral theology is that guidance which is reliable, not mere conjectures or unproved opinions.

3. The rules suggested for the guidance of the pastor should always be as definite as possible. Mere generalities do not amount to much in so practical a subject as this. They mean scarcely anything. What is wanted is something exact and precise—something so clearly defined that at once it can be attempted. A mere general statement of the importance of a certain course disappoints him who asks what he is actually to do. Sometimes the indefiniteness discourages him from undertaking anything. Hence the instructions should specify exactly, if possible, what is to be done. If I am told that it is highly important that I should visit my people very often, I do not know precisely what that means. But if I am advised to visit them twice or three times a year, then I am impressed, and will be likely to take the advice. If I am counseled in the general to preach series of sermons, I am not likely to give the thought much attention; but if certain series are described and the subjects enumerated, then my attention is fixed, and possibly my purpose formed. I will see that the thing is quite feasible, and probably adopt the plan. If I am told simply that my visits to the sick room should be very brief, I am left in uncertainty; but if an exact length of time is suggested as a guide, then I have something tangible and satisfactory. Of course, it is not always possible to give such precise directions, nor is it possible, in all circumstances, to adhere to the same exact rules. Peculiarities of persons and occasions will necessarily lead to variation. Still, it is highly important that some medium standard should be set up. Then the principles will be better understood, and the course advised far more likely to be entered upon.

4. The directions given for the guidance of the pastor should also he practicable. If they are not, they are valueless. They are to be carried out into real operation or they are nothing. What

may actually be clone —done without unreasonable exertion, and done by persons of ordinary talents and opportunities—is what may wisely be laid down as a general code for the pastoral office. Men of great powers, or in churches of large wealth and influence, or in other circumstances which are peculiarly favorable, may carry out plans of usefulness which to others would be utterly impossible. But the aid of pastoral theology should be general, adapted to all, and susceptible of being put in practice by those who have but ordinary advantages as well as by those who are more highly favored. The design of the study is not to speculate upon what might possibly be accomplished, but to indicate clearly what is feasible, and should therefore be attempted in ordinary cases.

5. Moreover, too much should not be asked in treating of this subject. To demand too much, or to undertake too much, is a course which is almost certain to result in nothing. If the standard is so high that it manifestly cannot be reached, then there is danger of such discouragement as will keep back from any effort. Or if too much is undertaken, and life becomes an incessant race to keep up with duties, and every hour is burdened with a load that presses heavily, then it is to be feared that a recoil will come, the burden be shaken off, and, because all cannot be done, scarcely anything will be attempted. How often have we all seen utter failure in life as the consequence of attempting too much! The true course, then, is to indicate what may commonly be done without overcrowding or overtasking. Then there will be some encouragement to enter upon duties which are within reach, and which it is possible to overtake with ordinary care and toil.

6. That it must be up to the demands and peculiarities of the age is another thing which should be observed in treating of the subject of pastoral theology. This is the chief element in the Christian system in which there can be any change. There can be no change in the principles of the way of life. Truth is truth, and it cannot alter or be improved. Salvation is ever the same, the Bible is the same, and the depravity of the heart is the same; but the modes of applying the truths of the gospel to the

heart, so far as human agency is concerned, are constantly changing. As the heart is better understood, and experience teaches how it may be better reached, and views of the whole work of the gospel become clearer and broader, then the modes of carrying it on must be modified. New agencies will constantly arise, and old ones will be remodeled. As a matter of fact there are now in existence great plans for promoting the cause of Christ which were in other days unknown. We may instance the Sabbath-school, the great schemes of benevolence in the Church, the seminary for training young men for the ministry, and the evangelistic work of the press. These are new agencies which must necessarily influence the work of the pastor, and of which pastoral theology must take notice. As a system it will not do its work fully unless it comes up to all these and other modern modes of thought and action. On this account there must be new works on the subject from age to age. All that is valuable and unchanging in the past must be retained; all the experience of the passing years must be added; and all that is stirring in the present and looming up in the future must receive its carefully discriminating attention.

HOW THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE STUDIED

This is a point which must here receive a passing notice.

1. Ministers, especially younger ones, should regard the acquisition of knowledge as to the duties of their office as one of their most important pursuits. It is an indispensable preparation if they would be efficient workmen in the gospel. Its study should therefore be entered upon with the conviction that it is a real and momentous subject. It should not be thrust into a corner as if it were some merely incidental matter added to fill up the curriculum of ministerial training. Most prominent should be its place, most earnest the thought given to it. The Spirit of God lays great stress upon it when he urges upon the pastor, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it." If God himself has put upon it this stamp of divine approbation and urgency, we must regard it as a subject not to be slighted. Undoubtedly, it will give great advantage in his work to the pastor who studies it carefully. On every account its study should be entered upon with earnestness.

2. It ought to be studied with all the thoroughness to which hope of success in the most blessed work would lead. Success will ordinarily be in proportion to the skill and zeal with which the duties of the office are undertaken. The pastor's own happiness and honor require him to be thorough in this as well as all other branches of preparation. The interests at stake in his work are of such transcendent moment that no amount of preparation for wisely conducting them would be too great. Nor is he left at liberty whether or not he will make this preparation. The great Head of the Church demands it of him. The obligation under which he rests is, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." No part of this preparation is so insignificant that it may be safely overlooked. Everything that is carefully treasured now will come into use

on some future occasion. Thorough study of this subject now will greatly help to prepare the way for an easy, happy, continued and useful ministry.

3. Then this study should be pursued with the full purpose of putting it into practice just as soon and as fully as opportunity may permit. This is eminently a practical branch of study. Its whole aim is to influence the active work of life. Its directions must be put into operation or they have been given in vain. And their use is to commence the very hour the pastor sets his foot upon his field. He may afterward discover for himself certain more appropriate methods of thinking and working, or he may improve upon those which his system of pastoral theology suggests, but he cannot wait. He is in the field, and must put his hand to the work to-day. Life is too short for ministerial work to be done in an unnecessarily defective manner. The pastor should study to do his best at once. And there are some things, for which instructions are given in this study, which it will not do to delay. The catechising of the young, the personal improvement of memorizing Scripture, the study of the original languages, the daily consecration of self to God and his service, and many other such things, are matters which cannot be put off one day without loss. They should be understood and entered upon at once in order to yield their full benefits. Even little matters, that might easily be overlooked, will have great influence upon the whole of the minister's life. His work is so unspeakably momentous, for the glory of God, for the welfare of souls and for his own happiness, that its very first hours should be filled with the greatest efficiency.

CHAPTER II

THE PASTOR IN THE CLOSET

THE PIETY WHICH IS NEEDFUL FOR THE PASTORAL OFFICE

It should be laid down as our first principle that eminent piety is the indispensable qualification for the ministry of the gospel. By this is not meant simply a piety the genuineness of which is unquestionable, but a piety the degree of which is above that of ordinary believers. It is meant that there should be a more thorough baptism of the Holy Ghost, a more absolute consecration of all the powers and faculties to the service of God, a more complete conformity to the likeness of the Lord Jesus, a greater familiarity with the mind of the Spirit, a nearer approach to the perfect man in Christ Jesus, in those who take upon them the privileges and the responsibilities of the pastor, than are commonly expected even in true Christians. The pastor should not be satisfied with reaching the general standard of spirituality. He has devoted himself to a high and holy office to which he believes himself called, and hence he has need of a very high tone of piety. As a minister appointed to serve in the sanctuary and wait upon souls, how deep should be his humility! His great aim is to save men, and it will not therefore suffice for him to have merely the ordinary sympathy with the suffering and the lost. He is to be a leader in the spiritual host of God; must he not go before others in spiritual attainments? To draw men up to a more and more elevated standard of piety and devotedness is the appointment he holds from the great Head of the Church; surely he must himself rise still higher?

It is beyond all question that this eminent piety is before everything else in preparation -for the duties of the sacred office. It is before talents, or learning, or study, or favorable circumstances, or skill in working, or power in sermonizing. It is needed to give character and tone and strength to all these, and to every other part of the work. Without this elevated spirituality nothing else will be of much account in producing a permanent and satisfactory ministry. All else will be like

erecting a building without a foundation. This is the true foundation upon which to build—the idea which is to give character to all the superstructure. Oh that at the very beginning this could be deeply impressed upon the hearts of young ministers! Oh that they would take and weigh well the testimony of the most devoted and successful of those who have served God in his gospel! A man with this high tone of piety is sure to be a good pastor; without it success in the holy office is not to be expected.

The first thing for the young minister to consider is how he may attain to this high degree of holiness in heart and life. How often do other things occupy the mind! How much more anxiety there generally is about other branches of preparation! But this should be before them all, and at the root of them all, and ever present to give character to them all. As all other believers do, the pastor should strive to be filled with the Holy Ghost, but in view of his holy office he should strive far more earnestly. The one thought should be ever before him: "This is no ordinary profession that I hold; it is something more sacred, more heavenly, more Christ-like than the common callings of men, and therefore I must be more holy." There is no part of the training for the gospel ministry which requires so earnest and constant attention as that which pertains to the personal piety of those who are called to its duties.

We dwell long and minutely upon this branch of our subject because of its superlative importance. There is no other point in the whole subject that needs to be so thoroughly impressed as this. It must not be overshadowed by the consideration of other things, even though they too are necessary in preparing for the practical duties of the minister. We would have it so conspicuous and so deeply impressed on the heart and conscience that it may give complexion to ail our other studies on this subject. This self-culture—culture of personal piety—is a branch of pastoral theology, and a most important one. It is especially .noticed among the inspired rules laid down for the conduct of the minister. "Take heed unto thyself" is definitely commanded. The pastor's own heart is the place in which the

work must begin. His closet is the armory in which he must equip himself for the service that may require great hardness. It is the mount where he may tarry in the presence of God, and thence come down with glory beaming in his face. It is the upper room in which he may commune with Christ and obtain that burning love that will ever sweetly constrain. It is the mercy-seat, made so by the divine presence, where the Holy Spirit may overshadow him and imbue him with a wisdom and a might that will be irresistible. It is the secret place in which he may find his God, and then go out fortified to a work from which he might otherwise well shrink, saying, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

IMPORTANCE OF EMINENT PIETY IN THE PASTOR

This subject has been already brought forward, but we would dwell much longer upon it, that, if it be possible, we may awaken the most profound attention to it in the hearts of those who are already in the office or who have it in prospect. We would make our conviction of the necessity for this eminent piety appear as emphatic as it is in our power. By dwelling upon the details and entering into some of the particulars we would show that it is not possible to exaggerate its importance. A few of the considerations which must press it home most solemnly appear:

(a) The Names applied to Ministers in the Word of God

These names are not given inconsiderately or for some mere rhetorical purpose by the Holy Ghost. They are full of the most weighty meaning. They are figurative, but highly indicative of the nature and duties of the office. It is not possible to read them without feeling that the calling to which they relate is a most exalted one, and the character they suppose a character of great sacredness. We can enumerate only a few of them.

Prominent among the names applied to this office is that of pastor—shepherd! the very name which Christ takes to himself when he says, “I am the Good Shepherd." How Christ-like should those be to whom he applies the same title! Those who are appointed to feed others in the green pastures—should they not themselves know well where and what those pastures are? Those who are to lead others in the paths of righteousness should themselves be familiar with those paths. Those who would guard others from straying must surely be themselves well fortified by the strength and the watchfulness that come from the Omnipotent Spirit!

Ambassador is another of those names which the Scriptures

give. Does not this name tell of him who bears it as having stood near to God, as being entrusted with messages from heaven, as being clothed with authority from on high? Does it not tell of a loyalty of heart that should make him true to his heavenly Master? And does it not give a place of solemn dignity before all other creatures? The very name shows that his business is one of tremendous importance, even that of bearing terms of peace from the court of infinite justice to men who are in open rebellion. A view is thus opened to us of the responsibility of him who has been honored so highly as to be made an ambassador of God to men. Oh, does he not need, if any creature in this world does, the very spirit and character that prevail around the throne?

Another of the names applied to ministers is that of stewards—" stewards of the mysteries of God." They are admitted near to the presence of the Lord our Saviour, have his heart opened to them in confidence, and have his interests committed to their trust. Is not this a high and sacred honor? But they are responsible for the management of the high trust reposed in them. Oh, what manner of persons need they to be!

Still other names which the Scriptures give them are lights, and teachers, and witnesses. They are to bear witness of Christ and his great doctrines; and they are, in their own life and character, to be living witnesses of the renewing and sanctifying and exalting power of the gospel of Christ. Can they sustain all these offices and discharge all these duties unless they are very highly imbued with the graces of the Holy Spirit?

It should also be remembered that the great business to which they are appointed is the very same business that occupied so much of the thoughts and of the time of the Son of God while here on earth. He came to preach as well as to redeem by his death. He came to the earth with this as one of his purposes. His heart was set upon it. Behold the zeal which he manifested concerning it: “And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils." What, then! the true preacher

is a co-worker with Jesus? We have divine warrant for the assumption. It was in the apostle's mind when he said, “AVe then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." What dignity does this give to the ministerial office! With what sacredness should it be regarded! Since preachers are represented as standing by the side of Christ in this great field of work, oh how holy they should be! How assiduously they should cultivate the very same mind that was in him!

(b) The Greatness of the work to which he is called

This demands of the pastor most thorough consecration of heart and life. There is no other work so sacred, so momentous, so identified with the highest interests of the world, so dear to the heart of God. What, then, should those men be to whom this work has been entrusted?

God has called them, and sent them to speak to their fellow-men in his name. He has laid the obligation on them to take his messages as they are found written out in the Holy Oracles, and proclaim them aloud to the whole world. Their business is to lay open before men the very heart of the infinite Jehovah. They are to explain the communications which God sends, to deliver his instructions, his threatenings, his promises, his warnings and his grand motives. To these things they are to awaken attention. They are to keep them before men, and to press them home with all the urgency that fellow-feeling and sympathy can arouse.

Ministers are the chief earthly instruments in the hands of God for saving their fellow-men. By preaching he has ordained that the gospel is to be brought home and applied. And this preaching he has made the great business of all his ministerial servants. Hence, in a most important sense, he has constituted them his agents for the rescuing of sinners from their lost estate. Though men themselves, they have been sent to grasp their fellow-men and hold them back from going down into the

pit. They are appointed to go and stop the lost rushing rapidly on the way to perdition. The high commission has been given them to gather in souls, that they may be redeemed and treasured up for the blessed mansions of Jesus.

Coming, then, in the name of the Lord and delivering the message which he has put in their mouths, it cannot be but that their words shall have a most serious influence for weal or for woe upon those to whom they are delivered. This was felt by the apostle when, as a preacher, he exclaimed, “For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish; for to the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" Is it any wonder that he should thus cry out, "And who is sufficient for these things?" Each proclamation of the gospel by the minister either leads souls toward life immortal or sends them downward toward a deeper hell. It softens hearts or it hardens them. It brings men upward toward Jesus, or it will justify God in consigning them to the regions of deepest woe. Is it not, then, an awful thing to preach? Who shall attempt to do it until his heart is bathed in the atmosphere and the blood of Calvary?

In a certain and most momentous sense ministers are appointed to be mediators between God and their perishing fellow-men. They are to plead with God that he would be reconciled with men. So pleaded that faithful minister the apostle Paul as he said, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." The old prophetic obligation still rests upon them: “Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord!" Thus are they to stand before God on behalf of men. But they are especially to plead with men that they would be reconciled unto God. Perpetually their cry to the perishing is to be, “Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Their awful position is that of standing between dying men and the

living God, who is just, holy, and yet forgiving. With the one they are to plead the infinite merits of Christ; to the other they must point out the blood, the blood that cleanseth from all sins. Their messages are most solemn as coming from the lips of God. They are awfully solemn, since men must heed them or go down into everlasting burnings. Oh, how much they need the Holy Spirit every moment!

They are leaders in the great sacramental host. That host of the living God, blood-washed and called to the highest destiny, is increasing in numbers every day. It is gathering men from every clime, and is bound together by the most sacred of ties. The object before it is to rescue this world from the dominion of Satan and to crown Christ its King. This is the grand enterprise of the world, to which everything else must be subordinate and must contribute. There are in it posts of toil and responsibility for private Christians, but ministers are the heaven-ordained leaders. Christ is the Head, and from him come the authority and the power, but they are the responsible captains. What manner of men must they be? Theirs is the post of danger and responsibility, but it is the post of honor too. How blessed those who have grace to be faithful!

The work of the minister is the grandest and most important work in the world. The estimation in which God holds it—God, before whom all the callings of men are open—may be learned from the glowing words of the apostle: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they believe without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!" Thus does God regard it, and thus especially should it be looked upon by those who are placed in it. The following language in reference to it is not too strong: "What an office is that of the minister! The world cannot show such another work. It is the great, the greatest, in which a man can be engaged. Moses's leading forth the tribes from Egypt, and Joshua's conducting them into Canaan, sink into

insignificance when compared with it. Time begins and time will end all other works in which a man can be engaged, but eternity alone is the boundary and endurance of this. All others are the works of man; this is pre-eminently the work of God. A never-dying God is his employer, never-dying souls his employ —on them and in them to undo all that Satan and sin have effected, renew them after the image of Christ, and bring them back to God and his glory. To teach the philosophy of human redemption, the science of God's great salvation, the stupendous plan of divine mercy, and to bring back the sinner from the brink of perdition to the paradise of heaven; to prophesy to the dry bones that they live; to open the eyes of the blind, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; to quicken to a new life the dead in trespasses and in sins; to awaken the dreamy sleeper and to convert the sinner,—this is the paramount design of the gospel ministry. To effect this, how absolutely necessary the presence of God!"

The more we reflect upon it the more we must feel that we have neither thoughts to imagine nor words to express its greatness. It is not possible for us to overestimate its importance or the importance of the deepest piety in those who are called to its sacred duties.

This solemn grandeur of his work should be kept before every pastor, younger or older, to animate him in a calling which has its many trials. It should ever be in his mind to make him faithful in duties from which the flesh naturally shrinks. He should never forget it, that it may especially be an ever-present motive to lead him to a most thorough consecration of his whole being to the cause of the Master.

(c) The Conversion of Souls and the Prosperity of the Church depend on the Degree of the Pastor's Piety

This is saying much, but due reflection will make it appear that it is no exaggeration. We have an illustrious scriptural

example of it in the case of Barnabas. The noble record of him is, “He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord "—" He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith;" and hence “much people was added unto the Lord." May we not believe that much people will always be added unto the Lord under the ministry of men of such character?

As is the love of Christ in his own soul, so will be the minister's zeal for the perishing souls of those committed to his care; so will he long for the glory of Christ; and so will he pray and work and strive in his heavenly calling; and so ordinarily will be his success in that calling. There is nothing else in this wide world that can properly constrain him to put forth the efforts that are needed. It was this which the apostle Paul said constrained him, and so it must he with every one who would follow in the successful course of the apostle. All other motives will soon lose their impelling energy, but this will grow stronger and stronger. It will find means for removing or overcoming obstacles, and still hold its onward course. Hence, in the quiet seclusion of his closet, when the pastor's heart is warming through communion with God, there is the best possible preparation going on for the conversion of souls.

Then the piety of the church will generally rise about as high as that of its minister. A cold, worldly-minded pastor is sure to have a cold church. A living pastor will have a church in which life and joy and prayer will abound. How can it be otherwise, since his ministrations permeate the whole life of the body? He is the appointed agent for edifying the people of God in their most holy faith, and their spirituality cannot be expected to rise higher than his. There doubtless are exceptions, but the general rule is, that the measure of devotedness in any particular church may be gauged by that of the pastor's heart. Should he rest satisfied while there is any coldness there?

And who can tell how much depends on the life and prosperity of the Church? In it are involved the honor of God, the comfort of believers, the destiny of souls, the spread of the

gospel, the purity of those who are the appointed lights of the world, and the interests that awaken all heaven and for which the Lord of glory died. How God regards the state of the Church may be seen in those great prophetic messages to the seven churches of Asia which were appointed beacons for all ages. The condition of the Church which the Lord Jesus redeemed with his own most precious blood must be very near and dear to his heart. And is it true, most solemnly true, that the measure of that Church's godliness depends upon that of the pastor's heart? Then his heart is the place in which must begin a revival in the Church. There is the place from which the Church's devotedness to God must begin to rise into a higher and higher sphere. One minister with his heart properly alive, properly sprinkled with atoning blood, properly consecrated by the Holy Spirit, must be a great blessing in the whole community. A few such in the bounds of the Church would soon change its whole aspect—yea, would soon affect the moral tone of the whole country. Blessings for thousands are impending when the minister is on his knees pleading for more and more grace.

(d) The Real, Power of the Pastor is in his Earnest Godliness

This is his power with God; it is also his power with men. Though other branches of preparation are absolutely necessary, yet this it is which above everything else will make him an able workman. His calling is such that his heart is needed in it at every point. It is the heart alone, and the heart glowing with love to God, that can give him strength and energy and perseverance and success. With it he will be irresistible, without it his ministerial life will be a failure.

Where there is such an unction of the Holy Ghost it will, as a matter of course, impart a high and holy character; and a character without a spot and beyond suspicion must ever be the right arm of a minister's efficiency. It is in fact indispensable to his real efficiency. In this the calling of the

pastor is different from most other callings amongst men. Worldly wisdom or professional skill or artistic proficiency may give a high degree of success in these callings without any aid whatever from moral or religious character. But not so with the minister. Christian integrity is that which must penetrate and give tone to all that he does. What skill is to the artist, what logical acumen is to the lawyer, what far-seeing wisdom is to the statesman, that is reliable probity to him. It is the tower of his strength among men. It is his most attractive ornament. Rob him of that, and he becomes the most despised of mankind; give it to him in its richness, and no man is more honored and beloved.

And the heart is the true source of such exalted character. Where there is devoted godliness in the heart it will be seen in the life. It cannot be hid. It is not ostentatious, but it must necessarily work itself out into the light of day. Moreover, it cannot be counterfeited. If the genuine work is not within, no efforts to imitate it will be successful. But where it really is, life, lips, acts will all reveal it, even when it is not so intended. The heart which is elevated by communion with Christ will show itself on the countenance and in the daily intercourse with men. Hence, whatever character we would bear with our fellow-men we must attain to in the depths of our own hearts. Whatever standing we would maintain before the world we must first reach in our secret intercourse with God.

Then devoted piety will almost inevitably disarm opposition, and even envy itself. There is in it such a charm of humility that enmity cannot stand in its presence. It has a gentleness of love that could not be hated. As a matter of fact, it may be generally seen that the men who live nearest to God are the ones who have the least annoyance from opposition. The good man will have but few adversaries, excepting among such as were adversaries to Him who was goodness incarnate. Because piety disarms opposition it must give power as well as peace to him who is most deeply imbued with its spirit.

Moreover, to have the heart true to God and true to men through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit is the only way

to obtain that abiding confidence from men which is so essential to the gospel minister. That confidence cannot be retained unless it has its source in a deep fountain of truth within. But that will secure it. Who can doubt the reliability of him who evidently lives under the power of heavenly motives? And such confidence is an armory of power for the minister. Much as it is needed in most earthly callings, in none of them is it so important as in his. When men have reason to rely upon him fully, his motives will be rightly construed, even when they cannot all be seen, and all his efforts in the gospel cause will have double weight. He will then have an influence among his fellow-men that will itself be a very great power. There are men whose reputation for high integrity makes them giants—moral giants—for good in the world. For this reason, even if for none better, should that highest of integrity, the integrity of true godliness, be assiduously sought after. It will give such weight to the minister's words that none of them will be lost. Coming, as they manifestly do, from an honest and earnest heart, they will be received, and weighed, and remembered. It will be seen that he holds communion with God, and so men will be induced to listen to him, as otherwise they would not. The respect which his manifest godliness inspires will compel them to honor his message. And then his preaching will inevitably be clothed with double power.

That true sanctity which becomes the gospel minister will keep him near to God, the source of all real strength and success. He cannot retain any measure of spirituality unless he walks with God. But from that holy presence he will go out amongst his fellow-men clothed in a might that no human training or talents could give him. Then may his soul beam with a glory like that which irradiated the face of Moses as he came down from Sinai. He would carry with him an indescribable atmosphere of sacredness that would tell effectively on all his ministry. With almost the authority of the Master could he speak. From the source from which he received communications of grace would he also receive communications of power, and as he ministered in the name of

the Lord, would the strength of that name go with him, and bring forth results that would be the crown of his rejoicing.

An eminently pious minister will almost inevitably be successful in his blessed work. The pity which he has learned to feel for souls, his unquenchable love for Jesus and his all-absorbing zeal for the glory of God will impart to his working an earnestness that can scarcely fail of success. Clothed with the power of the Holy Ghost, which comes down to him in answer to his effectual fervent prayer, he will be sure of seeing the cause of Christ prospering in his hands. If he be a profound theologian, a ripe scholar or an eloquent speaker, his communion with God will hallow each gift and make it still more effective. If his attainments be of the most ordinary character, still the holy unction that accompanies his efforts will make them tell. This will make up wonderfully for other defects. Yea, it will often accomplish for the minister what no mere earthly advantages could. McCheyne well said: "A heated iron, though blunt, will pierce its way even where a much sharper instrument, if it he cold, cannot penetrate. So if our ministers only be filled with the Spirit, who is like fire, they will pierce into the hardest hearts where the sharpest wits cannot find their way." It was also a saying of his, "A loving man will always accomplish more than a merely learned one." Other of his rich aphorisms were, "It is not great talents that God blesses so much as great likeness to Christ. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

The names of multitudes of pastors could be given which would prove that those who are the most godly are the most highly blest in saving souls and spreading that righteousness of which they are themselves bright examples. Their work is not that which merely dazzles for a moment and then leaves deeper darkness behind it. It is abiding, and sends out great streams of influence for good that will cease neither in time nor in eternity.

It is hoped that these emphatic reiterations of the fact that the pastor's deep piety is his real power will not be looked upon as platitudes. They may possibly be regarded by some who

have not had much experience as commonplace truisms not needing mention. They have been repeated so often, and by so many, that here perhaps they may arrest scarcely any attention. But they cannot be thought of too profoundly. They are the words of truth and soberness. No true pastor but will understand their great importance more and more as his experience increases. It cannot be repeated too often, nor made too emphatic, that the pastor's great power is in his vital godliness. Nothing in this wide world will make up for the want of it. Let experience be heard. This is the testimony of all those who have been the most highly blest in their ministerial work. One such testimony may be given; it is that of one of the princes of Welsh preachers, Christmas Evans: “The pulpit orator falls infinitely too short of answering the desired effect unless the fire within him is kindled by the influence of the Holy Ghost of God, for which he must pray in the name of Jesus, firmly believing in God's promise that he will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him. This is the mystery of the art of eloquence of the man of God. He must be clothed with the power from on high. Here is the great inward secret." In this work of the ministry, as in everything else pertaining to the gospel, God's great rule is, "Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Let no one pass this point by until it has arrested his attention, sunken into his heart and fixed his life-purpose.

(e) Devoted Piety will make all the Work of the Pastor Easy and Pleasant

This is another consideration upon which great stress should be laid. Such piety is unspeakably important, not only for God's glory and the benefit of souls, but also for the pastor's own comfort. It is in this, and not in superior talents or cultivated taste, or in a pleasant charge or attractive social relations, that his real enjoyment is to be found.

Without that warm love to God and his work the ministry must prove but a life of drudgery and hypocrisy. The mistaken

man who holds it must constantly assume an interest in spiritual things which he does not feel. He must speak with an emotion which he has to force.

He must even strive to maintain a character that is not natural to him. It is a humiliating thing to be such a minister as this. It is to toil on and on in a work in which there is no heart and no pleasure, and scarcely any good to be expected.

All other motives than the constraining love of Christ in the heart soon lose their influence. There are no doubt other incentives, such as ambition, love of learning and desire for social influence, that may carry forward a minister for a while with apparent pleasure. But they will not stand the wear and tear of years of drudgery and trial. If the pastor who is chiefly actuated by these is successful, they will soon satiate; if he is not as successful as he expected to be, he becomes discouraged and disgusted with his office. If there is nothing more than these, the ministry soon becomes a miserable failure.

But when the love of Christ reigns in the heart supremely, it gives an impulse to the whole life that is ever steady and joyous. The wear and tear of toiling years will not wear it out. Sometimes there may appear only little success, but it has a faith that lays hold of the promises and is not discouraged. Through prosperity or adversity, among friends or enemies, in failing or continuing health, it moves steadily forward, impelled by an inward affection that cannot be quenched. Instead of years and trials wearing it out, it only grows stronger and stronger with the lapse of time. It constantly intensifies as more and more is seen of the love of Christ and the value of souls.

When earnest godliness reigns within it turns the whole life of the minister into a work of love. Souls then seem so precious that too much cannot be done to save them. Christ is so dear that everything which can possibly be contrived for his glory is a delight. There can be no rest unless something be undertaken for him every hour. Even hard duties then become a pleasure; or, rather, there are no hard duties, for supreme love to Christ

makes duty and pleasure to be identical.

Thus it is that by supplying the holiest of motives, by giving a keen perception of what should be done, by quickening the faculties, and by imparting a lively sense of the Holy Spirit's aid, devoted godliness makes all the work of the sacred office easy and prosperous.

In fact, the calling of the pastor is the happiest and most noble calling in the world when his piety is of this elevated character. There may be apparent drawbacks to his comfort arising from poverty, or opposition of unreasonable men, or want of honor from the world, but all is more than made up by his hidden springs of spiritual joy. The minister who is imbued with a heavenly unction is blest with the honor that cometh from God, and with the assurance of the divine friendship. Good men will do him reverence, for they are gifted with the same spiritual instinct. The approbation of conscience will be to him a perpetual feast. He may see the appalling evils of sin wherever he turns, but he will have the indescribable pleasure of helping to remove or alleviate those evils. When the same mind is in him that was in Christ Jesus, then his life-work will consist in doing that which he loves best—that which he knows will be for the glory of his best Beloved, his heavenly Friend. His work on earth will prove the perpetual delight of laying up treasure in heaven. In reality, his life on earth will be but the beginning of his heavenly happiness. And all ministerial biography shows that the men who have been the most holy have also been the most happy in their work. When, like

Rutherford, they have lived under the influence of a constant unction from on high, they have also breathed the very blessedness of the upper sanctuary. The more devoted, the more joyous they have been. The whole life of such eminently pious ministers is a joy. To make the attainment of this ministerial happiness an object of pursuit is not unscriptural, for even Christ charged his disciples: "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

(f) The Pastor is Appointed to be a Living

Example of the Gospel which he Preaches

This places the necessity of his being an eminently godly man in a very strong light. The solemn charge is imposed upon him of demonstrating by his daily walk and conversation the truth and the power of the doctrines of the gospel. From this responsibility no possible argument will release him. The divine law which has been laid down for his guidance is this: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient; not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?); not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." The reputation for holiness which the pastor is to sustain is here described with some minuteness, that there may be no mistake.

This appointment of the minister to teach by example must be carefully studied. All his other learning will be in vain without it. All other preparation for his office will be lost if this does not receive the chief attention. Of ministers emphatically it may be said that they are Christ's living epistles sent out into the world in order that men might read in them the transforming efficacy of his gospel. To them especially is the direction of Christ given: "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." To pastors the particular charge is given that they strengthen the Church by their own example: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." And this example is to be set by them in all the Christian

graces: "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example for the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." In this way they are to illustrate all kinds of good works and to disarm all opposition: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." There is no law of the whole pastoral office that is more fully and explicitly enjoined than this.

Those who hold this office are not only to describe to men the effects of religion upon the life, but they are also to show them in their own practice. This is something that can be better understood and will be more deeply felt. Holiness of life, the pure and noble character that is reached by daily communion with God, when seen in the minister, will convince men of the truth and power of the gospel as nothing else short of God's omnipotent Spirit could do. Men form their opinions of Christianity not so much from what they read in the book of God as from what they read in the book of the lives of its professors. When this book is fair and beautiful, they will be attracted; when it is blurred, they will be driven away. Example will break down opposition and produce conviction when nothing else will. An eminent man of God has said, "Be assured of this, brethren, there is no preaching like the preaching of ministerial sanctity." Hooker used to say that "the life of a pious clergyman is visible rhetoric;" and Herbert, that "the virtuous life of a clergyman is the most powerful eloquence." And what will give this sanctity of life but the unction from on high? What but the possession of the very mind of Christ will so purify and ennoble the life as to make it a fit example to illustrate the gospel and attract to the cross? The life of the pastor should be one of such heavenly-mindedness that he would not only bear witness of Christ, but also be a living witness to him; that his example would give a high tone to the piety of the Church; that, in boldness, with the devoted Paul he could say, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

(g) Eminent Piety is Expected of the Pastor

Hence he cannot be too diligent in its cultivation. It is true that very often there is too much expected of him. He is but man, and the struggle against sin and imperfections must constantly be carried on in him as well as in other men. And sometimes he is most unjustly, even cruelly, criticised. Enemies do this because, through him, they wish to injure the cause; friends do it from want of thought or want of knowledge. His motives cannot be all seen. As a public man he must act, and his reasons for acting are not always understood. Many things he must do which are encompassed with difficulties, and these difficulties alone are looked at and exaggerated, and he is censured for them, whilst everything else is overlooked.

At the same time, it is true that high-toned principle and consistency are expected of him. And it is right that they should. Everything in the heart-experience which he is supposed to have passed through, in the profession which he has made, in the sacred office to which he is called, in the superior advantages for sanctity which he has had, and in the holy influences which he is appointed to disseminate,—all these justify the expectation that he will be a man of more than ordinary godliness. If he comes short of that expectation he is disgraced. What cowardice would be to a soldier, what weakness would be to an athlete, what dishonesty would be to a steward, that will a low degree of piety be to him. It will be to his dishonor, and the world will see it and know it, and hold him in corresponding disdain. No man is more highly honored than a devotedly consistent minister; none is more despised than he who is faithless and inconsistent.

It is to be sorely lamented that occasionally there are men to be found in this office who have very little indeed, if any, of its spirit. Here is one of an irascible temperament who is constantly embroiling himself and his church in the most lamentable strifes. Here is another who is unstable, ever devising, trying and abandoning projects, so as to forfeit all confidence. Here is another eminently worldly, so as to have no

claim to be regarded as a steward of the mysteries of God. Here is another hopelessly imprudent, ever doing that which is unwise and sadly inconsistent with the high reputation he ought to bear. And occasionally there is one bearing the ministerial name who is still worse. Either because he has no grace in his heart, or because he allows himself to tamper with temptation, he falls into gross sin and causes a shudder throughout the kingdom of Christ.

Who can estimate the injury which such an unholy minister does? His crime will be noised abroad from east to west. It will be told of beyond the seas. Its history will be translated into other languages. It will be gloated over by the enemy through Western settlements. Its disgusting details will be read by wondering girls in the log cabins of Canada. And nowhere will it be repeated without causing pain or injury. It will grieve the pious, harden the impenitent, furnish argument for the opposer, blight the spirit of devotion, encourage others to sin, and cause nameless mischiefs that nothing but the omnipotent Spirit of God can counteract. Oh that those who hold the ministerial office, or are looking forward to it, would duly consider this! Oh that those who have no heart for its becoming spirituality would leave it! Oh that all would study well their tremendous responsibility! Oh that they would get very, very near to Christ, and cling to him with the full conviction that only by his side are they safe! Oh that they were willing to deny themselves many things which might seem right enough in themselves, but which might easily be misunderstood and tend to the dishonor of the cause! Oh that they would all strive for a godliness of the most elevated character, which would keep them far above reproach or even the suspicion of wrong!

(h) The Pastor is Warranted in looking forward to Eminent Glory in the Heavenly World

If even “Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," how much more should his

ministers endure any toils in view of the great heavenly joys before them!

That there are peculiar joys in store for the faithful pastor is taught not very obscurely in the Scriptures. What other meaning can we attach to the words of Christ: “And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that sow-eth and he that reapeth may rejoice together "? Did not the apostle foresee that peculiar glory when he thought of those whom he had been instrumental in saving, and said, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" And another prophet in still more glowing language exclaimed, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." After a very careful study of the whole subject, Dr. Killen records this cheering conclusion: "To every devoted pastor, in reference to the people among whom he labors, it may be said in the words of our Lord himself, They cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Nor does he himself design either to pay or put such off with the wealth and honors of time, but he has in store for them abundant recompense at the resurrection of the just. Having turned many to righteousness, they shall then not only ‘shine as the brightness of the firmament,' but be made 'pillars in the temple of our God.' "

All true pastors are preparing for that pre-eminent glory of the future. Surpassingly great is the bliss which they may lawfully keep in view in all their ministerial work and trials. To this they are appointed, and for this they are getting ready according to the measure of their fidelity.

What eminent godliness should now be theirs! What heavenly-mindedness they should now have, in prospect of such distinguished seats of bliss in the celestial world! It is not unbecoming for them to keep steadfastly in sight the portrait of the faithful minister as described by Bunyan. It was the picture of a grave person hanging up against the wall: “It had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of

truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back; he stood as if he pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head." When all is regarded as given for Christ's sake, then it is not unwarranted for the pastor to be incited to the effort for eminent piety by the motives so strongly stated by Dr. J. W. Alexander: "Each instant of present labor is to be repaid with a million of ages of glory."

We have thus dwelt at much length upon the transcendent importance of deep-toned piety in pastors, because of our clearest possible conviction that it lies at the foundation of everything hopeful in the office. We cannot present this conviction as emphatically as we feel it. At the present age of so much superficial religion we feel that this subject is one of immense importance. What is needed in the ministry now is complete consecration of heart and head and hands to Christ. With ministers more than with any other persons alive the supreme motive needs to be the glory of God. In all their studies and ministrations, in every element of their being, their moving impulse should be love to Christ.

Oh that every pastor could be made to believe and feel, and keep before him the conviction, that nothing else but this devoted godliness will make his ministry either pleasant or profitable! Can ministers not be persuaded to rely upon this as true? Would that they might all form the solemn purpose not to rest until this degree of godliness was reached! This is within the power of all. Great eloquence or popularity it may be impossible for many to reach, but great devotedness to Christ is attainable by all who will strive for it. And when this is reached, then a successful ministry is made sure. If our ministers, young and old, would set out for this, the whole face of the Church, and of the country too, would very soon be changed. How much is dependent upon our pastors laying this matter to heart!

HOW THE PIETY OF THE MINISTER MAY BE CULTIVATED

This is a point of vital importance to every pastor. No subject should receive from him more anxious thought. There is none to which he should give closer attention from the beginning of his ministry to its close. The following suggestions may be of use to those who are earnestly set on higher attainments in this first qualification for their sacred office:

(a) This Piety to be Cultivated by Constant Prayer

We have written fully of the attainment of a high type of piety by the pastor, because we feel profoundly its importance. And now the very momentous question comes up, How can it be reached? By what means can the heart be so cultivated as to arrive at this blessed experience? That such elevated piety is attainable should be laid down as a maxim at the very beginning. And that every pastor should set his heart upon it, and never rest until it is experienced, we would press home as our first and most important advice. Then the most effectual method for reaching it we would emphatically declare to be constant prayer. It is hardly necessary to mention this to those who have themselves been called into the ministry, but it may be wise to stir up their minds to a vivid sense of the great practical truth. If we can say anything that will awaken more earnest attention to it, the effort will not be misdirected.

It is well known that every degree of piety in the heart must be the work of the Holy Ghost. By him it is that piety is first implanted through the renewing of the nature that was once all corruption. That nature needs to be sanctified more and more, the obstacles in the heart and in the world have to be overcome, the motives drawn from Christ and his gospel have to be brought home with such power as to impress the mind. But to do all this is the special office of the Holy Spirit, and by

no other power in the world excepting by him can it be effected. By the death of Christ his power was secured, and he was sent into the world for the express purpose of sanctifying redeemed men and producing in them the holy likeness of Christ.

He effects this change by taking Christ and the things of Christ, and impressing them vividly upon the hearts of those who are the subjects of renewing grace. He shows Christ as our personal Saviour, and opens the eye of faith so that he can be seen and trusted in.

Then, by this operation, the conscience becomes pacified through atoning blood, and that blood he applies day by day, so that the soul is kept in peace and animated to aspire after higher degrees of holiness. Besides, the work is carried on with the greatest success by the Spirit holding up Christ as our model after whom we are to copy in heart and life. Nor is he presented as our pattern only, but as our motive also—as the glorious object of our love, the worthy object to which our whole being ought to be consecrated. Thus through Christ the Spirit sanctifies. lie takes men hour by hour to the cross by which sin was once effectually conquered, and by which it is yet to be utterly banished from the hearts and the habitations of men.

Then the encouraging thing for us, and the point we would now urge, is that this Spirit is given in answer to prayer. He is with his Church and with his people already, but the larger measure of his sanctifying power which ministers especially need is that which we are now considering. This undoubtedly may be obtained by earnest and persevering prayer. The most emphatic promise in the whole Bible is given in reference to this very thing: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much

more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!" According to Luke, who records the same promise, the blessing desired is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Let us linger for a moment on this promise. Observe, he does not simply say, "Ask and ye shall receive;" that, coming from the lips of perfect Truth, would be enough. But to make the promise more impressive, he repeats it three times: "ye shall receive," "ye shall find," "it shall be opened unto you." Nor is that all. To make it still more emphatic, he repeats it three times again: "every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." In the very acts of asking, seeking, knocking, the blessing is received. Nor is even this all, though the promise has been repeated six times. That it may sink the more deeply into every heart, he uses one of the most touching arguments: “Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit (as Luke has it) to them that ask him!" Was there ever such a promise as this? Was ever any engagement of God so positively ratified? If prayer, to be successful, must be for things agreeable to the will of God, can there be any question about this prayer for the Holy Spirit? Is not his whole heart set upon granting us this?

Not a day, then, should pass without the pastor carrying this petition before the throne, and wrestling for the Holy Spirit to come and baptize him afresh, and baptize him thoroughly, with his sanctifying influences. In urging this petition he should never become weary or discouraged or satiated, or so familiar with the request that it will lose its fervency. When he is praying for the influences of the Holy Spirit, he is praying for more holiness of life, for more of the mind of Christ, for more of the image of God, for more power with men, for everything which as a Christian and Christian minister he should desire.

The importance of prayer in the ministry is so very, very great that we will strive to impress it by showing how it lay

before the minds of men whose own eminent godliness enabled them to understand it as others could not. This is not the opinion of one or two, but of the many, and that of those who had most of the mind of Christ. We would repeat their testimony over and over again, that the great truth may be fixed the more indelibly. It has been tersely said, that "a ministry of prayer must be a ministry of power," and all experience goes to prove the truth of this saying. It has been reasoned in this way: "Above all things, prayer must blend itself with all ministerial labors. Nothing makes a thought derived from others more certainly our own than the attempt to make it the subject of serious and earnest prayer. This gives a new and somewhat original cast to the thought itself, and it flows from the mind and the tongue with a mild yet winning force which few hearts are able to resist. To a preacher who thus combines study and devotion, though he may give no signs of extraordinary genius, the hearers listen, they know not why, and are impressed by his preaching in a manner they can scarcely understand. The secret of his influence is that God is with him and makes whatever he does prosper."

The great Welsh preacher, Mr. Williams of Wern— one of the princely trio of that land of great preachers, John Elias, William Williams, and Christmas Evans— left this testimony: "The old ministers were not much better preachers than we are, and in many respects they were inferior, but there was an unction about their ministry, and success attended upon it now but seldom witnessed. And what was the cause of the difference? They prayed more than we do. If we would prevail and have power with men, we must first prevail and have power with God. It was on his knees that Jacob became a prince, and if we would become princes we must be oftener and more importunate upon our knees." Dr. Griffin remarked of a young man, a pupil of his who had just commenced preaching, "He has an active mind and superior talents. The only question I have about him is, whether he will pray down the Holy Spirit while he preaches." The probability of any minister's success is in the question, “Will he pray down the Holy Spirit f" Very

valuable was the dying testimony of the great and godly Andrew Fuller: "I wish I had prayed more for the assistance of the Holy Spirit in studying and preaching my sermons." The exhortation of the noble French preacher, Massillon, cannot be too attentively studied: "Accompany your labors with your prayers. Speak of the disorders of your people more frequently to God than to them. Complain to him of the obstacles put in the way of their conversion by your unfaithfulness more frequently than of those which their obstinacy may present. Blame yourself alone at his feet for the small fruit of your ministry. As a tender father apologize to him for the faults of your children, and accuse only yourself." Innumerable other such declarations could easily be cited from the writings of the most devoted and successful of ministers. The transcendent importance of prayer is the voice of the best, the greatest, the most highly blest of those who have labored in the cause of Christ.

Above all other Christians, the pastor must be a man of prayer. All others need to be daily at the throne of grace, but lie more. He lias to do with such purely spiritual things that nothing but the Spirit can qualify him for his exalted work. In the cause committed to him such tremendous interests are involved that he needs constant guidance from on high. Of himself how can he reach such hard and impenitent hearts as he has to do with? His vocation requires him to stand so near to God that he must have the purifying of the Holy Spirit for that awful presence. It is his to intercede for others as well as to pray for himself, and how can he do that unless he has the aid of that Intercessor who inspires groanings that cannot be uttered? Eminently is he to be a temple of the Holy Ghost; oh how holy, how holy doth it become him to be! Even Christ, the divine Shepherd, spent whole nights in prayer; how much more do those who are mere men, though in the most sacred office, need to tarry long, long in that exercise! Among other ends he had in view in praying so often, and in causing that fact to be recorded, did he not intend to set an example to his under-shepherds in all time? Ah, prayer should be their daily breath.

Emphatically should it be true of them that they "pray always."

Every one of their ministerial acts—yes, all that they do—should be consecrated by prayer. They are liable to err and make grievous mistakes; how can they be safe without the guidance of the Spirit? All that they do and say may be so momentous in its results that they should not rely upon their own understanding, but hold constant fellowship with God. It was this dwelling with God that made Whitefield so great. "So close was his communion with God before preaching that it was said he used to come down to the people ‘as if there were a rainbow about his head.'" Constant praying will make the whole work of the minister safe and happy. He will then be preparing for the pulpit and other duties every day and hour. Quaintly has it been said, "They who have been made fishers of men mind their business both when they are fishing and when they are mending their nets." In everything should the minister wrestle in prayer, because God is so willing to hear and to help him, because it is so safe to rely always on the infinite understanding and infinite power, and because this carrying every act before the throne will turn the whole life into an unbroken service of God.

(b) Piety to be Cultivated by a Morning Hour of Devotion

In all the counsels which we purpose giving for the guidance of the pastor we want to be as specific as possible. We do not intend to rest in mere general observations, which might be important, but would not lead to the practical results Ave desire. Our suggestion now is, that the pastor set apart the first hour of every day for uninterrupted communion with God. We would have the first and best of the minister's time rigidly devoted to the divine service. Most pastors, by a little arrangement of duties and by a little self-denial, could carry out this important rule. Those with whom it would be absolutely impossible might set apart some other hour of the clay, but the first hour is the best. We will not dwell on the other benefits

that would accrue, such as the economizing of time and the establishing of regular habits, but we would say that the spiritual benefits could scarcely be exaggerated. A whole morning hour spent in reading the word of God, in prayer and in spiritual meditation, what an influence it would have upon the life! How could the direction of Christ be better obeyed, or the resulting blessing more certainly secured? "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly!" Let the first hour of the day, then, before food, before family, before daily avocations, be made sacred to the Lord.

In the life and work of the minister especially it is all important that there should be specific and long periods of devotion. He should observe the rule to be in the spirit of prayer always, but there should be a definite and considerable time for it daily. He should have such a period every day, when the world would be resolutely excluded, when the mind would dwell long and intently on spiritual things, when the divine word would be read and applied to self very deliberately, when the soul would be kept in prolonged communion with God, when the realities of the spiritual and eternal would be made more impressive, and when the mind might be toned up to a braver grappling with the trials and the duties of life.

The importance of this morning hour of communion with God will be seen when the responsibility of the minister's office is considered. He has a great work to do, and every day which he spends is so much taken from the aggregate of time given him for that work. He never commences a day that will not bring him something in which he will need divine guidance. Every day with him has its own work—a work to which he was never called before, and will never be called again. During any day upon which he enters he may be sorely tempted, or he may be called to the awful duty of ministering to persons nigh unto death, or to counsel the inquiring, or to preach a sermon that will be the savor of life unto life or of death unto death to some soul, or to decide questions of duty in critical emergencies; or

he may have opportunities of influencing by words fitly spoken, or of setting an example that will help souls forward on the way of life. Every day he lives his soul may make progress in grace and in the experience of heavenly love. Day by day the pastor is to stand as an intercessor before the throne of grace, bearing the names of the flock committed to his charge. How can a pastor enter upon any day of such solemn responsibility without making sure of divine help during every moment?

The practice of spending the first hour of the day in secret prayer is recommended by the highest example. It is said of one of our most eminent statesmen, at a time when most responsible duties to the country rested on him, that his morning hour was always spent in imploring the help of the great Ruler of the nations. A distinguished judge acknowledged his success in his profession as owing to the hour he daily spent with God. General Havelock, though burdened with the care of the army during the terrible mutiny in India, managed to keep sacred for prayer a long time in the morning of each day. Other honored names might be added, as those of Bacon, and the great astronomer Kepler, and the historian De Thou, of whom it is related that every morning “he implored God in private to purify his heart, to banish from it hatred and flattery, to enlighten his mind, and to make known to him the truth which so many passions and conflicting interests had almost buried." This also was the custom of one guided by the Divine Spirit, for David's resolution was, “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." The testimony of that most godly man, Philip Henry, speaking of one of his studying days, was, "I forgot, when I began, explicitly and expressly to crave help from God, and the chariot-wheels drove accordingly. Lord, forgive my omission, and keep me in the way of duty!" What higher example and encouragement could we have for this practice?

It is recommended that the morning hour be set apart for devotion, because that hour can more generally be commanded, and because the mind is then clearer and better

fitted for communion with God. Most pastors could so arrange their daily duties as to have that hour statedly to themselves. Then they would not be interrupted by any of the ordinary claims of the day; the mind would be refreshed and calm, and the world would not often intrude. It could easily be an hour kept sacred to God and the soul and the profound interests of eternity.

The influence of this morning hour of undisturbed fellowship with God would be felt all the day. Not simply would its prayers be answered, but a tone of spirituality would spring out from it and pervade all. The presence of Christ would be felt in every hour and every act, and this would save from innumerable mistakes and perplexities. A blessed restraint would be imposed from the remembrance of the hour when the heart burned with love, and from the anticipation of again meeting with Christ in the sweet morning devotions. An elevated tone of Christian life would thus be imparted to the whole day. Duty would be turned into pleasure, trials would be moderated and every true enjoyment would be rendered doubly sweet. The consciousness that the day was devoted to God would keep it all a scene of worship and make this life but the commencement of heaven. Oh it would be a most blessed thing for every pastor to make sacred this morning hour of prayer! Thoughtfully has one written of it: "Prayer, prayer, prayer, the first, second and third elements of the Christian life, should open, prolong and conclude each day. The first act of the soul in early morning should be a draught at the heavenly fountain. It will sweeten the taste for the day. If you can have but ten minutes with God at that fresh, tranquil and tender season, make sure of those minutes. They are of more value than much fine gold. But if you tarry long so sweetly at the throne, you will come out of the closet as the high priest of Israel came from the awful ministry at the altar of incense, suffused all over with the heavenly fragrance of that communion."

This habit, once formed, will become an invaluable element of the pastor's strength. It may require some effort and some self-denial at first, but soon it will grow easy and prove that

hour the most attractive of all the hours of the day. It will be looked forward to as the time of sweet refreshment of the soul. When one has learned to relish this hour of devotion he has acquired a great element of power in his ministerial work. The practice cannot be recommended too strongly. We beg that the recommendation be not looked upon as visionary or trivial. Let time be given for communion with God before the ordinary duties of the day are entered upon. The pastor with a work for eternity staring him in the face cannot afford to do without anything that would help him—certainly not without such a grand agency of spiritual power as this.

(c) Piety Increased by the Devotional Reading of the Scriptures

Ministers are liable to get into the habit of studying the word of God simply that they may be the better prepared to teach others. It is all important, however, that they should do more than this. They should not read the Bible merely for others, nor simply as a book of science, or history, or geography, or profound wisdom only, but that they may also bring it home and apply it to themselves. The faintest impression that it is not intended for their own personal benefit should never be admitted. Their hearts should be so applied to it that they may themselves be brought nearer to God. They should listen to it that they may hear God's voice addressed to their own souls, and that for themselves they may see his glory beaming upon every page. For their own personal benefit, as if there were no others in the world who needed it, for their spiritual strength and instruction and comfort, they should meditate upon it profoundly every day.

This is a very important duty for every Christian. The word is the great instrument by which the Spirit increases holiness in the hearts of believers. It is by faith in that word that men are ordained to be sanctified. Christ teaches the necessity of the truth when, in his great intercessory prayer, he made sure of its efficacy by the petition, "Sanctify them through thy truth;

thy word is truth." The Spirit will honor his own truth, and will make it effectual. It is by Christ, the Bread of life, that the soul is to be nourished; and Christ is to be found chiefly in the Scriptures. From the Scriptures come light, and heat, and strength, and impulse, all of which are important elements of true godliness in the soul. Not only to the young man, but to all who ask a similar question, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" comes the inspired answer, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Oh how the devout study and personal application of the Scriptures enrich the soul! A simple passage devoutly meditated upon makes the heart better. Then the growth in piety which is produced in this way is not ephemeral or spurious in any sense; it is healthy, and will be permanent in its results. All the books on personal piety that were ever written are not to be compared in wisdom, in authority, or in efficacy with the Bible.

Now, there is special need for the devotional study of the Bible by the pastor. His piety should be of the most elevated type. His own spiritual wants, as well as those of the people to whom he ministers, demand that it should also be progressive —ever rising and expanding as his work becomes more solemn, and nothing will meet these requirements but a piety that is truly scriptural. No type of piety but that which is wrought out from the word of God will do for him whose example is largely to give form and character to the religion of hundreds. Then the more thoroughly the minister studies the Bible for his own edification, the better will he understand how to bring it home to others. And no spirituality but that which the Holy Ghost teaches in his word will rightly equip or steady pastors in their great work for God, for souls and for eternity.

For the minister especially it is very important that his soul be put in direct contact with the word of the Lord. He should get just as near as it is possible to the mind of the Spirit. The very thoughts of that Spirit he should endeavor to think over in his own heart. The soul will generally become assimilated to Him whose inspired utterances are kept constantly and impressively before it. We shall grow holy by the adoring

contemplation of Him who is holiness itself. "But we all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The word is pure, and its effect is always to purify. We do not sufficiently appreciate the supernatural influence of the Scriptures in sanctifying those who are kept under their influence. Wisdom worthy of profound reflection is contained in the remarks of Dr. Archibald Alexander on this point: "There is something wonderful in the power which the word of God possesses over the consciences of men. To those who never read or heard it this fact must be unknown, but it is manifest to those who are conversant with the sacred volume or who are in the habit of hearing it expounded. Why should this book above all others have the power of penetrating, and, as it were, searching the inmost recesses of the soul, and showing to a man the multitude and enormity of the evils of his heart and life? This may by some be attributed to early education, but I believe that if the experiment could be fairly tried, it would be found that men who have never been brought up with any sentiment of reverence for the Bible would experience its power over the conscience. 'The entrance of thy words giveth light.' "

To every pastor, then, would we say, Study the Bible with constant and close self-application. Make its chapters and verses familiar, not merely by the effort to gain an intellectual understanding of them, but by the blessed comfort you have found from them in your own souls. Adopt some rule of systematic devotional reading, and let it not be intermitted for any trivial consideration. Let your study of the word be profound, so as to get down to its very marrow and sweetness. Let your meditations be constant, so that all the day long you may have some Scripture before the mind. Let it be with you as his biographer says of McCheyne, that "he fed on the word, not in order to prepare himself for his people, but for personal edification. To do so was a fundamental rule with him." And let all this devotional study of the word be mingled with prayer, that the same Spirit who inspired it would give it life and power

in its effects upon your own soul.

(d) The Pastor should Cultivate his Piety by Preaching to Himself

"Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" is the scriptural rebuke for neglecting this duty. When the preacher delivers the message of God, he should never separate himself from his audience as if he were not addressed. He needs the communications of grace just as much as his congregation does. His own experience of wants, of sins, of trials and of blessings should be wrought into his discourses. His own faults should be kept in view, and rebuked as sharply as those of his audience. Diligently should he listen for the voice of God as addressed to his own particular case, and then reiterate that voice from the sacred desk. This rule, given by another, should ever be his guide: “In your preparations for the pulpit endeavor to derive from the subject on which you are about to preach that spiritual benefit you wish your hearers to receive."

It is well for the minister to study his own particular wants in every sermon that he preaches. He should question himself, What are my most grievous shortcomings? What are my besetting sins? What are the deficiencies in my Christian character? What hindrances do I find to my progress in grace? To what higher degrees of spirituality am I desirous of attain-in? What more good might I do in the kingdom? These and similar questions to self would give far more directness of aim to his discourses. He may depend on it that his own wants and those of his people are very similar. Then, if his discourses arise out of his own experience, and are shaped so as to meet his own wants, they will assuredly also be applicable to the great body of his Christian people.

The soul of the minister will almost necessarily grow in grace under such a process. Its own great interests will not be neglected through exclusive care for others; its prevailing maladies will be detected; it will be kept alive, and the proper

spiritual nourishment will be given it. When every sermon is faithfully brought home to the preacher's own heart, he must advance in purity, in vigor, in knowledge and in every other grace. Perhaps not perceptibly, but very surely, will he make progress from year to year.

Nothing could have a better effect in preserving from a perfunctory mode of preaching than this self-application of the sermon. As in every other profession, the minister is in danger here. To see a man preaching as a mere thing of rote is a very sad sight indeed. There is nothing more heartless or repulsive. It is scarcely possible for such preaching to do any good or not to disgust. But when the preacher keeps his own case vividly before him in what he is saying, then he must be interested, and consequently interest others. Then he appears not as one above them. He is not patronizing, but he is one with his audience, and enters with them into all their troubles for sin and into all their joys for deliverance through Christ.

This habit will without doubt intensify the earnestness of one's preaching. It must quicken the sensibilities, and awaken to keenness of thought about the great spiritual wants of the soul. Then in the proclamation of the gospel the pastor will have all the ardor that can be produced by the serious thought that his own interests are at stake. He cannot be indifferent with the conviction pressing upon him that life or death is the issue—he cannot be cold and formal.

The thought is well presented by the devout Leighton: "It is a cold, lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things upon mere report; but they that speak of them as their own, as having share and interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness, their discourse of them is enlivened by firm belief and an ardent affection; they cannot mention them but their hearts are straight taken with such gladness as they are forced to vent in praises." Then the preacher must preach in sympathy with the people, and his sighs and his tears and his joys mingle with theirs.

The pastor should look upon this rule of preaching himself in all his sermons as one of very great, moment. It is important for

his own sake, it is important for his people's sake, that he should preach every sermon to himself as one of the chief auditors. He should do this even when he is addressing the impenitent, for their hearts and his are by nature alike, and the gulf from which he would draw them is the gulf from which he has only narrowly escaped himself. After preaching, the sermon should rest deeply in his own thoughts, and its influence upon his spiritual life be anxiously looked for. "In what am I better or more resolved in my Christian calling?" is a question lie should very thoughtfully ask. The minister cannot do without this preaching to himself, for ordinarily he has no other to preach to him, and his soul will suffer without this culture.

HINDERANCES IN THE WAY OF MINISTERIAL PIETY

There are certain things which are in danger of impeding the progress of the clergyman in holiness. There are temptations which are peculiar to him and which arise from the nature of his office. His very advantages and means of usefulness sometimes become a snare when they are not properly guarded. Sometimes when he appears to be the strongest he needs to be especially watchful. These dangers should be carefully studied, for they are insidious, and it is only when they are clearly seen that they lose their power. It is well that a few of them should be here exposed.

1. The minister is in danger of imperceptibly falling into the habit of looking upon spiritual things simply as a profession. It is his business to work for the salvation of souls; he is called to interpret the Bible as a profession; he goes to visit the sick officially; he calls upon men to glorify God because it is his duty to do so; and he gradually falls into all these duties as a mere habit. He is in danger of coming to look upon them simply as a profession, and not as matters involving everlasting interests. If he is not careful he will soon find himself performing them in a merely perfunctory manner. The great interests which he handles become so familiar that they may excite within him scarcely any feeling. This tendency is seen in all the professions. And there is great cause for the minister to be alarmed lest it comes to be with him that he has no heart in a work which is most solemn in its issues. How careful should he be lest in dealing so constantly with other souls he should come to neglect his own!

2. The pastor must be watchful, or soon he will find that all his studying of the Bible is intended for others. The word of God is the great instrument with which he is to work, and in that light simply he will soon find himself regarding it and making it familiar. How to make it plain to others and how to interest them in it may soon become the ever-present question

with him. And so much absorbed does he become with this that he does not search it for the blessings with which it might enrich his own soul. Bishop Simpson has well portrayed this danger: "The very word of God that the minister studies may do him less good than it does the non-professional reader. Why is this? I take my Bible; my heart is sad and I seek some precious promise. I bend over the page; my heart leans for a moment on that precious passage: 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself,' and just as the heart is beginning to grasp the sweetness and the fitness of the passage there springs up the thought, 'That will be a fine passage to unfold to my congregation,' and ere I am aware I am preparing a sermon for my people, instead of resting my soul upon the riches of the promise." Many a minister while feeding others has thus starved himself.

3. Because he holds the ministerial office and has devoted his life to divine things, the pastor is liable to take it for granted that all is well with his own soul, without giving that question the constant attention which its awful importance demands. He has a sort of habitual impression that that question is of course settled, and so he may hardly ever think of his own spiritual state. It is not a matter of pressing daily duty with him to make his calling and election sure. His incessant ministering to other makes the impression of his personal safety the more settled, and thus he comes to neglect his own salvation; at least there is very great danger that he will so neglect it. This was not the way with the great apostle, though he had so many evidences of his acceptance. His anxious course he thus describes: "But I keep under my body, and bring it' into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The great danger here is that if the minister should be self-deceived he might go on and on and never awake to the realization of his deplorable condition.

4. There are special temptations to which, from its peculiar nature, the ministerial office is exposed. It is a sacred office, and that very thing draws after it certain dangers that should be candidly admitted. Very often the peril of the pastor is to be unfaithful in delivering the whole counsel of God for fear of awakening the enmity of his hearers. Envy of others who are supposed to have a superior place or success is a strong temptation in the way of many. Some are liable to be led away by spiritual pride, and then to become impatient of opposition, and even to show a domineering spirit that is most offensive. Even the great confidence reposed in the minister, and the love with which he is cherished, give promise of an impunity in yielding that makes certain temptations far more formidable. Slothfulness is one of the besetting sins of this office, and that because of the habits of seclusion and the possibility of postponing duties, and because there is very often no other pressing impulse than the voice of conscience. These are some of the peculiar dangers to which the minister is exposed, and they should be very carefully studied, especially in the light of their enormity when yielded to by him who is an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

5. The pastor has no counselor whom he ordinarily likes to consult about his own soul. Other persons have their spiritual guide, and they may be greatly benefited by unburdening their hearts to him and seeking his advice in their inward struggles. But he has no one, in fact, who stands related to him as a friend and adviser in sacred things. It is not supposed that he needs such assistance. There is a sort of impression that his attainments in divine things are, or ought to be, so high that it would be an unworthy exposure for him to condescend to seek the aid of others. And so, neither asking nor being offered the assistance of any earthly minister, his sins may remain covered, his spiritual sores fester, and if great grace is not granted him he may become hard and insensible and slide very far from the spirit he should possess and manifest.

HELPS TO THE PIETY OF THE PASTOR

Having spoken of the hindrances, we would now enumerate some of the helps, to a deeper spirituality which this office furnishes. It carries with it certain advantages for the promotion of personal piety—advantages which are not possessed by any other calling in life. These should receive the closest attention by him who holds the sacred office. He should also improve them to the uttermost. His piety should be of a more elevated type than that of other Christians, because he has many things to help him upward which they have not. He will be unfaithful to his God, to his office and to himself if he does not lay these things to heart and derive from them their fullest benefits.

1. From the nature of their office and studies ministers must have the clearest knowledge of the way in which eminent piety may be reached. This very thing is the great study of their lives. It is at once their duty and their privilege to know as fully as men can know what are the most important means of grace, what are the advantages of devoted piety, how the Spirit ordinarily sanctifies the hearts of men, and how great is the weight of the motives urging on to godliness. God's ordained method of reaching that desirable end lies plainly before them, so that they cannot well mistake or wander from it. This knowledge is always fresh with them, because the duties of their office require that it should be constantly in their thoughts. Indeed, the subject can never escape from their notice, but presses home upon them with all its weight in everything they do.

2. The pastor has every possible motive for cultivating the graces of the Spirit. He is urged forward to it by his love to Jesus and desire for the glory of God, by pity for poor dying souls, by anxiety for his own happiness and by all his affection for the Church of Christ, especially for his own particular branch of it. He has all the motives of ordinary Christians for seeking after devoted godliness, but he has also peculiar

motives of his own. His personal reputation is at stake. With him success in life's calling depends upon the measure of his sanctity. Fidelity to the charge entrusted to him requires that he should ever he actuated by the highest spiritual motives. The pressure of responsibility calls upon him to become more and more holy. Every conceivable motive urges him—urges him constantly—upward and onward to a fuller experience of the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost.

3. His sense of the importance of consistency must act as a peculiarly healthful restraint upon the pastor. He is conscious that in consequence of his solemn ordination vows it becometh him to be eminently holy; that far more is expected of him than of other men; that he is an ambassador for God, a minister of the Lord Jesus and a pastor of a portion of the redeemed flock; that he, with other ministers of the gospel, is “made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men;" and that because of his sacred profession his failings or crimes would do unspeakable harm to religion. All these considerations are like a hedge around him. He cannot break through them without a struggle, without shame and without doing sore violence to his conscience. The restraint may sometimes seem a painful one, and perhaps for the moment he would wish it removed, but it is most salutary in the end. Many a time the consciousness of what he is keeps back the minister from indulgences that would injure his soul and grieve his Saviour. Many a time it constrains him to discharge duties from which he would otherwise be tempted to shrink. Many a time it impels him forward toward higher attainments in grace and greater conformity to the pattern of his divine Lord.

4. The mind of the minister is constantly engaged on holy things, and it is almost inevitable that it should become more and more spiritual. His daily study pertains to the word of God, the nature of Christ, the mind of the Spirit, the importance of salvation, the conversion of souls, the spread of the gospel, the edification of believers and other kindred subjects; and how can he be constantly busied about these sacred things without his soul being made more sacred by them? In studying, in

preaching, in prayer, in the Sabbath-school, every day, if not every hour, his thoughts are bent upon eternal things, and it is natural that what is so much thought of should appear in ever-increasing magnitude. And these things are too momentous to lose their impressiveness because of familiarity. The heart cannot help taking the hue of that upon which it is constantly fixed. Just as the views, the gait, the tones and the manners of one whom we admire and with whom we associate imperceptibly become impressed upon us, so it is that the mind grows gradually like that with which it is most steadily engaged. Thus it is that ministers must almost necessarily become spiritual from their constant intercourse with spiritual things.

This advantage of the minister is clearly presented by Dr. Shedd: "Not only does the ministerial calling and profession require eminent piety, but it tends to produce it. By his position the clergyman is greatly assisted in attaining to a superior grade of Christian character. For, so far as his active life is concerned, his proper professional business is religious. The daily labor of the clergyman is as truly and exclusively religious as that of the farmer is agricultural or that of the merchant is mercantile. This is highly favorable to spirituality. Ought not one to grow in grace whose daily avocations bring him into communication with the anxious, the thoughtful, the convicted soul, the rejoicing heart, the bereaved, the sick and the dying? Ought not that man to advance in the love and knowledge of God whose regular occupation from day to day is to become acquainted with the strictly religious wants and condition of the community, and to minister to them? If the daily avocations of the mechanic have a tendency to make him ingenious and inventive, if the daily avocations of the merchant tend to make him enterprising and adventurous, do not the daily avocations of the clergyman tend to make him devout? The influence of active life upon character is in its own place and manner as great as that of contemplative life. A man is unconsciously moulded and formed by his daily routine of duties as really as by the books he reads or the sciences he studies. Hence a

faithful performance of clerical duties contributes directly to spirituality."

5. The minister is continually in the midst of scenes which must keep fresh the impression of the importance of true godliness. He is called to visit the dying, the suffering, the sorrowing, the hoping, the rejoicing. The nature and results of sin in their horrors and of piety in all its blessedness he sees exhibited in living reality. Sometimes he almost beholds the woes of the lost; sometimes almost the joys of the ransomed. Such scenes are passing before his eyes nearly every day. He sees them in all their various aspects. He is admitted to the confidence of hearts that are almost breaking. His soul would need to be of adamant if these things did not move it deeply. As no other person he has opportunities of witnessing the transcendent value of the gospel of Christ for assuaging the woes of men. The earnestness of life and the nearness of eternity must impress him with the thought that there is nothing but the religion of which he is a minister that is of real importance to the world. And this is the school in which he is ever learning the value of eminent godliness.

6. The prayers of his godly people are ever going up for the pastor. As a power for promoting his piety this cannot be overestimated. These prayers are offered in public and in private. Often when he little dreams of it they are ascending to the throne. They are very constant from one and another or many of his congregation, and the pastor should seek for them most anxiously. Such supplications cannot be offered up so frequently and so earnestly and yet be in vain. Undoubtedly they are among the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous which avail much. Though he may not recognize them at the time, they do bring down the power of the Spirit upon him when he is studying, when he is preaching, when he is visiting the sick and in other of the solemn duties of his office. These prayers are deeply important for the piety of the minister and for the prosecution of a work the most solemn that can be committed to the hands of man.

Such are some of the peculiar advantages which the pastor

can rely upon in striving for that eminent degree of piety which becomes him. Great are his trials, but greater far are his blessings. These things compensate, and more than compensate, for all the sacrifices he may have to make. Happy, happy man is he in being privileged to hold such a noble office under Jesus the King! How high it is possible for him to rise in the attainment of holiness and of happiness! How devoted may be his godliness! How much of the spirit of heaven he may attain even here! How much of the very character of Christ the Son of God it is his privilege now to manifest before the world!

CHAPTER III

THE PASTOR IN THE STUDY

THERE are two places where, unseen by the world, the pastor receives strength and equipment for that momentous work to which he has been ordained; they are the closet and the study. We place them in the order of their relative importance—first the closet, then the study. First the cultivation of the heart, then the cultivation of the head, is the rule of life from which the minister of the gospel ought never to depart. The two classes of preparation for his work which are involved, in many points intermingle and are dependent on each other; still, for the sake of making each as impressive as possible, they may be considered apart. We have dwelt on the preparation of the closet; our business is now with that which is to be made in the study. In his study, away from the eye of man, the pastor is to furnish his mind and train its powers so that he may go forth and do efficient service in the great work of the Master. Here the beaten oil is to be prepared that will send forth a sweet savor in the courts of the Lord. The importance of the study as lying at the foundation of ministerial success and its proper management are questions which must be well pondered. How to become enamored of the study so as to be much in it, how to select the employments that are most important for it, how to systematize its work, and how to economize its hours so that they may tell most effectively, are considerations which are of vital importance to every pastor, young or old.

CLOSE STUDY INDISPENSABLE

The duties of this office are such that it is impossible to discharge them effectively without a life of close study. A mere random preparation, when everything happens to suit, for some important public occasions will not do. There must be close and continued cultivation of the mind and storing it with new funds of thought. Mere genius will not give permanent success here. The Spirit of God will not inspire a man without his own efforts, for the Spirit works through the diligent use of human means. Nothing will take the place of laborious and persevering study for the faithful discharge of the duties of this office. This is the indispensable condition of usefulness, of comfort and of success. Let this be received as a well-established maxim, all other assertions, promises, boastings and imaginings to the contrary notwithstanding.

It should be firmly settled by every pastor that close study is to be one great business of his whole life. We would not establish a comparison between this and the other great duties of his calling, because this so interpenetrates them as to become a constituent element of them all. That his life is to be one of incessant study, he should fix upon as a fact from which there is to be no escaping if he would serve God in the gospel. He should become reconciled to it. He should make all his arrangements with reference to it, and he should give himself up to it with his whole heart and purpose. To study on and on he should consider as no incidental thing with him, but as the great business of his life and as an indispensable part of every duty to which he is called. His study is not to be as a mere preparation for the ministry, to be dropped, or even remitted, when its active duties are entered upon, but is to be the incessant occupation of his life. It is not to be relaxed with years, but to go on filling and enriching the mind upon whose stores there will be such incessant draughts. This work of replenishing and strengthening the mind is fundamental in the ministerial office, the sphere of whose duties lies so much in

that which is mental and spiritual. The pastor should be earnest in it. In this, as in other things, he should make full proof of his ministry. He should meditate upon these things, give himself wholly to them, that his profiting may appear to all.

The pastor must study, study, study, or he will not grow, or even live, as a true workman for Christ. The want of this is the cause of innumerable failures which are seen in the ministry. Here is a young man who enters upon the office with fine talents, a fair amount of preparation, an encouraging field of labor and every prospect of success. But the promise is not fulfilled. He does not come up to the expectations which were excited, and which he himself entertained. On the contrary, his preaching decreases in interest, his congregation falls away and his whole work declines. The reason is, that he has not kept his mind polished up by constant study, or continued to replenish it with the rich stores of thought which he might have gathered from other sources. This process is well described by Vinet in his admirable work: "We must study to excite and enrich our own mind by means of other men's. Those who do not study find their talents enfeebled and their minds become decrepit before the time. In respect to preaching, experience demonstrates this most abundantly. Whence comes it that preachers much admired in the beginning decline so rapidly or remain so much below the hopes to which they had given birth? Most frequently it is because they did not continue their studies. A faithful pastor always studies to a certain extent; besides the Bible he constantly reads the book of human nature, which is always open before him; but this unscientific study does not suffice. Without incessant application we may make sermons, even good sermons, but they will all more and more resemble each other. A preacher, on the contrary, who pursues a course of solid thinking, who nourishes his mind by various reading, will always be interesting." John Wesley also depicts the evil of the habit of not study-ins; in an exhortation to one who had fallen into it: “Your talent in preaching does not increase; it is about the same as it was seven years ago; it is

lively, but not deep; there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading alone can supply this, with daily meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. Oh, begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not. What is tedious at first will afterward be pleasant. Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way, else you will be a trifler all your days and a petty, superficial preacher. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow; do not starve yourself any longer."

Nothing but close study will do for the pastor who will live and grow in the duties of his profession. He must study God in his word and in his works and in his providences; lie must study the great writings of human piety and wisdom which a rich religious literature furnishes; he must study man in his varied character, in his history and in his prospects; he must study everything that would enrich his discourses, draw men to Christ and glorify God.

It is impossible for any preacher to keep up that variety which is necessary in order to interest a congregation unless he is perpetually gathering together stores of thought, and contriving how to present them so as to attract attention. Christ, and him crucified, is the great theme of preaching, and must be the burden of every sermon. To present this one subject two or three times a week, and that year after year, without tiresome sameness, is the great difficulty which every conscientious minister must feel. The thought of this was what excited the amazement of the great English statesman, John Bright, when he said that it was a perfect mystery to him how a minister could preach even tolerably on the same subject week after week and year after year. And here is the very place where multitudes of ministers do fail. Their preaching ceases to interest because it gradually grows into a reiteration of the same thoughts in almost the same order and well-nigh the same words. No congregation can be kept together where there is such repetition in the sermons. But it is not necessary

that there should be such sameness, even though the great central theme never varies. This one grand, all-absorbing truth may be presented in ten thousand different aspects, each of which shall be new and each thrillingly interesting. It has in it a variety that never can be exhausted. These diversified phases of the cardinal thought of the gospel, however, must be thought out. They must be very diligently sought for. They are contained in the Scriptures, in Christian experience and in the nature of the subject, and they may be found in rich variety by him whose thoughts are fixed persistently on their discovery. They may always appear fresh, though the one old story has been told over a thousand times. Here is the minister's boundless field of study. Yea, it is a blessing and a glory to us that we must study and study on, and ever be rewarded with the richest discoveries of heavenly knowledge.

In almost all instances the pastor will lose his influence and position of usefulness when he is not diligent in the labors of the study. It is nearly inevitable that it should be so. In innumerable cases the secret of the decline in the popularity of ministers is to be found here. The fact cannot be concealed from the people when their pastor is habitually negligent in his preparation for the pulpit. They will see it and feel it, even though they may never cast a glance inside the study. They will perceive it in the crudeness of his discourses, and in the repetition of the same thoughts, the same Scripture quotations, the same stories and the same illustrations month after month. And can they be blamed if their interest flags and they soon grow weary? They are not fed; they learn nothing; there is nothing for them to learn; and their attention must soon be gone. Many, many ministers should look to this as the cause of their unpopularity, and not to the unreasonableness of their congregations. If they would make diligent preparation, not only for each particular sermon, but also for the general work, by incessant thought and gathering of material, it is not often that the people would lose their interest in either the preaching or the preacher.

Pre-eminently with those who hold the sacred office should

it be the rule that they would not serve God with that which cost them nothing. There was a great principle, a heaven-revealed principle, in the resolution of King David: “Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." To offer that to Jehovah which cost no sacrifice or effort, or is of no value, is unworthy his glorious majesty and the benefits we have received from him. And does not the clergyman violate that principle every time he goes into the pulpit and professes to serve God whilst preaching a sermon that has cost him no time or toil or thought? It is an affront to his congregation to preach such a sermon, but is it not a far greater affront to that glorious Being in whose name he speaks and who sees and knows all? For the preacher, who proclaims the words which God has given him, to slight his message is to slight the Author of that message; but to study it diligently, to give it deep thought, to throw his whole heart into it, is to exalt the Master by whom he is sent. He thus shows the world what he thinks of the King who sent him, as well as of the message which he bears. And the more we study our adorable Father in heaven the greater will he appear in his sublime Deity, in his word and in his works.

It is a dangerous thing for any clergyman to get into the habit of relying upon his ability to preach in a purely extemporaneous manner. There are many ministers who can do so—indeed, most persons who have been for some time in the ministry could occasionally deliver a sermon without almost any preparation. And in certain emergencies it may be necessary to do so. But to rely upon that ability, and resort often to it, as some do, is a habit that will soon prove ruinous. No preacher, no matter how great his native talents, can long retain even a respectable position if he pursues this course. If it leads to such a superficial practice the power of easy extemporaneous speaking becomes a very perilous one. The great danger is that the consciousness of being able to make a fair appearance without premeditation may keep from that persevering study without which no preaching can continue to be edifying. There may be fine words and smooth utterance

and tolerably rounded periods, but the thoughts and words will be the same over and over again. There will be enough that is old, but very little that is new or instructive. We could name many ministers of fine talents and superior powers of utterance and self-command before an audience, but who have failed in congregation after congregation because they have relied upon their native powers, and neglected that deep and never-relaxing study which, we would over and over again repeat, is indispensable to the really successful pastor.

The warning cannot be made too emphatic that one of the greatest dangers of the ministry is that of falling into the sin of slothfulness. The secluded habits of the office, the possibility of getting through many of its duties tolerably without much special preparation, and the fact that ordinarily conscience must be the only prompter, are all liable to be so perverted as to lead to a sluggish and procrastinating course of life. It is a lamentable fact that so many ministers allow their usefulness and comfort and influence to be blighted in this way. It should not be overlooked that this is a great sin. The solemn vocation of the office and the interests at stake, and the ordination vows which have been entered into, show it to be a crime in the sight of God before which any thoughtful man must tremble. And ultimately it will be ruinous. It blights the prospects of him who indulges in it; it will necessarily be seen by the world, and the minister of Christ who allows himself to become the victim of habits of slothfulness will be despised. Again then do we say, study on, that this habit, and all that is kindred to it, may be prevented or overcome.

THOROUGH SYSTEM

There is peculiar need for a well-arranged method in the discharge of the duties of the ministry, and especially for conducting the exercises of the study. In no calling of life is there more need for thorough system. So great is the number, and so varied the nature, of the duties pressing upon the pastor, that if they are not carefully arranged and proportioned in time it will be utterly impossible for him to overtake them all. It is his vocation daily to search the Scriptures diligently, to cultivate his own heart, to preach the gospel in public or from house to house, to visit the sick, to attend funerals, to write letters, to conduct ecclesiastical business, and to perform many other duties; and in order to do all this there must be a plan of work carefully matured. He needs to have his time systematized in order to perform all these duties with any measure of justice to them. The ease with which some of them might be postponed, or even omitted altogether, and his constant exposure to interruptions from various quarters, are temptations which make it exceedingly important that the pastor should have his work laid out by a system that will call up each part of it in its place and proportion, and so give completeness to it all. This system should not be so rigid as to amount to a drudgery, but it should be so well defined and understood as to bring up each duty in its time and place. It should extend to the times of devotion, to the hours and subjects of study, to the great duties of the office, and to all its private and public callings. Each of these duties and calls should be assigned its appropriate place in the work of the day or week, and the arrangement of all should be as strictly adhered to as varying events will permit.

It is surprising how much more can be accomplished when a thorough method of duty has been established, and each part of it is entered upon with promptness at the fixed minute, with the powers of the mind fully concentrated upon it. The remark of Dr. Archibald Alexander, that "more than half one's time can

thus be saved," is probably within bounds. The same thought was forcibly presented by Cecil when he said, “Method is like packing things in a box: a good packer will get in half as much again as a bad one." The order of duties, and number of hours or minutes to be spent in each of them, being fixed by rule, there will not be time wasted at each turn in considering what to do next. Much time, very much, will be gained by having the appointed duty always ready for present action, and ordinarily the most profitable thing to be done at any given hour will be that which has been fixed by the pre-established system. It is not left then for present impulse to follow its promptings whether best or not. In this way also time will be gained and space will be fixed for doing many things which otherwise would be utterly neglected. In the little fragments of time that could be economized many a volume may be read, many a study pursued, many an article written, many a valuable thought treasured up.

When a system of duties is carefully planned and rigidly adhered to in practice, it soon grows into a habit and becomes easy and pleasant. There is nothing more disagreeable than to be vacillating at every point as to what should be undertaken next. There is no more effectual method of squandering time. But when the system has grown into a habit, then its rules as a system are forgotten, and the promptings of duty alone are heard. It becomes natural then to take up each part of the day's work as its hour arrives. A fixed order of duties is far more agreeable in the end than to take them up at random as the whim of the moment might dictate. There is no thraldom in thorough system; it rather oils the wheels of daily work and makes them to run more smoothly.

To adopt some system in the study and other engagements of the ministry not only economizes time and makes the work move on more pleasantly, but it also saves from the omission of many duties which might seem to be insignificant, but which, in the aggregate, are very important. The system, grown into a habit, brings up such duties as a matter of course, and so they are not passed by or forgotten. Such things as writing letters,

visiting aged persons and speaking to inquirers are very liable to be neglected unless there is some fixed plan by which they are brought to notice at the proper time. There are small matters, such as keeping books and papers in order, making a record of marriages, of baptisms and admissions of members to the church, and acknowledging favors received, which are liable to be overlooked as of no importance, but which, in their aggregate, have a positive bearing on one's comfort as well as on his influence. These must be arranged in some order or they will inevitably be neglected in a life which is filled with so many and such varied duties as is that of the clergyman.

In order that our counsels may he as explicit as possible, we will give a scheme of daily ministerial work which has been long tried and proved practicable. Its general outline is to spend the forenoon up to two o'clock in study, the afternoon in visiting, and the evening in reading and correspondence. More specifically: two hours and a half are first employed on the study of the Sabbath morning sermon, then an hour or an hour and a half on general Bible or other studies, and then from half an hour to an hour on the sermon for Sabbath evening;. In the afternoon about two hours and a half are spent in the various duties of pastoral visiting. In the evening, or parts of evenings that can be commanded, the time is nearly equally divided between correspondence and general reading. Other smaller matters, such as have been already named, are dovetailed into the little fragments of time which lie between. We do not propose this as a plan for all, for each one must have his own system, framed according to his circumstances, tastes and objects of pursuit. But we give it as an illustration of the method which should be adopted by all. It may also, at least in its general outlines, serve as a model according to which the younger minister may construct some scheme until, by experiment, he has found out what is best for himself.

How many hours a day should be devoted to study? This is a question which is asked by most earnest young men as they enter the ministry, and it is a. question which experience ought to strive to answer—at least so to answer as to fix some

boundaries that may serve as a guide. We have already spoken of the necessity for very diligent and persevering study, and now need but add that just as much time daily as prudence will allow should be spent in it. But we would also say that the other extremity should be avoided. There should not be too much undertaken, either here or in any other branch of the ministerial work. If too many hours are spent in mental work, other duties will be neglected, the health will be endangered, the vigor of the mind will not be so great, and the wearying effects of overwork may so discourage as to create a dislike that will alienate from all mental effort. We would therefore recommend that only a reasonable and profitable length of time be allowed daily to the work of the study.

We would venture to suggest as a rule about five hours a day, or from eight o'clock in the morning until two, with a recess of an hour. Our programme, then, for the ordinary day's work would be—one hour of devotion before breakfast; five hours of study; two hours and a half of visiting; and in the evening one hour and a half for reading and correspondence—ten hours a day for these various duties of the office. Considering the variety afforded by the different engagements, this would not be too much. And if this length of time daily for five days in the week were devoted to earnest work, it would accomplish as much as any minister should ever undertake.

But these short hours in the study should be spent in real work. There should be no dreaming, no frittering away of minutes, no languid spaces spent in getting ready for work. The business in hand should be plunged into at once, and the whole powers toned up vigorously till the allotted period is ended. And little fragments of time should be most diligently utilized. These are what may be made a minister's treasury of improvement. As in some manufactories the sweepings or the shavings, when carefully gathered up, are the real profits, so it is that by improving the fragments of time the minister may accumulate great mental and spiritual wealth.

We have said that this daily routine we propose is only for five days in the week. On the Sabbath the minister should have

nothing to do with any other mental efforts than those of his public exercises. All preparations should be fully made before the Lord's Day arrives. On every account the slovenly habit of finishing sermons on the sacred day should be most strenuously avoided. We would also earnestly recommend that Monday be observed as a day of mental and bodily rest. The minister must have his resting clay as well as other men, or he will suffer the consequences. His physical constitution demands it. If it is denied, in time he will break down in health, as hundreds are doing. Nor must it be supposed that devoting one day of the week to absolute rest will be a loss of time in the end. No; the work of the other days will be more vigorous, the physical and mental tone will be kept up, and at the end of the year far more will be accomplished. One day of wakeful, energetic work is worth three or four spent in half dreaming and forcing one's self to unattractive tasks.

The thorough system we are now urging requires that there should be great promptness and punctuality in the discharge of every duty. Very much depends upon this, taking it in its broadest sense. What may be considered little duties should be most diligently attended to just as they arise, for in the aggregate they are far from being little. Every duty should be taken up in its time and finished with vigor. What claims to be done just now should be done at once and done well. How important for the minister's usefulness and credit and comfort that he should not keep continually hanging over his head a cloud of delayed duties! How different his life from that of the one who is strictly prompt in all his undertakings! We would place great emphasis on this point. To help the impression, we will quote a few energetically written sentences from Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton:

“I do not mean the merely being in time for lectures, dinners, etc., but I mean the spirit out of which punctuality grows—that love of accuracy, precision and vigor which makes efficient men and women; the determination that what you have to do shall be done in spite of all petty obstacles, and finished off at once and finally. When Nelson was on the eve of

departure for one of his great expeditions the coachman said to him, 'The carriage shall be at the door punctually at six o'clock.' 'A quarter before,' said Nelson; 'I have always been a quarter of an hour ahead of my time, and it has made a man of me.'

"The punctuality which I desire for you involves and comprehends the exact arrangement of your time. It is a matter on which much depends. Fix how much time you will spend upon each object, and keep all but obstinately to your plan. Ponder well what I have said, and call upon God to help you in arraying yourself in the qualities which I desire. If you mean to be effective, you must set about it earnestly and at once. No one ever yawned it into being with a wish; you must make arrangements for it, you must watch it, you must notice when you fail, and you must keep some kind of journal of your failures."

In the ministerial office, where there are so many different kinds of work and, so many minute though not insignificant objects of attention, it is of vast importance that each duty should be taken up promptly and discharged with energy. There is no other way of filling up its various parts with any measure of completeness.

The habit of being rigidly punctual in attendance upon every meeting and in every other object calling for his attention is an invaluable one for the clergyman. A sense of the importance of his work, the demands of veracity and the influence of his example, all require that he should be inflexible in fulfilling every engagement, and that at precisely the appointed time. It is amazing how some ministers will make appointments—appointments which to others may be of great moment—and then for some trivial reason fail to perform them. To do so is certain not only to disappoint those by whom they were expected, but also to impair the confidence of men in them, and to encourage a looseness of sentiment as to moral obligation. One should know precisely what he is doing when he enters into an engagement, and then consider himself absolutely bound to fulfill it. Never, unless from causes which are

unavoidable, should he disappoint in any promise he makes. His word should be as his bond. In this way he will make for himself a character for fidelity to his promises, for promptness and for punctuality that will be an invaluable source of power in the great work of his ministry.

All these points have been brought under the general head of system in the duties of the ministry in order that the subject may be made as emphatic as possible. No minister should drop it until his mind is impressed and his purpose formed. It may be safely said that the great difference in the efficiency of ministers is largely owing to the observance or .neglect of method in their work. The man who carefully systematizes his duties, and abides by the scheme he has planned, is sure to do more work, and to do it better, and to do it with far more satisfaction, than he otherwise could. He gains from men a confidence and respect that are a great power; he makes far more out of life; he stretches it out into works of usefulness more numerous and more effective. There may be extraordinary geniuses who can abide by no fixed plan, but must do everything by the impulse of the hour. Such cases, however, are rare —they are not the rule. The great fact which should be deeply pondered is, that he who begins life with a carefully-planned method, perfecting it from time to time by his experience, is certain to make that life better and more full of usefulness than those who neglect all system. Without system life is in great danger of being wasted. Of two pastors commencing life with equal piety, equal talents and equal zeal, but one with and the other without a minute plan of duties, the methodical one is sure in the end to do more for the Master, more for the world and more for himself than the other.

THE PASTOR SHOULD KEEP AHEAD WITH HIS WORK

Every pastor should adopt the rule of having some provision stored up beforehand for the performance of every duty to which he is likely to be called. It is a miserable plan to put off preparation to the last allowable minute. It is to live from hand to mouth. It is to make the life of the pastor one of slavish drudgery. A better plan, on every account, is to keep ahead with one's work. This rule should be observed in preparing sermons, in pastoral visiting, in appointments for special services, and in all the other numerous avocations of the ministry. There are many advantages in being ready beforehand with everything one has to do —of having a store prepared at all times for the future.

1. The knowledge that one is ahead with his work 'puts him at Ids ease and gives him a feeling of satisfaction. It imparts a consciousness of independence which those who procrastinate to the last moment in everything that they do can never enjoy. In this way one may be master of his own movements, instead of ever being under the lash of pressing duties. He will have comparative tranquillity, and be saved from much of that worry which, rather than hard work, breaks down many a minister. He will also be saved from much of that censure which a procrastinating habit is sure to incur. It will inspire confidence in him when the people see, as they inevitably will, that his diligent foresight keeps him ready for every work.

2. The habit of being beforehand with one's work prevents the necessity of hurry, with all its evil effects. An admirable rule once laid down by a wise and experienced pastor was never to be in a hurry. The tendency of this rule would be to make life longer, to fill it with more happiness, to extend it out into more deliberate usefulness, and to save from innumerable mistakes and perplexities. To be ever so much in haste does no good. There is no need for it, even with the busiest pastor, provided only his work be well regulated. The true plan for the

clergyman is not so to waste time and postpone duties as that he will be forced to be in a hurry. There are ministers who are always pressed for time, always fuming in haste; they have no leisure for friends or social enjoyment or the minor courtesies of life, and yet they do not accomplish much. You will look in vain for the great results which surely may be expected. There are others, again, who are never in a hurry; they are never behindhand; they are always at their ease; they have time for everything, and in the end they accomplish far more than the others. The grand secret is, that they keep a little ahead with their work, and that always.

3. When he is beforehand in the chief duties of his office the minister is always prepared for unexpected interruptions. Every pastor knows how liable he is to these every day and at any hour. From the nature of his calling it cannot well be otherwise. He never can predict the moment when he may be summoned to attend a funeral, or to spend hours with one who is drawing nigh unto death, or to counsel with an inquirer, or to perform a marriage ceremony, or to receive visitors coming upon ecclesiastical or other business. Sometimes these casual demands upon his time are most imperative; they cannot possibly be avoided or postponed. Then the Sabbath perhaps is near at hand, and he must be ready for it, or the address for an installation or some other special service cannot be deferred. What is the perplexed pastor to do? How is he to escape the flurry that is often actually distressing? Only in one way, and that is to be ahead with all his preparations, so that he may be ready, come what may.

4. This practice will lead to far more being done, and also better done. When one is beforehand with his work he will be able so to arrange his time as to find some space for every duty. It will be possible for him then to lay out his plans for preparing sermons, for general reading, for study of the Bible, for visiting, for correspondence, for helping in the work of the Sabbath-school, for pursuing private studies, as well as for recreation, and possibly for writing for the press. The plan is simply to command time for all by being beforehand in every

work.

And then, too, everything will be done better. There will be no posting through work imperfectly from lack of preparation. What is undertaken in a calm and self-possessed manner can be thoroughly finished. There will be no slighting sermons through a haste which other imperative duties enforce. The true method is to be beforehand in every undertaking; then the heart will be in it; and because the heart is in it, it will be more pleasantly and perfectly accomplished.

INCESSANT STUDY OF THE BIBLE

This is a duty which must be placed amidst the very first of all the duties that devolve upon the pastor. We must come back to it again and again and again as we treat of his all-important calling. In that holy office he must study many things, but this most—yea, more than all other things put together. We would endeavor to impress this point as strongly as possible. The minister must study the Bible for his own heart-culture; he must study it for all his official duties; he must study it until he grows to love the study; he must study it until he gets his mind saturated with it; he must study it to keep up freshness and variety in his preaching; he must study it every day; he must study it until his dying day.

The pastor may depend upon it that a thorough knowledge of the oracles of God would prove to be the right arm of his strength. It would give vigor to his faith. It would impart robustness to his Christian character. It would clothe his preaching with irresistible power. It would furnish him with the best preparation in his attendance upon the sick, the inquiring, the young, in ecclesiastical affairs and in every other branch of his work. What skill is to the mechanic, what eloquence is to the orator, what taste is to the artist, what wisdom is to the statesman, that, and still more necessary, is a profound knowledge of the Scriptures to the minister. All experience proves this to be so. From the very nature of the case this must make him strong; without it, he cannot but be weak as an ambassador of God. The testimony of all devoted and successful pastors establishes this truth beyond a question.

A few sentences from the pen of that great and good man, Dr. James W. Alexander, will serve as specimens of what is reiterated thousands of times by those who have had the ripest experience: “Constant perusal and re-perusal of Scripture is the great preparation for preaching. You get good even when you know it not. This is one of the most observable differences between old and young theologians. Give attendance to

reading." In another connection he says: “The liveliest preachers are those who are most familiar with the Bible without note or comment, and we frequently find them among men who have had no education better than that of the common school. It was this which gave such animation to the vivid books and discourses of the Puritans. As there is no poetry so rich and bold as that of the Bible, so he who daily makes this his study will, even on human principles, be awakened and acquire a striking manner of conveying his thoughts. The sacred books are full of fact, example and illustration, which, with copiousness and variety, will cluster around the truths which the man of God derives from the same source. One preacher gives us naked heads of theology; they are true, scriptural and important, but they are uninteresting, especially when reiterated for the thousandth time in the same naked manner. Another gives us the same truths, but each of them brings in its train the retinue of scriptural example, history, a figure by -way of illustration, and a variety hence arises which is perpetually becoming richer as the preacher goes more deeply into the mine of Scripture. There are some great preachers who, like Whitefield, do not appear to bestow great labor on the preparation of particular discourses, but it may be observed that these are always persons whose life is a study of the word. Each sermon is an outflowing from a fountain which is constantly full. The Bible is, after all, the one book of the preacher. He who is most familiar with it will become most like it, and this in respect to every one of its wonderful qualities, and will bring forth from his treasury things new and old."

The minister who has laid hold, as a living fact, of this one thought of the pre-eminent importance of being deeply imbued both with the letter and the spirit of the word of God is already mighty for his work.

Look at the Bible. The pastor has to do with it at every point of his work. He must come to it in everything he undertakes. He is nothing without it. It is all in all to him in his office. It is more to him than any—than all—other books that were ever

penned. The Bible contains his credentials as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. It is the message which he is appointed to reiterate with all fervor to his fellow-men. It is the treasury from which he can ever draw the riches of divine truth. It is the Urim and Thummim to which he has constant access, and from which he can learn the mind of Jehovah with all clearness. It is the audience-chamber where he will be received into the presence of the Lord and hear words of more than earthly wisdom. It is the armory from which he can be clothed with the panoply of salvation. It is the sword of the Spirit before which no enemy can possibly stand. It is his book of instructions wherein the great duties of his office are clearly defined. The chief rules of his sacred art are here. There is nothing which it is essential for him to know but is revealed here either in express terms or in inferences which are easily studied out. It is a mine of sacred wealth for the clergyman, the abundance of which he can never exhaust. The deeper he goes, the richer and more unbounded will its treasures appear. Well was it said by Dr. W. E. Schenck: “That volume alone contains the warrant for the sacred office he bears. In it alone is found the record of his great commission as an ambassador of God. It alone authoritatively exhibits and defines the official duties he must perform. It alone tells him of the glorious rewards he may expect if he be found faithful. Nay, more, it contains the subject-matter for all his preaching and his other professional labors." It is a shame for a preacher not to be a master in the knowledge of the Book of books, which is everything to him.

It is well that we should strive to impress this great duty and privilege of the minister by the authority of eminent workers in the sacred office. Their experience and testimony should be deeply studied. "The study of the Bible is the special duty of every individual who would understand the truth of God and be prepared to make it known to others. Burnet, speaking of ministers in his own times, says, 'The capital error in men's preparing themselves for that function is that they study books more than themselves, and that they read divinity more in other books than in the Scriptures.' This, it is to be feared, is as

true now as it was then; and if so it must be attended, inevitably, with very injurious consequences both to the ministry and the Church. For as the Bible is the source of divine knowledge, so it is of spiritual strength, and every holy affection and purpose.

“Melanchthon recommended, as the first requisite in the study of theology, ‘a familiarity with the text of the sacred Scriptures, and in order to this that they should be read daily, both morning and evening. The daily devotion of Luther to the sacred text is well known, and it was this that made him strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.'

"Dr. Campbell, in his treatise on systematic theology, says, 'Devoutly study the Scriptures themselves if you would understand their doctrines in singleness of heart. The only assistance which I would recommend are those writings in which there can be no tendency to warp your judgment. It is the serious and frequent reading of the divine oracles, accompanied with fervent prayer; it is the diligent study of the languages in which they were written; it is the knowledge of those histories and antiquities to which they allude.'

“President Edwards, as the result of his own experience, said, 'I find that it would be very much to my advantage to be thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. When I am reading doctrinal books or books of controversy, I can proceed with abundantly more confidence and can see upon what foundation I stand.'"

It has been truthfully said: “When scholars furnish themselves with stores of other writers, besides the Scriptures, and being little conversant in the Scriptures draw the Scriptures to the authors whom they most affect, and not their authors to the Scriptures, their divinity proves but humanity, and their ministry speaks to the brain, but not to the conscience, of the hearer. But he that digs all the treasures of his knowledge and the ground of all religion out of the Scriptures, and makes use of other authors, not for ostentation of himself, nor for the ground of his faith, nor for the principal ornament of his ministry, but for the better searching out of the

deep wisdom of the Scriptures,—such an one believes what he teaches, not by a human credulity from his author, but by a divine faith from the word. And because he believes therefore he speaks, and speaking from faith in his own heart, he speaks much more powerfully to the begetting and strengthening of faith in the hearer."

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE

It helps very much in any undertaking to know precisely what is to be done. And in the matter before us we want something more definite than the general statement of the importance of the study of the Bible. How is that study to be entered upon? What plans can be adopted so as to carry it on with the greatest efficiency? In answering this we shall not attempt to go over all the rules that might be given to the general student of Scripture. Some of the most obvious ones we shall omit because they are so manifest, and confine ourselves to those which are peculiarly applicable to the ministry. And of these we shall speak only of such as are certainly practicable, and so may easily be adopted by almost any minister.

1. When any text is selected for a sermon or lecture, its whole context should be carefully studied out. One should not be satisfied by merely getting enough of the meaning to serve for the present discourse, but there should be pains taken to investigate it thoroughly, and to trace its connection with what goes before and with what follows after. One passage well understood will help to throw some light over the whole field of Scripture. Its careful study will not only help the sermon on hand, but will serve also as a method of enlarging one's whole comprehension of divine truth. Besides, the large number of passages thus investigated will, in the course of years, form a most important fund of biblical knowledge treasured up in the mind. This plan of biblical study should be diligently persevered in, as in addition to other advantages it will economize time, the same research serving for the current discourse and for the permanent improvement. Not only when sermonizing, but when from any cause the attention is aroused to any particular passage, the meaning of that passage should be studied out at once. Then it will be more likely to fix itself permanently in the memory.

2. The location of a few prominent places, comprehending the body of biblical geography, should be fixed distinctly in the memory. To have a clear perception of the place where any scriptural event occurred will give a wonderful interest and impressiveness and fullness of meaning to that event. To this end, the physical and general geographical features of the Holy Land should be fully comprehended at the outset. They should be mastered so as to be accurately understood and always ready to be applied. Palestine proper is but a small country—not as large as the two small states of Maryland and Delaware together—and consequently its geography can be easily learned. The plan we suggest is that a few of the most prominent places, representing the various parts of the land, be selected and fixed indelibly on the memory. Their physical peculiarities, their distance and direction, say from Jerusalem, and some great historical event for which they were each noted, might be studied, and this would help to give them distinctness. Then every other place could be located in its proximity to one or other of these. They would serve as landmarks, so that in reading any transaction of the Bible we should know exactly where we were. This would give an indescribable vividness and charm to the book.

To be still more explicit, we would name the following nine places as suitable for such landmarks: 1. Beersheba; 2. Hebron; 3. Samaria; 4. Capernaum; 5. Dan; 6. Tyre; 7. Acre; 8. Joppa; 9. Ramoth-gilead. These places may be fixed in the memory by the following numbers and historical associations; the distances and directions are not given with exact accuracy, but in numbers near enough and that may be more easily remembered: 1. Beersheba, forty-two miles south-west of Jerusalem, the old home of the patriarchs, on the borders of the desert; 2. Hebron, sixteen miles south of Jerusalem; here Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah; 3. Samaria, thirty-eight miles north of Jerusalem, capital of the kingdom of Israel, with its wicked kings; 4. Capernaum, eighty-one miles north of Jerusalem, the scene of so many of our Lord's miracles and discourses; 5. Dan, one hundred and nine miles north of

Jerusalem, on the northern extremity of Palestine; here Jeroboam set up the golden calf; 6. Tyre, one hundred and six miles north of Jerusalem, the great commercial city of antiquity; 7. Acre, eighty miles north-west of Jerusalem, “the key of Syria," famed in many a war; 8. Joppa, thirty-five miles westward from Jerusalem, and the port of that city; 9. Ramoth-gilead, forty miles north-east of Jerusalem, one of the cities of refuge, and the place where king Ahab was slain. If these leading points are imprinted permanently on the memory, and all scriptural incidents associated with one or other of them or with Jerusalem, then an important key has been furnished for opening the sacred treasury.

3. The prominent epochs of scriptural history should he clearly understood and firmly fixed upon the memory. This will apply chiefly to the Old Testament, as the whole of the New Testament history is comprised within a comparatively small space of time. God has seen tit to convey the knowledge of his will to us largely through history. This was no doubt the best way. Accordingly, in the Bible we have the history of the way in which salvation was wrought out for men, of God's providential dealings with both good and bad men, of the condition of the race when its Creator was discarded, and of the world both with and without religion. History often conveys lessons as authoritative as direct commands, and sometimes more impressive. Hence the student of the word of God ought to make himself most thoroughly acquainted with the history contained in it, both with its great outlines and connections and with its minute incidents.

A wonderful assistance in doing this will be found in grasping its important epochs. The great salient points which mark the government of God over men from the creation to the advent of Christ, as they are recorded in the Bible, should be kept prominently and indelibly in the memory. They will serve as stages by which to measure the progress of the life-journey of the race. All the other events of the centuries can be arranged around these, and their positions remembered from their proximity to them. This will give the whole march of the

history distinctness, order and impressiveness.

We would suggest the following schedule of chronological epochs. We give the name of the epoch, its date before Christ and the space of time between each and the following one. We also present it in a tabular form in order that it all may be taken in at one view, and thus the memory be assisted:

Epoch.	B. C.	Name of Period.	Length of Period.
1. Creation	4004		
2. Deluge	2348	Antediluvian Period	1656
3. Call of Abraham	1921	Noachian Period	427
4. Descent into Egypt	1706	Patriarchal Period	215
5. Exodus	1491	Egyptian Period	215
6. Passage of the Jordan	1451	Wilderness Period	40
7. Establishment of Monarchy.	1095	Period of the Judges	356
8. Division of the Monarchy	975	Period of United Monarchy	120
9. Capture of Jerusalem	587	Period of Divided Monarchy.	388
10. Close of Old Test. History	397	Period of the Captivity	190
11. Birth of Christ	00	Period of the World-powers	397

It will take but a very short time to memorize these ten dates, and it is recommended that they be repeated hundreds of times, if necessary, so as to become perfectly indelible and familiar. The assertion is ventured that whoever does this will be astonished and delighted at the assistance it will afford in understanding the Bible history, at the order into which it will reduce the various events, and at the light it will throw over the whole book.

4. The Bible should be studied constantly with the aid of the best commentaries. The vague outcries which are often heard against the use of commentaries are very inconsiderate if not foolish. There may be a slavish dependence on them that is injurious, but we can hardly think that earnest ministers are much in danger of that. The light which the labors of good men have thrown upon the Scriptures has ever been growing brighter from age to age; language, archeology, travels,

geography and other kinds of research, have all been contributing their aid in elucidating the divine record; no other book in the world has received so much thought from the best of minds; and is all this to be thrown away and each one to go over the whole process for himself? The proposal would be one of foolish egotism. The greatest preachers—such men as Robert Hall, who spent hours daily in reading the commentary of Matthew Henry—never indulged such self-conceit. No, a proper conception of the grandeur and depth of the word of God will lead the prudent minister to use every possible aid in striving to reach its fullest meaning. The very best commentaries should be secured— it is waste of time to use any others—and then they should be consulted, not merely for isolated passages, but they should be read and studied like any other books. All the light they can shed upon the sacred pages should be sought. Some system should be adopted for the regular study of the Bible in this way.

There are certain commentaries which should be read through. Full justice will not be done them and their real benefit will not be reached in any other way. We would name a few of these to show the kind of expositions we mean. On the New Testament we would recommend such works as The Life of Christ, by Farrar, Alexander on Acts, and Hodge on Romans. On the Old Testament we name Murphy on Genesis and Exodus and Psalms, Fairbairn on Ezekiel, Auberlin on Ezekiel and Revelation, and Moore on The Prophets of the Restoration. Then the pious and most suggestive commentary of Matthew Henry should be read through during the life of every minister, for whoever studies it closely will have his piety deepened, his power of analyzing strengthened and his mind stored with the riches of the word of God.

5. Scripture should be compared with Scripture in order that the mind of the Spirit may be more fully reached. This is a plan of studying the Bible which is very highly recommended by all those who have practiced it sufficiently to understand its great benefits. There is a real delight enjoyed when one follows on from passage to passage and finds a new ray of light here,

an additional depth of meaning there, a striking view of divine truth in another place, and everywhere something fully to reward his research. A certain truth will be found announced in didactic language in one place; in another it will be set forth by some historical fact; in another it will be revealed by a type; in another it will sound forth again in the sweet words of a psalm; and in each case it will have a special phase of importance and beauty. A truth announced in one place may appear far clearer in another, because of the connection in which it occurs. What does not make an impression in one place may be most striking as seen in another. What is obscurely hinted here may be plainly revealed elsewhere. Part of a doctrine may be taught by one passage, part by another, and other parts by still others; and it is only by following up and putting them all together that the full rounded truth is reached. There is an indescribable charm in searching out how exactly the teachings of the Spirit fit into each other, wherever, or in whatever connection, they are found. It is surprising how clearly one comes to understand the Scriptures by perseverance in this kind of research. The very exercise gives an important familiarity with the various parts and connections of the inspired Book. There is no better method of building up a sermon than this process of taking a text and following it on and on through other Scriptures which fortify, illustrate, explain and expand it into a broad and beautiful manifestation of the mind of God.

6. A "Students' Bible" should be kept for the purpose of preserving interpretations or illustrations of scriptural passages which may be casually met with in reading, in conversation or in any other way. Such incidental expositions of Scripture are peculiarly valuable. How often is the regret felt that, having been once in the mind and seen to be deeply important, they were not preserved, but are now gone and cannot be recalled! In the course of ordinary reading an admirable explanation of a passage will sometimes be met with; in conversation an impressive remark upon the meaning of some text will be heard; or a forcible illustration will be suggested in the midst of daily business; or the meaning and

force of a Bible truth or a plan for opening it up into a sermon will sometimes flash unexpectedly upon the mind. These should be nailed for future use by being put on record. They should be saved from oblivion, especially what has originated in one's own mind, for that will be the most valuable. When such casual explanations are thus preserved they grow into a very precious treasure in time. Hardly any of them but at some future day will come into use.

There is one caution which should be given as to the use of a "Students' Bible." It is that too much be not put in it. Only really valuable explanations or illustrations should find a place on its pages. When there is too much, reference to it becomes a drudgery, and a part at least of the superabundance is likely to be of so little importance that in time the book may come to be utterly neglected and all its treasures practically lost.

7. A whole book of the Bible should be read continuously, and, if possible, at one sitting. There is very great advantage in taking some book and reading it through at once without regard to the divisions of chapters and verses. As the Scriptures are ordinarily read in broken-up portions, the connection is liable to be lost and the general drift of the writer left undisclosed. What injustice would we think done to any other book were it read in this fragmentary manner! If we want to reach the full and broad meaning of the word of God, we must read each of its books continuously. It is only thus that we can get at the richer bonds of thought that unite its parts in one sublime whole. The time required for going through a book thus, as to most of the books, would not be very great, and it would more than repay the effort. Says Dr. James W. Alexander: “To-day I took up my Greek Testament, and, as I walked about the floor, read the Second Epistle to Timothy, pausing in thought on certain striking places. I saw many new excellencies, had some new rays of light, and was more than ever convinced of the excellency of this way of Scripture study; especially when, after a number of rapid perusals, one goes over the ground with more and more ease every time."

8. It is an excellent plan for a minister to have constantly on

hand some book of the Bible for special study and analysis. He should take up some book and work on it until, as far as it is in his power, he has mastered its contents. It should be read over and over and over until its matter lies fully before the mind. Then there should be thorough research as to the history, mission, character and peculiarities of the writer, as to the time, circumstances and object of writing the book, and as to the place it holds in the canon of Scripture or the niche it occupies in God's plan of revelation. This study should be continued until interest is aroused and the heart enlisted. Down, down into the rich veins of divine truth should the research be carried. The book should be analyzed so fully that not only the general object of the whole, but the special object and relation of each part, shall be distinctly seen. The study should be so exhaustive that the subjects of each chapter would be impressed upon the memory, and so made ready for use. One book of the Bible thus carefully studied will certainly be an invaluable addition to a minister's spiritual and mental wealth. When one book is finished another should be taken up. The enriching process should be continued through life.

9. The study of the word of God should be continued until it has -worked itself up into a fascination. So long as it is carried on in an intermitting and superficial manner there will be no attraction. But research into this most wonderful of all books may be carried to a point where its meaning shall be so clearly seen, and the aroma of its perfections shall be so sensibly enjoyed, that one shall be allured to its deeper study as to a feast of pleasure. There may be a very great delight found in it. And when any minister has reached this attainable point of great enjoyment in the study of the Scriptures, he has reached one of his greatest possible achievements. Indeed, there is the most weighty truth in the remark once made in a company of experienced and successful pastors, and endorsed by every one of them, that the attainment of a captivating love for the Bible should be the first and great aim in the studies of die clergyman, and that the teacher of pastoral theology who had found the secret of awaking it had found the secret of raising

the office to a far higher plane. This would unquestionably be the testimony of all those who have had much experience and success in the ministry. They would urge upon every minister, young or old, to study daily, to dig deep, to contrive every possible plan by which to awaken in themselves an absorbing love for the word of God. They would press it home upon the conscience that there should be no pause until that point is reached.

Let two of the wisest and best workers in the ministry be heard in order that the great importance of this subject may be more deeply felt. The first is Dr. Archibald Alexander; he wrote: “It has been said that everything a minister studies should have a reference to the word of God. Through whatever fields of science or of literature he may rove, he should come back with superior relish to the Bible. In the varied regions of philosophy and taste he is permitted to rove, but the Bible should be his richest banquet. Make it a rule always to prefer it. If at the hours of devotion you are strongly drawn toward some new and interesting publication, if you are tempted for this to omit the regular study of the Scriptures, regard it as a temptation, and resist it accordingly. You recollect the resolution of the pious Henry Martyn. He never would allow himself to peruse a book one moment after he felt it gaining a preference to the Bible. As long as he could turn to his Bible with a superior relish, so long he would continue reading, and no longer. Go thou and do likewise. If you commence with this resolution, you will find the advantages of it in your daily experience. The word of God will grow constantly in your estimation, and you will be ready to exclaim with David, ‘Oh how I love thy law! It is sweeter to my taste than honey and the honeycomb.'

“My own experience convinces me that the oftener and the more diligently you peruse the Scriptures, the more beautiful will they appear and the less relish you will have for light and superficial reading. There is in an intimate, in a daily, conversation with the Scriptures something sanctifying, something ennobling. A satisfaction is felt in perusing them which no human composition can excite. You feel as if you were

conversing with God and angels. You breathe a heavenly atmosphere. The soul is bathed in celestial waters. It imbibes a sweetness and composure which shed over it unearthly attractions."

The other quotation we make is from Archdeacon Law. His weighty words were: "Brethren, unless we are content to totter, we must take our stand on an inspired Bible. We really have such treasure. We should know, we should maintain, its value. Here prayerful students may drink pure truth from God's own lips, even as Israel's leader on the mount. There is no wisdom in the sneer that there may be idolatry in the love and study of these pages. The speaker is more than man; we should draw near with awe. The innate power is more than man's; we should devoutly court its action on our hearts. He is the wisest among earth's sons who is best taught in it. He is the happiest who draws most deeply from its spring. He is the heavenliest who is framed most strictly by its model. He is the ablest minister who uses these materials most skillfully. He reaps the largest harvest who scatters this seed most widely. That flock is the most favored whose constant teaching flows in the grand channel, 'Thus saith the Lord!' "

COMMITTING SCRIPTURE TO MEMORY

The memory of every clergyman ought to be well stored with the word of God. Especially those passages which are of the greatest importance should he have treasured up in the very words which the Holy Ghost inspired. Many such passages will -have fixed themselves in the memory without an effort, in consequence of the continual hearing and reading of the Bible from infancy. But the pastor should add largely to them by the determined purpose and plan of learning by heart others and still others. He should fix upon some system by which he would be constantly increasing his stock of available utterances from the sacred oracles.

The subjects in respect to which scriptural quotations should be ready in the memory are innumerable and deeply important. The minister should be ready to speak with inspired words concerning the nature and attributes of Father, Son and Holy Ghost; concerning the foundations of all the great doctrines of the gospel; concerning the moral precepts and the leading duties of religion; concerning the fruits of the Spirit; concerning the warnings, the promises and the consolations which God has so abundantly given; concerning the imagery in the Bible by which the soul may be elevated to heavenly-mindedness; concerning the great events of human history; and concerning the predictions which point out the grand future of the Church of God. Such passages, stored up and ready for use, the minister will find invaluable in prayer, in preaching, in attending funerals, in visiting the sick and afflicted, and in other duties. They will suggest themselves as texts, illustrations and proofs in sermons. They will be ready for extemporaneous addresses. They will prove mighty weapons by which to meet adversaries of every kind. In hours of solitary meditation they will rise up before the soul, and enrich it, beyond all conception, with the very thoughts of God. They will make the preacher mighty in the Scriptures.

The remarks of Dr. Win. E. Schenck on this point are most

pertinent: “One important text once fairly lodged in the memory becomes in some sort a part of one's self. It is thenceforth ready for use in preaching, in praying, in conversing anywhere and at any time. It helps to make one 'mighty in the Scriptures.' A large store of texts and choice passages thoroughly committed to memory will give invaluable help in all pulpit preparation, and will greatly strengthen for any sudden draft or any emergency of ministerial duty."

A plan for such memorizing of Scripture which has been long tried and found perfectly practicable and easy, and really delightful, may now be described: A blank book is procured, and in it are written down from time to time such passages, longer or shorter, with chapter and verse, as it is determined to learn by heart These passages are numbered from one upward. Then the first one is taken up and repeated by memory about fifteen times a day for a fortnight. The second one is then taken and submitted to a similar process, while at the same time every day the first one is reviewed once. And so the process goes on, every fortnight a new passage being taken up, and in connection every day of that fortnight all the passages that have gone before in their numerical order, with chapter and verse repeated. When twenty-five is reached, then the first one is dropped altogether, and so afterward the second and the third. The permanent process thus becomes the repeating of the current passage fifteen times a day, with a review of the twenty-five previous passages at the same time.

This scheme may seem to be very mechanical, but it soon grows into a pleasure; it occupies not more than fifteen minutes a day, and can be carried out while walking; the floor during some interval of change from one duty to another, and so prove a recreation.

And look at the advantages. Each fortnight a new and important passage of Scripture is laid up in memory for use in all time to come. It has been repeated over hundreds of times, and so wrought into the mind that it can no more be effaced than can those verses that have come down with us from childhood. Every such passage is a new treasure in the mind. It

makes one richer in the word of God. Every fortnight makes its addition to this mine of wealth. And into what a vast stock this will accumulate in a few years! How richly it will fill the mind with God's most precious utterances upon all those subjects which are the most deeply important for man to know! Let it be remembered, too, that the Scriptures thus committed are not only so fixed in memory that they can never be forgotten, but that they become so familiar as to be a part of the mental furniture, ready for use on all occasions.

This plan may seem too complicated and artificial for some, but most pressingly would we urge upon every pastor to devise some plan by which he will be constantly filling his memory with portions of God's word.

THE STUDY OF HEBREW AND GREEK

It is to be feared that most pastors, as soon as they leave the theological school and enter upon the hard work of the ministry, drop the study of the original languages. At the very time when they are ready to enjoy the reading of the sacred word in the tongues in which it was first written, and to profit by it, and to go on improving in the exercise, they lay it aside, in very many cases to be taken up no more. By so doing they lose, in a great measure, the advantages of an important study of the previous years. The commencement of one's ministry is the time, and the only time, for averting this danger. The knowledge already acquired should be carefully kept up. It should be increased until the sacred languages could be read with ease and pleasure. Some plan for persevering in this study should be adopted in the beginning.

It need not take much time. Want of time arising from the pressure of other duties is generally the great obstacle. But there need not be many hours spent in it. One hour a week devoted to the Hebrew and one to the Greek will serve to keep up that knowledge of them already attained, and even to make a little progress. One unbroken hour in the week is better than the fragmentary plan of fifteen or twenty minutes a day for each of the studying days of the week. The knowledge which is at first fresh is easily retained, and then, if ever so little is added to it from week to week, it will gradually grow into a grand attainment in years. The systematic study may be very much aided by the careful examination in the original of each text with its context which is taken up for sermon or lecture. Some ministers keep up their knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek fairly in this way.

The slowness of the progress, and the imperfect knowledge of these languages already attained, very often at first discourage from attempting further effort. It is so tedious to search out the interpretation of a passage, there is so little satisfaction in the operation, and there is such a mountain to

be overcome before the task will be much easier, that it is frequently given up in despair. But is it not much if, even with difficulty, a passage can be traced back into the very language in which it was written by men inspired of God? And if present difficulties should be ever so great and present improvement ever so slow, yet what will not steady progress at length achieve? What will not an hour a week, of even the slowest advance, amount to in ten years? The rule should be to keep up what has been already attained, and aim after some improvement, no matter how little.

The advantages to the minister of being acquainted with the original languages of the Scriptures are very great.

1. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Bible can be better understood through the aid of this knowledge than it can possibly be without it. There are shades of meaning in the first language which no other language will convey. There are a force and a beauty in the idioms of the original tongues which cannot be felt when translated. We can often obtain a better insight into the mind of the writer by catching the import of his identical words than we could possibly reach by the use of any commentaries. By the study of the original we get into the modes of thought and feeling that were prevalent in the times of the writers. We are able to touch their hearts—to sorrow, rejoice, hope and understand as they did. By reading the word of God in these grand old languages our attention is awakened; we break through the rote into which the constant use of the English has degenerated, and we are as it were perusing a new book.

2. We get nearer to the mind of the Spirit in this way. Every version must necessarily be a remove from it. In the original tongues we have the truth as it came fresh from the lips of God through his inspired servants. Here it is that we have the least possible of a human medium between the mind of the Spirit and the mind of man. What a rich blessing it is that in this way we can go so near to him!

3. Out of all the possible languages of the world these were the ones which were providentially chosen for conveying the

will of God to man. How honored and blessed are we that by any process, however laborious, we may reach the fountain-head and read the divine Mind in the very words in which it was first made known! This getting close to the thoughts of God is the great object of all exposition of Scripture.

4. It must be an unspeakable pleasure to get at the very terms which were written by inspired pens, the very sounds that were uttered by Jehovah and heard from his lips by his highly-favored servants. By this study we can get at the precise language which the Holy Ghost dictated, and which holy men of old penned in the highest raptures of communion with the Deity. In this way we can read the very words with which Abraham saluted Melchizedek, which were written with God's own fingers on the tables of the Law given to Moses on Sinai, in which David sung the sacred lays of Israel, by which Isaiah uttered the raptures of his soul as he soared in sublime vision, through which Ezekiel received his awe-inspiring revelations by the banks of Ulai, which Paul used on Mars' Hill, which was spoken to John in his sublime Apocalypse, and which was heard in heavenly accents around the throne of God. Surely the reading of such words must touch the deeper and more sacred chords of the heart!

5. To be skilled in these languages gives one an independence in interpreting the Scriptures and an authority in expounding them which cannot be too highly valued. Then we can go to the fountain-head at once, and see for ourselves the meaning and force of the original, and judge of the version, without depending on others to tell us whether it conveys accurately the spirit of what God has spoken. Our explanations will then be listened to with more attention and received with more confidence, because they are known to have come from the exact words that were at first written.

6. Some of the best modern commentaries on the Scriptures cannot be used to full advantage without a knowledge of these languages. They are founded upon the original—it is difficult to see how there can be an exposition of the highest excellency that is not so founded —and require at least some acquaintance

therewith in order to be clearly understood. Certain it is that the exact force and impressiveness of their explanations cannot be otherwise appreciated. Very often the truer and richer meaning of passages depends on shades of language that cannot be translated.

7. Ministers should keep up and increase their acquaintance with the original languages, because some day they may themselves undertake to prepare commentaries, and then find that this knowledge is indispensable. Every minister should aim at preparing something for the press, something that may go farther and wider than his voice could reach, something that may live when his voice can be heard no more on earth. The press is too important an agency for disseminating truth to be neglected bv those who have the heart and head to use it. And what more natural for a teacher of the divine oracles to write than explanations of those oracles? It might not be a commentary on a whole book of the Bible, but on some part of a book, some chapter or some shorter passage, that was undertaken. Whatever it might be, it would be rendered far more valuable by the clearer understanding and the authoritativeness it would receive from an acquaintance with the original. Without this there can hardly be a profound and independent commentary written. The riches of the inspired thought can hardly be brought out without a knowledge of the inspired language.

How much it is regretted by multitudes of older pastors that in the beginning of their ministry they did not undertake and rigidly pursue this study! for they see the importance of it now as they could not be made to see it then. What skill they once had in the sacred languages is nearly all gone, and it is too late for them now to begin the study, which would be almost a new one. Sometimes they are deterred from undertaking certain literary work through want of ability to use these languages. They feel the great want at every turn in their studies, and mourn that they had not understood it at an earlier day and provided against it. Their advice to all young ministers would be most emphatic: “Keep up and increase your knowledge of

the Greek and Hebrew."

A much-needed caution should here be given to all preachers: it is, to avoid the habit of correcting the ordinary English version of the Scriptures in the pulpit. There are some ministers who are constantly doing this. Sometimes the conviction can hardly be avoided that it is done as a display of learning; and a poor weak one it is. Sometimes, no doubt, it is honestly done to impart a clearer understanding of the word. But it is nearly always unwise, hardly ever in good taste. It is always unwise if not done in a very guarded manner. Its tendency is to weaken, and ultimately destroy, confidence in the Bible as it is in our hands. Instances could be given where preachers have assailed the English version so often that some of the best of their hearers have declared that they did not know what to receive, for they could not tell whether any particular passage was correctly or incorrectly translated. It should be made a matter of conscience not to trifle in this way with the word in its present venerable form. Its meaning may be explained to the fullest extent, but the version should ever be touched with a very delicate hand.

PREPARING SERMONS

This subject comes under another branch of preparatory study for the gospel ministry, and we shall not take it up now to any extent. It belongs to Homiletics, a science of such wide range as to require a whole volume of itself. But there is one counsel concerning the work of sermonizing so important and so comprehensive that it should not be omitted in a treatise on the general subject of pastoral theology.

The one advice which we would give to ministers here is, to aim at doing the very best in each sermon. It is easy to get into the habit of slighting work here— of feeling that the present is not a subject of sufficient importance to call forth all one's strength—to yield to a sense of lassitude and haste for this once—to put off the exertion of full effort to some other and more important occasion. Against all this we would very earnestly advise. The aim should be to do the very best that is in one's power on the particular sermon that is now on hand. The strength should not be reserved for another time; the best should be done now. The subject claiming the present moment should be treated in the clearest and most impressive manner, so that men may be moved by it toward God and holiness.

But when we say that the best should be done on every sermon, it is not intended that a great amount of time should be spent on it. That would not often be possible in the busy life of a minister. But it is not necessary that a very long period should be consumed in the forthputting of one's best efforts. It is better not to spend too much time on a sermon, nor to attempt doing so, for then there will be danger of falling into a, slow, dreamy and languid habit of study—danger of letting the life of the subject and the animation of one's thoughts evaporate. It is better to go at the subject with a strong sense of its importance, with a quickened attention, and with a determination that it shall be treated as fully and as impressively as it is in our power. There is great force in the opinion of the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson, that if one sits

clown doggedly and persistently to write, whether at the first he is in the spirit or not, he can work himself up to fervor and force. This is the state of mind one should strive after every time he undertakes the preparation of a sermon, and he will grow into the habit of doing his best always.

As a motive to this it should be remembered that preaching is the minister's first and greatest duty. It was not to baptize or to wait upon tables that the apostle Paul felt himself called, but he felt that a woe was hanging over him if he did not preach the gospel. It is the same with all ministers who have much of Paul's spirit. They may slight anything, they may slight everything else, but they cannot slight the sermon.

The importance of any sermon which the pastor may preach demands that he should lay out his strength upon it. The sermon now on hand is the present duty upon which the powers of the mind and heart should be concentrated. This is the particular message which is now to be received from the mouth of God, and carefully arranged so as to be fastened upon the attention of men. It is to be a fresh proclamation of mercy made in the name of the great Head of the Church. It mav prove a savor of life unto life or of death unto death, and the results of it may extend away into the endless ages. The subject on which one is now preparing a sermon is a subject, perchance, on which he has never preached before, and may never preach again; how important that it should be thought out once for all! How important that the people who come to hear the word of God on any particular Sabbath should not be put off with anything less than the very best that can be prepared for them!

It should be remembered that any sermon that is preached may be the means, in the hand of God, of the conversion of some soul or souls. The minister never rises to deliver the message of God but there may be some one present who is inquiring on the very subject treated in the discourse—some one who at that particular time may be helped forward in the half-formed determination to close with the offers of Christ—some one to whom the Holy Ghost may apply that very sermon

and make it the medium through which he will see himself pardoned and saved. It may be that the sermon now on hand will be one that shall be thought of through time—yea, in eternity—as the message that brought healing and eternal life to souls. What solemn interest should these considerations throw around a sermon! How they would save from preparing it in a careless manner, and lead to putting forth all the powers of the heart and soul and mind in making it most clear and impressive! These things should be thought of in every sermon. In every one there should be a determination to save souls if possible. A sermon is a momentous thing, and ought never to be treated with levity.

In the preparation of a sermon it is not improper to reflect that it may determine some person to become a constant attendant upon one's ministry. At the delivery of that sermon there may be some one present whom it would be very desirable to secure to the congregation— some one who will that clay decide the question whether or not he will make that church his home. Suppose the minister sees some such person present, and is conscious that his sermon has been carelessly prepared or scarce studied at all; he will feel embarrassed, and even come short of his ordinary acceptability in the pulpit. This will be a cause of great mortification and sorrow to him. The preparation should be so thorough—not, of course, in a mean, sinful, man-pleasing spirit—as to give comfort in the pulpit and provide for such emergencies.

To do his best in each sermon is the true way for the pastor to make progress in the art of sermonizing and to see progress in the attendants and attendance on his ministry. Every minister should establish it as his incessant aim to make some improvement in preaching, which is the great work of his office. It is absurd to talk of great care in the preparation of one's sermons as detrimental to personal piety. Oh no; the solemnity which leads one to exercise the greatest care in presenting the truth in the most impressive manner must tone up the heart to a more thorough consecration to God and his cause. It is a law as invariable as our human nature, that if one

does not improve he will deteriorate. It is so in the great work of preaching; hence, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," should be the motto here. If one attempts to do his best in the preparation of each sermon, the process becomes an intellectual discipline, the powers become strengthened by it, the mind is improved, and successive efforts grow better and better; the perfections of a sermon are more distinctly understood and the modes of approaching them become plainer and easier. Besides, the congregation will inevitably feel the influence of this careful preparation on the preaching of their minister. They will be instructed in the truth; they will be fed with the nourishment which God has provided; their taste for the things of Christ will improve; their knowledge will be greater; and so they will be attracted to the sanctuary and draw with them others in increasing numbers.

A sermon which a minister prepares carefully will always afford him far more pleasure. He will have a satisfaction in its preparation which will abundantly repay the greater effort it may have required; all the hard work will be turned into a joy instead of a drudgery, and by the deeper study there will be opened new views of truth that, by their variety, will afford rich gratification. There will be pleasure also in the delivery of such a sermon—a pleasure that will assist in presenting the carefully-matured thoughts so forcibly that they will find admittance to taste, to mind, to conscience and to heart.

Such sermons will tell upon both preacher and congregation in a few years. If there be ever so little improvement from week to week in the preaching—as some there must be with such constant effort—or if there be ever so little weekly increase in the interest of the people, in time the increase will be appreciable. The minister himself will feel that he is advancing in the better grasp with which he is able to lay hold of a subject, in the more impressive manner in which he is able to bring it before his people, and in the increasing gratification his work affords. The congregation will give evidence of the effects in the closer attention they yield, in the spiritual

profiting they manifest, and in the growing numbers that will be found in the sanctuary.

When a minister does his best in preparing his sermons they will be worthy of being preserved for future use or reference. They ought, by all means, to be put in such a form that they can be so preserved. If they arc not written out in full, they ought to be put down in such ample skeleton that they can easily be recalled. Every subject that is studied out carefully— studied out once for all, and put in such shape that it can be preserved —becomes a part of a minister's treasure which he can lay up as invaluable. A remark worthy of much attention was once made by an excellent pastor, aged, profound, studious and devoted, that there was not much in his past, long ministry that he regretted more than that he had not written down and preserved his sermons. In his earlier days he had prepared sermons which had life and beauty and force, and which he might now, when his powers were waning, use occasionally to great advantage. But they were gone, and could be recalled no more. Such thoroughly-studied sermons could be brought in occasionally when age and infirmities were creeping on, when some peculiar circumstances in the church might render the repetition of any of them desirable, when the preacher might, perchance, have removed to another congregation, when there was an exchange of pulpits with a brother-minister, or on some other of the special occasions of preaching to which ministers are frequently called. They might also prove valuable for reference when at any time the subjects might again come up for consideration. By all means, all the powers of heart, mind and conscience should be thrown into the study of each sermon.

READING AND BOOKS

Upon the general subject of reading, which is so vast and important, we cannot here enter. It comes not within the province of pastoral theology. We allude to it simply for the purpose of noticing a few things that are specially important for the ministry. It will be taken for granted that the pastor will read much, and that most of his reading will of course be on religious subjects. The importance of this should be very deeply impressed upon the mind of every minister.

Reading is a duty so important for the ministry that there is a special charge concerning it given by the Holy Ghost. "Till I come give attendance to reading," was the precept enjoined on the young minister Timothy, and through him upon all ministers. The pastor is constantly drawing upon the stores of his mind in his sermons and other ministrations, and he must fill it up again by gathering from other sources. He must keep his mind enriched by the thoughts of other minds—the greatest of minds—that are so abundantly treasured up in books. He must strive to have his powers quickened by contact with the most splendid intellects and by suggestions that can be found plentifully in the best authors. The richest literature in the world probably is the religious literature of the English language. All this is open to the pastor to the extent that he has time to peruse it. He should cherish the keenest appetite for the abundant feast. Every minister should constantly have on hand some book that he is diligently perusing. Some works like those of the seraphic Howe should be carefully studied and wrought into the very texture of the minister's thoughts. How to select the books that will be the most profitable, and how to read them to the best advantage, are questions which should receive very thoughtful attention from each pastor for himself.

In the course of reading an Index Rerum should be kept, in which to note down for future reference thoughts suggested, facts stated, arguments developed, subjects treated, explanations of Scripture, themes for sermons or anything else

that should evidently be preserved. The riches gathered from great authors are too precious, of too much value to a minister, to be trusted to the memory alone. They should be treasured away so systematically that they can be found and used to advantage at some future day. Too much matter, however, should not find its way into such a book of reference, lest it should prove like storing away useless lumber, and so prevent its ever being used in the future. Only that which is really striking and likely to be of importance should be thus written down.

On every account it is highly important, especially for the young pastor, to find out and read the best authors on the various branches of his studies. Both time and money will be wasted unless care is taken on this point.' None but the best authors should be read by him who must economize time, and whose aim it should be to enrich his mind by familiarity with the noblest thoughts. The Rev. Dr. Shedd has presented this subject impressively. Speaking of the intellectual character of the clergyman and his studies, he says: “These may all be reduced to one—namely, the daily, nightly and everlasting study of standard authors. ‘Few,' remarks John Foster, ‘have been sufficiently sensible of that economy in reading which selects almost exclusively the very first order of books. Why should a man, except for some special reason, read a very inferior book at the very time that he might be reading one of the highest order? A man of ability, for the chief of his reading, should select such works as he feels beyond his own power to have produced. "What can other books do for him but waste his time and augment his vanity?'

“Choice and high culture is the fruit of communion with the very finest and loftiest intellects of the race. The preacher must love the profound thinkers and meditate upon them. But these are not the multitude; they are the few. They are those who make epochs in the provinces in which they labor. As we cast our eye along the history of a department, be it poetry or philosophy or theology, a few names represent and contain the whole pith and substance of it. Though there are many others

who are respectable, and many more who are mere sciolists and pretenders, still, an acquaintance or unacquaintance with them all would not materially affect the sum of his knowledge who should be thoroughly familiar with these standard writers. The clergyman, therefore, must dare to pass by all second-rate authors, and devote his days and nights to the first-rate."

In order to give some assistance in the selection of books, we would name a few upon the respective branches of ministerial study. We pass by general reading and culture, for it is with the minister in his special calling as pastor that we are now concerned. We give only a few authors—as many as may serve at the beginning of the ministry—a sort of indispensable apparatus for commencing the great work. At least, the pastor's library should be stocked with most of these as soon as circumstances will allow. The books we name have been well tried, and are recommended by persons whose judgment is worthy of confidence.

1. Books of general reference. Webster's or Worcester's English Dictionary—this should be a constant companion; Roget's Thesaurus of English Words; some good general Encyclopaedia if possible.

2. Interpretation of Scripture. Cruden's Concordance; Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Hackett's edition; Simmons' Manual; Wheeler's Analysis and Summary of Old Testament History; Whitney or Barrow's Sacred Geography; The Land and the Book.

3. Commentaries. On the whole Bible, Henry's Commentary; Critical and Experimental Commentary by Jamieson, Faussett and Brown; Lange's great Bible work is a thesaurus of scriptural exposition which may be secured as the wants of the pastor require. Many of the best expositors have written on only one or a few books of Scripture. A detailed list of some of the most useful of these may now be given: On Genesis, Murphy, Jacobus, Bush; on Exodus, Murphy, Jacobus, Bush; on Leviticus, Bush, Bonar; on Numbers, Bush, Keil and Delitzsch; on Deuteronomy, Keil and Delitzsch; on the whole Pentateuch, Calvin; on Joshua and Judges, Bush, Keil and Delitzsch; on Ruth

and Samuel, Keil and Delitzsch; on Esther, McCrie; on Job, Barnes; on Psalms, Barnes, Calvin; on Proverbs, Bridges, Stuart; on Ecclesiastes, Bridges; on Song of Solomon, Newton; on Isaiah, Barnes, Alexander; on Jeremiah and Lamentations, Henderson; on Ezekiel, Fairbairn; on Daniel, Barnes, Auberlin, Stuart; on the minor prophets, Henderson; on Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Moore; on the four Evangelists, John J. Owen; on Matthew and Mark, Alexander; on John, Hutchison; on Acts, Alexander, Hackett, Jacobus; on Romans, Hodge, Turner; on Corinthians, Hodge; on Galatians, Luther; on Ephesians, Hodge; on Philippians and Colossians, Eadie; on Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus and Philemon, Barnes; on Hebrews, Stuart, Owen; on James, Barnes, Pattison; on Peter, Barnes and Leighton; on John and Jude, Barnes; on Revelation, Stuart, Barnes and Auberlin.

4 Theology. Systematic Theology, by Hodge; Hill's Divinity; Dwight's Theology; Dick's Theology; Outlines of Theology, by A. A. Hodge; Pictet's Theology.

5. Church History. Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History; Shedd's History of Doctrines; Kurtz's Sacred History; Schaff's Apostolic Church; McCrie's Life of Knox; History of the Church in Chronological Tables, H. B. Smith; The Ancient Church, by Dr. Killen; D'Aubigne's Histories.

6. Church Government and the Sacraments. Miller on the Christian Ministry; Miller on the Ruling Elder; Primitive Church Officers, J. A. Alexander; Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity; Coleman's Primitive Church.

7. Sermons. This field is a boundless one, and we give only a few books which are known to be of standard value: South's Sermons; Robert Hall's Sermons; Sermons of John M. Mason—these should be read by all means; Davies' Sermons; Archibald Alexander's Practical Sermons; Gospel in Ezekiel, Guthrie; Principal Cunningham's Sermons, amongst the best in the language; Spurgeon's Sermon's; Bishop Horsley's Sermons, —among the best.

8. Practical Piety. Russell's Letters; Rutherford's Letters; A Kempis; James's Earnest Ministry; Wins-low's Precious Things

of God; Baxter's Reformed Pastor; Daily Meditations by Bowen; Owen on the Glory of Christ—a work of pre-eminent value; Owen on Spiritual-Mindedness—Dr. Alexander said this should be read once a year; Howe's Delight in God; Flavel's Keeping the Heart.

9. Christian Biography. Lives of McCheyne, Simeon, Henry Martyn, Haliburton, Archibald Alexander.

10. Great Puritan Writers. John Howe—all of his works. Says James W. Alexander, "A little reading in the pages of great thought will sometimes set one thinking, as if by a happy contagion. Such pages are those of John Howe." Owen, especially on Hebrews—Dr. Mason used to say all his theology was from this. Some of his most valuable productions are on "Spiritual -Mindedness," on the "Glory of Christ," on "Forgiveness of Sin," "Indwelling Sin," and "Mortification of Sin;" Baxter, especially his "Saints' Rest" and Reformed Pastor;" Leigh ton's works; Flavel's works— highly recommended; and Charnock on the "Divine Attributes."

11. On Sabbath-school Work. "Sunday-School Idea" (Hart); "Sabbath-School Index" (Pardee); "Preparing to Teach" (Presbyterian Board).

The minister who has secured most of these books is furnished with the best of reading for many a day, and with authorities on almost all subjects that can come before him in his profession. Of other authors he will find out the value in the progress of his ministry, and purchase them as new wants arise. It was an excellent advice of Dr. Archibald Alexander that ministers should buy books only as they are actually needed, and not to be stored away on the shelves of the library for future use. Our last advice is to be sure of getting only the standard and very best authors.

NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER PERIODICALS

The active pastor cannot afford to dispense with the current periodical literature of the day. He will find it necessary to devote considerable time and attention to its perusal. This kind of literature is one of the peculiarities, one of the great wonders, of the age. There is scarcely a prominent subject of human thought or activity to the interests of which a journal is not devoted. There are all classes of periodicals, from the cheap daily newspaper up to the massive quarterly magazine. On the pages of the current press is to be found a resume of the seething, rushing, complicated life of the world. Some of the greatest minds of the age put forth their strength in this direction, and some of the best writing is found in the religious and secular journals which the great mass of men are reading. All this must receive due attention from the minister.

There are grave questions of the times which it will not do for him to be ignorant of, or to understand only in a vague manner. What are the chief phases of religious thought in the world, its errors, its dangers, its hopes and its prospects? What are at present the most urgent wants of mankind? What are the great movements going on in the Church? What are the most effective methods of working for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom? What are now the developments of God's providence? In what direction is he leading the world? What is the progress of the cause of truth and righteousness?—On these and similar subjects it is vital to the ministry of the present day to be well informed.

This kind of literature must be perused by the pastor as an aid to him in his preaching. Not that he is to carry the substance of the newspaper into the pulpit from Sabbath to Sabbath—a most miserable practice, and one that degrades the pulpit. But there are living issues which the pulpit must take up; there are present wants that it must meet; there are current thoughts in religions and other periodicals which

should stimulate the heart and mind of every preacher. There are great events of the passing times which can be used to illustrate and enforce the truth. The grand old gospel themes should be brought home in the earnest spirit of the age, and show themselves adapted to every want of man as it arises.

Then, again, as a guide to the pastor in the activities of the Church, he must make himself somewhat familiar with the news of the day, both religious and secular. No true minister or church can afford to stand still while there are such active movements going on in the world both for and against the kingdom of Christ. But what is to be done? How is our energy to be put forth to the greatest advantage? Care should be taken that the enterprise be not rushed into blindly, that the zeal be according to knowledge. The close study should be, What are the most pressing wants of men? what methods of working are the most promising of success? how can the great gospel enterprises be most effectively carried on? Most important information on all these subjects can be gathered from the periodical press, and for that reason, as well as to assist him in his personal, social and civil duties, it should be read by every pastor.

The minister must keep himself posted in the news of the day in order to retain the respect of well-informed men. The age is seething with every kind of activity; all are reading, all are thinking, and if he is not at least tolerably familiar with what is going on in the world, he will inevitably suffer in the esteem of others. In all the social intercourse of life, in all the necessary mingling with society, the topics of the day will come up, and the clergyman should study to be able to converse on them with more than ordinary intelligence.

It is very important that the pastor should keep himself and his work up with the times. To do so will give him an influence and a power which can be turned to the very best advantage. And this should be done. All lawful use should be made of times and circumstances by which to promote the cause of salvation. This was the habit of the apostle Paul, that noble model for the ministry. He tells us: “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I

might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." The minister must mingle with the world and feel its currents, and he ought to use them as best he can for the promotion of the noble work to which he is called. He should study to subordinate all the movements of the age that are not sinful to the interests of the kingdom. Yea, it should be his aim to the extent of his ability to make the progress of the cause of Christ felt as the greatest of all the movements by which society is agitated. And all this presupposes that he keeps himself well informed as to what is going on in the world.

It is, then, almost essential that the pastor should take a few of the very best newspapers and other periodicals, and read them. He should also keep a "scrap-book," for the purpose of preserving many valuable things met with in the course of such reading. Without this, multitudes of facts, sentiments, arguments, important and well-expressed truths, that could be used afterward most profitably, will be lost. How often is one tried by the dim recollection of such things as these that float in the mind, but will not come into definite and available shape! Really valuable matter, therefore, ought to be preserved in a “scrap-book," carefully indexed, so that it can be found when needed by him who must use every proper method for reaching the understanding and heart and conscience of men.

CHAPTER IV

THE PASTOR IN THE PULPIT

We now pass from the private to the public duties of the pastoral office. We leave the closet and the study, where, in obedience to the divine mandate, "Take heed unto thyself," the pastor carries on the work of his own spiritual and mental equipment, and go out with him to that other great department of his work, where he comes in direct contact with men and brings all his training to bear upon their hearts and consciences. The heart and head being prepared, we would consider how that preparation may be made to tell most effectively. How his zeal, awakened by the love of God, his powers strengthened by diligent training, and his stores of truth, arranged and ready for use, can be brought to bear with most weight upon the souls of his hearers, is a vital question for the study of every pastor.

Though preaching, as a sacred science, is not now specifically before us, yet in a treatise concerning the great duties of the pastor it must receive some, and very thoughtful, attention. Some cardinal principles must be indicated in reference to that duty, which is the very central one of the whole ministerial office. What to preach, how to present the truth so that it will most deeply impress, after what objects to have a direct aim, how to get and keep the mind in the best tone for preaching, — to these and kindred points the pastor must give close attention if he would be a successful workman in the gospel.

PREACHING, THE MINISTER'S CHIEF CALLING

The pastor has many other duties assigned him by the ordination of God and the appointment of his Church, but this is chief of all. As a minister of the gospel nothing else can make up for the omission or neglect or slighting of this paramount service. He may not be eloquent—eloquence, in the ordinary meaning of the word, may not be possible for him—but he is responsible for using the powers that he has to the very best advantage, and when he does so use them he will be eloquent in the best sense. Powers of head and heart, ordination of God, experience of others, most diligent preparation, hope of usefulness, the cry of perishing souls, the unspeakable glory hanging over the head of the faithful minister, and every other power and motive, may well be concentrated on a work so grave and momentous as that of proclaiming God's pardon to guilty, dying men. This was the great business of apostolic men. How earnestly did Peter publish salvation! How constantly did Paul proclaim the gospel! Yea, with what divine simplicity and power did Jesus himself proclaim the riches of the kingdom which he had come to establish! Do not these inspired examples tell us of the pre-eminent importance of preaching? Do they not tell us of the wisdom of God in ordaining that the power of public speaking over an audience should be his great instrumentality for publishing his offers of mercy through Christ crucified? And the Scriptures confirm this doctrine of the transcendent importance of the ordinance of preaching. In one place they tell us that God "hath in due time manifested his word through preaching." In another place we lead, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!" In order to deepen this

impression, and lead to a more thorough discharge of the duties involved, we should dwell very thoughtfully upon this great duty of the pastor.

Let it he borne in mind that the ministry was appointed chiefly for the purpose of preaching. Christ himself preached, as the great Pastor and Leader in this work. How instructive it is to read of him that when he "had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities"! He also sent out his disciples to the same work, laying this charge upon them: "And as ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Then to all his followers, that it might sound down through all the ages, he gave the abiding command, "Go ye therefore into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." That this is an established ordinance of God is very plainly asserted: “For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Then the command to the ministry is explicitly given: “Preach the word." God, in his infinite wisdom, saw what was the best method of reaching the souls of men with the truth; and this was the plan he chose. And because it is God's plan we may depend upon it, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it is the best plan. Sacraments, printed pages, private instructions and other agencies, though they have a very important mission, can never take the place of the preaching which God has ordained. This he has appointed, because it brings glowing hearts into sympathy with other hearts, and so intensifies and fastens the truth.

To preach is to deliver God's messages of mercy and love and instruction to men. This is the essence, the sum and substance, of all true preaching. The preacher is “to seek the law at God's mouth," and then repeat it to all who will hear him. God is to be heard, and his words then published abroad. This is the minister's highest calling, his imperative duty and his truest policy. When he does this, then no tongue can exaggerate the dignity of his work as a herald to proclaim the communications of Heaven to a lost world. When he speaks

simply what God has told him to say, then his words can well be with authority and boldness. It is this that makes the calling of the preacher sublime— this that must enlarge and ennoble his own heart.

Everything else in the life, studies and other duties of his office should be made to centre upon this his most momentous work. So it was with the inspired Paul; he regarded all other things as subordinate to his preaching; this he felt was his first calling. “Christ," said he, “sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which believe it is the power of God." All previous preparation, all the culture of head and heart which is so essential to good preaching, all daily and nightly study of the Scriptures, all quickened observation in search of illustrations, all visiting from house to house, intended to ascertain wants, to secure attention and to attract to the worship of the sanctuary, should have the ministrations of the pulpit in view. The great study should be how all these can be brought to lend their aid in making the preaching more effective.

The minister ought, by all means, to cultivate a very high appreciation of the importance of preaching, and to concentrate on it all his energies. The hour in the pulpit he should look upon as the harvest hour of the week. He should cherish a growing assurance that his ministrations there will tell most powerfully upon men, and that to proclaim the messages of God to man is the most noble and solemn thing to which a man can be called. Such exalted estimate of what it is to preach would help to the better performance of the service, and often prevent it from being slighted. The preacher should strive to work himself up to admiration and love for this greatest duty of his office.

WHAT TO PREACH

The pastor should have settled principles on this point. It will contribute much to his success and comfort to have a definite understanding of what he is to proclaim to men. To assist him the following thoughts are suggested:

(a) The Word of God

The duty of the Christian minister on this point is most unquestionable, and he should understand it and determine positively upon its performance at once. The Holy Scriptures contain the message that he is to deliver, furnish models of the manner in which it is to be delivered, and contain the true excitement to his zeal. The matter of all true preaching is to be found in the Bible, and out of its sacred pages the mind of the Spirit is to be searched and then delivered from the pulpit. Every sermon should be carefully wrought out from the text; every point advanced should be proved by a "thus saith the Lord;" passages bearing on the subject in hand should be quoted, or at least their substance presented; and the whole discourse should be saturated with the word of God. This adherence to the Scriptures should not be merely incidental, but it should be studiously aimed at. The Bible should be made the substance of all preaching. Not only the matter of preaching, but the manner of presenting the truth also, should be guided by the inspired pages. From this sacred storehouse illustrations should be gathered; its imagery and sublime utterances should be used, and its poetry should adorn the preacher's words. The whole discourse should be animated and impressed by the spirit of the holy oracles. The truths of the Bible should be preached just as they are found upon its pages. The whole of the divine word should be presented; none of it should be intentionally kept back; there need be no fear of preaching it all. The grand rule of the preacher should be to search out the mind of God as revealed on the sacred pages, and then simply to publish it to his fellow-men.

The solemn command rests upon the minister to preach the word which God has revealed, and nothing else. This point is clear. “Preach the word," is the charge which must ring constantly in the pastor's ears. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee," is the mandate which comes as imperatively upon him as it did upon the prophet of old. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," is the rule which has never been revoked. The practice of the first, the inspired, preachers comes to us with all the force of a command. The rule with them was thus described: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which mail's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." A. fine instance is that which is recorded of the apostle Paul: “And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." This settles the matter of duty with all true ministers as to what they ought to preach. They are responsible for preaching the whole word of God, and not for the effects of that word. If they come short intentionally of delivering the whole counsel of God, they are guilty of a great sin of omission. If they preach something else than what God has commanded, their guilt and danger must be very great indeed.

The word preached is God's ordained instrumentality for the conversion of souls and the sanctification of believers. Out of all possible means which might have been adopted for that purpose, he has chosen this, and we have but to follow in the path he has opened. His plan for the conversion of men is distinctly announced: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." No less plainly is his method for the edification of his people indicated in the prayer of Jesus: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Now, will not God honor and prosper his own clearly-announced agency more than any other? Are we not bound to follow this, and this alone? Any other preaching than that of the Scriptures is not the preaching which God has appointed. There is nothing so obligatory, so safe, so honorable, as to deliver God's messages just as we gather them from his own words.

Because God has appointed the Scriptures for that purpose we may rest assured that to preach them is the best possible way to lead men to the blessings of salvation. Human wisdom might imagine otherwise. But does not God know best? Does he not know best how men may be instructed in divine things; how the heart which he has made may be the most effectively reached; how the knowledge of his will may be most thoroughly imparted, and through what channels it is his purpose to convey the blessings of his Spirit? Does not he alone know what the truth is? Then is it not better to trust in his wisdom, and to follow his plan, than it is to follow our own fallible and changing conjectures? Remember that in preaching we have to do with divine things, and hence we can have no reliable information concerning them excepting from Him who is divine.

We can expect the blessing of God on our efforts to influence men only when we use the Scriptures for that purpose, but when we do so use them we may look confidently for that blessing. The great thing which we need in preaching is the power of the Holy Ghost, without which our words will be utterly lost. Then we should remember that the Scriptures are the Spirit's own weapon for conquering men. The word is the sword of the Spirit. It is the sword which the Holy Ghost has forged, which he has given to be used by his servants, which he uses himself in the dispensations of providence, and which we may be positive he will bless. When we are preaching the word we are using the very weapon which the Holy Ghost has put into our hands; and will he not make its strokes effective? Is there any other weapon that can be compared with it? In fact, the Spirit himself is using the sword of his word when he leads us to use it. This is the way in which he conducts his dispensation. It is not outside of men, but in them and through them that he maintains and builds up his kingdom. Then the Spirit is with us when we preach the word, and because it is his word it cannot fail of its effects.

The Scriptures are true, and therefore they may well claim to be the burden of all preaching. They are not only true, but

the truth itself—the truth of God, the truth that needs to be known for our highest well-being, the truth that must ever be taken as the standard of all truth. Hence, when the word is proclaimed in the pulpit there need be no vacillation or hesitancy. It may be pronounced with positiveness and pressed home most urgently. In preaching its plain utterances there will be no mistake made, there will be no harm done to cause after-regrets. The constant proclamation of the truth of God must strengthen and elevate the preacher himself, as well as convey spiritual and intellectual benefits to the hearers.

While ministers preach the word of God they can speak with authority, they can press home their messages, and they can demand in the name of its Author that it be listened to. This gives them very great power. If they deliver simply their own opinions, men may dispute with them; if they adduce alleged facts, the reality or the pertinency of those facts may be questioned; but when they come out squarely with a "thus saith the Lord," their words must be listened to and received. Such a message cannot be gainsaid: it will be thought of in hours of reflection. When known to be the truth of God, it will command attention and be laid up in the memory for future and possibly saving thought. This convincing power of the Scriptures has been well described: “There is a power in the plain teachings of the word of God such as is found nowhere else. Men may affect to despise it, but if they will not listen to Moses and the prophets and to Christ and the apostles, neither would they be convinced though one rose from the dead. There is a power in its simple statements with which nothing can be compared. Armed with a 'thus saith the Lord' who could successfully resist the prophets of the old dispensation? And when the new was to be founded, this was the great weapon. Man will not hesitate to argue with man, to contradict his statements, to dispute his conclusions; but who will dare to make God a liar?" In fact, there is nothing but the proclamation of the word of God which will give to the pulpit its proper influence, and continue to it the dignity which is its right. It is only this message from heaven that can properly be pressed home upon the attention

of men with the fervor which God demands of his ministers.

All experience—the experience of the most godly and successful ministers—proves that it is the preaching of the word which does the true execution. Those who have not studied the matter, or tried it, may think otherwise; they may think that men could be more successfully attracted by flights of fancy, or by startling novelties, or by dreamy imaginings, or high-wrought sentimentalism, or lofty oratory. But this is a great mistake as a mere matter of policy. All else but the truth of God will prove ephemeral, will fail to produce sound edification, and will not even attract for any length of time. The best and most permanent work will undoubtedly be done by the heaven-ordained instrumentality.

The testimony of the eminent Dr. Charles Hodge as to its efficacy is worthy of being well considered: “This" (the Bible) "is sharper than any two-edged sword. It is the wisdom of God and the power of God. It has a self-evidencing light. It commends itself to the reason and conscience. It has the power not only of truth, but of divine truth. Our Lord promised to give to his disciples a word and wisdom which all their adversaries would not be able to gainsay or resist. In opposition to all error, to all false philosophy, to all the sophistries of vice, to all the suggestions of the devil, the sole, simple and sufficient answer is the word of God. This puts to flight all the powers of darkness. The Christian finds this to be true in his individual experience. It dissipates his doubts, it drives away his fears, it delivers him from the power of Satan. It is also the experience of the Church collectively. All her triumphs over sin and error have been effected by the word of God. So long as she uses this, and relies on it alone, she goes on conquering, but when anything else, be it reason, science, tradition or the commandments of men, is allowed to take its place or to share its office, then the Church or the Christian is at the mercy of the adversary. 'Hoc signo vinces' the apostle may be understood to say to every believer and to the whole Church." The Holy Ghost also testifies as to the power of the word over the heart: For the word of God is quick and powerful, and

sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Let the history of all great and truly successful ministers be examined, and it will be found that they drew their force and inspiration from the sacred volume. This was true of the great preacher, Paul, for lie says, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

As we are appealing to experience, we must still quote from it. The eminently devoted John Brown of Haddington declared: “So far as I ever observed God's dealings with my soul, the flights of preachers sometimes entertained me, but it was Scripture expressions which did penetrate my heart, and that in a way peculiar to themselves." Dr. Nicholas Murray bore his testimony to the same truth, as learned from his own long and successful ministry. The following is the result of his observation: “Spiritual religion is best promoted by the preaching of the truth. It was by the preaching of the truth that the apostles uprooted the deep prejudices of the Jews, and dispersed the assembled deities of Olympus and gave the mythologies of Greece and Rome to the winds of heaven. So it was by the preaching of the truth that the Reformers turned Europe upside down, and unbound the angel which has ever since been flying through the midst of heaven to give the gospel to every creature. And in whatever country or community the Church has left its first love and fallen into a formal state, it has been revived by the preaching of the truth. It was so in England in the days of Whitefield, in Scotland in the days of Chalmers, in America in the days of Edwards. And we find the same true as to communities. The towns in Britain and America noted for churches alive to their responsibilities and possessing the spirit of Christ are those which have been favored by a succession of ministers who faithfully preached the distinguishing truths of the gospel. And it may be laid down as a general rule that the pastors most blessed in their labors in the American churches were those most clear and

discriminating in their presentation of truth and most strict in their adherence to the order of the gospel. The preaching of the truth, simply, affectionately, earnestly, is the best means of the spiritual improvement of a people. 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'"

Most pastors long in the ministry have found out for themselves how much better it is to preach the Scriptures than anything else. The most devoted of them would promptly confess that they are ashamed of all sermons on other subjects which they have ever preached. They do not want to preserve such sermons; they are never willing to repeat them. Young pastors should take the experience of those who have gone before, and begin with preaching the word, and that only and that always, until they can say unto God with the Psalmist, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

By his preaching, by his example and by all other means the pastor should strive to lead the people to love the Bible in this age when it is by so many utterly neglected. There is now so much reading of other kinds, and so much that is unfriendly to the close study of the book of God, that the watchmen of Zion need to guard very closely at this point. It should be the deliberate and persevering aim of ministers to keep up in their congregations a high appreciation of the word of God. It can be done. There are some churches in which the Bible is studied far more than others, and that largely through the influence of the pastor. A love for the Bible can be promoted by the minister constantly honoring it, by his pointing out its excellencies, by his explaining and preaching it, by his reproducing its histories in the forms of life, and by contriving various plans to have it studied. That pastor has accomplished a great work who has, by his preaching and other efforts, trained his people to love the Bible.

(b) Nothing but the Word to be Preached

This caution is so much needed that it ought to be dwelt upon very thoughtfully. It can scarcely receive too much attention from the preacher who would be faithful to God and faithful to souls, and who would magnify his holy office. The rule should be adopted, and adhered to rigidly, that nothing but God's own truth as found in his written word should be introduced into the pulpit. Other things may sometimes be admissible as illustrations or proofs of the teachings of the Bible, but as themes for discourses, as the prominent things to be dwelt upon, or as in any way overshadowing the subjects which the Spirit has revealed, they should be promptly excluded.

Very great care should be taken that one be not gradually led off into preaching something else that may be (or may not be) true and important, but certainly is not the word of God. Multitudes of preachers, neglecting attention to this matter and forgetting their commission to preach the word only, plunge into secular subjects and throw themselves into the current of whatever may happen to be popular at the time. They are not satisfied with applying the rule of divine truth to the topics of the day, but make those topics—upon which they cannot speak with any authority—the themes-of their discourses. The important rule to be adopted by the minister is, that he will not be led away from his great business of preaching the written word by other subjects because they may happen to be more popular at the time, or because they are more novel, or because they may seem more beautiful and attractive, or because they may be more congenial to the unrenewed hearts of men. To be so carried away is to be unfaithful to the charge which God has given, and untrue to the infinite importance of the word; and it is unwise as a matter of policy in those who would be permanently useful and eminent in the highest and best sense.

It is at once the pastor's duty and interest, and should be his delight, to preach the truth as it is found on the sacred pages, and not mere morality, for morality will not change the heart or reconcile with God. The truth should be preached, and not

philosophy or science, for these are too cold to meet the sympathies and deep longings of the soul. The plain truth should be preached, and time and strength not taken from the momentous themes of God and the soul and eternity in striving after mere ornaments and flowers. These have their place, but it is.a very subordinate one. The eminent old writer Charnock has well said: “No man is renewed by phrases and fancies; these are only as the oil to make the nails of the sanctuary drive in the easier. Words there must be to make things intelligible, illustrations to make things delightfully intelligible, but the seminal virtue lies not in the husk and skin, but in the kernel. The rest dies, but the substance of the seed lives and brings forth fruit. Separate, therefore, between the husk and the seed. The word does not work as it is elegant, but as it is divine—as it is a word of truth. Illustrations are but the ornaments of the temple; the glory of it is in the ark and mercy-seat. It is not the engraving upon the sword that cuts, but the edge; nor the key, as it is gilt, that opens, but as fitted to the wards. Your faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. It is the juice of the meat, and not the garnishing of the dish, that nourishes. Was it the word as a pleasant song or as a divine seed that changed the souls of old, made martyrs smile in the midst of flames?" A good illustration of this point was also given by the eminent Robert Hall: “To my ear, it should be anything but commendation should it be said to me, ‘You have given us a pretty sermon.' If I were put upon trial for my life, and my advocate should amuse the jury with tropes and figures or bury his arguments beneath a profusion of flowers of his rhetoric, I would say to him, 'But, man! you care more for your vanity than for my hanging. Put yourself in my place, speak in view of the gallows, and you will tell your story plainly and earnestly.' I have no objections to a lady winding a sword with ribbons and studding it with roses as she presents it to her hero-lover, but in the clay of battle he will tear away the ornaments and use the naked edge on the enemy."

It is the truth of God that will stir the heart at last, and stir it

as nothing else will. It has a power of its own that is peculiar and irresistible. That power is penetrating and abiding. The mightiest weapon that can be used is the sword of the Spirit. It disarms opposition; it subdues, it brings captive to Christ. The word of God is the source of true eloquence in the pulpit. Well has it been said of it that “The only way to be eloquent in the pulpit is to banish every thought of self, to forget everything but God and duty. The triumphs of true eloquence, touching, grand, sublime, awful as they sometimes have been, are seen, it has been remarked, only when the orator stands before you in the simple majesty of truth, and, overpowered by the weight of his convictions, forgets himself and forgets everything but his momentous subject. 'It is amazing,' says Goldsmith, 'to what heights eloquence of this kind may reach. This is that eloquence the ancients represented as lightning bearing down every opposer; this is the power which has turned whole assemblies into astonishment, admiration and awe—that is described by the torrent, the flame and every other instance of irresistible impetuosity.'"

(c) Christ to be the Sum and Substance of all Preaching

We have already shown that the Scriptures, and nothing but the truths of the Scriptures, should furnish the matter that is brought into the pulpit. We now go further, and say that the one great theme which the preacher must ever bring out from the word of God and present in the diversified forms it receives from all scriptural truth is Christ and him crucified. As Vinet has most aptly expressed it, “In every sermon we must either start from Christ or come to him." This will result necessarily from the deep study and preaching of the Bible, for Christ is the burden of all Scripture; hence he laid the obligation upon his followers: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." The preachers of olden times made this the substance of their messages; for we read, "Of which salvation the prophets have

inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." So it was with Paul, whose noble resolution was, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Such also was the message of Christ himself, for it is recorded of him after his resurrection that, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Whatever text or theme, then, is taken by the preacher, it ought to look to Christ. He should be the great burden of every sermon. His name need not necessarily be mentioned as that which is to be the subject, but the tone, spirit, life, deep undercurrent and steady aim of every discourse should pertain to the person and work and infinite blessings of Christ.

Christ, and him crucified, was the one theme for the preaching of which the ministry was appointed. There is no other conceivable object which was worthy of the establishment and perpetuation of such a sacred office. And it is with us either the preaching of Christ or nothing. We have no title to our ministry excepting what is involved in this. The Scriptures are perfectly unequivocal as to the paramount obligation of this duty. The great commission which Christ laid upon his apostles was contained in these words: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." And in accordance with this it is recorded of them that “daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Then Paul testifies of himself and of his brethren, saving. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." And still more fully he says again, “God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did

beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Then, just as we have the apostolic spirit, just as we would follow the inspired apostolic example, and just as we would fulfill the object of our commission as gospel ministers, we shall preach always, in every sermon, Christ and his great salvation. If we do not preach this, oar ministry is nothing. It is without authority, without spirit, without power, without an adequate object, and will be without any substantial results for good.

A sermon which does not in some way contain the salvation of Christ cannot with any propriety be called a gospel sermon. It may be so impressive as to awaken deep interest, or so beautiful as to please, or even of such a high moral tone as to cultivate and refine, but it is not the gospel, for the publishing of which all preaching was appointed.

It is not meant that the death of Jesus in the place of sinful men should be the announced subject of every sermon, nor even that his name should be in every point that is handled; this might not always be possible, nor would it always be best. But what is meant is, that the salvation of Christ should be the drift, the centre, the substance, the aim—should give tone and direction and impulse to every discourse. This can be done in perfect consistency with keeping up a proper variety and interest. The whole word of God leads to Christ and centres in him, but that through thousands of different avenues. This was finely illustrated by an incident related by Mr. Spurgeon: “Don't you know, young man," said a Welsh minister, "that from every town and from every village and from every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?" "Yes." "Ah," said the old divine, "and so from every text in Scripture there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And, my dear brother, your business is, when you get to a text, to say, 'Now, what is the road to Christ?' And then preach a sermon running along the road to the great metropolis, Christ. And," said he, "I have never yet found a text that had not a road to Christ in it; and if ever I do find one that has not, I will make one. I will go over a hedge and ditch but I

will get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there be a flavor of Christ in it."

We have only to reflect upon the real wants of men, and upon the perfect provision which is made for them all in the Lord our Righteousness, to be satisfied that we need go no farther than these either to awaken interest or to offer the highest blessings. Men are lost, they need a Saviour; they are wretched, they need peace; they are corrupt, they need purity; and the remedy for all is in Christ, and in Christ only. Oh, preachers of his gospel! tell your hearers who Christ is; tell them how worthy he is of all their confidence; tell them why it is that those who know him best can never say enough in his praise; tell them how it is that he saves men; tell them how willing he is to save them; and tell them, and continue telling them, what they must do to be saved.

Worthy of being deeply pondered are the following thoughts upon this subject: “Elegant dissertations upon virtue and vice, upon the evidences of revelation, may entertain the prosperous and the gay, but they will not mortify our members which are upon the earth; they will not misting calamity, nor feed the heart with an imperishable hope. When I go to the house of God I do not want amusement. I want the doctrine which is according to godliness. I want to hear of the remedy against the harassings of my guilt and the disorder of my affections. I want to be led from weariness and disappointment to that goodness which feeds the hungry soul. Tell me of that Lord Jesus who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Tell me of his intercession for the transgressors as their advocate with the Father. Tell me of his Holy Spirit, whom they that believe on him receive to be their Preserver, Sanctifier, Comforter. Tell me of his chastenings, their necessity and their use. Tell me of his presence, his sympathy and his love. Tell me of the virtues, as growing out of his cross and nurtured by his grace. Tell me of the glory reflected upon his name by the obedience of faith. Tell me of vanquished death, of the purified grave, of a blessed resurrection, of the life everlasting, and my bosom warms. This is gospel; these are glad tidings to me as a

sufferer, because glad to me as a sinner. They rectify my mistakes, allay my resentments, rebuke my discontent, support me under the weight of moral and natural evil. These attract the poor, steal upon the thoughtless, awe the irreverent, and throw over the services of the sanctuary a majesty which some fashionable modes of address never fail to dissipate. When they are habitually neglected or lightly referred to there may be much grandeur, but there is no gospel."

Though Christ crucified is to be the one great burden of every sermon, it does not necessarily follow that there must be a tiresome repetition. It may be that some preachers are often driven by the fear of this to seek other subjects. But this supremely important subject has an infinite variety of aspects. In Jesus dwells all the fullness of wisdom, all the fullness of grace, all the fullness of the Godhead—an ocean boundless and fathomless. The wonders of his nature and work are so vast that even the angels, with their celestial minds, strive to understand them. No preacher can ever exhaust the fullness of Christ, or need be compelled to repeat the same thing about it from want of variety. The study should simply be to present the one great theme in its new and various aspects. This of course will require constant study and quickened attention, and love to Him who, in the whole gospel, must ever be all in all. Besides, men need to be told the old story over and over and over again that it may penetrate their minds and hearts and whole spiritual being. The preacher, then, must strive to bring forth things new and old as, year after year, he preaches nothing else but Christ, and him crucified.

It is this only that can give real power and dignity to preaching. What are all other things, such as morality or education or politics or science or current novelties, compared with it? What power have they to heal a corrupt nature or comfort a sorrowing heart? Here only, in the cross, is there power to effect a radical reformation in depraved man; here only is there true life for the spiritually dead; here only are there motives adequate to excite and bear up the immortal soul; here only is there a theme — the theme of Immanuel —

that is of infinite variety and infinite grandeur. Preaching without this must be a poor, lifeless thing. Well did Bishop Home say of it, “To preach practical sermons, as they are called—that is, sermons upon virtues and vices—without inculcating those great Scripture truths of redemption, grace, etc. which alone can incite and enable us to forsake sin and follow righteousness, what is it but to put together the wheels and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the spring which is to make them all go?" So also wrote Cunningham, that great thinker: “A religion without a Saviour is the temple without the Shekinah, and its worshippers will all desert it. Few men in the world have less pretensions as a preacher than myself—my voice, my look, my manner, all of a common kind; yet I thank God there is scarcely a corner in our little church where you might not find a streaming eye and a beating heart. The reason is that I speak of Christ; and if there is not a charm in the name, there is in the train of fears and hopes and joys which it carries along with it. The people feel—they must listen." Such testimony as this should be carefully treasured in the heart of every preacher.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, should tempt the ambassador of Christ from this divinely-appointed theme. He should not be tempted by policy, as if by preaching something else he could draw hearers to his ministry; nor by imagined weariness of iterating the old subject; nor by despondency of ever doing good by it, as the prophet of old when he cried out, "Who hath believed our report?" nor by envy at the success of others who have a name for a day through a vapid sentimentalism without Christ; nor by the fascination of novelties by which so many are led away from the cross. The man of God should allow none of these things to tempt him, but he should adhere obstinately to the message he has received from heaven, and trust God for success. His heart should be so set upon it that he would feel bound, like the apostle, to say, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!"

We would very strongly emphasize this point, for it is greatly to be deplored that so much of the preaching of the present time has very little in it of the death of Christ. The thought may

be impressed by the words of one of the most successful of modern preachers, Rev. J. Angell James. He says: “It is my sad and serious belief that if the evangelical pulpit is losing its power, it is just because it is losing sight of its object and aim. The cultivation of the intellect and the advancement of knowledge in the present day are lifting both preachers and hearers above the plain and simple gospel of Christ. Sermons are with many persons no longer heard as the word of God, but as the word of man; not as means of grace and aids to salvation, but as intellectual exercises on religious topics for the gratification of taste, intellect and imagination on Sunday. And it must be confessed that the preachers of them are, by their artificial and excessive elaboration and the introduction of new topics, teaching their hearers so to regard them, and are teaching them thus to be a kind of amateur hearers of sermons."

This danger should rest upon the heart of the preacher; he should be warned by it; and he should guard against everything in his sermons that would keep out or obscure Christ, and him crucified. He should be vigilant on this point, and when he finds any tendency toward the danger he should take the alarm.

If the Holy Ghost, in the Scriptures, dwells upon Christ as the one great subject of revelation, surely his ministers may well do the same. This he does; for, as it was promised of him, he receives of the things of Christ and shows them unto men. Does he not know what things they are which it is of the greatest importance that men should be informed? Is he not a safe guide to be followed by every minister of the gospel? Is it not an evidence of true humility when, instead of leaning upon our own understanding, we persistently tread in the path over which he leads? The more we have of this Spirit's influence, the more shall we do just as he did—take of the things of Christ and show them plainly to men. Oh that we may be able wholly to give ourselves up to the Spirit for guidance, for impulse and for trust in final success!

(d) Doctrines should be Preached

There is in the minds of many persons a very unjust and unthinking prejudice against preaching the doctrines of religion. It is taken for granted that the sermon in which there is much doctrine must necessarily be dry, unspiritual, full of sectarianism and almost necessarily incomprehensible. It is possible that doctrines may be preached in this repulsive manner, but it is not necessary that they should be; they may be presented so as to awaken the deepest interest; and they must, by all means, be brought into the sermons of him who would be a faithful ambassador of God.

A little consideration will show that in fact there can be no preaching without doctrine. What are doctrines but the great principles, facts, opinions which God has taught, and directed his servants to teach their fellow-men? But if all these are taken away, what have we left to preach? Upon what else can warnings, promises or invitations be based? What is the gospel but a vast system of doctrines which have been communicated to the world by the great Teacher? The attributes of God, the mysteries of the Trinity, the fall of our race, the incarnation, life, death and ascension of Christ, salvation by his blood, faith, conversion, the Church, the resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell,—what are all these but doctrines? The sovereignty of God, his eternal decrees, justification by faith, the perseverance of the saints and the millennium are no more doctrines than the other great principles of the gospel are. Now, it is manifest that the minister must absolutely close his mouth if lie does not preach these. He must preach the doctrines if he preaches at all. He must preach the whole scope of the doctrines if he would keep up any variety and fullness in his ministrations in the pulpit.

1. The doctrines should be distinctly announced and dwelt upon by the gospel teacher, because they are clearly -presented in the Bible. It is always safe and wise to follow that inspired mile. We cannot improve upon the plan which God has ordained in his word. And his plan is to build up his people through his

pastors “with knowledge and understanding." On the pages of the Scriptures we find what are called the very strongest doctrines, and those which are the most repulsive to the natural heart, taught plainly and in various forms. We are even warned that we shall there find "some things hard to be understood." What are the Epistles mainly but doctrines stated, explained, vindicated, gloried in and drawn out into the blessed influences they should have upon the life of the renewed man?

2. The knowledge of all the doctrines of the gospel is vastly important, and therefore none of them should be intentionally kept back. On this point we are specially cautioned: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The doctrines of the gospel are valuable in themselves, for each contains some of the precious truth of God. They are all indispensable in their relations to one another as parts of the one glorious system of redemption. They are important in the estimation of God, who caused them to be put on the pages of his word, in the deeply-momentous instruction they convey to us, in the light which they shed over the path of duty, in the comfort they carry to the weary soul, and in the glory they are calculated to bring to our blessed God and Saviour. Not one of them could be spared. If they were not needed they would not have been revealed.

3. The doctrines of the gospel should be preached fully, because the heart is affected through the understanding. All experience proves this. The more fully the truth is known, the greater will be its influence upon the life. The better God is understood in his various perfections, the more thoroughly will he be loved and trusted; hence the inspired admonition: “Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." The more fully duty is comprehended, the more will its obligations be felt. The more deeply the enormity of sin is studied, the more it will be shunned. The more clearly privileges are seen, the more eagerly will they be improved. The better informed the conscience is, the keener it

will grow. The wider and more comprehensive the view through the mysteries of redemption, the more deeply must the mind be overwhelmed with wonder and adoration. And the study of these sublime things must elevate and expand the whole being.

4. The people should be instructed in reference to all the doctrines, that they may be assisted in maintaining the truth in its never-ending contest with error. The doctrines of the Bible are assailed from every quarter; they are misrepresented either from ignorance or design; the people are daily coming in contact with this opposition. From the pulpit they should be assisted in preparing to tell why they believe, to explain and to defend the truths of God. Each great doctrine is linked in with every other one, and there must be some knowledge of all in order to have an intelligent comprehension of the whole system. The clear understanding of any one point will throw some light over the whole round of truth and confirm confidence in it all. People will not be driven away from the sanctuary by the scriptural and judicious presentation of the doctrines of the gospel. If they are not built up in the truth, they will gradually lose their interest and drop off from the nerveless preaching, and, it may be, fall a prey to some form of error.

5. If the pastor would build up in his hearers a stable Christian character, a character that is not to be "carried about by every wind of doctrine," he must train them in the great, comprehensive dogmas which are laid down in the Bible. That solidity of character, in both theory and practice, which you always know where to find is based upon a foundation of doctrinal truth. This alone can produce a well-rounded, harmonious Christian life. The men who most beneficially influence their fellow-men are those who can give a reason not only for their hopes, but also for the various great truths which they see centring in Christ. If only feelings are appealed to in preaching, the type of Christian character formed will not be stable; if only practice is the theme, it will not be strong. The fuller the knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible, the stronger will be the faith and the love and the hope, and the more

abiding the principles.

6. As in the study of the Bible toe would fix upon certain places and certain dates around which other places and dates may be grouped, in order to give distinctness to the understanding and to assist the memory, so also the great doctrines should be fixed as centres around which the various utterances of God may be clustered. This plan may be made of very great value in the study of the Scriptures. The doctrines are nothing more or less than the leading subjects according to which the teachings of the word may be classified; and the process of classifying will help in a wonderful degree to make familiar with the Scriptures, to understand their import, to remember their words, and to impress the beauty and harmony which they must have as the revelation of the infinitely perfect God. The doctrines cannot be properly preached without making the hearer stronger and stronger in the Scriptures.

We would say, then, emphatically to every pastor, Preach the doctrines. Preach them incidentally when they manifestly arise out of some other line of thought which is being pursued. This is a favorite method of Mr. Spurgeon of London. Sometimes preach them formally, but use as little of mere technicalities as possible. Preach them fully; there is no danger in following the Scriptures. Preach even the strong doctrines occasionally, but be sure to follow them out into the practical influences with which the Scriptures associate them. Preach them systematically, if possible, that they may be seen in their logical relations and influences upon each other. Preach them as the Bible does—not for controversy, but that all the grandeurs of redemption may be seen, that God may be glorified, and that believers may be helped onward in the process of becoming perfect men in Christ Jesus.

COURSES OF SERMONS

Every preacher of much experience knows how very important it is for the cause he pleads, for the edification of the people and for his own comfort, that the subjects of his discourses be wisely selected. Very often there is scarcely a choice in this matter, as the exigence of the hour or church or current providential events indicate clearly what the subjects must be. But after making this deduction it will be found that by far the greater part of the time the preacher must go deliberately to work to search out the text for the next Sabbath's sermon. We would recommend, then, that several comprehensive courses of sermons, embracing the whole compass of scriptural doctrine, duty and history, be kept on hand, to be taken up in turn when there are no other considerations indicating the suitable topic. We suggest some of the advantages of this plan.

1. The whole field of Christian doctrine and duty, and of Scripture history, may thus be covered in the course of one's ministry. The field is very large, embracing the vast scope of doctrines that pertain to God and man, the present and the future—all the duties arising from the complicated relations we sustain and the deeply-instructive histories that crowd the pages of holy writ. It must necessarily take a long time to reach all these, and call for care that none of them be overlooked. They are all deeply important, or they would not have found a place upon the precious pages of the word of life. What God has seen fit to reveal ought not, either from intention or oversight, to be passed by in the preaching of his servants. What we may think of but little importance may not appear so in the sight of God, and in the diversity of minds to which we address ourselves there may be one or more to which the point handled is exactly adapted. Moreover, it will be improving to ourselves to be compelled by such system to go over the whole field of divine truth. Certainly, in this matter as in all others, it is far better for us to follow the leadings of God's word than to

lean upon our own imperfect understandings.

2. Subjects that we might not otherwise have thought of will thus be brought up for our study and the people's edification. It is almost inevitable that in such a vast multitude and variety of subjects as are contained in Scripture many would be passed by, unless some such system is adopted to bring them up in their order. Even important topics are almost sure to be overlooked. Rich veins of divine truth will lie untouched through one's whole ministry, grand themes will remain hidden in corners that we never dreamt of, unless they are forced upon us by a well-contrived system of selecting our themes. The plan we recommend will open rich avenues of the gospel. In following it there will be constant surprises at the precious and inexhaustible veins of truth that will be found, and the field of research will become more and more vast and sublime as one advances.

3. Something of the relations and proportions of the truths of the gospel as they are found in the Bible may be preserved in our sermons by this plan of arranging them in series. The doctrines, duties, histories, threatenings, promises and invitations may thus be presented according to their relations and comparative importance. There are some great truths of redemption which the Bible is constantly reiterating. Others are but seldom introduced. So it should be in our preaching. Then the great doctrines will also be better understood and more deeply felt when they are brought up in their logical order; as sin first, then redemption, then the application of that redemption, and then its results. Besides, it must be best to present the gospel scheme just as the Scriptures do. They set forth redemption, now in the history of the chosen nation, now in types, now in the life of Christ, now in the doctrines of the apostles and now in the fortunes of the Church, past or future. All these important elements in the presentation of the truth can scarcely be observed unless there be a carefully premeditated plan of presenting its subjects.

4. This plan will almost certainly lead to the important result of keeping up variety in f reaching. Every minister who

preaches weekly, year after year, to the same audience knows how difficult this is. It is almost inevitable that the cast of one's mind will lead him perpetually to the selection of similar favorite themes for his sermons. As a matter of fact it is observed that most ministers do insensibly fall into the habit of dwelling mainly on their favorite topics. But the scheme of prearranging courses of sermons will force one to take up new subjects systematically. A preacher who pursues this course will soon be known as one who keeps up variety. Not only the different series of discourses, but also the different discourses of each series, will be likely to lead to new fields of exploration. Sameness will necessarily be avoided. This will probably prove the very best plan for preserving freshness and consequent interest in the ministrations of the pulpit.

5. By this arrangement there will always be a subject ready as soon as the minute arrives for commencing the study of the sermon for the week. There is no task of the study more unpleasant than to be compelled to search for a subject or text. It is always felt to be time wasted. And a theme for a sermon which is thus sousrht out purposely is rarely entered upon with vigor or pursued with pleasure. It is generally unsatisfactory. Our plan of having courses of sermons arranged beforehand would prevent all this. It would have the appropriate theme ready to be taken up at the instant without anxiety or delay, and with all the zest that would be excited by the prospect of entering upon a new and appropriate field of research.

Such would be the important advantages of arranging series of sermons early in one's ministry and following them up persistently for years. The exact plan we recommend may be illustrated by one which has been adopted by a hard-working pastor, and carried out very pleasantly and profitably for years. Several comprehensive courses have been framed—framed with a view to embrace the principal points of scriptural history, doctrine and practice. There was no anxiety to limit the number of courses or subjects in each, as it was intended to lay out the work of years. All the courses were carried on simultaneously, a sermon of each being taken up in turn, so

that proper variety was provided for. No intimation was ever given to the congregation that any such arrangement was determined on, in order that the pastor might not be bound to follow it out in any particular order, or to continue it at all if it were found to be impracticable. It was not intended that these prearranged subjects should be taken every Sabbath nor at any definite intervals, but that when no other subjects indicated by the exigence of the day were at hand then these should be brought in. Perfect freedom was allowed to intermit the series for one Sabbath or several Sabbaths if deemed advisable, for the sake of presenting subjects of present importance. Indeed, no restraint was allowed which would make adherence to the fixed plan irksome. It was felt that to do so would soon cause it to be abandoned.

As we want to impart very full information on this matter, we will give the courses in the order in which they were taken up alternately. They were six in number, carefully devised so as to embrace the main points of Old and New Testament teachings. They were:

A. Leading Events of Old Testament History—this is needed for the general study of the Bible; B. The Chief Doctrines of Theology—the importance of this is obvious; C. Leading Events in the Life of Christ— this could not be dispensed with; D. Great Duties of Religion—" that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" E. Leading Events in Apostolic History—needed to instruct about the Church in its inspired institutions; F. Jewish Institutions and their Teachings —these reiterate the blessings of Christ in a most impressive manner.

The subjects of each course, in detail, were:

A. Leading Events of Old Testament History.—These were: 1. Creation; 2. Fall; 3. Murder of Abel; 4. Translation of Enoch; 5. Wickedness of the World; 6. Deluge; 7. Covenant with Noah; 8. Babel; 9. Call of Abraham; 10. Abraham and Melchizedek; 11. Abraham constituted Father of the Faithful; 12. Overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; 13. Offering of Isaac; 14. Life of Isaac; 15. Jacob's Vision at Bethel; 16. Jacob Wrestling with God; 17.

Joseph Sold; 18. Promotion of Joseph; 19. Migration into Egypt; 20. Job's Strange History; 21. Oppression of the Hebrews; 22. Plagues of Egypt; 23. Passover; 24. Crossing the Red Sea; 25. Giving of the Law at Sinai; 2G. Wandering in the Wilderness; 27. Brazen Serpent; 28. Death of Moses; 29. Conquest of Canaan; 30. Sun and Moon standing still; 31. Victory of Deborah and Barak; 32. Samson, a Type of the Jewish Nation; 33. Ruth's Affection; 34. Ruth's Reward; 35. Mission of Samuel; 36. Saul made King; 37. Suicide of Saul; 38. David the Man after God's own Heart; 39. David the Psalmist; 40. David the Warrior; 41. David's Sin and Sorrows; 42. Solomon the Builder; 43. Solomon the Author; 44. Solomon in all his Glory; 45. Revolt of the Ten Tribes; 46. Elijah and the Prophets of Baal on Carmel; 47. Translation of Elijah; 48. Jehu the Avenger; 49. Jonah's Mission; 50. Hezekiah the Reformer; 51. Captivity of the Ten Tribes; 52. Destruction of the Assyrian Army; 53. Recovery of good Hezekiah; 54. Jerusalem burnt and its Inhabitants captured; 55. Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams; 56. Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego in the Fiery Furnace; 57. Nebuchadnezzar humbled; 58. Death of Belshazzar; 59. Daniel in the Lions' Den; 60. Rebuilding of the Temple; 61. Esther made Queen; 62. Feast of Purim.

B. Chief Doctrines of Theology.—1. Being of God; 2. Inspiration; 3. The Bible the Only Rule of Faith and Practice; 4. Canon of Scripture; 5. Spirituality of God; 6. Eternity of God; 7. Immutability of God; 8. Omnipresence of God; 9. Omniscience of God; 10. Wisdom of God; 11. Omnipotence of God; 12. Holiness of God; 13. Justice of God; 14. Goodness of God; 15. Truth of God; 16. Trinity; 17. Divinity of Christ; 18. Personality, Divinity and Work of the Holy Ghost; 19. Decrees of God; 20. Creation as a Doctrine; 21. Angels; 22. Providence; 23. Original State of Man; 24. Covenant of Works; 25. Sin, and that of Adam; 26. Original Sin; 27. Covenant of Grace; 28. Person of Christ; 29. Mediatorial Office of Christ; 30. Atonement; 31. Exaltation of Christ; 32. Intercession of Christ; 33. Mediatorial Kingship of Christ; 34. Effectual Calling; 35. Regeneration; 36.

Faith; 37. Union of Believers with Christ; 38. Repentance; 39. Justification; 40. Adoption; 41. Sanctification; 42. Perseverance of Saints; 43. Death; 44. Intermediate Condition; 45. Resurrection; 46. Second Advent of Christ; 47. Judgment; 48. Heaven; 49. Hell; 50. Sacraments; 51. Baptism, subjects; 52. Baptism, mode; 53. Lord's Supper; 54. The Church, a Divine Institution; 55. The Ministry appointed of God.

C. Leading Events in the Life of Christ, classified according to the nature of his works.—1. Mission of John the Baptist; 2. The Two Genealogies; 3. Birth of Christ; 4. Visit of the Wise Men; 5. Christ in the Temple with the Doctors; 6. Baptism of Christ; 7. Temptation of Christ; 8. Christ calling his Disciples, Matt. iv. 18-22; 9. Sermon on the Mount; 10. The Journeys of Christ, Matt. ix. 35; 11. Christ's Command over Nature—representative case, Stilling the Tempest, Matt. viii. 23-27; 12. Christ casting out Devils—representative case, Demoniac of Gadara, Mark v. 1-20; 13. Christ forgiving Sin—representative case, Curing the Paralytic, Mark ii. 1-12; 14. Christ ever doing Good —representative case, Blessing Little Children; 15. Christ ever doing Good—representative case, Feeding Five Thousand; 16. Christ healing — representative case, One born Blind, John ix.; 17. Christ raising the Dead—representative case, Lazarus; 18. Christ preaching—representative case, Luke iv. 16-22; 19. Christ teaching—representative case, John x.; 20. Parables of Christ—representative case, Prodigal Son; 21. Christ a Prophet —representative case, Destruction of Jerusalem, Matt. xxiv.; 22. Apostles sent out, Matt. x.; 23. The Transfiguration; 24. Christ's kingly Entrance into Jerusalem; 25. Lord's Supper instituted; 26. Christ's consolatory Discourse to his Disciples; 27. Mediatory Prayer of Christ; 28. Agony in Gethsemane; 29. Arraignment of Christ before several Tribunals; 30. Condemnation by Pilate; 31. Crucifixion; 32. Burial of Christ; 33. Christ's Resurrection; 34. Various Appearances of Christ after his Resurrection; 35. Christ's Ascension after Commissioning his Disciples.

D. Great Duties of Religion.—1. Supreme Glory to God, First Commandment; 2. True Worship, Second Commandment; 3.

Singing in Worship; 4. Thanks giving; 5. Hearing the Word; 6. Attending Prayer-meetings; 7. Reading the Scriptures; 8. Secret Prayer; 9. Backsliding; 10. Family Worship; 11. Third Com mandment; 12. Fourth Commandment; 13. Fifth Com mandment; 14. Duties of Parents to Children; 15. Sixth Commandment, Anger; 16. Brotherly Love; 17. Seventh Commandment, Purity of Heart; 18. Care of the Thoughts; 19. Eighth Commandment, Hon esty; 20. Ninth Commandment, Truthfulness; 21. Charity versus Slander; 22. Tenth Commandment, Contentment; 23. Humility; 24. Visiting the Sick; 25. Helping the Poor; 26. Supporting Benevolent Objects.

E. Leading Events of Apostolic History.—1. Election of an Apostle in place of Judas; 2. Descent of Holy Ghost; 3. Three Thousand converted; 4. Death of Ananias and Sapphira; 5. Election of Seven Deacons; 6. Martyrdom of Stephen; 7. Conversion of Paul; 8. Dorcas raised from the Dead; 9. Baptism of Cornelius and other Gentiles; 10. Herod Agrippa murders James; 11. The Governor of Cyprus converted; 12. The First Synod at Jerusalem; 13. The Jailer of Philippi converted; 14. Paul Preaching at Athens; 15. The Mob at Ephesus; 16. Paul Arrested at Jerusalem; 17. Paul before Felix; 18. Paul's Appeal to Agrippa; 19. Shipwreck of Paul; 20. Paul a Prisoner at Rome; 21. John in the Island of Patmos.

F. Jewish Institutions and their Teachings.—1. Tabernacle and Temple; 2. Altar of Burnt-Offering; 3. Laver; 4. Altar of Incense; 5. Shew-bread Table; 6. Golden Candlestick; 7. Ark of the Covenant; 8. Mercy-seat; 9. Cherubim; 10. Shekinah; 11. High Priest and other Priests; 12. Ephod; 13. Robe of the Ephod; 14. Breastplate; 15. Mitre; 16. Burnt, Sin and Trespass Offerings; 17. Peace-Offerings, Ordinary and Freewill Oblations; 18. First Fruits; 19. Tithes; 20. Passover; 21. Pentecost; 22. Feast of Tabernacles; 23. Feast of Trumpets; 24. Great Day of Atonement; 25. Jubilee, with Sabbatical Year.

MANNER OF PREACHING

Very much depends upon this. It should be made a careful and incessant study by every minister. The following reflections may assist in attaining to higher proficiency in an art which is the most sacred and exalted.

(a) Deep Earnestness

Every motive arising from his office, his trust, his character and his hope of success demands of the pastor that he should be fully in earnest in that which is his greatest work. He cannot preach aright in any other way. It is not meant that there must necessarily be much noise in the pulpit. Very often the highest emotion will subdue, and so prevent, noise. But what is meant is, that in preaching the heart should be enlisted —the whole heart—the heart inflamed by a sense of the importance of the subject—the heart filled with the strongest desire of effecting the objects for which the gospel is preached. This earnestness cannot be assumed or counterfeited; it must be genuine. It must spring from a sympathy with God and souls which has been produced by the Holy Ghost; and in every sermon the first care of the preacher should be to get his heart inflamed with it. He should pray and read the word and meditate until it is reached. It is the fundamental preparation for faithful and successful preaching.

What earnestness do we find characterizing; the preachers of the New Testament! They were in earnest when in one place we hear them crying, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though" God did beseech yon by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Paul was in earnest when he could exhort, saying, "Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Apollos was in earnest, since we read of him, "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." These and other cases form a model

which should be imitated.

The slumbering conscience of unrenewed men demands the greatest fervency in the preacher. There is a terrible insensibility about spiritual and eternal things which it often seems as if no motives could penetrate. And this stupor is found everywhere. Now, it is true that the Holy Ghost alone can break through this obstacle and arouse the heart to its danger and refuge; but it is also true that the Holv Ghost ordinarily works by means, and that by the means that are naturally the best adapted to accomplish the desired end. And what so likely to awaken the slumbering conscience as the preaching which flows from an ardent heart? What, in fact, has proved so effective as this divinely-appointed agency? The preacher, then, should apply his whole soul to awaken men. He should not be afraid of enthusiasm in a work so deeply important and so hard to be accomplished. If men see him awake and in earnest, and perseveringly so, they must be affected. If they see him indifferent, they will sleep the sounder.

How is it possible to preach of the awful realities of heaven and hell, of the soul and the everlasting ages, and of the death of Christ for the salvation of the lost, without the deepest emotion? Hell is a terrible reality. The prospect of its unutterable anguish, of its eternal torments, is dreadful. Then the thought that all the unconverted are posting on steadily and surely to its woes is appalling. But it might be escaped through the blood of the Son of God, and then would come a heaven of indescribable bliss and everlasting glory. Can we think of these things and not be overwhelmed at the thought? Can we speak of them without our hearts and words burning with the very deepest feeling? Can we preach of them in any other tone than that of the devoted McCheyne? He said: "Souls are perishing every day, and our own entrance into eternity cannot be far distant. Let us, like Mary, do what we can, and no doubt God will bless it and reward us openly. But an inch of time remains, and the eternal ages roll on for ever—but an inch remains for ever—but an inch on which we stand and preach the way of salvation to the perishing world." Equally fervent

was the purpose of Cecil: “Hell is before me, and thousands of souls shut up there in everlasting agonies. Jesus Christ stands forth to save men from rushing into this bottomless abyss; he sends me to proclaim his ability and his love. I want no fourth idea. Every fourth idea is contemptible; every fourth idea is a grand impertinence."

To preach in a cold, unfeeling manner, to preach without earnestness, is sinful. It shows in the preacher a heart that is hard. It reveals an amount of selfishness or thoughtlessness or levity, or all of them combined, that ought to humble and alarm. The existence of such a state of mind should set us to inquire most anxiously how it is with our own souls. It should drive us quickly to the cross of Christ for pardon, and for the spirit of Him who felt so much for us that he died in our place. Deep is the guilt of handling the word of God in an unfeeling manner! The souls of all preachers should be awakened by the stirring appeal of Baxter: “How few ministers do preach with all their might, or speak about everlasting joy or torment in such a manner as to make men believe that they are in great sadness! It would make a man's heart ache to see a company of dead and drowning sinners sit under a minister, and not have a word that is like to quicken or awaken them. To think with ourselves, 'Oh if these sinners were but convinced and awakened they might yet be converted and live!' But, alas! we speak so drowsily or gently that sleepy sinners cannot hear. The blow falls so light that hard-hearted persons cannot feel it. Most ministers will not so much as put out their voice and stir up themselves to an earnest utterance. But if they do speak out loud and earnestly, how few do answer it with earnestness of matter! And then the voice doth but little good: the people will take it for but mere bawling when the matter doth not correspond. It would grieve me what excellent doctrine some ministers have in hand, and let it die in their hands for want of close and lively application. What fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and how little they make of it, and what a deal of good it might do if it were sent home, and yet they cannot or will not do it! Oh, sirs, how plain, how close and

earnestly, should we deliver a message of such a nature as ours is! When the everlasting life or death of men is concerned in it, methinks we are nowhere so wanting as in this seriousness. There is nothing more unsuitable to such a business than to be slight and dull. What! speak coldly for God and for men's salvation! Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet can we speak in a drowsy tone? In the name of God, brethren, labor to awaken your hearts before you come; and when you are in the work, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners. Remember that they must be awakened or damned, and a sleepy preacher will hardly awake them."

In each sermon we ought to deliver the message of God as if it were the last time we were to preach. Any sermon may be the last one for the preacher. It may be the last one for him; it may be the last one for some of his hearers; it probably will be the last one to some of them. This thought should stir up the whole heart. Oh how we should preach in view of it! How earnestly we should preach, since we are sure that we shall not often stand before exactly the same audience to warn and exhort them! It should be with us always as it was with Cecil on his dying bed: “Knowing he was about to die, he expressed a desire to live longer. He was asked, Why? 'That I might preach Christ.' 'But you have clone this through your ministry.' 'But, oh,' said he, 'I would do it stronger, much stronger, than ever.'"

We should not be afraid of enthusiasm here. Enthusiasm is surely excusable when life and death and the souls of men and the glory of the Son of God are at stake. The apostles were enthusiasts in their preaching. Hear the enthusiasm of Paul: “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." In the preaching of the awfully solemn things of religion is the proper field for enthusiasm. It should be cherished here, and anything less should be considered cold-heartedness. A consuming zeal is needed in this age of worldliness and shallowness in religion, and at this time when the hearts of men are so desperately callous.

The great preachers who have made their mark upon their age have been in the highest sense enthusiasts. "Richard Sheridan used to say, 'I often go to hear Rowland Hill, because his ideas come red hot from the heart.' Dr. John M. Mason was asked what he thought was the forte of Dr. Chalmers. After a moment's consideration he replied, 'His blood-earnestness.' "The biographer of Baxter says: “In preaching, Baxter's heart burnt within him, and while he was speaking a live coal from the altar fired his sermons with seraphic fervor. Into the pulpit he brought all the energies and sympathies of his entire nature. He had a large mind, an acute intellect, a melting heart, a holy soul, a kindling eye and a moving voice, and he called on all that was within him to aid him in his preaching. Being deeply earnest himself, he wished his hearers to be earnest. Himself being a burning light, he wished to flash the hallowed fire into the hearts of others. He seems never to have studied the action or the 'start theatric' The only teacher that gave him lessons in action and attitude was feeling, real, genuine, holy feeling, and this taught him how to look, how to move, how to speak. In preaching, as well as everything religious, he believed with Paul, 'that it was good to be always zealously affected,' and consequently that earnest, fervent preaching is truly apostolic." There is great force in the remarks of Olin: “Success in religion depends on zeal, fervor. Cold preaching never does any good. Cold prayers are not answered. Cold efforts effect nothing. On the contrary, the simplest ministry of God's truth if fervent is powerful. A fervent people are always prosperous. Their deep sympathies melt the hardest heart. God's most honored instrumentality is such a people. Preacher and people together burning with the love of Christ and of souls constitute the favored instrumentality. This is irresistible; it makes the word irresistible through the Spirit."

(b) Preaching should be with Tenderness

A large part of the audiences to which we preach consists of persons over whom is resting the sentence of condemnation to

death eternal. They are all sufferers. At the same time they are our fellow-beings, our kindred, men, flesh of our flesh; they have the same nature, feelings, susceptibilities, hopes and fears with ourselves. For their deliverance from all the miseries and dangers of sin did Christ die as well as for ours, and that because his heart was moved with deep pity for us all. Their souls are at stake in the message we deliver them from the lips of God. It will prove the savor of life unto life or of death unto death to them. A dry, cold, unfeeling delivery of that message to them would be cruel heartlessness. We should feel for them in our inmost souls, and let that feeling influence every tone and every word we utter. Our tenderness should be like that of the apostles, who could write, “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail, for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe, as ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children."

Why did God appoint men rather than angels to be his ambassadors to a lost world? He might have sent angels, or he might have conveyed the truth to each soul in a miraculous manner, or he might have used other methods, but he chose men to be the heralds of mercy to their fellow-men. Was not this because they could feel for those who were sinners like themselves as no other creatures could; because they could speak from experience when they pressed home God's gracious offers; because they could interest them as those who had the same wants and longings; because of that deep sympathy which binds them in a common brotherhood? And because God has made this arrangement we should ever proclaim his messages with the warmest sympathy toward our kindred

according to the flesh.

There is something in affectionate tenderness that goes directly to the heart and calls forth its responsive kindness. It awakens attention, convinces that the speaker is sincere in his appeals, breaks down all opposition of the mind to the truth, and touches sympathetic chords which thrill out from speaker to hearer. As he weeps or smiles or hopes or fears or is filled with awe, so they also are moved and their hearts warm with his. This tenderness will melt them when neither arguments nor threatenings nor warnings nor invitations nor anything else would have any effect. This is the way to get at the hearts of the audience, and hold them and influence them by the grand motives that are furnished in the gospel.

To speak in an unfeeling manner is sure to repel the hearers and close up their hearts. It leaves the impression that the speaker is not sincere in what he utters. It sets men to finding faults and objections to the discourse. It positively hardens and renders the mind insensible to what appears to it the merest platitude. Either these are the effects of heartless preaching or it is not listened to at all, but men turn from it as if religion were of little account. To deliver to men the messages of God, in which life and death are at stake, in an unfeeling manner is as cruel as it is sinful.

The nature of the message we bear, the identity of our interests with those of our fellow-men, the consciousness of our own many, many imperfections and the suffering condition of our hearers, all demand that we should preach to them in the most tender manner. With great truth and force has this thought been presented by an able writer: “There is something in an affectionate statement of gospel truth which is peculiarly calculated to find its way to the heart. Christianity is a religion of sympathy. It is founded on the principle of human wretchedness. It meets man in every species of sorrow and affliction. It takes him by the hand when deserted by human supports. It pierces the clouds which throw a melancholy gloom over the path of life and opens before the wayworn traveler a hope full of immortality. Let ns reflect upon this peculiarity of

our holy religion and consider what an advantage it gives us in our public addresses. By far the greater part of our congregation is suffering in one way or another. We cannot enter a family and be permitted to know what is passing within it without perceiving that there is a worm corroding the root of their comforts, some poisoned arrow drinking up their spirits, some intolerable burden subduing their strength. To such how suitable is the invitation of the compassionate Saviour, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'! How appropriate is the character of the great High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities! To such, how adapted are the consolations of the Spirit, the promises of the gospel and the resting-place of the saints! To overlook such circumstances, and to discuss abstract truths in a cold and formal and heartless manner, oh, what a loss of opportunity! what a mockery of human misery! what a dereliction of duty! what a prostration of office! what a fearful responsibility! Let us pray for the heart of a shepherd, for bowels of compassion. Let us take the sufferer by the hand and conduct him to the Saviour. Let us lead him to the wells of salvation. Let us pour the healing balm into his bleeding heart, and assure him that there is One who sympathizes with his sorrows and ‘who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.'"

The experience of all really successful ministers agrees with this. "We may talk," says Nettleton, "of the best means of doing good, but, after all, the greatest difficulty lies in doing it in a proper spirit, 'speaking the truth in love'—' in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves' with 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ.' I have known anxious sinners drop the subject of religion in consequence of a preacher addressing them in an angry tone." “I was never fit," says Payson, “to say a word to a sinner except when I had a broken heart myself, when I was subdued and melted into tenderness, and felt as though I had just received pardon to my own soul, and when my heart was full of tenderness and pity."

(c) Preaching should be in Sympathy with the Wants of the People

We should study not to feel above those to whom we minister, not to stand aloof from them, not simply to patronize them. We should strive rather to remember that they have the same nature, the same feelings, the same susceptibilities, the same trials, hopes and fears, with ourselves—that we are suffering under the same disease of sin and need the same remedy that they do.

We should strive to get into sympathy with the feelings, the wants, the trials, the temptations, the aspirations, the doubts, the fears, the hopes, the joys by which they are affected. We should deeply study those motives which are bearing upon them. We should bring them home to ourselves and weigh well the influence they would be likely to have upon us. How should we feel and act if situated in every respect as they are? In such circumstances what motives would be likely to have the greatest influence upon our lives? These are questions which we should bring home very closely. This is a difficult, but most important, element of success in preaching. The old divine, Thomas Adam, uttered these weighty sentences: “How much better would it be if, instead of censuring and bitterly inveighing against the ignorance, perverseness and corruption of my neighbors, I exerted myself in good earnest, according to the duty of my station and the talents which God has given me, to instruct and reform them! Perhaps many a one has long been waiting at the pool of Bethesda for some friendly hand to help hi in in, and I pass by them with a stupid unconcern and leave them groaning under their misery. ... I find it very difficult, if not impossible, through my selfishness, to sink myself into the common mass of mankind, so as to take my full share of their guilt, to sympathize, to pity, to have a fellow-feeling of their wants, joys and sorrows, and be truly concerned for the temporal and spiritual welfare of all."

There are peculiarities of thought and feeling in every human breast, and also those which lodge deeply in the hearts

of classes of society. There are national feelings which make his country dear to the patriot and the exile far from his home; the poor have a fellow-feeling in their trials; youthful affection has its strong and endearing ties; the inebriate sees strange charms in the intoxicating cup; men of business are held by bonds not easily broken; even fellowship in sin lays hold of the deep springs of the heart. It would be the preacher's wisdom to try to understand these feelings, to get near to them, to sympathize with them, and to use them in his efforts to bring the truth home to the conscience. He should put himself in the place of those to whom he preaches and get his heart to beat in unison with theirs, and thus influence them by the motives of the gospel.

This getting into the feelings of the people and sympathizing with them, and so addressing them, is one of the secrets of successful preaching. It is certain to captivate men. It must be earnest, for how can we feel deeply for our hearers and not be fervent in our appeals to them? We have but to get at this, and our preaching must tell. It will certainly draw men to the sanctuary and fill the house. There is much food for thought in the following remarks: “The great preachers of the world have been those who were in direct sympathy with human life and who had an end to gain with the men before them. The end of preaching is not a good sermon, but a holy heart. Fine sermons have nearly ruined good preaching. If ministers cared more for their people and less for their own sermons, they would be more useful. Learning, rhetoric, eloquence, are good as collateral influences, but no man will win souls who does not feel the throbbing pulse of his whole congregation, who does not know their wants, who does not study their lives, who does not understand how to take the primary truths of Christianity and apply them to the consciences of men in their daily business-life. Such preachers, and only such, will be certainly efficacious, and such preaching is necessary to the filling of the churches. Were such preaching universal in our time, not only would our churches be filled to overflowing, but thousands would have to be built; for, you may depend upon it, there is

never a man who preaches intelligent truth, and preaches it with a living sympathy with men, that people do not flock to hear."

(d) Aiming Directly for Conversions in Preaching

It is true that in the ministrations of the pulpit we are to sow the seed which may spring up and produce a harvest in the future—we are to lay foundations that will sustain a noble structure, it may be, in years far hence. But we must also calculate on the conversion of souls at once, for “now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." In our preparations for the pulpit and in our preaching we should have ever before us the solemn obligation of now making an effort to bring some of our audience to the salvation of Christ. The sermon which fails in this fails in one of its most important objects. So prominent should this aim be with us that after every sermon we would look anxiously to see who had been impressed, who had been moved to take one step toward the cross. We would inquire as to the spiritual wants of the impenitent who hear us, ascertain their difficulties, and then shape our discourses so as to meet them.

This is the great design of the Christian ministry. There are other deeply important objects, such as the edifying of believers, but this is the chief. “If souls are not saved, whatever other designs are accomplished, the great purpose of the ministry is defeated." Look at the preachers of the New Testament. They sought directly to save men, and they were successful; for consider the thousands converted on the day of Pentecost, and the occasions when we read, “When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." On this their hearts were set, as they showed by such language as this: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This was implied in the

great promise made to them: “Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." So also in the commission and promise: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Indeed, this is explicitly declared to be the great object of preaching: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." So the voice of infinite wisdom encourages us: “He that winneth souls is wise."

Men are in crying need of the benefits of salvation. They are lost; they are suffering; they are posting steadily and rapidly down, down to endless woe. Then a way of saving them has been provided, and it is all ready for as many as can be induced to enter upon it. The proclamation has been made from Heaven that they may be pardoned and received back into the favor of of that God against whom they have rebelled. It is ours, as preachers, to take that offer and carry it home to them, and reiterate it and explain it, and show the infinite mercy it contains, and persuade men with all urgency to accept its priceless benefits. This is to be with us a great object in every sermon. The caution of McCheyne should ever be before us: “Never forget that the end of a sermon is the salvation of the people."

This direct aim after conversion must have a very great influence upon our preaching. We are aiming after immediate results; then we shall necessarily be far more interested in our discourses, we shall preach with more earnestness, our words will be clothed with more directness of aim at the heart. Souls are now at stake; how importunate we should be with them, that now they may be rescued before it be too late! Christ is now to be offered, and accepted or rejected; how critical the moment! The heart is now to be reached and made soft by divine grace, or it will grow harder; how tender should we be! Treasure can now be laid up in heaven; oh how diligently we should strive for such eternal riches!

When our hearts are set upon saving souls at once, our preaching must necessarily be far more effective. Without this

aim there will not be that earnest preparatory prayer upon which so much depends, nor will there be deep study as to the best way of securing acceptance for the saving truths of Christ. When the preacher's own heart becomes inflamed with a sense of the need and the hope of men being converted immediately, his words will have an increased force. The true fervor in the pulpit will not be reached until it is felt that souls must be snatched at once as brands from the burning. This it is that gives a glowing importunity which cannot be withstood. The heart yearning to glorify Christ by the immediate salvation of men is the heart which the Holy Ghost blesses. Where this is found the preaching must have power and efficacy.

Then, as it has been well said, “Nothing short of positive success can satisfy a true minister of Christ. His plans may succeed smoothly, and his external machinery may work steadily; but without actual fruit in the saving of souls he counts all these as nothing. His feeling is, ‘My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be found in you.' And it is this feeling which makes him successful. ‘Ministers,' said Owen, ‘are seldom honored with success unless they are continually aiming at the conversion of sinners.' The resolution that in the strength and with the blessing of God he will never rest without success will ensure it. It is the man who has made up his mind to confront every difficulty, who has counted the cost, and, fixing his eye upon the prize, has determined to fight his way to it—it is such a man that conquers."

The preacher, then, should have his mind constantly fixed upon the direct conversion of souls—the souls of individuals whose names he ever keeps before him, the souls of all the impenitent in his congregation. Of this important interest he should never become oblivious. He should carry it with him into the closet, into the study and into the pulpit. The ever-recurring questions with him should be, How shall I reach and overcome the great difficulties that stand in the way of perishing souls? How shall I make the truth so clear that those who need it most must see it? How shall I place the offers of salvation in such a form that they will be accepted by those

who must receive them now or be lost for ever? He should seek day and night for conversions. He should look for them with a patience that is never exhausted and with a faith that cannot be disappointed.

Instances innumerable could be given of the good results of this direct aim after conversions in preaching. Here is the testimony of the Rev. J. A. James: “I am now on the verge of old age and the subject of not a few of its infirmities. It is now some consolation to me to recollect that amidst innumerable defects—which, if affection has concealed them from the notice of my friends, are humblingly known to myself—I have in some measure ever kept in view the conversion of sinners as the great end of the Christian ministry, and therefore of mine. I started in my preaching career while yet a student with this before my eyes as the great purpose for which I entered the pulpit." His biographer relates of Rev. R. Knill that "his specialty as a preacher seems to have been the directness of his aim at the conversion of souls, and besides the multitudinous instances of individual success there was reason to believe he had been the instrument of converting one hundred persons who in one way or another became preachers of the gospel."

(e) Sensational Preaching.

There is a kind of preaching, sometimes too prevalent and in some communities too popular, against which a most emphatic protest should be entered. Its aim is to awaken curiosity by presenting fantastic thoughts in a grotesque manner, or to entertain by a tissue of sickly sentimentalism, or to startle by absurd paradoxes, or even to curry the popular favor by flings at orthodoxy and the vital truths of religion. It announces its subjects in some silly phraseology. Sermons have been announced under the names of “Spiders," “Main Street," "Limpers," "The Greatest Liar in Town," etc. These may be extreme cases, but they will serve to illustrate the wicked absurdity of the whole thing. Then plain thoughts must be

expressed in flippant, new-fangled language, and subjects must be treated in some unheard-of manner that will cause the hearers to stare.

It is difficult to find language strong enough by which to condemn this wicked and foolish practice. Where in this world is buffoonery so much out of place as in the pulpit? What sacrilege it is to trifle with sacred things and prostitute the very gospel that was established by the blood of Christ! If such impiety must be indulged in, surely it ought not to receive the name of Christian preaching. It ought to be taken into some other place than the pulpit, and those who practice it should, in all reason, drop the name of ministers of that gospel which they seem ashamed to present in the form and language that the Scriptures and piety of the Church have hallowed.

The origin of this sinful and absurd manner of entertaining an audience on the Lord's day most generally is in a desire to copy after some erratic, or possibly unprincipled, preacher, who, by his recklessness as to the way of handling the truth of God and by his genius, has risen to a temporary popularity. It aims to gain applause for originality, to awaken curiosity and wonder, and that even if it mocks both God and man by its maudlin nonsense; and then it justifies itself by the plea that in this way alone can the interest of an audience be excited or retained.

Now, in reference to this whole style of preaching we would say that to good taste it is loathsome, to true piety it is sinful, and to sound sense it is impolitic. Can it be otherwise than disgusting to hear preachers of the gospel, in the sacred desk, on the Lord's day and with the the most solemn responsibility resting upon them, trifling before an audience of dying men with mawkish conceits? What a shock does it give to every right feeling to conceive the idea of the apostle Paul preaching in this manner, or to think of a chapter of God's book being devoted to such sensationalism! Then it is nothing less than blasphemy to caricature the word of God, as is often done by this kind of preaching, to bring it into ridicule, to trifle with God and truth and souls, and to treat the whole matter of

religion as if it were a good joke. Besides, it is utterly futile; it does not in the end accomplish what it aims at. Hearers may be attracted and startled for a short time, but soon the relish will be gone and be followed by disgust. The effort to be like some brilliant star in the pulpit will soon prove a miserable failure. Sensational preaching will not attract long. There are multitudes of noble models, living and deceased, to prove that the preaching of the mind of God, just as it is found in the Scriptures, and in the language that will carry it home most directly to the heart, is the preaching that will most surely attract, most permanently edify, do the most good, produce the most permanent results and most certainly be blessed by the God of the gospel.

The things of God and the soul and eternity are too solemn to be trifled with. The preacher who is really in earnest in his work will not turn aside from the eternal interests on hand to amuse the people, to startle them or to gain their applause by his ingenuity and flights of fancy. His heart will be so set upon delivering the message of God that he will have no eye, no ear, no taste for anything else. One thing—even the glory of God in the conversion of souls—will he ever keep before him, and that will cut off all that is sensational or selfish or unbecoming in his discourses. He will have no heart but to preach the gospel in the most direct and emphatic manner.

PUBLIC PRAYER

This is one of the leading duties of the minister in the pulpit, and must therefore receive some attention in this place. It is a subject which is worthy of very careful study from every pastor —much more study and preparation than it often receives. Its very great importance will be felt when we consider, (a) that public prayer forms so large a part of the worship of the sanctuary; (b) that it is intended to be joined in and followed in spirit by all the congregation; (c) that its aim is to express the wants of all the people assembled; (d) that it is an appointed vehicle for bringing down the blessings of the Holy Ghost; and (e) that it -will inevitably form a model after which all the prayers, both public and private, of the praying people will be formed. Our aim now shall be simply to indicate some leading points concerning it which ought to be studied. We offer a few comprehensive suggestions which can be thought out more fully:

1. Public prayer should receive its tone and spirit from a sense of the divine presence. In it we come especially near to God, and all its meaning and value depend upon his presence, recognized and felt as a reality. This state of mind in offering public prayer will help to banish worldly thoughts, will bring spiritual and eternal things very near, will give a felt reality to the services, and will produce that importunity at the throne of grace which is so essential. It will inspire the proper reverence when the assembly gather around the footstool of God. What is more unbecoming than irreverence or levity in the presence of Jehovah, and while appealing to him for mercy, pardon and acceptance? This sense of the divine presence, when strong in the mind of the preacher, will disseminate itself through the whole audience and produce a salutary influence upon all. When it pervades the prayer at the commencement, it will go down through all the rest of the services, giving them elevation, solemnity and power. The aim of the minister, as he engages in this service, should be to get his mind filled with the

impression, “God is now present, Christ the Mediator is here, the Holy Ghost is now, at this very moment, helping our infirmities." It is possible to attain this state of mind, and no effort should be spared until it is reached.

2. The public prayer of the pastor should be comprehensive. However it may be with private or social prayer, the prayer of the sanctuary should be made to cover at least the leading wants of the whole assembly. This is its object, and this is expected of it. It is obvious that it should contain praise for the infinite perfections and glories of God, thanksgiving for his boundless mercies, confession for sins of every name, prayer for the supply of all wants, and intercession for blessings upon others. These are general objects which manifestly should be embraced in the prayers of the house of God. But besides these there should be a large comprehension of other wants which are common to all. Thus prolixity of expression will be avoided, and variety will be secured in this part of the public worship. But a far more important object will be reached in meeting the diversified wants of the people of God and of his Church. Think of the various wants which must be pressing upon the hearts of a whole congregation of men and women. Some have their doubts and fears, some their repentings for recent sins, some their peculiar temptations, some their afflictions and perplexities, some their business troubles, and some their anxieties about their impenitent relatives and friends. The petitions in public prayer should embrace all such cases. They will thus often prove grateful to troubled hearts whose sorrows are little known to men. Then the vast interests of Christ's kingdom must also, of course, be included in the prayer of the sanctuary. “Thy kingdom come “is a petition of vast scope which must never be forgotten. The particular church of the worshipers, the blessings of revival, the circulation of the word, the progress of missions, the work of the Sabbath-school, the dissemination of the printed page, and the sending forth of a godly ministry, with other subjects pertaining to the welfare of Zion, must find their place in this deeply-important part of public worship. How wide, then, should be its scope! how

comprehensive its view of all the wants of the people of God and of the Church, which is now struggling with such desperate enemies!

3. In public prayer the petitions should he as specific as possible. They should not only be comprehensive, as embracing the vast scope of the Church's wants, but they should also be definite as to the things which are sought. Vague generalities do not ordinarily amount to much in this service. They do not arrest the attention, they do not call forth the importunity, nor do they awaken the desire that are essential qualities of acceptable prayer. When we have a specific thing for which we plead, then we plead in earnest—we become importunate, and our sincerity is made manifest. Hence there should be definiteness in the petitions which we carry before God in his sanctuary. We should not rest with vaguely asking that the evils of sin might be removed from the world, but that infidelity and injustice, and dishonesty and intemperance and Sabbath desecration and other great sins might be done away. We should not be satisfied with general petitions for the afflicted, but we should remember the sick, the sorrowing, the embarrassed and other sufferers. It is not enough that we pray indefinitely for the young, but our hearts should go out in earnest desires that they might be kept from temptation, that they might be converted, and that they might be made useful in their lives. The petition is not discriminative enough when we merely ask that the various agencies for the spread of the gospel may be blessed; but we should also ask distinctly for the circulation of the Bible, the raising up of a sanctified ministry, the success of missions, and other specific objects. In this way our prayers will have more point, more variety, more earnestness, and undoubtedly will be more effectual. All these and other specific objects of course cannot be introduced into each public prayer, but there should be careful attention that they all be occasionally remembered, some of them should find a place in the worship of every Sabbath. In following this counsel there must be good judgment used. There might be such an enumeration of minute and trivial details as would

almost bring ridicule upon the exercise —an evil against which a proper sense of the dignity of the presence and place and worship will be the best preservative.

4. In public prayer the petitions should be direct in aim and simple in language. The first thing is to have in the mind a clear and distinct perception of what is wanted, and then to ask for it in words which are the most natural and the least circuitous, and that convey our thoughts most directly. The simple expression of our wants to God is the true idea of all prayer. For this reason we should not hesitate to use the imperative mood as if it were an unwarranted boldness. Its use is not irreverent. We find it freely used in that model of prayer which we have been taught by our Lord. "Give us this day our daily bread “is the form in which we find its expressions. We may follow this pattern boldly. The Lord's Prayer should also be our model in its grand simplicity and directness. It uses no roundabout, no inflated, no labored language, but each petition is offered in fervent and most natural words, and then it passes on to the next. It is a great abuse of public prayer to use it for preaching to the audience or for rebuking them, or even, as is often done, for giving information to the Lord. All these things are out of place in it. Never should it be forgotten that its great object is to carry before God the diversified wants of the whole congregation and of the kingdom of Christ, and that in the most direct manner in our power. This manner of prayer will intensify our sense of the reality of the position we occupy as suppliants struggling at the throne of God. Then it is only when our prayers are uttered in this simple manner that the people can follow us, as they should, in all our petitions. Moreover, it is only this simple, child-like, reverent deportment that is becoming the majesty of Him before whom we appear. God's presence is no place for verbosity. Effort after rhetorical figures or inflated language, or an utterance that is merely calculated to please men, is greatly irreverent before Jehovah. Our only effort should be to express our wants in the most direct and earnest manner.

5. Brevity should be carefully studied in public prayer. This

is a point worthy of attention by most ministers—of very much attention by some. When the exercise is continued beyond a reasonable length, it invariably becomes prolix in thought and verbose in expression. Then all the subsequent parts of the service must suffer—must either be hurried over in an unsatisfactory manner, or be joined in by the audience in such a state of mind and body that but little benefit can be expected. It is expected that in the prayer of the minister the whole congregation should follow in spirit, making its petitions their own, and expressing their wants thereby. But when it is lengthened out to weariness they cannot follow; they either become drowsy, or they grow impatient, or they even fall into a state of irritation. Of course all good impressions are driven away from their minds when there is so little consideration on the part of the minister. In this way multitudes of prayers are ruined, so far as their influence upon the audience is concerned. Instances could be given where the hearers have been almost exasperated by them, where a spirit of impatience instead of devotion has been produced, and where the whole subsequent services have been spoiled. What good effect can prayers have upon the minds of the people when they are weary, listless or irritated? But if prayer be brief it will be more to the point and more interesting, and when it is finished the people will be hungry for further communion with God, and in a right frame of mind to join in the remaining services of the hour. The Lord's Prayer is very brief. The public prayers of the most successful preachers, such as Spurgeon, are remarkable for their conciseness. We would venture to suggest that the prayer of public worship should not, under ordinary circumstances, exceed eight minutes in length; five, in many cases, would not be too short. This matter requires study and preparation. It is difficult for many preachers to believe to what extent they do lengthen out their prayers. It is no easy task to be both brief and comprehensive in this part of the worship of God.

6. The prayer of the sanctuary should be thoroughly saturated with scriptural thought and expression. The language

of the Bible is that which the Spirit prompted, and which must therefore be most in accordance with the mind of God. For the same reason it must be Bible language which is best calculated to express those devotional feelings which are the work of the Spirit in the heart. If the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, the language which lie teaches must be the best adapted to express spiritual wants. Moreover, scriptural expressions are those with which the people are most familiar and which they can most easily follow. They touch chords in the heart which no other forms of utterance can reach. It is on this account that we often find laymen, whose whole phraseology is taken from the word of God, leading in this service to the greatest edification. Then, what is there so well calculated to excite devotional feelings as those hallowed utterances which the Holy Ghost indited, which the most godly of men have been using for ages, and which are associated with all that is devout and heavenly? Besides, the use of scriptural language in public prayer honors the word of God and fixes it more deeply in the memory and affections of the people. Only one caution should be given here: that is, not to use scriptural expressions in prayer as a mere formality, as mere stereotyped phraseology, in the use of which neither mind nor faith nor feeling is moved. This should be carefully avoided. The meaning of the Bible words which are used should be distinctly comprehended and their glowing thoughts poured out of a full heart. To pray in this manner will require that the devotional expressions of Scripture be carefully stored up in the mind and ready for use in the sanctuary. Every minister should plan and toil to have this store become richer and richer.

7. The public prayer of the pastor should be an echo of the deep earnestness which he has learned in the closet. In the closet, alone with God, with the world shut out, is the proper place to get the mind and heart into the proper tone for conducting the public devotions. There is the place to cultivate that all-important sense of the divine presence without which there can be no real prayer. There, in closest communion with

our Lord and Saviour, we may attain to a deep impression of our own and the Church's wants; there we may reach the necessary feeling of reality in the service; there we may get the earnestness that will awaken every faculty, the wrestling that will not be shaken off, the importunity that will take no denial. There we may have poured out upon ns “the Spirit of grace and of supplication," and there we may seek and obtain the divine assistance which is so much needed in conducting the devotions of God's people. From that mount of blessed intercourse with God we might come down with face beaming, heart glowing and faith so strong that the people would feel, whilst we led in their supplications, that we stood with them at the very gate of heaven. That minister who is but seldom in his closet, and but cold when there, will certainly be weak in public prayer, but the one who is mighty in private with God will also be mighty in public.

PREPARATION OF THE MIND FOR ENTERING THE PULPIT

This may seem a small matter, but it is in fact one of very great importance, not only to the preacher himself, but also to his whole audience. It is not enough that the sermon should be prepared and ready to be preached, but there should also be such a state of mind as would impart unction to it and to all the other parts of the service. This point is worthy of much attention; the preacher's own comfort is involved; the success of the sermon in finding its way to the hearts of the hearers is at stake. In fact, the tone of devotion that is to pervade the whole congregation is closely connected with that which fills the preacher's heart as he enters the sacred desk. If his heart is cold, his thoughts distracted and his mind filled with lower cares, then the whole service will almost necessarily be destitute of spiritual power. It may not be possible for him to have perfect command over the state of his mind when entering upon the worship of the house of God, but by diligent attention he may approximate that happy frame that will make his ministrations a delight both to his audience and to himself. To this end he should strive to have his mind freed from everything distracting, filled with the Spirit, impressed with a sense of the great importance of the duties before him, glowing with love and fresh from blessed communion with his Saviour.

Before going into the pulpit there should, of course, be some length of time spent in secret prayer with reference to the particular service about to be entered on. In such preparatory devotion of the closet the mind should be elevated and filled with the spirit of adoration. That is the place to get near to God, to obtain the unction from on high, to make sure of the Spirit's presence from the beginning to the end of the approaching public worship. But besides this secret prayer preparatory to entering the pulpit, and besides the premeditated effort to have the mind in a high devotional frame, there are certain precautionary hints that should

receive attention.

1. The mind should be kept as free as possible from anxiety concerning the sermon about to be preached. If the preparation for it is felt to be too imperfect, or if it be not yet finished, or if there be too much solicitude about getting through it, or about the impression it may make, then the mind is sure to be agitated, and so far disqualified for the duty of the hour. To avoid this the sermon should be conscientiously studied out, its preparation completed in due time, and then the whole matter trusted to the providence of God, with the mind perfectly calm.

2. The portion of Scripture to be read and the hymns to be given out should all be selected beforehand and carefully gone over, so that their contents may be fully known. It is sorely distracting to be compelled to search for hymns in the pulpit or to turn over the leaves of the Bible for some chapter half remembered, and perhaps not at all appropriate to the subject on hand when found. All this should be guarded against by previous preparation.

3. The minister should set himself resolutely against hearing anything that might worry or agitate him as he enters the pulpit. There are often well-meaning but thoughtless persons, and more frequently habitual faultfinders, who will waylay him there to tell him of some trouble that is brewing in the church, of some members who are walking unworthily, or of some duty which is calculated to perplex. This is simply cruel; it is torturing the minister when there is most need for his mind to be settled. Surely, the Lord's Day, and especially that important moment of it, should be spared to him. All his ingenuity should be exerted in devising methods for freeing himself from this sore annoyance.

4. The notices which are handed him to be read in the pulpit often disconcert the preacher at the commencement of public worship. Sometimes they pertain to matters of which he does not approve, sometimes to outside religious meetings to be held at the same hours with some of his own stated services, sometimes to things which are purely secular. Then the conflict

between his sense of duty, or the dictates of his judgment, or even his personal feelings and his desire not to give offence, is often painful as well as perplexing. He must decide promptly, for there is no time for deliberation; and thus his mind may become so distracted as to be unfitted for the subsequent duties of the hour. Probably the best way to overcome this difficulty is to have all notices, other than those of the ordinary services of the congregation, go into the hands of a committee of the session, and let it be responsible for their being read or not read. Then the preacher, upon the state of whose mind so much depends, will be saved from what might mar the whole exercises of the day.

WRITTEN OR EXTEMPORANEOUS SERMONS

This is a practical point which meets every preacher at the commencement of his ministry, and it must receive attention at once. On this account, although it properly belongs to the subject of Homiletics, it must not be overlooked when the general work of the pastor is under consideration; and it may as well be acknowledged at once that no positive decision can be given as to which plan, in all cases, is the better one. Some preachers can succeed better in the use of the one method, and some in the other. Some men have such ready command of language and such self-possession that it is better for them to use no notes in the pulpit; but some are so methodical in the presentation of their thoughts, so slow in the selection of their words and so easily disconcerted before an audience, that it is far better for them to use the manuscript. Then it is certainly advisable for each one ordinarily to follow the plan which he finds, upon fair trial, to be the better one for him. As a matter of fact, we find that some of the greatest preachers of the world have carefully written and read every word, while some just as great have not taken a line into the pulpit. Each plan undoubtedly has its advantages, which should be carefully considered.

Some of the advantages of the plan of writing sermons are these: It secures more accuracy in stating gospel truths and doctrines, and more correct quotation of Scripture. When sermons are deliberately written out there is better opportunity of studying variety—a fact which Dr. J. W. Alexander has well presented: "It has been observed that preachers who rely upon their extemporaneous powers are very apt to fall into a very great sameness. They repeat the same thoughts and the same trains of thought, and at length almost the same sermons; and this they do without being conscious of it. . . . Mere writing is not a certain preventive of this evil, but it has an excellent tendency to prevent it, as ensuring an excellent amount of

fresh study, and by keeping the mind, for longer periods and with greater deliberation, in view of the truth." In this way, too, there can be more conciseness in the presentation of truth. Moreover, the habit of writing sermons so accustoms one to writing that he is prepared to contribute something—as every minister should—to the press. Besides, sermons that are carefully written can be preserved for future use, and perhaps prove invaluable, it may be, in old age, when mental vigor shall have declined. One thing the preacher should carefully observe when he uses written sermons—that is, to make himself beforehand thoroughly familiar with his manuscript, going over it at least four or five times, so that he may deliver the sermon with the utmost freedom.

Extempore preaching also has its advantages, among which we may enumerate the following: It can he made very direct and impressive. It affords an opportunity for introducing new and striking matter that may present itself at the moment. It helps, by the peculiar preparation it demands, to store the memory with divine truth. It economizes time by doing away with the drudgery of writing. It gives ability for extemporaneous speaking in church courts, on the platform or on any other occasion when much preparation would be impossible. Then the ability for this kind of preaching can be gained in almost all cases where there is persistent effort for it. The grand secret of reaching it is to know exactly, by previous diligent study, what is wanted to be said, and then trust to the moment for the language.

Considering, then, that each plan has its own manifest advantages, the general conclusion is obvious, that for most ministers it is advisable sometimes to use the one method and sometimes the other. Each has some training process or some other benefit to confer upon him who practices it; the two need not be antagonistic to each other; they may rather be made supplemental, and help each other. We would recommend that in ordinary cases both plans be used occasionally. When there are two services on the Sabbath it is a most excellent rule to write one of them and to conduct the other in an

extemporaneous manner. In this way the advantages of both methods may be secured.

MAY SERMONS SOMETIMES BE REPEATED?

In respect to this matter there are two extremes, both of which should be avoided. Some ministers indulge in the habit of repeating sermons so frequently as to wrong their audience and seriously injure themselves in many ways. Others, again, are too scrupulous. When a sermon has been very carefully prepared on an important subject, and preached to the great edification of the people, why should they not in some future year have the same benefit from it? It is acknowledged that a sermon may sometimes be preached a second time to the great profit of a congregation. Hearers are occasionally censorious about this matter without reason, and certainly without reflection. Sometimes preachers themselves are far more cautious about it than is for the advantage of either themselves or their hearers. On the other hand, where it is very often done —done so as to excite just criticism among the people—the effect must be evil. Its tendency is to foster habits of slothfulness in the preacher himself, and to prevent that freshness and appropriateness in his discourses which are so desirable; to awaken dissatisfaction among the hearers, and to give an advantage to any who might be unfriendly, and so to greatly injure the preacher's usefulness.

It is well, therefore, to establish some general principles according to which only the repetition of sermons will be allowed. It is not wise to trust the matter to the casual feelings of the day. When, then, is it allowable that sermons should be preached again to the same congregation? The following rules may be suggested: A sermon may be repeated after some time when it has been prepared for a class of persons who were not present at its first delivery; when it was carefully prepared, but, the weather being unfavorable, there were at first but few present; when unexpected calls upon the minister's time render a new preparation utterly impossible; when, being very carefully prepared, new circumstances in the congregation

promise great good from its repetition; when judicious persons in the church earnestly request that it should be preached again. Only, let not a duty of such vast importance as that of preaching be performed in a spirit of slothfulness. Let not the people have reason to think that their pastor could be tempted by a motive so unworthy. Let not this or any other of the duties of the pulpit be discharged in a spirit unworthy of the awful Presence and of the momentous results that must follow.

CHAPTER V

THE PASTOR IN HIS PERSONAL PAROCHIAL WORK

PREACHING is the chief work of the ministerial office, but it is not by any means the only one. There are many other duties, of a less prominent but of a deeply important nature, which devolve upon the pastor in his relations to the particular flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer. In the present chapter we would treat of such of these parochial duties, other than that of preaching, as belong to him personally— duties which either cannot be performed by any other than the minister or are justly expected of him. Like the Great Master, it is the calling of the ministerial servant to go about doing good. It is an elementary principle of his office as a pastor that he is to watch over the flock committed to his care. Most solemn is the obligation resting upon ministers to watch for souls as those who must give account. These less conspicuous duties of the ministerial office are indispensable. Without due attention to them no man can be either faithful or successful in the sacred calling. Great preaching-power will not do without this. A man may be a great preacher, but through neglect of the other pastoral duties come far short of the good he might otherwise have accomplished. On the other hand, it is often the case that a minister of but moderate power in the pulpit will do much for the cause of Christ by his tact and industry and fidelity in the other parochial duties. This is a holy art which should be carefully studied and diligently practiced by every ordained workman in the vineyard of the Lord.

PASTORAL VISITING

A prominent part of the pastor's work is to go from house to house and see all the families of his congregation at home. It is expected of him, and justly, that he should occasionally enter into every household, carrying with him the spirit and the message of the gospel. This duty of the minister is indispensable. It is indispensable that he should visit the families of his congregation, and it is also very desirable that he should see other families and seek to interest them in the great concerns of their souls. No faithful pastor can or will neglect this work of pastoral visiting. It was sanctioned and made obligatory by apostolic example. Paul could say to the Ephesians: “I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house." We read also of the apostles that “daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ."

This visiting of the pastor is necessary in order that he may know and keep up acquaintance with the people of his charge. It would be a cold business to preach to an assembly of people when they were not even personally known. The pastor must become acquainted individually with his hearers in order to exert the proper influence with them. It is particularly important that he should know, by name if possible, every one of the children. That minister possesses a great source of influence who knows every youth and child of his congregation and can call them by name, as well as take them by the hand, when he meets them. But it is no easy task to keep up this acquaintance with every one, young and old, in a large congregation. It requires painstaking to do it. And there is no other way in which it can be done so well as by seeing the families and becoming acquainted with them at home.

Unless the pastor is in the habit of calling frequently upon the people of his charge it is difficult to see how he can keep up a proper interest in them. How can he have the necessary

pastoral attachment to them if he never sees them excepting casually on the Sabbath? Moreover, how can he so well show his interest in them? It is obvious that a pastor should cultivate the affections of his people. He should endeavor to draw them to himself in order that he may thereby be enabled to draw them to Christ. And nothing will contribute so powerfully to this good-will between pastor and people as visiting them at their homes. This will prove to them that their minister cares for them. The resulting attachment and confidence will more than repay for all the trouble that may have been taken. Even when visiting is not directly beneficial in spiritual things, it will produce this kindly feeling. It will prove a bond of friendship. The people will listen more attentively to the words of the minister whom they love; he will have far more influence with them, and they will help him more cordially in every work for the upbuilding of the kingdom.

It is necessary that the pastor should go amongst his people in order that he may become acquainted with their spiritual wants and trials and temptations—in order that he may sympathize with them in their joys and sorrows. There are sorrows of soul, troubles and perplexities of spirit, about which many long to consult him who is their spiritual guide and friend. Deeply important to the pastor are the questions, Who of his dear people are doubting? Who tempted? Who almost giving up in despair? Who inquiring the way of life? Who almost in the kingdom? Who needing but a word from him to bring them to a happy decision for Jesus? These wants can be found out only by his going amongst the people and seeing and hearing from themselves. The pastor will find that there are always those who are just waiting for him to open a conversation with them about their eternal interests.

This work of helping individual souls in their spiritual conflicts, helping them to find Christ, or helping them to a closer embrace if they have already found him, is one of the most blessed avocations of the pastor. He should go from house to house, with a word of counsel or comfort to all who will listen or open their hearts to him as pastor and friend. He

should give instruction as to innumerable points which may not ever be reached in the pulpit. He should comfort the sorrowing, the embarrassed and the sorely tried. Pie should assist in solving doubts and taking away false confidences. He should minister in all those peculiarities of spiritual wants which can be reached only by coming near to the souls of individuals in the sympathy of Christ.

In mingling with the people, going from house to house among them, hearing their views, learning their aspirations, ascertaining their wants, knowing their trials, sympathizing with them, participating in their joys and sorrows, and learning to love them, we have an eminently valuable method of gathering both matter and motive for preaching. We may learn from the godly of them a religious experience that will be fresh and precious. From the wants that we meet we may know what to preach, and how to shape our discourses so that they may be the most profitable. Then the love for the people which we gradually acquire by associating with them will compel us to preach with an earnestness that is bent on their spiritual welfare. We will then plead with them as with friends who are dear to our hearts, and as no others could plead with them. This will give living fervidness to our discourses and clothe them with a power that will be irresistible.

The fact is, that in order to perform the duties of his calling with any measure of fidelity the pastor must come near to his people—nearer to them than he can possibly get in the pulpit—near to them as individuals. In the pulpit he must treat them in the mass, but never will he be able to influence them as he should until he gets into personal communion with them. Dr. John Hall has presented this thought in an impressive manner: “The experience of the Church is that that pastor effects the most in the end who comes into closest personal contact with his charge. No amount of organizing, no skill in creating machinery and manipulating committees, is a substitute for this. Who feels the power of a tear in the eye of a committee? The minister who would be like the Master must go, and like him, lay the warm, kindly hand on the leper, the diseased, the

wretched. He must touch the blind eyes with something from himself. The tears must be in his own eyes over the dead who are to be raised to spiritual life."

It has been objected against much family visiting that it takes away too much of the time of the minister from his study. But surely this objection is not well considered. It certainly would never be urged by those who have much experience in the active work of the pastor. It should be remembered that the business of the minister is not simply to be a student, but it is to bring the truth into contact with the minds and consciences of men. Can it interfere with that work to go amongst men and learn their wants and susceptibilities, to get near to their hearts, gain their affection and open the way for the reception of God's message? Is not this one of the best possible methods of learning how to preach and how to study? Besides, let it be remembered that it cannot possibly be a waste of time for a pastor to engage in that which is one of the most important elements of his calling, even the personal oversight of the flock which the Great Shepherd has committed to his care.

This deeply-important work of pastoral visiting can often be conducted to the great profit of the people by ministers who have not great power as preachers. Sometimes persons who may not be able to attract in the pulpit can make up for the deficiency by their success in preaching from house to' house. Then, not one pastor in a hundred can be eminently successful, and continue so, unless he visits his people. The attendance will not keep up when this duty is neglected. When it is faithfully discharged its effects will immediately be seen in bringing to the house of God those who had grown cold and begun to absent themselves, and in the occasional presence of some who had hitherto utterly ignored the sanctuary. When a minister does not visit his people he will not know them, there will be no attachment between him and them, he will be ignorant of their spiritual wants, he will lose one of the best guides and spurs to a faithful presentation of the gospel, and his whole ministry will be destitute of one of the best elements of its usefulness and one of its sweetest charms.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD PASTORAL VISITS BE MADE?

Before attempting a direct answer to this question a preparatory consideration or two will be in place. A duty of so much importance as this in the calling of the pastor ought manifestly to be performed in a systematic manner. There is no branch of the ministerial work in which system is more necessary than in this. Very much of the well-known failure of ministers to satisfy their people in this thing undoubtedly arises from its being usually performed in a casual, unmethodical way. If it is not done according to a prearranged plan, it will almost necessarily happen that some families will be frequently visited, while others will be wellnigh utterly neglected. Then too there will usually be accumulated a mass of unperformed duty in visiting, the thought of which will keep the minister in a state of constant discomfort. Very much of this difficulty may be avoided by system—by having a carefully-ordered plan of the work—a plan that will enter into all its minutiae.

An important step toward such system is to make out a correct catalogue of all the families and parts of families composing the congregation. If there is not such a roll carefully kept, it will be almost certain that some families will be omitted in visiting; but it will show at a glance where to go—where to go first, which it is often a matter of difficulty to determine. It will stir one up to visit a family or families that have been too long neglected. It is, in fact, the only way by which all the families of a congregation can be kept before the attention. It is of course necessary if there is to be any system whatever in visiting. This register should be often consulted; it should be made very familiar, so that the families upon it may be kept constantly before the mind of the pastor.

A catalogue of this kind which has been long in use may be described. For the sake of convenience in finding the names, the large congregation is divided into seven or eight districts,

and the families of each district recorded on a separate page of the book kept for the purpose. Opposite the list of names there are perpendicular lines, about a quarter of an inch apart, drawn from the top to the bottom of the page. The date of the visit to each family is placed in the space between these perpendicular lines in the form of a fraction, the denominator being the number of the month and the numerator the day of the month. In this way the page presents the exact time of the last visit to each family in the district. As soon as the whole congregation is gone through with, which will be shown by the filling up of all the spaces between the first two perpendicular lines, the catalogue is corrected and the process begun anew.

It is also necessary that the time devoted to visiting from house to house should be carefully economized. If this point is not closely watched, it will soon be found that an hour or two will go but a short distance in the work. Irrelevant conversation, casual chats here and there on the streets, and calls that are not needed will consume most of the allotted portion of time unless there is close attention. But by cutting off everything superfluous, and following strictly the list of visits previously planned out, as much again can be accomplished as when it is done in a haphazard manner. The families to be visited during one afternoon should be selected in the same street or neighborhood, so that as little time as possible may be spent on the way from house to house. Whilst occasionally a visit may occupy some length of time because of special interest or special wants, ordinarily the time spent at each house need not be long—not longer than about twenty minutes. It is better that visits should not be protracted. By attention to these and other such small matters it will be found that much time can be saved, and much more, and just as profitable, visiting can be accomplished in the end.

Now we are prepared to offer an answer to the question, How often should pastoral visits be made? And the answer we suggest is, that in all ordinary cases the minister should adopt the rule of visiting each of the families of his charge three times a year. If the visits are more frequent than this the work

may become a drudgery to the pastor, and his calls grow to be not quite so highly valued by the people. If they are less frequent, the desirable acquaintanceship and friendly intercourse and spiritual supervision can scarcely be kept up. It is important that a definite rule about this matter be observed in order that the pastor may know the work before him and arrange for it, and so not come short through inadvertency.

But can this be done? Can pastors, in the average of congregations, visit all their people three times each year? Can this be done without encroaching too much upon other duties? Can it be done without becoming a toil and a burden from which most ministers would ultimately shrink? Can it be done without compelling them to put forth an unreasonable amount of effort? We answer emphatically, Yes. It can be done easily.

It can be done from year to year without wearying. It can be done so as to be a comfort and recreation, as well as a profit, to the pastor.

It might seem to be difficult, perhaps impossible, to accomplish so much; but there is a plan by which the difficulty may be overcome—a plan by which all this work, formidable though it may seem, can be got through with easily. For twenty-five years a pastor devised schemes and tried experiments by which to satisfy both his people and himself in visiting, but soon wearied of them all. At length a scheme more simple, more natural and more easy than any of them presented itself to his mind, and the problem was solved. The key was found. All that was before so formidable in the duty was gone; henceforth it was plain and easy. The plan cannot be recommended too highly to every working pastor. It is predicted that it will prove almost like a charm in a branch of his calling which is to many ministers so irksome.

The plan is simply to calculate how many visits a week it will require in order to go through all the families of the congregation three times in a year, and then rigidly adhere to the rule of paying just that number of visits in the early part of each week. This plan will take one through the congregation, and through it and through it again, almost without his

knowing it. It is surprising how light this rule, strictly carried out, makes the work. Supposing the congregation to be one of moderate size, consisting of one hundred families, then it will require only six visits a week—no more than could be paid in a single afternoon—to go through it three times in the year. Suppose it were a larger congregation, containing one hundred and fifty families, then only nine visits a week would be needed. Suppose it to be one of the very largest congregations, having a membership of over five hundred persons, or two hundred and fifty families; even then only fifteen visits a week would be wanted to go through it three times a year. All that is requisite is to fix upon the weekly quota of visits and let them be promptly performed. The task for each week is so light that there needs to be no shrinking from it or falling behind in the work. It is recommended that the visits be made early in the week—say on Tuesday and Wednesday—and then there can be freedom from all care as to that duty all the rest of the week. The minister can then study with more composure, feeling that that branch of his week's work is done. The rest of the visiting time of the week can be deliberately devoted to the sick, to strangers and to the interests of the Sabbath-school. Then, though the people may find fault that their pastor does not visit enough, the weekly work going steadily on, gives him composure and the assurance that it will come out well in the end. There is hardly anything that will yield more satisfaction and comfort to the life of a pastor than the adoption, and persistent carrying out, of this plan. It will not then be any task for him to visit all his families three times in each year.

HOW SHOULD PASTORAL VISITING BE CONDUCTED?

There are many things which make it difficult to give such counsel on this subject as will be applicable to the generality of ministers. There is great diversity in ministers themselves, some of them having no difficulty whatever in introducing religious conversation, others from natural diffidence or other causes finding it almost impossible to ask for admission into the sacred precincts of other hearts. There is also great difference in families as to their accessibility in spiritual matters. Then the circumstances under which pastoral visits are paid, and the times and places, are all so unlike that it seems impossible to lay down very exact rules for conducting them. No definite rules can perhaps be wisely established or should be rigidly adhered to. After much reflection, and consultation with experienced pastors, it is thought best merely to indicate a few general principles which should govern in this important pastoral duty, where love to God and souls and good sense and sanctified tact are so much needed.

The old plan of pastoral visiting was to announce from the pulpit the Sabbath previous the districts or families to be called upon during the respective days of the week, and then, generally in company with an elder, to hold formal personal religious exercises in each household and with each individual. This plan gave a character of religiousness to the visit that was very important. It opened the way at once for conversation about spiritual interests. In some communities it may still perhaps be carried out to advantage. But it is doubtful whether at the present time it is generally practicable. There is not now that influence of pastoral authority that would ensure the assembling of the family at the clay and hour assigned. Many members of families could scarcely be induced to meet and converse with their pastor at any appointed hour. Some would rather make the expectation of his coming an occasion for being absent from home. Neither would it generally be

advisable to hold close personal conversation with parents before children, or with children before parents, or with almost any in presence of others. The very formality of the plan would militate against its good results.

The general counsels, then, which we would give about the whole matter are these:

1. There should be as little formality in the visit of the pastor as possible. A call that is simply official, and that is made in a professional manner, will not be highly esteemed or secure the confidence of either old or young. When it is conducted in a functional manner it will lose much of its value, and be positively repulsive to many. But when the pastor goes to see his people as their friend, the young will not shun him, his words of counsel or instruction will have more weight, and he will be likely to gain such confidence as will lead them to open their hearts and let him know their spiritual wants. It is far better in most cases to converse about their souls with individuals alone. There will be less reserve and more freedom when parents or children or brothers or sisters can be seen unembarrassed by the presence of others. On this point the advice of Baxter was: “In general, take each person alone and discourse with him out of the hearing of the rest; for some do not like to be questioned before others, and cannot answer you with freedom. However, let none be present but those of the same family, or those with whom they are familiar. I find by experience that, in general, people will bear plain and close dealing about their sin, their misery and their duty when you have them alone better than when others are present."

2. The pastor should watch the circumstances of the occasion, and be guided by them in each visit he makes. If events are carefully observed, in almost every case some incident will open the way for religious conversation, for words of comfort, for instruction in divine things, for rebuke or for prayer. Circumstances will generally indicate when to speak, whom to address and what to say. When the truths of the gospel are introduced in this way, they come more naturally and they make a deeper impression, for they are seen in an

unexpected light, and there is no repulsion stirred up in the heart against them. We have the best example, the highest authority and the sweetest motive for this plan of addressing individuals in the case of our Lord and the woman of Samaria. This example should always be kept in view by us. In all our family visits, from first to last, we should watch the circumstances and let them open the way for our gospel message.

3. It should be the settled purpose of the pastor in each visit he makes to leave some good impression upon the family. He should never forget that he is an ordained minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not becoming for him to be continually obtruding his ministerial character, but neither should he hide it. Most careful should he be neither in word nor act to do anything inconsistent with the sacred office he holds and the precious interests committed to his trust. He should neglect no opportunity of saying a word for Christ, or of doing something that will recommend religion, and so should he make every interview profitable. Never should he close a visit without the persuasion that something has been done, by word, deed, or prayer, that will help the great cause. If he has not this conviction that some good impression has been made, he should be sorely dissatisfied with himself. This is probably the very best rule of pastoral visiting that can be adopted. To carry it out, tact, good sense and a quickened heart will be needed, but it is of so much importance that the holy art should be persistently cultivated.

VISITING THE SICK

This is one of the most trying and responsible duties to which the pastor is called. It is no wonder that the youthful minister often trembles when he is summoned to stand by the bedside of a dying man and guide the soul that must soon launch out into eternity. There is nothing that tries him so much as this. A man can scarcely be placed in a more solemn position than to be called to minister to the weak, the suffering, the dying, perhaps the self-deceived, the hardened, the ignorant and the impenitent, or to the awakened whose minutes for finding pardon are almost closed. Who is sufficient for the solemn task of directing a soul that is tottering upon the brink of eternity, when a wrong word may be fatal or a right one may be the means of immediately opening the gates of endless glory? In nothing is the pastor in more need of prayer for the direct help of the Holy Ghost. Never should he enter upon this duty without special supplication that he may have that help.

There should be a distinct understanding in every congregation that the minister is to be informed by their friends when persons are sick. Ministers are often unjustly censured about this matter. They cannot be expected to know of every case of sickness—to know it because persons are out of their places in church or because their illness is generally known in the neighborhood. Neither can ministers be expected immediately to see every case of slight indisposition of which they may accidentally hear in a large congregation. It should be published from the pulpit with emphasis that it is the duty of friends to apprise the pastor of every case of illness—to apprise him, not in a roundabout, incidental way, through which he may happen to get the information, but directly and purposely, so that he may know without mistake that he is wanted. The pastor should insist again and again that this information be given him. He should announce that if it is not he is not to be blamed for neglecting the sick. He should have it distinctly

understood that the responsibility will rest with the friends. For the sake of the sick, for the sake of Christ who may be glorified in them, he should plead with people to send for him in as direct a manner as they would for the physician. Nevertheless, it will not do for one to wait for such information. After all that can be said or done, people will be strangely neglectful about this matter. There should be constant attention to ascertain where visits to the sick are needed.

Patients ought, beyond question, to be seen by a spiritual adviser. If Christians, the minister should see them to strengthen them, comfort them and receive their testimony as to the excellency of Christ and his salvation. If impenitent, every conceivable effort should be made to snatch them as brands from the burning. It would be cruel to neglect them. No apprehension of exciting, and so injuring them physically, should prevent the minister from seeing them. It has been clearly shown by Dr. Archibald Alexander and others, from actual instances, that the judicious ministrations of a pastor may help the patient in body—may even help in restoring him to health. But even at the risk of the body the immortal interests of the soul should receive the first attention. Besides, the time of sickness is an admirable one for the minister to illustrate in himself the benevolence of the gospel by showing its sympathy with the suffering. And he may now attach to himself and his ministrations the families of the patients more firmly than he could in any other manner. Vinet has put this point very forcibly: “The success or zeal only of the pastor in this part of his ministry is one of the most appropriate means of his becoming popular. Every one is sensible of the merit of this work, even without appreciating sufficiently its entire object and results." This is the minister's splendid opportunity for imitating the example and manifesting the spirit of Christ. The providential opportunity of sickness in any of his families must be diligently improved by every faithful pastor. He must see the sick and be faithful to them at any sacrifice.

It will be seen that on this branch of ministerial duty, which is of such grave importance, and the discharge of which is

likely to cause so much embarrassment to the youthful pastor, there should be much pains taken to present the teachings of experience. Help is needed here by the minister if anywhere. We would therefore throw out a number of suggestions which may be made of practical value, some of which can be applied at one time and some at others, and all of which should be pondered by the pastor and so modified, if need be, as to suit his own temperament and circumstances.

1. Visits to the sick ought ordinarily to be brief. When persons are prostrated by weakness or suffering pain they cannot bear to be long taxed by the presence of any other than their ordinary attendants. A long-continued visit excites and often seriously injures them; and when the pastor protracts his remarks so as to produce such nervous exhaustion, little that he says will be closely attended to or remembered. Besides, when a patient is frequently visited and a long address is made each time, the appropriate subjects will soon be exhausted and have to be repeated again and again. Moreover, long visits to several patients will draw seriously upon the time of the minister, which needs to be economized. But when the visit is brief, the remarks made will be more pointed, and when the minister takes his leave he will be cordially invited and welcomed to come again. It is far better, then, in almost all instances, that the visits should be short but frequent. It would not be a bad rule to adopt that about fifteen minutes should be spent in each of them. This rule was recommended by the richly-experienced Dr. Samuel Miller. Of course there will be occasions when more time than this will be absolutely necessary, while often the visit will have to be very brief indeed. When patients are very ill it is better that the conversation with them should be exclusively about spiritual things. There will ordinarily be neither the time nor the inclination for anything else.

2. The utmost tenderness should be used in praying and conversing with the suffering. This does not mean that a whining tone of sympathy is to be kept up in our intercourse with them. That would cast a chill over them, and the very

presence of the minister would bring a gloom with it to the sick-bed. But we should not needlessly alarm them. They are, of course, very sensitive, and every word and hint and look is closely watched. A word may go like a dagger to their hearts, and result in dampening all their hopes and perhaps impairing the prospect of their recovery. It is cruel to be harsh or needlessly severe with those who are already suffering in body and depressed in mind. We should in reality sympathize with them, and when fidelity requires that they should be warned of the near approach of death, it should be done with all the tender consideration our hearts can contrive or our words utter. We should strive to put ourselves in their solemn place and deal with them accordingly. Great must be our tact and judgment and love to be at once cheerful and faithful with those who are growing weaker and weaker, even unto death.

3. It is often best that patients should be seen alone. The minister can be more free in questioning and counseling them when he is not trammeled by the consciousness that others are listening and scrutinizing every word. The irrepressible sorrow of surrounding friends often excites patients and renders calm conversation with them impossible. Then, the sick will generally open their hearts more fully to the minister when others are not present. They will sometimes tell him what they would not utter if restrained by the presence of other listeners. Sometimes, as Dr. Archibald Alexander wisely suggested, when their consciences are burdened by the memory of special sins, it is necessary to see them alone. Where the visit is with elderly persons, with persons who have been prominent in society, or with the impenitent, it is important that, at least occasionally, no others should be present. Of course, it is not always possible that all attendants should be excluded, nor is it always desirable that they should. When it is important that patients should be seen alone, the minister should enter into that understanding with the family before going into the room.

4. The pastor should strive to become clearly acquainted with the state of the patient's mind. As the physician makes his diagnosis, so should he ascertain the nature of the case with

which he has to do. He should ask the sick as to their spiritual views and hopes; he should draw out of them the exact state of their hearts toward God; they should be encouraged to tell their hopes and fears, and their reasons for them; they should be allowed, without interruption, to detail, as they often will, their experiences and their views. The minister should, if possible, gain their confidence, so that they may open their hearts to him very freely. It will do them good thus to unburden their hearts to a Christian friend; and sometimes a proper confession of sins—awfully, though, the doctrine has been abused—helps to soften the heart and lead the way toward conversion. The knowledge of the state of the patient's mind is of special value to the minister, because it will serve to direct him in his conversation and prayer. Then the remarks can be made in a pertinent manner, difficulties of the mind can be removed, false hopes can be exposed, ignorance can be instructed, the way to light and life can be pointed out, or unnecessary fears can be overcome; promises can be urged, comfort can be given and the soul made happy and peaceful even in death.

5. The Scriptures should often be read or passages quoted in these visits. When it is considered that the word is divine, that it is appointed of God for the conversion of sinners and edification of believers, and that it is the Spirit's own instrument for affecting the heart, then the importance of this counsel will be felt. There is a pertinency and power in the inspired teachings upon which we may well rely. Even when patients are very weak, we should read the word, quote it, repeat so as to impress it, emphasize and explain its rich instructions. Through many examples given by Dr. Archibald Alexander and others, it has been proved that the simple teachings of God's book, presented to the minds of even skeptical and doubting patients, is often far better than any process of argument that can be entered into with them. To read or quote passages of Scripture will frequently be a great relief to the pastor when the case is so serious and pressing that, of himself, he is utterly at a loss what to say. Indeed, this

is often almost all that can be done, when the patient either cannot or will not speak, and when we are scarcely sure that any words are heard. It is well, therefore, for ministers to have a large store of passages suitable for the sick laid up in memory and ready for use. There should be deliberate and continued preparation for this, as it is a matter which we cannot afford to overlook.

6. It is a good plan to preach little sermons sometimes when patients are in such condition that they can listen. This was a frequent practice with Rev. R. Murray McCheyne. The plan will be of much advantage when the same person has to be visited often, and when, therefore, it is found difficult to present the appropriate truth with sufficient variety. It will suggest new points of interest and be a guide to the minister's own thoughts and language. Very often patients will scarcely utter a word or will answer only in monosyllables; then the pastor is thrown upon his own resources, and it is a great relief for him to take some appropriate text and dwell upon it and let it direct his words. The patient gives him no clew what to say, but in this way he may have a clew from divine wisdom; and very often the Scripture text will guide him to the exact point which the patient needs. Preaching is God's own method of imparting truth, and it may be relied on in this as in all other cases. It is well, of course, to think of some passage beforehand and have it ready.

7. Much should be made of prayer in pastoral visits to the sick. Whatever else is clone or not done, we should always pray with them. We roust rely upon prayer as the most effectual thing Ave can do for bringing down the needed divine blessings upon the sufferers and for the aid of the Spirit in our intercourse with them. But besides that, prayer may have an important direct influence upon them; through it valuable instruction may be conveyed, even when the patients are too low to converse; through it they may be more deeply impressed than in any other way; and by it their own heartfelt desires may be carried up to the throne. Oh, how importunate and how tender ministers should be when they are wrestling with God

for the souls of those who are probably very soon to be in eternity! How they should get near to the Divine Presence and carry the patients with them, and commune with God as those who are deeply in earnest and who will take no denial!

Vinet's remarks on this subject are worthy of much thought: "Expect much from prayer; I mean not only from its power with God, but from its immediate effect on the sick. We may say everything in prayer; under the form of prayer we may make everything acceptable; with it we may make hearts the most firmly closed open themselves to us. There is a true charm in prayer, and this charm has its effect also upon us, whom it renders more confident, more gentle, more patient, and whom it puts into an affecting fellowship with the sick man, whoever he may be, by making God present to us both." In another place his language is: “Let us hope against hope; let us wrestle with God to the last moment; let the voice of our prayer, let the echo of the words of Christ, resound in the dying man's ear even in his dreams. We do not know what may be passing in that interior world into which our views do not penetrate, nor by what mystery eternity may hang on one minute and salvation on one sigh. We do not know what may avail, what one ejaculation of a soul toward God may embrace at the last bound of earthly existence. Then let us not cease; let us pray aloud with the dying man; let us pray for him with a low voice; let us commit without ceasing the soul to its Creator; let us be a priest when we can no longer be a preacher. Let the office of intercession, the most efficacious of all, precede, accompany, follow all others."

8. In entering upon visits to unconverted patients we should determine to save them if it be possible. The sufferer may be near to death, and so the time when anything can be done for him be almost over. It is the last opportunity. The poor soul is upon the brink of eternity; if it be not rescued immediately it will soon be in hell. The case is terribly urgent. We should plead with God for him—wrestle, wrestle with all our might, for soon the opportunity will be gone. We should plead for him, not only in the presence of the patient, but also in secret; and we

should get others to plead for him. We should intercede as priests at the altar—yea, as standing between the living and the dead. And we should plead with the patient to be deeply in earnest—to give all up and fling himself into the arms of the Saviour. Nothing should be left undone that gives any promise of saving the soul that otherwise is just about to perish for ever. Plans should be devised that might be likely to succeed, and the case should be carefully studied day and night—yea, hour after hour. Everything else should yield to the work of striving to save that dying man or woman. If necessary, even efforts almost hopeless should be made, since the case is growing desperate. Never, never should we give up until the last breath is drawn, for we know not but that God, even at the last, may snatch the soul as a brand from the burning. His mercies are infinite, and he can save unto the uttermost.

9. In conversing and praying with the sick the pastor should aim to benefit others also who may providentially he present. Friends and acquaintances gathered around a sick-bed will usually be very attentive to what is said to the patient. It is a good opportunity for making an impression upon them when their hearts are opened and made tender by the circumstances. In the remarks he makes, and in his prayers, the minister ought not to forget these. The susceptible state of their feelings should be wisely improved. They will listen then and reflect, and take home truths which at any other time they would hardly suffer to rest for a moment upon their minds. Then the impressions which may be made by the scene before them and by the words and prayers they hear should be followed up afterward so as to be made abiding. The opportunity of drawing toward the Saviour those of them who are impenitent is an exceedingly valuable one, and the most should be made of it. The providence which prepares them to hear with eagerness the comforting sounds of salvation should be watched and improved to the utmost.

10. It is a good plan to leave little book and tracts with invalids when they are able to read them. Pages which contain truths just applicable to them will often be perused in their

long hours of languishment, and the appropriate instruction found in them will be pondered over and over again. Then the silent message from the printed lines can be received without the excitement or perturbation which the visit of even the minister will often produce. Sometimes the little volume of gospel comfort will be most welcome as a help to cheer the weary hours. If the patient himself is not able to read, generally some Christian friend will be glad to read for him, and so convey the words of life to the hungry soul. It is well for ministers to find out what little books are suitable for invalids in various states of mind, and so be prepared to furnish them when they are needed. A supply should always be kept on hand, for they will be found more valuable than might appear at first thought.

11. In cases where patients are suffering from lingering diseases it is advisable for ministers to make their arrangements for visiting them periodically. This plan should be adopted when the ailment is consumption or paralysis or nervous prostration or feebleness from age, or any other complaint that is slow in its progress. It will save such patients from the liability to neglect if the rule is adopted of visiting them once a week, or once a fortnight, or once a month, according to the imminence of the disease. By it, moreover, the minister would have his mind relieved from a constant burden of anxiety lest he should not give them attention enough; the periodical visit has been paid, and so far his responsibility is ended; his mind may be free from care as to that duty. And still further, the common complaints of invalids and their friends that they are neglected by their pastor can be effectually met by pointing to the times when they have been actually seen.

12. Little meetings of Christian friends should occasionally be held with persons long confined to sick-beds. To those who are providentially deprived of the privilege of going to the sanctuary of the Lord it is a great comfort and benefit when the ordinances are carried to them in this way. It is very profitable for others also to attend the little social gatherings for prayer and praise and devout meditation, when all is made solemn by

the presence of sickness and the probable approach of one of the number to eternity. The pastor then has no trouble in finding themes appropriate to the occasion. The songs of praise at such times are peculiarly sweet, for they call up clear associations of the past, stir the soul with deep tenderness to Christ, and awaken blessed thoughts of coming glory. It is very appropriate that the Lord's Supper should at times be celebrated at these social meetings with invalids. It will be a comfort to them, help to strengthen their faith, and give them another opportunity of showing forth their love to their dear Saviour. It may also prove to them a precious pledge of the fast-approaching time when they shall feast with Jesus at the glorious banquet of his Father's kingdom.

VISITING THOSE WHO ARE IN SORROW

It was said of the Great Shepherd that the Lord sent him "to comfort all that mourn," and “to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" and in performing that mission he left the eminent example which it is at once the duty and the honor of every one of his under-shepherds to follow. The house of mourning will ever be one of the chief places to which the faithful pastor will resort. In every congregation and at all times there are to be found many of the sons and daughters of affliction, and even the people of God are not exempt, for it is still true of them that “many are the afflictions of the righteous." Sorrows caused by the death of beloved relatives, painful anxieties about worldly prospects, perplexities and losses in business, griefs from the blasting of long-cherished hopes, woes planted in the heart by the misconduct of the nearest kindred,—these will be revealed to the pastor with sad frequency as he circulates through the families of his charge. To all these he should be prompt to listen and to yield the sympathy of a warm Christian heart. When he hears of afflictions of any kind coming upon households, he should not wait to be sent for, but should hasten to them with the rich consolations he gathers from the gospel.

Seasons of sorrow in families are opportunities which ought to be carefully improved by ministers. The providence of God is then preparing the sufferers for the cordial reception of the blessings of the gospel. Their hearts are softened, the attractions of the world are diminished in power, their need of unearthly help is felt, and the importance of salvation as a great healing remedy for the soul is seen. Then the words of the pastor will be welcomed and listened to as conveying the most important information that can be received. As a matter of experience, most pastors can testify that very many persons are actually brought into the kingdom through afflictions. Such seasons are the minister's harvest-times when he should spare

no pains. Griefs have prepared the soil under the direction of the heavenly Husbandman; it is for us to cultivate it with a judgment and an assiduity that must succeed in making it productive.

It is of great importance that in our attempts to comfort those who are suffering from sore griefs we get into sympathy with them. We should not affect to make light of their sorrows, or rebuke the manifestation of them. We should not be cold in speaking of them, or deal with them in a mere official or perfunctory manner. We should bring home in imagination to ourselves the trials which they are passing through, and conceive what reflections would be most consoling to our own hearts in similar circumstances, and then bring the same consolations to bear upon them. We should bear with even their whims and fancies while they are so much pressed down by griefs. It was remarked by Dr. J. W. Alexander: “We must copy the physician, who often has to condescend to the nervous and whimsical. The gentleness of Paul and Paul's divine Lord should be always before us." The true method by which we may reach their hearts and help them is “to weep with them that weep," and that not because we affect to sympathize with them, but because we really do feel for their sorrows. Then there are little acts of consideration, such as sending a note or lending a book or making a kind inquiry, which will show that they are thought of, and will be warmly appreciated, and help to heal the wounds of their hearts.

The afflicted ought to be carefully attended to by the pastor, even if it has to be done at considerable sacrifice of time and toil. They should be visited from time to time until the days of their mourning shall be ended. To prevent such visits from being overlooked or neglected, it would be well to arrange for their being made periodically. Not only at the time when families are afflicted, but long afterward, their griefs should be remembered. We should take pains by our kind attentions to show that we do not forget them. Even if we must work harder before or afterward, we should find time to see them often. Whatever else is neglected, they must not be. And even if it is

not a pleasant duty to be so much among the sorrowing, it is so Christ-like to be found there that we must not shrink from it. As pastors of the flock of God we cannot afford to neglect the opportunities which sorrows in the families of our congregation furnish of conferring benefits upon others, of manifesting the spirit of our holy religion, of imitating the example of our Master, and of gathering souls into the kingdom. Such opportunities, in most cases, do not come frequently to the same family; when they do come our hearts should be set upon their highest improvement.

VISITING THE AGED

In these days of Sabbath-schools the attention of Christians is largely turned to the religious training, the improvement and the happiness of the young. This is well, for no amount of thought or expense or toil is too much to be bestowed upon that cause; but the aged ought not to be neglected or overlooked; their comfort amidst the decay of worldly pleasures and the increase of bodily infirmities, and their safety in the inevitably near approach to eternity, should be a subject of lively interest, especially with the pastor. There is danger of their being overlooked, as if there were little attractive in their years of decay, as if not much could be done to add to their comfort, or as if it were not worth while to spend efforts on those whose stay on earth must soon be ended. As a matter of fact it is to be greatly lamented that the aged are so much neglected by those who are passing through their more active years. On this account, as well as for the other reasons, the pastor ought to give special attention to them.

They are a part of his charge which he is in danger of overlooking, but which at the same time should receive special care. In his unwearied attention to those whom others are so prone to slight he may recommend the spirit which should always distinguish the sacred office he holds.

If a person who is in declining years is also without the consolations of religion, his condition is one which is calculated to excite the deepest sympathy. With him most of the attractions of this life are gone; his powers of enjoyment have all become enfeebled; he has no hope in the future to cheer him; perhaps he has become utterly callous as to all spiritual things; eternity must be very near to him; and, as he is, there is nothing before him but a speedy doom of sorrow. Everything conceivable should be done, by pastor and other Christian friends, to save that hoary sinner. But supposing the aged man to be a devoted Christian, he should still receive unremitting attention from his spiritual counselor and friend. He needs to

be strengthened while nature is wearing out all his powers; he needs to be comforted by the consolations of religion when other comforters are leaving him; the minister ought often to be with him to see and then to tell, with still more emphasis, how faith can make even one enfeebled by age strong—strong in the Lord.

It is manifest, then, that the pastor ought to give very special attention to those who are in old age. Though there may be no manifestation of it, yet they often do feel it very keenly when they are neglected. On the contrary, any interest manifested in them is peculiarly grateful. They have not many pleasures to tranquillize their declining years; this would be one, and surely the minister, at least, should yield it to them. It would be a good plan for him to visit them periodically; with those who are very aged and feeble a call once in a month would be time well spent.

MINISTERING TO AWAKENED SOULS

Those persons are in a deeply-interesting state of mind who have been brought by the Holy Ghost, applying the word and the providence of God, to see that they are in a lost and unhappy condition, that they need some way of deliverance, that they ought to be Christians, and that if they are not saved soon they must be wretched for ever. They have been awakened. They are under conviction of sin. The Spirit of God is striving with them. Undoubtedly there are always persons in this state of mind in congregations where the gospel is faithfully preached and fervent prayer offered. The promise of God that his word should not return unto him void makes this certain. And they need Christian counsel. Their case is critical, and they must be guided by the wisdom and piety and experience which the Christian minister is supposed to possess. To guide them to the Lamb of God is one of his most responsible duties.

All those who have already found Christ, and are themselves in the Church, should be made to feel that they are responsible for promptly informing the pastor of every case of spiritual awakening. There are undoubtedly such cases in the congregation at all times. It should be taken for granted that there are, for why should there not be when the word and the ordinances and the Spirit are all enjoyed? But the pastor cannot be expected to know of himself who are awakened. He should be always watching for them, yet he cannot possibly know all. Others will know of them—relatives, friends, neighbors, Sabbath-school teachers—and they should at once communicate the tidings to the pastor. More welcome messages there could not be delivered to him. The intelligence should be imparted promptly, for the impressions of the awakened one, if not carefully heeded, may soon pass away.

Then the pastor should see them as speedily as may be, and if possible at their homes. Any opportunity should be embraced to help them forward in the way over which the Holy Ghost is

urging them, but to see them in the uninterrupted retirement of their homes is best. There they can be seen with more promptness and less formality than elsewhere, and there they can generally be seen alone, which is almost necessary with those who are as yet so backward about revealing the secret workings of their souls.

Great now is the responsibility, and very often difficult is the task which lies before the minister. He is the chief human agent for directing that inquiring soul; and how much he needs special, earnest prayer for the guidance of the Holy Ghost!

He should begin by ascertaining as fully as he can the exact state of the inquirer's mind, the process by which he was awakened, his convictions of sin, his doubts and fears, his views of God and Christ, the nature of the efforts he is making, and whatever else may be necessary to guide the counsels to be given. The natural hesitation of the awakened to open their hearts should be overcome by showing them that these interests are common to us all, that there are no good reasons for concealing their feelings, and by warning them that their immortal welfare is at stake and that everything should be done to make it sure. The remarks of the pastor should of course be shaped according to the discovered state of the inquirer's mind. The minister who is well furnished for his work will be prepared by previous study and observation for every case that can ordinarily come before him, for in most cases their doubts and wants and hindrances and objections have been experienced in innumerable other instances. The best plan is to open the Bible and take the awakened soul to the fountain-head of truth, and show him God's own words exactly adapted to meet his case. The mind should be stored with suitable passages which can be promptly quoted at such times. Sometimes, when there is great reticence, though evidently some feeling, it is well to preach a short informal sermon appropriate to the occasion. It Avill almost certainly touch the case at some point. Various plans should be tried, that, if it be possible, the inquirer may be brought to the cross before the impressions pass away.

Then, the case should not be given up as hopeless even though interview after interview may seem to have produced no effect. It is impossible for us to tell what may be going on in the hearts of others, so widely do men differ in their natures, and hence in their manifestations of the working of the Spirit. We should bear with an ignorance so great that we can scarcely understand it. We should have patience with the obdurate, for how much patience has our Lord exercised toward us! Sometimes persons, to soothe the voice of conscience, will feign an indifference or a hopelessness which they do not really feel. But our great incitement is to reflect that the Spirit of God is surely striving with them, and that his power is infinite to break the hardest and melt the coldest heart. We should remember, too, the prize of infinite value which is at stake, even the soul that must soon be a saint in glory or a victim of demons in despair—the soul for which the Son of God bled and died. It may take a long time before the inquirer is brought to the peace of Christ; sometimes the process is very slow and discouraging. But the heart is reached at last, and it is often the case that those who struggle long and almost hopelessly are the most decided when at last they are brought into the clear light of the Sun of Righteousness.

ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENTS

One of the most characteristic and impressive elements of the sacred work to which the pastor is called is that of administering the sacraments. As well as from other considerations, it has a dignity connected with it from the fact, acknowledged on all hands, that it is the exclusive prerogative of the minister. He it is who has been divinely appointed to break the bread and pour the wine, as well as baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The importance of the sacraments to the pastor may also be seen in the fact that they set forth in sensible emblems the same great truths that he preaches from the sacred desk, so confirming them and making them more emphatic. Besides, the solemnization of these ordinances furnishes ministers with both occasions and themes for their most impressive discourses. And so it comes to pass that in no place is the ambassador of Christ so much honored as when he stands serving at the Lord's table or when he applies the baptismal water. In fact, it would not be extravagant to say that the observance of the sacraments and the ministerial office must stand or fall together.

Pastors should make much of the sacraments; they should exalt them to a very great eminence in their own estimation. In public addresses and private conversation they should be frequently alluded to, and their value should be impressed deeply. The times of their celebration should be looked forward to and anticipated with gladness, and benefits expected from them. Their solemnization should be engaged in as a great event in which heart and hopes should be elevated, the Divine Presence felt and a foretaste enjoyed of the heavenly banquet. The sacraments, in fact, may be made so much of as to prove a very great help to the pastor in his work of edifying the people of God. They may be made to tell most beneficially upon the Christian life of the Church. Then, above all, through them great honor may be made to redound to God in Christ, who is their Author, their Object and their Life.

Especially should the Lord's Supper be turned to the most profitable account. In addition to the other manifest advantages which may flow from it, it ought to be made a standpoint in the progress of the church and of each of its members, from which there would be an honest survey of the past and an earnest planning for the future. It should be the fixed epoch in the church's life, around which its hopes and projects and activities may cluster.

An excellent plan of a wise and successful pastor, the Rev. Dr. G. W. Musgrave, was to make all his preaching of the intervening months have a bearing upon the approaching communion season. He laid out the subjects of his discourses with the definite object of having them culminate in the great ordinance that would set forth Christ, and him crucified. This was making much of that sacrament; it was keeping a distinct point in view in all the preaching, and it was making everything cluster around the infinitely important, central fact of redemption.

It is advisable occasionally, say once in each year, to prepare the way for the observance of the Lord's Supper by special services during all the days or evenings of the preceding week. This is calculated to awaken deeper attention to the things of Christ, the impression of which is liable to become dim; it exalts the estimation of the ordinance, making it more prized; it brings persons who have been long halting to a determination that they will espouse the cause of Christ; and it is likely to revivify and strengthen the life of the Church.

Sometimes, especially in a large congregation, it is better to omit the sermon before the communion service. The advantages of so doing are that there can be more deliberation, and consequent comfort and profit, in the administration of the ordinance. There needs, then, be no hurry on the one hand or weariness on the other. It is believed that these advantages will more than make up for the omission of the “action” sermon. Experience has in fact proved that this plan is better, more edifying and gives more satisfaction to the body of communicants.

When members of the church are, for a length of time, deprived of the privilege of attending upon the public ordinances through the infirmities of age or sickness, it is well to celebrate the Lord's Supper with them occasionally at their homes. The pastor, with an elder or elders and a few other Christian friends, can join in the service and form a little congregation with which the Master will undoubtedly meet. Such seasons are very precious. They are a great comfort to those for whose benefit they are especially held, feeble perhaps in body, but strong in faith. All others who are present must feel the sweet and solemn influence. And the dear Lord who first met at the table with the twelve rejoices in the confidential tokens of a love which will soon be made perfect in glory.

Children should be baptized at the time of public worship on the Lord's day. An arrangement for the observance of this sacrament which has long been carried out, and proved to be profitable and acceptable, is this: One Sabbath morning of the quarter, the first Sabbath of the month previous to the communion, is set apart for preaching to the young and baptizing the children. On the Sabbath previous notice is given, and parents and others are urged to bring all the children and youth with them. No part of the church is appropriated specially to the young, for they are expected to mingle with the ordinary congregation. After singing and reading the Scriptures, parents present their children for baptism; then after singing again, a short sermon is preached to the children, and the whole services of the morning adapted to their capacity and wants. This plan has several obvious advantages. It is liked by both parents and children, and having been continued for years, has been proved to be practicable.

It is very important that pastors should keep a correct list of the communicants of the church and of all the children, as well as adults, baptized. The names should be put down on the day when they are received, so that they may not be forgotten. It is only after one has been long in the ministry, and finds by experience how much is involved in being able to find the names and the dates, that the importance of this thing is

realized.

ATTENDING FUNERALS

One of the most trying duties to which the pastor is habitually called is that of officiating at funerals. Very generally he is not consulted as to the time when the services are to be held, and must go whether it be convenient or inconvenient, whether he has other engagements at the same hour or not. Much of his time has often to be wasted in waiting for the arrival of friends of the deceased and on the way to and from the place of interment. His addresses must necessarily be in the same general train of thought, and that no matter how often he has to officiate, and so he has to be watchful that his services do not degenerate into mere ceremony. Then the sights and sounds of sorrow which he is under the necessity of witnessing are frequently of the most painful character and harrow up all his feelings. And still worse, he is sometimes under the necessity of making addresses and striving to offer consolation while he is conscious that there is not one ray of hope in the death that is being lamented. These are the trying aspects of the service; but there is also another view which may be taken of it, and which may reconcile us to its trials. It must be a blessed thing for a benevolent heart even to try to assuage the bitterness of sorrow. Then the funeral service affords the minister an opportunity of manifesting the benevolent spirit of the gospel. He may follow the example of Christ, who was so often found alleviating the sorrows of mourners. This may be the means of drawing the afflicted to the Saviour, and may so attach the friends of the deceased to the minister that he will obtain a permanent influence over them for good. Sometimes the funeral service gives the preacher an excellent opportunity of telling how blessed a thin2; it is for the Christian to fall asleep in Jesus.

A few suggestions in reference to the addresses to be made on these occasions may be of use to those who have not had much experience:

1. It is a great mistake to make such addresses too long. The

persons assembled are ordinarily placed in such an uncomfortable manner, many of them standing, some in windows or passages or stairways and some in other rooms, that they cannot listen with profit for many minutes. It is impossible, under such circumstances, to retain their attention for any length of time. Then, if a funeral address is long continued, much of it must almost necessarily be taken up with matter that is irrelevant. Moreover, protracted addresses at each of the many funerals which the pastor must sometimes attend become a serious draft upon his strength and energies. On every account, then, in speaking on such occasions, it is better to be brief and pertinent. Then the people will listen with closer attention, they will be better satisfied and more highly benefited, and the speaker will not expose himself to that exhaustion that would partially disqualify him for subsequent duties. We need hardly ever be afraid of too much brevity in this service. Brevity is always the safer extreme for one to fall into.

2. In speaking of the deceased at funerals we should beware of too much eulogium. The temptation of going to excess in praise of the dead is very great, from a desire to comfort and please the relatives, and perhaps from the temporary ardor of our feelings. But it should be remembered that in many cases these high panegyrics are not strictly true. Besides, if the deceased, who gave no special evidence of piety, is certainly saved, may not others also reach that blessing without the strenuous efforts which are so constantly insisted on? Moreover, if a minister is in the habit of eulogizing so much in ordinary cases, he will give offence if he does not do it in those cases where it would be utterly inadmissible. The fact is, that sometimes at funerals there are praises heard which are shameful and positively injurious when the character of the life and death of the deceased are considered. It is far better, ordinarily, to say but very little about the deceased—to get into the habit and obtain a reputation for such caution. Then eulogiuin will not be expected when it could not be uttered with strict veracity. There are, of course, exceptions. Some

Christians are so eminent in their piety and so blessed in their death that they ought to be held up as a demonstration of the power of Christ and his gospel.

3. The circumstances of the occasion should, if possible, give direction to the remarks which are made at a funeral. In most instances of death something peculiar may be found and improved to the benefit of friends and neighbors when their hearts are full of sympathy. This would furnish a theme; it would give variety, which the speaker anxiously seeks after in a service in which he must engage so often; and it would make sure of the remarks being pertinent, and hence more interesting. This plan will often prove of great assistance in funeral addresses. When nothing of this kind suggests itself, it is well to have an appropriate text of Scripture in the mind. Even if it is not announced, it will serve to guide the speaker's thoughts, and lead him to points that will be varied, appropriate and weighty as coming from the word of God.

4. The gospel of Christ and his salvation should be preached at every funeral. No matter in what direction the drift of the remarks may run, this should find a prominent place in it somewhere. The fact that funeral services always furnish a fine opportunity of presenting this all-important theme should reconcile us to them, no matter how many other trying things there are about them. On almost all such occasions there are some persons present to hear the gospel who never listen to it at other times. They furnish an excellent opportunity for telling of the death of Christ, which takes away the sting of death and the gloom of the grave from any penitent soul that would trust in him. The solemn circumstances of death are calculated to soften the hearts of all and open them for the reception of the blessed tidings of peace. Notwithstanding a too freely-expressed opinion to the contrary, persons are undoubtedly sometimes impressed at funerals—so impressed that their convictions continue afterward and impel them to seek and find the saving grace of Christ. If at funerals we strive for the salvation of souls, and pray for it and expect it, we shall certainly witness it far more frequently than we now do. It is an

evil to think that the truth must there be preached in vain. Why should it be?

CIRCULATING BOOKS AND TRACTS

In the work of the ministry, which is so momentous and in which so many interests are involved, every proper agency which promises to render efficient help should be used. And next to the inspired Book and the preaching of the living ministry we may place those uninspired pages which the love of thousands of pious hearts has furnished for spreading and impressing the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. This is an instrument with which the pastor may lawfully work; yea, with which he must work, if he would reach the highest success—an instrument the importance of which is by very few appreciated as highly as it deserves.

Books and tracts are an agency for good now looming up more and more conspicuously before the Christian world. In former times they were not such a power for blessing the souls of men as they are becoming at the present; they were not so cheap; they were not so abundant; there was not such an affluence of appropriate gospel truth stored in their pages; there was not such universal ability to read them. So cheap are books at the present time that the best of them can be obtained by almost any who wish. Christians are coming to realize more and more fully the value of religious volumes. They see the good they are accomplishing as guides to inquirers, to the weak in faith and to all who would grow in grace. Very few persons of much observation but know of instances in which the awakened have at least been helped through this instrumentality toward the salvation of Christ. There are certain states of mind in reference to spiritual things for which books are peculiarly adapted. Indeed, it may be safely said that books can be found suited to every conceivable phase of spiritual want, whether of those who are seeking the peace of God or of those who should be awakened to enter upon that search. The best thoughts of the greatest and best of men are stored up in them ready for the use of every reader. God, before whom all possible instrumentalities lay open, chose to

communicate his will to the world through a book, and this should lead us to look upon books as something peculiar even in the gifts of God.

Pastors should awake to the value of this powerful auxiliary. Here are preachers that they can send to many a soul whom they may not be able to reach by the voice. Here are expositions of truth as perfect as were ever conceived by human thought ready to assist in convincing hearts which they long to see given to Jesus. How best to use the printed page is a practical point which is worthy of far more consideration than it receives. What books and tracts should be distributed, to whom they should be given, when they should be used, what plans might be adopted for their methodical circulation, are all questions worthy of being carefully investigated.

Books may be found which are calculated to alarm the careless, and set them to asking with deep feeling what they must do to be saved; books which give the plainest and most satisfactory directions to the awakened as they strive to find the way of life, through the peace-speaking blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; books which convey to the bleeding hearts of the afflicted the sweetest possible consolations, even consolations that are the work of the Holy Spirit and cannot mislead; books on practical piety, the perusal of which must elevate the soul and make it better and happier; books the object of which is to explain and vindicate the important doctrines of religion for which the believer is earnestly to contend; books on the great duties of life—duties which we owe to God and man and our own souls, and the faithful performance of which can be reached only by those who have been renewed by divine grace; and books on the histories, biographies and all other important subjects found in the Bible. Is the pastor discharging his whole duty or enjoying his full privileges who does not make himself well acquainted with these books, and strive to have his people built up in Christian character through the inexhaustible riches which they contain? Educated to know of the existence of such works and trained to appreciate their value, he must throw away a grand opportunity for doing good if he does not contrive

to have his people know of these treasures of sanctified learning, and to study them and prize them, and grow in grace by their use.

Pastors, first reading and learning to value such religious volumes, should recommend them from the pulpit, and that by name. Some of their hearers will thereby be induced to read them. They should speak of them and urge their perusal as they go from house to house. They should keep a stock of them on hand, from which they can sometimes lend to those who may wish to read. They should also give some of them away in cases where it might seem advisable. In most congregations there are some wealthy persons who would be willing to furnish the means for so doing. Every community ought also to be visited by a colporteur or some other person, by whom every family might be supplied with volumes, large or small, that contain the words of life and truth.

CIRCULATING RELIGIOUS NEWSPAPERS

In a previous chapter we sought to show that it is for the interest of pastors to keep themselves well informed, through religious journals, of the progress of Christ's kingdom; we would now strongly urge upon them that they should also use their influence to introduce such journals into the families of their congregations. As almost all great enterprises of the day have their newspaper to support them, so every denomination of Christians and every important Christian undertaking-has its journal. There are papers adapted to every class of minds and every drift of religious thought. This subject the minister should look into, and endeavor to have his people benefited by the rich stores of instruction which are flowing out from the religious press.

He may draw much important aid in his work from this source. The periodical religious press, when habitually perused, will undoubtedly make the people more intelligent, and consequently more interested in the kingdom of Christ; it will supplement the teachings of the pastor, which must necessarily be limited in extent; it will enforce, by adding additional authority, the truths which are uttered from the pulpit. Its assistance will make the work of the pastor easier. It will give the people fuller information than the pulpit possibly can about the great enterprises of benevolence which the Church is carrying on, and so will interest them in those enterprises and make them more liberal in their support. If religious journals did no more than take the place of, and so crowd out, the pernicious literature that is issuing from so many other presses, it would be an unspeakable blessing to the Church and the world. That pastor is neglecting a splendid auxiliary to his work who is not using every effort to induce his people to take and read papers which are devoted to the spread of the righteousness of Christ in the salvation of souls and purifying the lives of believers.

We need to give continued thought to the subject in order to appreciate the value of a good religious newspaper coming regularly into a family and being read by its various members. Weekly it preaches its timely sermons to the household. Some of the most able and pious ministers and other writers that are to be found in the land are those who may be heard through its pages. And they send forth in this way the very best of their thoughts. The religious newspaper keeps the people informed of what is going on in the Church and the whole kingdom of Christ. It says many things plainly to them which the pastor, from delicacy or other causes, could not say. Many of the people will scarcely read anything else than newspapers; how deeply important it is that those papers be of the right kind! That family which habitually reads a good religious journal will undoubtedly have a higher and more intelligent tone of piety than that which neglects this method for growth in knowledge. They will have wider views and more generous impulses toward the truth, whether it is to be supported at home or extended abroad.

On every account, then, it would be well for the minister to strive to have a religious newspaper introduced into each family of his church. He should make this recommendation, and urge it strongly from the pulpit. He should enter into the matter more particularly as he goes about from house to house. It will not require a great outlay to secure one of the very best of these journals, which would come into the house weekly freighted with intellectual treasure that would entertain, instruct and purify. No pastor ought to neglect the aid which he might receive from this source. In former times it was a help unknown, for religious journalism is of modern date, and hence it is not alluded to in older works on Pastoral Theology. But now ministers cannot be too strongly urged to use this help; they cannot be too determined in the purpose to have the best religious papers circulated in their families.

THE PASTOR SHOULD IDENTIFY HIMSELF WITH HIS PEOPLE

He should not assume a position of superiority, as if he were above them, and thereby excite their enmity. He should not stand aloof from them, as if he had no common interests with them. He should not patronize, as if it were a condescension for him to have to do even with their spiritual affairs. On the contrary, he should feel, and lead the people to feel, that he is one with them in heart, in sympathy and in those grand interests of the soul which bind men together the closest of all. Whenever the minister, by actually feeling it himself, can succeed in making the people feel that he is thus really identified with them, he has gained a power by which he can accomplish almost anything in that congregation.

There are ministers who are constantly depreciating their people and speaking of them in the most derogatory terms—telling of their meanness, their stupidity, their ignorance, their frivolity and other faults. A practice more unwise and more unlike the good Shepherd, who loves his flock, it is hard to imagine. It is sure to keep the minister himself cold and mistrustful of those whom he can influence only by love. Then he may rest assured that his constant unkind remarks about them will in the end reach their ears in some roundabout way, and awaken their lasting enmity. The habit will certainly injure, if not utterly ruin, the work of him who indulges in it. It is far better, in every aspect of the matter, to say whatever good can be said about one's people, and in order thereto to think as well as possible of them—to cherish real affection for them. How much better, at any rate, to cultivate the spirit of the good old

Thomas Adam when he wrote, “I find it very difficult, if not impossible, through my selfishness, to sink myself into the common mass of mankind so as to take my full share of their guilt—to sympathize, to pity, to have a fellow-feeling of their wants, joys and sorrows, and be truly concerned for the temporal and spiritual welfare of all."

Our true policy, as well as imperative duty, is to identify ourselves with our people. We should grow to consider—and they will soon see that we do—that we are one with them in church fellowship and one in our social interests. We should endeavor to get into sympathy with their modes of thought and feeling— to be sufficiently acquainted with their callings as farmers, mechanics, merchants, fishermen, or whatever else is their general avocation, to appreciate their interest in these things and enter into conversation about them. We should enter into their joys and sorrows, their funerals and their weddings, with a real participation of their feelings. We should so identify ourselves with them that their interests and trials would be ours; and they should see that our interest in them is not perfunctory or assumed, but real. Our hearts should be with them, our interests should be with them, and then our efforts for their everlasting interests must necessarily be successful.

It is a great point for a pastor to gain the full confidence of those to whom he ministers in the gospel; and the sure way to gain and to retain that confidence is to be worthy of it. That minister is surely building up for himself a character which men will trust when he faithfully discharges the duties which devolve upon him, when his life in all its relations is one of general integrity, when he studies constant acts of kindness to his people, and when he is true to them as well in their absence as in their presence. There are ministers who have in this way acquired the full confidence of their people. Whatever they do is regarded as right of course. The confidence reposed in them gives them influence and power, so that whatever they do for the souls of their hearers or the glory of Christ tells with fourfold efficacy.

Then it should be remembered that away back of this identifying ourselves with the people of our charge, back of the kind words we should speak of them at all times, back of the benefits we should strive constantly to confer upon them, there must lie in our hearts a real Christian affection for them. It must be genuine—not merely assumed or professed. The first thing, then, is for the minister to determine and earnestly

strive to love his people. The attainment is possible. Why should not all reach it as did Paul when he said, “For I have said before that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you"? Cannot the godly minister become truly attached to the devoted believer who manifests the image of his Lord, to the aged Christian ripening for glory, to the friend of the church who has stood by it in all its trials, to the youth who is giving promise of all that is lovely and hopeful, and to those who sustain him by taking up with him the burden of every good work? Can he not deeply pity those whom he sees discarding every heavenly motive and forcing their way to endless ruin? Can he not yearn for the salvation of their souls with a yearning that never abates? Can he help loving with a true affection and rejoicing over both young and old, as he sees them coming with all their hearts to the embrace of Jesus as their Saviour and Lord? This is the true affection which the pastor should cherish toward his people. This will make his work anions; them a labor of love, and crown it with abundant and joyous success.

When this deep affection is in the breast of the pastor it cannot be hid. The people will soon see it. Baxter briefly expresses the matter: “The whole of our ministry must be carried on in a tender love to our people. We must let them sec that nothing pleases us but what profits them—that what does them good does us good, and that nothing troubles us more than their hurt. “Bishops," as Jerome says, “are not lords, but fathers, and therefore must be affected toward their people as their children; yea, the tenderest love of the mother should not surpass theirs. We must even ‘travail in birth for them till Christ be formed in them.' We should convince them that we care for no outward thing, not money or liberty or credit or life itself, in comparison with their salvation. When your people see that you unfeignedly love them they will hear anything and bear anything. We ourselves should put up with a blow given us in love sooner than a hard word given us in anger and malice. Most men judge of advice as they judge of the affection of him who gives it. Oh therefore see to it that you feel a tender love to your people in your breast, and let them feel it in your

speeches and see it in your conduct. Let them see that you 'spend and are spent for their sakes'—that all you do is not for any ends of your own, but for them."

CHAPTER VI

THE PASTOR IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH

THERE is a duty of vast importance lying before the pastor as the leader in the Church's imperative task of spreading the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, gathering in souls out of the world and building up the divine kingdom by every energy which she may possess. And it may as well be emphasized at the beginning, that the pastor's position in reference to that work is to devise and direct, and not himself to take up the great burden of its drudgery. He ought not by any means to undertake too much. It is an evil with many ministers that they would rather themselves assume the burdens of work than undergo the anxiety of planning how others may be gotten to bear them. By so doing the pastor positively injures the people of his charge. He prevents them from becoming trained to the work for which all are brought into the kingdom. He takes the course which is calculated to dwarf their powers and energies. The evil of this thing was well presented by Dr. Nicholas Murray: “In vain are members added to our churches unless they are living branches of the living Vine. In vain are churches multiplied unless they are churches alive unto God. Every addition to the Church should be an addition to the host of God's elect who are seeking the regeneration of the world. And every Christian should be so instructed. Ministers are the primary, but not the exclusive, workmen. They are the directors, but not the sole agents; and to seek to do all, to the exclusion of the active agency of the members of the Church, is a real injury to both."

Then the pastor alone cannot possibly do all the work which is needed in an active church. But little can he accomplish himself compared with what might be done if he gave the body of the members an opportunity, and simply led them onward.

The picture of Dr. Murray on this point is also worthy of being reproduced: “The Rev. Mr. A was a fervent, laborious and truly excellent man. His sympathies were large and his efforts to do good untiring. He was ever abroad among his people, and was a daily visitor to the habitations of suffering and sorrow, doing a work which many of the females of his congregation might do as well. As a consequence, he failed in the pulpit as a preacher; he became an exhorter and not a teacher. He failed in health, and his sun went down at noon. He did but little, because he undertook too much. The Rev. Dr. B is an able and excellent man. He is on principle opposed to the employment of his members as helps, because, as he thinks, it renders them forward and conceited; and he does very little out of the pulpit himself. As a consequence, he is formal and stately, his people are cold and unattractive and uncemented, and his congregation rapidly on the decline. For his people to meet for mutual exhortation and prayer would be on a par with the sin of those of old who offered strange fire before the Lord. The Rev. Dr. C is of a different mind. He is a close student. He knows that he cannot do everything, and he seeks to do some things well. He preaches nobly. His Sunday-schools are flourishing. He sets many wheels in motion, but employs hands to guide them. He is the centre of a hundred hands and minds moving around him. The entire machinery of his congregation is of his contrivance, but he only retains the oversight of it. Feeling that active devoted-ness is the best stimulant to personal religion, that it calls graces into action that otherwise would remain dormant, he seeks to employ all the talent of his people in efforts to do good to others. He seeks work for all and fervently exhorts them to its performance. He circumscribes his own work and does it like a man. He uses the power of his people to its full extent, and his congregation is as a garden which the Lord has blessed. They all work, and keep always at work; and his and their influence is felt at the ends of the earth." Much of the wisdom and discretion of ministers is made apparent by the manner in which they use the agency of their people to assist them in the discharge of their manifold duties.

It will inevitably consume too much of the time and too much of the energy of the pastor if he takes upon himself the great burden of the Church's work. It will necessarily interfere with his preparations for the pulpit and all his other studies, impair his highest usefulness, and in the end damage his energies and bodily health. The experience of Dr. Chalmers is well worthy of being kept in mind by every hard-working pastor. “I know not," he says, "a more effectual method of making one's existence painful, harassing and uncomfortable than by associating an excess of pastoral with an excess of mental labor—than by combining in one person a jaded body with an exhausted spirit. One species of fatigue may be endured, but both together are insufferable; and when both kinds of service are attempted in too high a degree, the quality of both will be most essentially deteriorated."

We have placed this matter conspicuously at the beginning, so that the duties of the pastor, upon which we would now dwell, may be fairly understood; they are the duties of organizing and leading in the activity of the Church. In the previous chapter we described his own special work; we now speak of those activities of which he is simply to be the director.

ACTIVITY IN THE CHURCH INDISPENSABLE

From the nature and design and obligations of the Church, it is absolutely necessary that there should be activity in the cause of Christ. The ordinance of the Master is imperative and lies at the foundation: “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch." The inspired example of the apostles teaches the same thing. As soon as they were endued with the Holy Ghost they went to work with all their might for the upbuilding of the kingdom, and in so doing set an example for all believers who should follow them. The plan which God has seen fit to adopt of spreading the gospel through human agency, makes this necessary. The experience of Christianity in its best days is that it has flourished most and been the purest when its energies were put forth the most strenuously for the glory of God. The personal growth in piety of each believer demands that his graces should be strengthened by diligent use. This doctrine of Scripture and experience should be taught distinctly and most emphatically by every pastor. He should repeat it until the people shall be fully aroused to its solemn obligation.

The activity of the age in which we live renders it necessary for the Church in all its members to be full of sanctified energy, in order that it may make, any progress, or even hold its own. In the magnitude of its commerce, the achievements of its manufactures, the splendor of its improvements, the wonders of its discoveries, the sublimity of its science, in every department of human thought and action, the world is becoming more and more stirred with unwearied effort. There never was such an age of practical energy. And the lesson of the times is that the same spirit, only sanctified, must be carried into Christ's kingdom. Shall the children of this world in their generation still be wiser than the children of light?

Shall we, who have the interests of truth and righteousness in our hands, not be up to the spirit of the age? Shall we not give good heed to the stirring appeal of the Holy Ghost which is so applicable at the present time, “And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep"? The principles of the gospel are ever the same; they are eternal, they cannot change, there cannot be progress in them, but there can be change in the modes of pressing them home upon the attention of men; there can be progress in the zeal of believers and in the extension of the blessings of salvation. There should be never-ending, never-wearying progress here. The spirit of the age is intensely active; so must the Church be in all her movements upon the world. The old efforts will not do now. There must be something more wakeful, more intense, more in accordance with the scenes in the midst of which we are living.

It becomes the people of God at the present time to be most diligent in mental effort of every kind. The thought of the Church should be intently bent upon devising how there can be a deeper interest awakened in the study of the word of God, what plans might be adopted for promoting more living piety in believers, and what can be done for securing more conversions of the ungodly, for the spread of the gospel and for promoting the glory of God in Christ through the world. Whilst the wisdom of earth is planning for material and temporal progress, these are the infinitely more momentous subjects to which the most intense study of Christians should be given.

There should also be energetic effort in working for Christ and his cause. It is the most noble cause in the world—the cause upon which most depends, and in which the most momentous interests of this earth are concerned. There is no enterprise among the children of men that is regarded with so much attention even from the throne of God. How much is to be done in it! The corruption and woe of this sinful world are to be banished, the human race saved from going down to hell, millions of millions of souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, this sin-polluted earth renewed, heaven peopled by blessed saints who shall be the compeers of angels, and, above all and

through all, the adorable Trinity infinitely glorified. Will not the omnipotent Son of God open the way for success in such a work? Will he not himself help it forward '? Is there a conceivable enterprise of mankind that will compare with this in grandeur?

Great should be the activity of the Church and of each of its members in the ever-expanding work of benevolence that now lies before us. Satan is active in destroying men through sweeping torrents of worldliness, through infidelity, through intemperance, through a maddening haste to be rich, and through kindred sins and crimes that are now peculiarly virulent; the friends of God and truth are loudly called upon to be correspondingly zealous in pushing forward every agency to counteract Lis malignant efforts. We should strive to save men whom he is seeking to destroy. We can do something—by the blessing of God we can do much. The good that we attempt will spread and multiply. We are called into the vineyard of the Lord, and we are kept there, that we may work for him. It is our mission; shall we fail in it?

Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon this calling of the Church to be active in this great gospel work. Next to the demands of their own personal piety, it is the most urgent call upon every member of the blood-bought host of Christ. No tongue can tell, no heart conceive, the sublime, the tremendous interests that are involved. One of the most solemn duties of the pastor is to awaken men to this subject. To this office he is appointed. The great service he can render to the holy cause lies here. Multitudes upon multitudes of even true Christians are asleep as to this matter. They do not seem to dream that they have anything to do in saving the world from sin. One of the hardest but most imperative of the duties of the minister is to arouse them, and make them see what they are called to do in the infinitely important enterprise to which the Church is appointed. It is so difficult to overcome our natural selfishness and slothfulness that the minister must make a most persevering effort. He cannot be too emphatic in pressing home upon his people that zealous and unwearied activity,

perpetual aggression upon the kingdom of darkness, is at once their imperative duty and distinguishing privilege.

The pastor who is not alive to this call of God, of the world, of the age, for himself and his people to be active, will not succeed in his ministry. Here is the peculiar demand of the times, but he does not appreciate it. He is not informed or alive to the stirring events that are going on around and within the kingdom of Christ. Other churches and other denominations more wisely take part in the great work, whilst he, heeding not, is left behind. As a consequence of this lethargy his people do not grow in grace or in the zealous spirit of Christ. One deeply-important part of his mission is not fulfilled. The Spirit of God does not bless him in his work, and his whole ministry is in danger of proving useless.

To every pastor it may be said in all sober earnestness, “Be a true watchman or your ministry is a failure. Events are thickening around you; are you awake? Are you anxiously asking, ‘What is going on in the world? What are the present calls of Providence? What are the grand movements in the kingdom? What predictions of eternal truth are now being fulfilled?' Then let the subject come home: What are you doing? What is your church doing? Are you alive to your position and the urgent calls of God?" These questions are vital to every one who holds the sacred office.

EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH TO BE A WORKER

“To every man his work “is the motto, once uttered by divine lips, which should be adopted by every pastor, and so repeated and pressed home by him that it would ultimately become the motto of his church also. “All at it and always at it" was the kindred motto of the Wesleys, which, carried out into vigorous action, wrought wonders in establishing the grand system of Methodism both in England and this country. Every member a worker in the blessed cause is the rule which the minister should strive with all his might to have adopted by his whole congregation. Its adoption is the call of the gospel, of the world, of the age. Its general adoption would in a short time change the whole face of the Church; it would soon bring wonderful enlargement to the kingdom of Christ; scarcely would it be extravagant to say that it would elevate the whole moral aspect of the world before the present generation passes away.

The pastor should insist upon it that every member of his church has some work to do. He should make it plain and impressive that the Scriptures inculcate this duty, and that the diversified spiritual wants of the race demand that it be obeyed to the full. He should endeavor to fix it upon every conscience that none are so obscure that they may safely hide, and none so weak but there is something within their reach—that all are positively guilty who are not contributing their share to swell the vast volume of influence which is ultimately to sweep over the whole earth for its regeneration. This doctrine of every person having his own work to do should be laid down squarely and never receded from— never omitted when there is an opportunity of pressing it home from pulpit or prayer-meeting or pastoral visit.

It may be admitted fully that all have not the same work or the same gifts, as it is best they should not. As faces, dispositions, temperaments, talents and circumstances differ,

so also are the gifts which can be used in the work of the gospel very diverse. It is providentially ordered that it should be so, for the same gifts are not needed for all kinds of work. There are different things to be done, and so it is best that there are different kinds of talents. No one is responsible for work which it is not in his power to do, but I am answerable for the gift that is bestowed upon me, whatever that be. And the exercise of my peculiar talents is the best thing for me. I can do the best work by using my own gifts. I can do a work by using those gifts and by improving my peculiar opportunities which no other person can do, and which if I leave undone must remain undone for ever. This should be well understood in arranging the active enterprises of the Church.

It is manifestly implied in this duty of personal exertion that each Christian deliberately investigate what his work should be. Self-examination as to talents and opportunities is of primary importance here. Looking earnestly within, around and above, the prayer should ascend, “Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Surely, this much effort is obligatory upon every child of God. The first duty is for each one to search very carefully for what God has given him the faculty and the opportunity of doing. When this is discovered it will save from doing nothing, for there are thousands who are idle simply because they have never investigated what it was possible for them to do. It will save from mistakes and failures, which most frequently arise from persons not engaging in that which is their appropriate work. How many a happy and useful Christian this personal search would make! Pastors should make this duty clear to their people, impress it upon their consciences, and perhaps sometimes help individuals in settling the question as to what they are to undertake.

The members of the church are rational beings, and they must act in a rational manner. Each should say to himself, “It is my solemn duty to search for the work to which God has assigned me." In this search there are two elements to be considered: First, talents.

The question here should be, “What have I the peculiar

talent or qualification to do for the general good of the cause of Christ? Can I speak a word in public or lead in prayer? Can I influence in private? Can I write letters to persuade the impenitent or strengthen the feeble? Can I help in the Sabbath-school? Can I assist in singing the praises of God? Have I influence that I can exert more or less widely? Have I the faculty of making peace, healing breaches that might otherwise mar the excellency of the Church? Have I money that I can save and give to the many, many wants of the kingdom? Have I skill to mature and execute plans for collecting funds for the cause of Jesus? Have I persuasion that I can use in bringing men under the sound of the gospel? Have I prudence that I can make available in promoting the peace and prosperity of Zion? Can I minister to the poor, the sick, the sorrowing to edification? Have I affability of address which I can use in welcoming and attaching strangers to the house of God?" Many other such questions will suggest themselves, and when they are faithfully asked and prompted by true zeal, they must lead to the knowledge and execution by each of his appropriate work.

The second item in this search pertains to the opportunities which may be possessed. There are circles of society in which one moves, there are relations of business or daily intercourse or consanguinity, there are fit occasions often presenting themselves, all of which form opportunities that may be improved in the interests of the kingdom. These are of course different in the case of each individual; certain persons have far more of them than others; all have some. Each one should diligently watch for them and improve them. Each in his sphere, each according to his talents, may do the work of God. No Christian alive but has some branch of this work which he can do better than any other member of the body of Christ. It may seem to him a work of only little importance, but it is necessary to make up the great aggregate of what should be done.

Then, his proper work having been discovered by each one, it should be promptly and heartily entered upon. Most

pertinent here are the stirring words of Dr. John W. Dulles: “When the car of Juggernaut is to be drawn, every man who can pull a pound must pull that pound. In the Church of Christ every man can pull his pound. There is a place for the old and a place for the young, for the poor as well as the rich, for the unlearned as truly as for the learned. What is needed is an earnest resolve to find out our place, and with God's help to fill it. The places are as various as our capacities. In the Sabbath-school there is a call for superintendents, secretaries, treasurers and librarians, for teachers, visitors, sextons, scholars and givers. In the prayer-meeting there is a place for earnest speakers, believing prayers, hearty singers, and punctual, teachable hearers. In the church are needed elders, deacons, ushers, singers. Others can serve the Master by visiting the poor, the stranger and the afflicted, and by nursing the sick. The night-school, the sewing-school, the Dorcas society, the mothers' meeting, tract distribution, collecting for missions and other fields are open to willing hearts. No man, woman or child need say that there is nothing for him or for her to do. Let each find his work and do it."

An evil to be guarded against in all our churches is the habit of sinking the sense of personal responsibility and losing it in the mass. It is admitted that there is a great work before the Church, and it must be done, but the feeling is, "The body, with its officers, must do it, whilst I am only one, will not be missed, cannot do anything." This is the core of the difficulty. If all acted on this excuse, as thousands do, then moral death would come over all our churches. This course should be exposed and its disastrous effects described. Upon the conscience of each person should the indispensable, burden be laid: “You are responsible as an individual; nothing, nothing can excuse you from your appropriate portion of the great work."

The best way for performing church-work is for each person to take up whatever task lies at his own door, and just as it presents itself. In this way there need not be any delay in waiting for organization; whatever is needed to be done can be done at once, whenever and wherever the opportunity presents

itself. Then, the body of Christians being scattered throughout the whole community and each acting promptly in his own sphere, the work would be likely to touch every point and its aggregate results to be very large. This is the first lesson on this subject which all Christians should learn, and if they were as faithful as they should be, no other would be needed; and this plan of work should never be dropped, no matter what other may come in to assist, But organization also is important. Imperfect as we are, it is essential. The organization of the Church by divine wisdom proves it to be so. Organization aids by encouraging individuals, by inciting all to greater diligence, by economizing the force of the Church through placing each element of it where it can tell most effectively, by increasing that force through the employment of well-tried plans, and by covering the whole field of work more thoroughly. While, then, each individual, without waiting, should work just as he has opportunity, the general work of the Church should be well organized, each person being assigned that part of it to which his talents are best adapted.

In addition to the duty of the clear and reiterated presentation of this doctrine, that each person should do something in the great cause, another function of the pastor is to assist in finding out what each one can do and setting him promptly to that portion of the work. This branch of his calling he should carefully study in all its details. He should study well each member of his church, to find out where he can be most useful. Each new member who comes in should be kept before his mind until his appropriate place is found. Elders and other experienced persons in the church, male and female, should be consulted in this business of assigning their work to all. The grand rule ever followed should be that not one must be idle; until each one has something appointed him the pastor should not feel that his portion of the work is done. No mind can appreciate the vast latent power there is in the Church, and happy is that minister who can draw it out. It is not necessary that each one should do much; only let it be something, and something appropriate to his peculiar talents and

opportunities. Something, and always—let this ring in every ear. Each faithful worker will influence others to work, and the aggregate of each one doing even a little, but that constantly, will be immense; it would soon revolutionize the whole Church for good.

Blessed, thrice blessed, is the minister who can thus inflame his people with zeal, and get them all to become busy in the work for which Jesus toiled and shed his blood. He will have a harmonious church, and a church that will be alive to every good word and work. He will have a church that will be ever growing in numbers and graces, and that will inevitably exercise a most benign influence throughout the community where it is located. Then the influence will certainly react upon himself. He will preach better; he will be far happier in all his work; he will not have such sore church-strifes to vex him. In answer to the living-piety and prayers of his people he will be sure of having the divine favor beaming upon him from day to day.

DEVISING PLANS OF WORK

It is well in every congregation occasionally to adopt fresh methods of doing good, of awaking interest and exciting the energies of the membership. The wearing out of old methods, the discovery of new branches of work which were previously neglected, and the increasing zeal of new members of the church, which ought by all means to be employed, will sometimes render this necessary. Besides, novelty generally interests, and if that interest can be utilized it is the pastor's wisdom not to let it be lost. He should therefore aim to devise such plans of work as the character of the times and the changing circumstances of his people may demand.

But such plans should be very carefully thought out before they are announced or put in execution. Inquiry should be made as to whether similar ones have been tried in other places, and whether they have proved successful there. The pastor should calmly reflect whether they are adapted to his congregation and the community in which he dwells; whether he has the right persons in his church to carry them out; whether he is himself willing to undergo the labor and anxiety which their successful operation may demand; and whether they might not lead to serious disorders and other evils. These things and others should be very thoughtfully considered before a minister commits himself to an untried scheme of operation in the general work of the church. It should be remembered that a plan will often be very different when it comes to be carried out from what it appeared when looked upon merely in theory; and to be constantly adopting, and soon after dropping, methods of operation injures one's influence, obtains for him the character of fickleness, and prevents him from receiving that hearty co-operation which is desirable when he proposes other plans which are really excellent.

Then, when a scheme of work has been diligently studied out and prayed over, and appears to be certainly feasible and promising of much good, it should receive a full trial. Even if at

first it does not succeed perfectly, it should not be hurriedly abandoned. If for a time unexpected difficulties, from want of proper zeal in the people or from any other cause, present themselves, there should not be utter discouragement. The measure should be entered into heartily, and developed as fully as possible. Even if it should drag for a time, it may ultimately go on more prosperously. The true way is to work it as well as possible, and persevere. It may be a most valuable scheme, and should have a fair opportunity of being developed. Unquestionably, some such plans will succeed and live, and prove to be blessings for many years.

ELDERS' WORK

In a subsequent chapter an outline will be given of a plan of operation which may be profitably adopted by a church session, and therefore very little will be said about its duties in this, which might seem to he its appropriate place. To the elders of the church properly belongs the management of its spiritual affairs, but that is not by any means the whole of their duty. They are also to be leaders in the various activities for which the united body of God's people is responsible. It is their duty to be the counselors of the pastor in devising and putting into operation plans for the better carrying on of the Lord's work. In the session properly should originate efforts—and some of them should be originating constantly—for exciting and vigorously conducting the work of the church. By the elders pre-eminently should the activity be carried on as well as supervised. The field of work which lies before them is a very diverse one. They are to help the pastor, to aid the other members of the church in their efforts to grow in grace, to plan measures for the spiritual progress of the body, to look after young converts, to see to it that the liberality of the church shall be developed, to use all proper means for evoking the latent talent which is certainly in the various members, and to be efficient in everv other good word and work. One of the first and most strenuous efforts of the pastor, in the activity of the church, should be to keep the session alive and diligent in the important position of usefulness which they occupy.

Not only should the session, as a session, be vigorous in the prosecution of the work of the church, but every member of it also, according to his talents and opportunities, should be faithful in the great cause. It should be strongly impressed upon the elders that they ought all to be workers. There is no class of persons in the church upon which this duty rests with so much weight as upon them. They are called by the appointment of God and the voice of the church to that very thing.

Because of their presumed character for eminent piety, because of the confidence which their position in the church naturally secures them, because of the sacred and responsible office which they hold, because of the influence which they must necessarily exert, and because they are set in the church to be an example to others,— because of these and other things it becomes them to be not only eminently holy, but also eminently useful. This is their calling, their happiness and their glory. If they are faithful in the Master's work, there is no telling the amount of good they may accomplish, no imagining the magnitude of the bliss with which they shall be re-warded in the heavenly world. But if they are not faithful in the important work to which they are called, they very greatly sin. They come short of their divine appointment and of the ordination vows into which they have entered; they fail of splendid opportunities of blessing men and glorifying God; and they spread the evil by hardening the hearts of others and keeping them back from a holy zeal which might pervade the whole body of believers. To them much has been given, and of them much shall be required.

WOMAN'S WORK

Explain the matter as Ave may, the fact cannot be mistaken that with woman is ever to be found the greater part of the piety, the earnest devotion and the zeal of the church. This is to be plainly seen in all of our churches. Among all denominations the evidences of it are to be found in the rolls of the membership, in the attendance upon all the services of the sanctuary, in her sympathy with every true object of benevolence, in her readiness to engage in every good work, and in her consistency of life. Upon this element of piety in Lis church the pastor must ever place great reliance, and his wisdom will be manifested in so framing his plans of activity that it can be used to the greatest advantage. It is a power for good too important and peculiar not to receive his special attention.

(a) Female Prayer-Meetings.

When the two things are considered, that many of the most godly in our congregations are women, and that they take no audible part save singing in the ordinary service of public or social worship, it will be seen that prayer-meetings of their own are most desirable. In them their voices can be heard in prayer, they can counsel and encourage each other, and they can confer about their own spiritual interests, as well as those of the church. A few persons would be sufficient to commence or to perpetuate such a meeting, for to a very few even is the promise of the divine presence made. It could convene, if desirable, in the parlor of the manse or in some other private house, where they would be secluded and free from restraint. Ill conducting it, the Scriptures should be read, prayers offered, words of Christian counsel and experience uttered, objects for special prayer presented, facts stated, brief and pertinent extracts quoted and a free conference about spiritual things held. There should be as little formality as possible in conducting the exercises. All should be free and unrestrained,

and full of Christ.

The pastor will not, of course, be in attendance at these meetings, but he can aid them very materially in other ways. He can announce them frequently from the pulpit, he can speak of them in private and encourage individuals to attend them, and he can always treat them as an important element of spiritual power in his church.

The influence of such a stated meeting of devout women, old or young, for prayer and spiritual conference will most undoubtedly tell upon the piety and progress of the church. Prayers will there be offered up for particular individuals, who will by and by be seen coming out on the side of Christ, for the commencement of revivals which will after a while gladden every heart, and for the pastor upon whose ministrations such vast issues are suspended. Unseen, and perhaps unnoticed, may be those little assemblies, but not unfelt will they be in their blessed results. They will tell upon the preaching of the minister, for they will bring down upon him the unction of the Holy Ghost. They will tell upon the Sabbath-school by causing its instructions to be sealed upon many a heart. They will tell upon every department of the church's work by removing difficulties, spreading the harmonious spirit of Christ, giving holier unction and opening many a door of success. Much should be made, and much should be expected, of the female prayer-meeting.

(b) Pastors' Aids.

In the earnest piety of the women of the church there lies such an amount of latent power for doing good that every plan should be devised for drawing it out into activity and using it to the best advantage. It doubtless will be seen in isolated circles benefiting souls and bodies and helping forward the great cause of salvation, but besides that it ought to be made more effective by being combined into general and comprehensive efforts. This has been accomplished in many churches by the formation of associations which have been well called pastors'

aids. Their object is to unite the earnest Christian women of the congregation into a band whose object it shall be to assist the pastor in such branches of his work as can be performed by them.

A sufficient number of earnest-hearted women for the formation of such an association can be found in almost any church. In its construction there does not need to be much or complex organization. The more simple and flexible in its mode of working it is the better. Those who are willing to enter cordially into its interests can enroll their names, elect their necessary officers and meet periodically for the purpose of devising work and laying it out appropriately for each of the members. The work which could be profitably taken up by them would be such as making the acquaintance of new families removing into the bounds of the congregation, striving to discover and bring to the sanctuary those who are living in its neglect, visiting persons in the congregation who are becoming disaffected or cold or negligent in their attendance, bringing also new scholars into the Sabbath-school, promoting general sociability in the church, and putting forth whatever other efforts for the general cause their wisdom and experience might deem advisable.

Such an association can be formed in almost any congregation. The requisite number of persons and the piety can be found if they are sought for; and, if formed, it may be made a most valuable auxiliary to the pastor. Women have the piety, they have the feeling, they have the tact, they more generally have the time, to do such work, and hence they can do it more efficiently than men. There are some parts of church-work which they can do better than even the pastor. They can reach families, especially the female portion of them, as the other sex cannot. They can follow up impressions that are made, cultivate the acquaintance of strangers and persevere in efforts to interest them in the Church and her ordinances as men cannot or will not.

(c) Visiting the Aged, Sick and Poor.

This is a branch of woman's great work in doing good which is of so much consequence that it should receive special attention. Whether it should be carried on systematically in connection with the pastors' aid or any other association, or whether it should be taken up by every pious and loving heart whenever and wherever objects are found, we would not decide. Probably it is better to enter upon it in both ways, so that it may be the more thoroughly accomplished.

It is a department of Christian benevolence which it is to be feared is too much overlooked at the present time. There is danger that in the desire for promoting the interests of the souls of men the wants of their bodies should be neglected. The Church needs to awake with great earnestness to this matter. She needs to listen more attentively to the words of Christ, “For ye have the poor always with you;" to return to the zeal of early Christian and apostolic days in relieving the poor and the suffering; to outstrip all the contrivances of human society and all the boasts of popery in cheerful ministrations to those upon whom the hand of affliction has in any way been laid. Very loud and emphatic should be the proclamation from the pulpit of this undoubted and ever-present duty which rests upon the children of the Lord Jesus.

Then to visit the sick, whether they are connected with the church or not, and minister to them, to speak kind and loving words to the aged, and to relieve the pressing wants of the poor, is pre-eminently the work of Christian women. It is an indispensable branch of the pastor's work, but he cannot possibly do all that should be done. There are some parts of it which the finer and gentler tact of women can do better than he. Men are not to be excused from this office of Christian mercy, but the more tender feelings of woman make her its appropriate minister.

If this branch of the Church's work, so manifest an emanation of Christianity, and so sweetly enforced by the example of the purer days of the gospel, were faithfully performed, there is no telling the amount or variety of good results that would flow from it. It would cheer many a sad and

weary heart, and light up with happiness many a dark abode. It would be to the world one of the most influential manifestations of the benign spirit of the gospel—the spirit which was so conspicuously seen in Christ, the spirit which is produced by the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, the spirit which a proper sense of the mercies received from God must necessarily engender, and the spirit with which Christianity is yet to bless the whole world. It would melt down many who could be reached by no other earthly motive, and constrain them to think of the mercy of Christ, and ultimately seek and find it. Who can describe how it would edify suffering believers, causing them to feel that though they are smitten by the hand of affliction, they have still the sweetest fellowship with the body of Christ's true people, and opening their hearts yet more fully to the blessed influences of the Spirit? The general practice of this form of Christian benevolence would bind believers more thoroughly together, for what affection could be stronger than that which must grow between the benefactors and those who receive their loving ministrations? What union more lasting than that of those who stand side bv side in the very same work that employed the hands of the Son of God?

(d) Dorcas Societies.

This is an agency for doing good which has been used by pious women from apostolic days, and which still may be made to accomplish much in assuaging suffering and aiding in various other objects of benevolence. Whatever supposed evils may sometimes be associated with it ought-not to prevent it from being perfected and employed diligently in its peculiar mission of usefulness. It may, in fact, be made a great benefit to those who engage in it. For Christian women to come together from time to time to plan out works of benevolence, and to use their hands in preparing garments for the poor or to assist in other charities, cannot but warm their hearts, enlarge their sympathies and strengthen their social ties. Besides, it should

be remembered that many women have little else than their time and skill in handicraft which they can give to the great cause, and the plans of the sewing society furnish the only method by which these can be made available.

Associations of this kind might prepare garments for the worthy poor who are suffering; they might clothe children, and so enable them to attend the Sabbath-school; they might send packages of articles that would cause gladness to many a toiling missionary family; they might collect funds that would carry on many a greatly-needed charity; or they might make their skill with the needle available in accomplishing objects of benevolence which otherwise would remain neglected. It is therefore an agency which should not be set aside because it has been decried, or because sometimes it may have been followed by discord or may have run into abuses. What is there good or holy or benevolent on earth which the sinfulness of human nature has not perverted?

ATTENTION TO STRANGERS

It must be kept as a distinct aim before every church to draw individuals and families into attendance upon its ordinances. The persons who are to be thus influenced are both those who mav have been Ions; residents in the vicinity of the church and those who may recently have come into the neighborhood. If the church is to be kept up in numbers, if men arc to be brought under the sound of the gospel, the congregation must be constantly recruited from this source, for deaths and removals to distant places and falling away from indifference or disaffection will be ever thinning out its ranks. Besides, the progressive nature of the gospel, so well set forth by the parables of the leaven and the mustard-seed, requires that it should be perpetually aiming after a wider extension. Its benevolent spirit cannot rest without striving to spread abroad its blessings to others. Its verv nature is to be aggressive always and everywhere. If any church's aim is simply to hold its own, it will inevitably retrograde. If it be not constantly drawing new families to the benefit of its ordinances, it will dwindle in attendance. It is a necessity, then, as well as a privilege, to give such attention to strangers as may possibly make them stated worshipers in the sanctuary, and ultimately bring them into the true fold of Christ.

(a) There should be some Agency for Making the Acquaintance of Strangers.

Families will often remove into a new neighborhood, perhaps into the vicinity of a church of their own denomination, and for a long time no Christian people seek their fellowship. They feel very lonely. There is no attraction of friends to draw them to the house of God, and they neglect it. Or perhaps they go a few times and finding no faces but those of strangers, they are chilled, and gradually slide away into utter indifference. This might have been prevented. If the church had been awake

to find them out, seek their acquaintance and interest them, they might soon have become happy and useful members of the congregation. When persons are strangers in a new community, a little attention is peculiarly grateful. It will not soon be forgotten. Instances could be given where it has first gratified, then interested, then softened the feelings, then led to sincere inquiry, and then landed the soul in the happiness of the salvation of Christ.

Now, there should be some definite plan adopted, so that no new families or individuals could come into the neighborhood of the church without being soon discovered and reached by the grasp of Christian friendship. The kind of agency to be made use of for this purpose must be determined by the peculiar circumstances of each congregation. But some such agency there should always be. Each member of the congregation should be on the lookout for families that may come into his immediate vicinity. All should be encouraged to report when they hear of such families removing into the sphere of the church's influence, and when so reported they should be visited promptly by pastor or elders or ladies of the pastor's aid or Sabbath-school teachers. Visits to them should be persevered in until they become interested, and, if possible, identified with the congregation.

(b) Hospitality to Strangers in the House of God.

This may at first sound like a small matter, but reflection and observation will soon prove that it is far otherwise. It has very much to do with attracting people to the sanctuary, and making thein feel at home there, with securing for the church a very desirable name for friendliness, with the satisfaction of those who are already in attendance, and with the promotion of that kindly spirit which forms such a congenial atmosphere for the influences of the Holy Ghost. Instances could be given where strangers have casually entered a church without any purpose of repeating the visit, but have been met with such

evident pleasure, have been so cordially welcomed and received with such marks of attention, that they have gone again and again, until they have finally made that church their home. Other instances could be given where devout strangers have gone to churches of their own faith, and from a sense of duty continued to go for years, without one friendly hand being extended to them or one word of welcome, or even a kind look. Other instances again could be given where persons, seeking a church which they could make their home, have gone to one a few times, but have met with such indifference as to turn away to some other denomination or to give up all attendance at the sanctuary.

Then the hospitality which is needed will cost little: in fact, it will cost nothing but a little reflection and an effort that will be only a pleasure. It consists simply in noticing strangers as they may come casually into the sanctuary, giving them a look of welcome, speaking a word or extending a hand of friendship, showing them to seats, handing them hymn-books, inviting them again, or any other of those little attentions which are so easily offered. These things are easily clone, will inevitably gratify the person receiving the attention, give satisfaction to those who bestow it, promote the good name of the church, prove a potent element in furthering the momentous cause of the gospel, and are even noticed by the Master himself. Attention to this matter will soon tell in its happy results upon the congregation. “Every church," it has been said, “that would prosper must show proper attention to strangers. It should be seen that they are promptly and courteously provided with seats and made to feel that they have a cordial welcome there. Kind looks should greet them as they come and follow them as they go. Should they come again, let them meet with the same reception. And should they become constant worshipers there, let them be sought out and visited, not merely by the pastor, but by members of the congregation. Whether rich or poor, they should not be overlooked or neglected. They have claims as strangers irrespective of all outward distinction. Let a man bring the matter home to himself. Suppose you are in a strange

place. You go to the house of God on the Sabbath, but are treated as a stranger in the fullest sense of the word. You are not spoken to, you are not seated. We venture to say the occurrence would neither be pleasant nor soon forgotten."

Those whose hearts are in the blessed work will hardly feel the need of a formal introduction in order to speak to strangers, welcoming them to the house of God and inviting them to come again. They will consider that there is a something higher at stake than the punctilios of society, and they will choose the higher interests, and in almost all instances the immediate results will justify their choice. This point was forcibly presented in a recent number of a religious journal: "' Why don't you speak to that young man over there, who seems lingering in hope that somebody will hold out their hand to him?' said Mrs. A to Mr. B in our bearing: as the congregation were flooding the sidewalk in their emergence from church the other day.—' I don't know who he is.'—' It would be an excellent way to find out.' —'Yes, but suppose that I should find out that he was somebody the pleasure of whose acquaintance I should not desire?'—' There would be no great harm done even then, while, if you can judge from look and act, and from his regular and apparent interest in church, there is small probability of such a result.'—' You know the customs of the city are somewhat rigid in regard to the matter of formal and proper introductions.'—' I know that men never hesitate, however, to accost any unknown individual when any imaginary benefit of consequence to themselves is dependent on an interview. Why shouldn't benevolence be as regardless of rule as selfishness, and such a young man's benefit be as considerable an element in the decision of such a question as your own?'

"We heard no more, but what we had heard increased our already profound respect for the insight of a clearheaded and warm-hearted woman into the mysteries of essential truth. We have often thought that the amity of the sanctuary ought to override the etiquette of the drawing-room, and that nobody ought to hesitate to make the first advances toward some

acquaintanceship with strangers who have become fellow-worshipers. Especially do Ave hold this to be the case with young men and women, particularly the former. They come to the city from their distant homes with hearts that ache at the separation from those to whom their whole wealth of love has been given. While hurried in the labors of the week they do not so much mind the smart of separation, but on the Sabbath they have plenty of time to think of home and old friends, and it seems desolate to them to meet Sabbath after Sabbath with a great congregation, to no one of whom are they bound by the slightest tie of sympathy. They come a while, expecting that somebody will say a kind word to them, that they may even here find a hand-pressure of welcome; they wait and linger on the threshold as if to invite a kind word, but it does not come. They intermit attendance, perhaps fall into the hands of some of Satan's colporteurs, who hold out both hands toward them, and in the company of errorists or open transgressors they commence their descent swift to ruin. Had they been greeted in their early attendance upon the sanctuary with a warm welcome from some Christian man who should have introduced them into the sympathetic circle of the good of their own age, they might have been saved. Don't sacrifice the welfare of immortal souls to a poor punctilio about propriety."

PRAYER-MEETINGS

The piety and usefulness of the Church are most intimately connected with its prayer-meetings. Whether as cause or effect, it is found that the degree of the one is always in proportion to the interest manifested in the other. It will therefore be seen at once that this is a subject which claims the most careful attention of the pastor. It is one which he must not only study, but carry out into practice from the first to the last day of his ministry. Everything demands of him that it should be made most prominent in both thought and practice.

(a) Conducting Prayer-Meetings.

The interests of the Church are so vitally connected with its prayer-meetings that the question of how they can be conducted so as to be made the most profitable is one which the pastor should carefully examine. Very much of the life and attractiveness and advantage of such meetings depends upon the mode in which they are conducted. They may be made so slow and cold and dull as to be positively repulsive, or they may be made so full of joyous animation as to prove the happy hours of the week. Great stress should be laid on this point, and it should receive earnest attention. It is deemed of so much importance that we shall go into considerable detail concerning it.

Our suggestions have been gathered from all quarters; they are the result of experience; they have all been well tried, and they are perfectly practicable, so that they can be carried out under almost any circumstances of pastor or congregation. It is certain that they will greatly help in giving interest and profit to meetings which are too often but little attractive, and are consequently shunned by all excepting those who are led to them by the imperative demands of duty. All our recommendations need not be carried out at each meeting; some of them are general, and should characterize every gathering for social worship, while some of them can be used

at one time and some at another. Each one of them should receive so much attention as would lead to its importance being seen.

1. The prayer-meeting should be regarded as an index of the piety of the Church. It has not inaptly been called the thermometer by which the degree of that piety may be seen. In a measure that can scarcely be mistaken, the attendance and interest in these meetings show whose hearts are alive to the things of Christ, and what is the extent of spirituality that pervades the body. Most members will attend upon the principal service of the Sabbath from other considerations, but those who frequent the social meetings for prayer are ordinarily prompted by love for the cause, by spiritual earnestness and by a desire for the presence of Christ. They go often at some worldly sacrifice, because the}' are led by the impulses of a living piety. Then the prayer-meeting not only indicates the degree of spirituality in a church, but it also tends most effectually to increase it. Its influence is to sustain the church's spiritual life and to warm it up into a richer glow. There is hardly anything else which can have a more salutary influence upon that piety. It preserves it by breaking in upon the rush of the world that would sweep it away; it increases it through the prayers by which it brings down the Holy Spirit as a sweet but ever-brightening flame. In this way the prayer-meeting, when the hearts of Christians are in it and the life and unction of the Holy Ghost pervade it, sends out its blessed influences over all the other activities and interests of the Church. Through it the Lord's-day services are made more profitable, the Sabbath-school is blessed, the effort to attract to the sanctuary is prospered, the family is happier and the fruits of the Spirit are everywhere seen. Let the prayer-meeting, therefore, in the first place, be properly appreciated as the index of the Church's life and as a centre from which flow out blessings in every direction, and then a deeper interest will be taken in it by both pastor and people.

2. Let the prayer-meeting be made interesting, and it will be well attended. The professed people of God ought to attend it,

because of the sacred obligations which rest upon them and out of love for the cause, but sad experience proves that multitudes of them will not, and in the work of the gospel we must take men just as they are. It is a fact which cannot be concealed that when prayer-meetings are not made interesting they are ordinarily but poorly attended, but when they are made interesting they will almost inevitably fill up of their own accord. And the interest which is needed in the prayer-meeting does not depend on mere novelty; it is not the result of flippant methods of arousing attention; but it does depend on the warmth, life, promptness, good feeling and manifest earnestness which are made to pervade all the exercises. Let these be attended to and the meeting will be filled; and when the prayer-meeting is filled the public sanctuary will not be empty. A stranger attracted habitually to the prayer-meeting is certain soon to become a member of the congregation. The promise of the divine presence is made to the coming together of even two or three, so that there need be no discouragement if only a very few are present; but, at the same time, when many are present all are cheered, there are more to partake of the blessings of the hour, the attendance of large numbers attracts still others, and the influence of a well-attended prayer-meeting is felt through the whole Church and community.

3. A spirit of friendliness should be cultivated. The prayer-meeting is eminently the social gathering of the people of God for prayer and praise and mutual spiritual edification, and therefore true friendliness ought to reign in it. There is no other place where there is so good an opportunity of showing the love of the brethren. Here the social element of our nature should be utilized and cultivated. If opportunities are sought for the exercise of these kindly feelings, they may readily be found. When entering the room and finding seats, or after the services are closed, there is time for friendly greeting and such little attentions as will show that there is a spirit of kindness. It will do no harm to linger a few moments for the cordial handshaking and for the word or two that may either establish

or foster the acquaintanceship which ought to subsist between those who are of the same great family of Christ and of the same branch of that family. Then there should also be care taken to notice strangers and to introduce them, so that when they come again they may feel that they are among friends. Every one—the pastor setting the example and leading the way—should take pains and devise methods for cultivating this sociability in the prayer-meeting. It will spread an atmosphere of good feeling which will make such meetings delightful to those who habitually attend, and attract others to come to their enjoyment, as well as constitute them the very places where the Holy Spirit may most certainly be expected.

4. The prayer-meeting should be carefully guarded against all scolding, grumbling and fault-finding. There are some persons who are constantly indulging in these. They complain of the small attendance, of the coldness, of the want of success; they censure those who are absent for staying away; they expatiate upon the superiority of other churches; they have not one kind or encouraging word to speak about their own. Such persons take the course best fitted to bring about the state of things of which they complain. Many a meeting is killed by them—either blotted out altogether or made so repulsive that but few attend it, and none to edification. Scolding in prayer-meetings, by minister or others, never does good. It forces nobody into attendance; on the contrary, it drives and keeps many away. It is mortifying to those who really love the church to hear it before strangers who may happen to be present. It is discouraging to all those who are conscientious in their attendance, grates upon the nicer sensibilities, ruffles the feelings, drives away the sweet spirit of kindness and forms a very unsuitable atmosphere for the presence of the Holy Ghost. By all means should cheerfulness reign in the place where people go to get their hearts warmed and elevated with holy emotions.

5. The people should all be seated near to the leader of the meeting, in order to promote sociability and animation. When they are scattered over the house, back by the door or around

the walls, there is a feeling of coldness east over the whole assembly. Then nearly all the advantages of the presence of numbers and of felt sympathy are lost; the sensation of indifference is inevitably produced; if strangers happen to be present an exceedingly unhappy impression is made upon them; the minister or other leader is chilled by seeing nothing around him but empty seats, while the people seem to want to escape as far away from him as possible, and the feelings of the leader being dampened, they will soon communicate themselves to the whole meeting. The people ought to be told of this in the plainest terms, and it ought to be repeated to them again and again and again until they shall be led to think of it. This may appear to them a small matter, but where the very life of the meeting is at stake it is not a trifle. Most persons seem to be strangely thoughtless about it; they are almost unkind in giving no heed to the entreaties of the minister when he even begs them to do him that little favor. But the effort should not be abandoned until the evil is overcome. It is well sometimes even to go down and take a seat among the people, to call attention more pointedly to the trouble. There is much in this little thing, as the testimony of all ministers will verify.

6. Brevity is essential to the life and interest of the prayer-meeting. If, either as a whole or in its parts, it is too much protracted, many will grow weary and sink to sleep; the long-spun prayers or addresses will be filled with rambling verboseness, and there cannot be the interest that would be imparted by the sound of a variety of voices. It is absolutely ruinous to a prayer-meeting to drag it out into weariness. To the young especially such a meeting is peculiarly distasteful. Instances in abundance could be given where a meeting, at first pervaded by a fine spirit, was spoiled, and most persons present positively irritated, by prayers being spun out to a quarter or half an hour. What can the minister do to prevent this abuse? First, he can speak kindly in private to those who indulge in the habit. Very often they are sincerely devoted and humble men, and would not for the world offend, and they

never dream that they are in the habit of occupying so much time. They strive only to do what is for the best. Second, he can set the example. He must not himself, by his long-protracted remarks and prayers, weary the people and encourage others to take up much time. He should illustrate what is meant by brevity in prayer. As leader of the devotions be should do everything, and have everything done, as promptly as possible. There should not be an instant wasted in hunting up a chapter or giving out a hymn; there should be no pause for some one to commence prayer. It is better to sing often and but a few verses at a time. In each part of the services, and in the whole, there should be no dragging. Not more than an hour should ordinarily be spent in the whole service. The people should be sent away hungry, and then they will carry with them happier impressions, and long for the next occasion when they can meet again with the children of God in blessed union around his mercy-seat.

7. It is well sometimes on one week to announce the subject for remarks and prayer on the next. This plan is often found to be profitable, and to contribute very greatly to the interest of the services. When a subject has been announced beforehand it can serve to guide the thoughts of some in preparing words of address. Then there is often some point of doctrine or duty or comfort which individuals would like to have brought for consideration before experienced Christians, and this plan will give them an opportunity for presenting such subjects. Or the subject announced may be one on which many persons would like to hear the thoughts of others. Sometimes it will be advisable to ask some brother to be prepared to open the subject which has been announced, so that there may be no hesitation or delay at the beginning. It would not be wise, in most congregations, to have this plan as the fixed rule of the prayer-meeting, but it might be used occasionally, both for its intrinsic value and for the sake of giving variety to the exercises. Very often the prayer-meeting is best conducted by leaving everything—subject of remark and all else—to the spontaneous feelings of the hour.

8. Occasionally some other person than the pastor should conduct the meeting. This plan has several advantages. It helps to bring out those who for the time are called to lead, giving them more freedom and encouraging them in the future to take part in the services; besides, it interests them as well as their friends more deeply in all the meetings. It also gives variety to the exercises when, from time to time, a new person conducts them, and almost of necessity imparts to them some change. Moreover, the pastor must necessarily be sometimes absent, and this prepares for such emergencies by having those ready who can easily take his place. Besides, it is often profitable for the pastor to sit among the people without the care of conducting the services on his mind, and give himself up to the reflections of the moment as to the subject of his remarks. Often the best addresses he makes are those which are prompted by something said or suggested at the moment.

9. It is a, good plan often to give an opportunity for voluntary remarks or prayer. There is less stiffness or restraint when the meeting is thus conducted. Then it is often the ease that some one has some thought which he would like to present for the benefit of others, and only awaits such an opportunity. Then, too, those whose hearts are warm and who are in the spirit of prayer can lead in the exercises and impart the same spirit to others. One is not always in the same frame of mind, so that sometimes even the most devoted would rather keep silent. When persons will voluntarily take part in the services, this is a most excellent plan of conducting them, but they will not always, and hence the plan is not always practicable. It may, however, occasionally be resorted to with profit to all. When it is resorted to there must be great care to avoid long pauses while waiting for some voice to be heard. They are fatal to the interest of a meeting. They ought to be provided against by requesting beforehand some of the brethren to be ready to fill up every instant.

10. The presentation of requests that special prayer be offered up on behalf of relatives and others should be encouraged. In every congregation there are many devout

persons, believing that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," who long to have that prayer poured forth for sons, husbands, brothers or other dear impenitent friends. And such prayers are undoubtedly often answered, as multitudes of instances on record abundantly testify. Then when such requests are j>resented there is a definite thing before the meeting upon which its prayers can be concentrated, and they become clothed with a reality and an earnestness that awaken every heart. There is hardly anything that will impart to a prayer-meeting so much interest as this, for there can be no deadness while all are pleading for the immortal life of some wandering soul. If the opportunity is only furnished, it will be found that such requests will be presented very frequently in almost any prayer-meeting.

11. A meeting may sometimes be profitably taken up with a Bible exercise. A Bible exercise, as it is called, is simply taking up some theme of Bible doctrine, duty, promise or warning, analyzing it, finding Scripture passages bearing upon each of its points, assigning each one of these passages beforehand to some person as his portion, and then in the meeting calling upon these persons to read them publicly, the leader first describing the point they are intended to prove or illustrate. This opens up the subject in a most profitable and impressive manner; it awakens a closer attention to the study of the Scriptures; it gives a comprehensive view of the teachings of the word on that particular subject, and it interests both those who read and their friends in the exercises of the prayer-meeting. Besides, it helps to prepare them for taking a public part in prayer or remark on future occasions.

12. Ladies of the congregation might send communications that could with great profit be read in the prayer-meeting. Their voices are not heard in the public meeting, but they might make their thoughts known even more plainly by writing. In this way they could impart that which would tend greatly to the edification of all. They might send facts, thoughts, brief essays, questions, reflections on passages of Scripture—many things that would interest, instruct, comfort, and elevate the

piety of the Church. It will be seen at a glance how appropriate this would be and how much it would add to the interest of the prayer-meeting. Such communications could be sent to the pastor, either with or without the writers' names, through the sexton; or they might be dropped into a box provided for the purpose; or, best of all, they might be sent through the post before the evening of the meeting, so that the pastor might be ready to read them with more facility.

13. Spirited singing is an important aid to the prayer-meeting. In all great religious movements sacred song has had a very prominent influence. Among other agencies, it had much to do with producing and sustaining the recent blessed awakening both in Europe and this country. There must be protracted thought before we can arrive at a proper estimate of the influence it has always had upon the devotions of God's people and in the extension of gospel blessings. Animated singing must necessarily give interest to the prayer-meeting. Other parts of the services may weary, but this is liked by all, both young and old. All can take part in it, and so it becomes eminently the service of all. Much of the life of the prayer-meeting depends upon the way in which it is conducted. It is a service which ought to be prompt, brief, joined in by every voice, frequently repeated and appropriate to the subject before the meeting. It is profitable to use the old hymns and tunes which are associated with all that is dear and sacred in the past, as well as those sweet gospel lays with which the piety of the present is stirring the hearts of believers. Both of these styles of sacred song should find a place in the social meeting. There are persons to whom each is peculiarly dear. It would give an interest ever fresh to have some new piece introduced from time to time. The whole matter of the singing should be in the hands of some competent and devoted person, who would make it a specialty and be always ready to throw in its important influence toward the attractiveness and profit of the services.

14. Variety should be observed in the mode of conducting the services. In this meeting, which depends so much on life

and interest, it is not well to continue always in precisely the same order of exercises, or even to adhere always to exercises which are exactly the same. It is safe often to vary the mode and diversify the services. There is charm enough in variety to make an effort for it here very desirable. There are several modes of conducting a prayer-meeting, and advantages in each; but these several advantages cannot be reached if it is always managed in the same way, while varying the mode may in the end secure them all. Sometimes one plan can be adopted and sometimes another. There may be an attractive change produced by varying the subjects, the persons leading, the order of exercises, and even the kinds of exercises. It might be advantageous even to observe a rotation of modes of conducting the services. It would not be wise to publish such a plan, and so make it obligatory. But to guide the pastor in arranging for the meetings, to keep any of the methods from being omitted and to preserve an attractive variety, it would certainly be profitable. A plan for the successive meetings might be something like this: (a) Meeting conducted in the common method; (b) Bible exercise; (c) Prayers and remarks voluntary; (d) Services conducted by a new leader; (e) Papers from correspondents; (f) Subjects previously announced. It is believed that the adoption of some such scheme of exercises, to be continued in as regular succession as circumstances might admit, would add very much to both the pleasure and profit of the prayer-meeting. One departure from the ordinary method should here be specially recommended. It is that of occasional silent prayer. When there is an unusual degree of solemn feeling in a meeting such prayer will have a most happy effect. Sometimes it will do more than the most glowing eloquence. It should not, however, be too often resorted to—hardly ever unless when deep feeling prevails. Then it will deepen and improve that feeling;.

15. A sense of the Divine Presence should be cherished in every meeting. This is our final and most important counsel. The presence and the blessed influence of the Holy Ghost should be so highly esteemed that there would be a most

determined effort to secure them at every assembly of the people of God for prayer. Without this all other devices to make the meeting interesting and profitable will be in vain; with it, a holy influence will come down—a sweetness, a solemnity, a power which will impart a peculiar delight and make the spot the dearest on earth. That the presence of Christ by his Spirit, when it is prayed for and looked for, may certainly be expected, is made abundantly sure by his own promise: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Why should not this promise be fulfilled to the letter in every prayer-meeting? If it were believed, prayed for and expected, and the meeting entered upon in that spirit, it undoubtedly would; and it certainly should be aimed at with all intensity of desire and purpose in every assembly of the people of God for his worship of prayer, praise and holy meditation. The presence of the blessed Master! Oh, what an elevated and sacred tone it would give to all the services of the hour! what a sweetness it would impart to every element of the services, from first to last! Then the blessing would surely be realized—the blessing of peace, the blessing of pardon, the blessing of comfort, the blessing of strength, the blessings of “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"—the blessing that would build up believers in their most holy faith, and the blessing that from time to time would bring the impenitent into the kingdom of our dear Lord. This would be to the prayer-meeting the crown of interest and profit and glory. The presence of Christ would make every prayer-meeting so sacred and happy that it would of a truth be a foretaste of heaven. It would in the end draw the attendance of the people of God, and others too, as no other plan, no matter how well devised, possibly could.

(b) Cottage Prayer-Meetings.

In addition to the weekly prayer-meeting held ordinarily in some apartment of the church, it is an excellent plan to sustain cottage prayer-meetings in private houses throughout the

bounds of the congregation. The places for holding these meetings should be so selected that they would be held occasionally in every district covered by the territory of the church. All arrangements for them—such as the times and places of holding, and the persons to conduct them—should be in the hands of one of the elders. The same elder might be the leader, or he might appoint some other person to take that place, while the pastor, who should attend as often as possible, takes his seat with the audience and joins very briefly in the exercises of prayer or remark. When such meeting is appointed at the house of any family, that family should feel it a special duty to endeavor to secure the attendance of all its neighbors, whether worshipers in that particular church or not. Notice should be given from the pulpit every Sabbath of the place where this meeting is to be held.

The influence of such meetings would be very beneficial in many ways. Holding them with families which perhaps had become somewhat cold or alienated would be likely to restore them to new interest. Families or individuals that could not otherwise be persuaded to put themselves under the sound of the gospel might in this way be induced to go to the house of a neighbor and there hear of its priceless blessings. There could be no better opportunity than is thus furnished for young and diffident men to begin to take part in the exercises of social worship. Then how could Christians be brought more closely together in social religious communion than when they assemble in the private house around the mercy-seat? It is a company of God's people meeting to confer about their souls' immortal welfare and about their dear absent Friend. The addresses which are made can be more familiar and unrestrained; they can get down to points of Christian experience that would hardly ever be reached in other kinds of assemblages for worship. As Christians are brought closely together in person, so also are they brought, very near to each other in that spiritual affection which is the great characteristic of the followers of Jesus. To many people the hours spent in the cottage prayer-meeting are amongst the happiest seasons by

which the clays of their pilgrimage are cheered. They are blessed moments, because they are spent with those who most ardently love the Master; because he is himself in their midst; because they have some resemblance to the scenes of the upper room of Jerusalem; and because they ave a foretaste of the sweet fellowship that will prevail in the heavenly mansions.

In every congregation there are persons who are kept away from the house of God by long-continued illness, by the infirmities of age, or by other causes. In the houses of such persons it is very appropriate that the cottage prayer-meeting should frequently be held. They cannot go to the sanctuary, but what constitutes the attraction of the sanctuary can be taken to them. Most precious to them will be the coming of the social meeting into their houses. When the services are held in such families it is well sometimes to celebrate the Lord's Supper with them. They are ordinarily deprived of the benefits of that ordinance, but in this way they will be enabled to partake of it, and that in circumstances which will render it more affecting both to them and to all who may be assembled.

(c) Not too many Prayer-Meetings.

It is often the case, especially in churches located in cities and large towns, that more prayer-meetings are attempted to be held than are profitable, either for their own success or for the edification of Christians. Sometimes two or three are held on the Sabbath, and one on almost every evening or day of the week. This is a mistake, as may be easily seen upon a little reflection and observation of the results.

It is not advisable, because when there are too many meetings held none of them will be so well attended; each of them will drag in consequence of there being so few persons in attendance; many of the very best spirits in the church must necessarily be absent from some of them, and so there will be an apparent lack of interest that must be damaging to them all. It is not advisable, because the frequency of their repetition is likely to detract from the impressiveness of their services,

interest in them will be likely to decline, and there will not be the attraction of freshness and variety which are so important. It is not advisable, because when so much time is occupied in attendance upon social meetings many other duties of a personal and relative nature must necessarily be neglected; much time must be taken away from what should be devoted to the deeply-important exercises of private prayer and meditation; family duties that are essential will be in danger of being omitted, and there are other imperative duties owed to society and to one's calling in life the performance of which would be rendered either impossible or sadly imperfect.

The better plan is to hold only just so many prayer-meetings as should, and reasonably could, be attended by the body of the members. Then let all the force of numbers and interest be concentrated upon these. Let there be a most strenuous effort made to have all the communicants at least generally in attendance upon them. Let everything be contrived to make them as attractive as possible. One or two prayer-meetings well attended and thoroughly interesting are worth a dozen dragging along with but a few in attendance and with scarce an appearance of life.

This counsel of course applies to churches in their ordinary condition. There are seasons of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit when meetings for prayer cannot be too frequently held—when in fidelity they must be held day by day.

MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES

One of the prominent and hopeful features of Christianity at the present time is that which is seen in the establishment by churches of outposts for preaching, prayer-meetings or Sabbath-schools. In both city and country there seems to be a blessed impulse leading the people of God to engage in such enterprises. The various denominations of Christians are vying with each other in efforts to spread the gospel through this effectual instrumentality. Sometimes a company of young men and others go to the outskirts of the congregation, or beyond, and establish a mission Sabbath-school; sometimes a prayer-meeting is set up and sustained by elders and others of the active members; sometimes a post is made at which there is a stated appointment for preaching and lecturing; or sometimes the whole enterprise is carried on with the fixed purpose of gathering together the nucleus for the formation of a church. This kind of work cannot be too highly recommended; it should be carried on perseveringly, each church sustaining one or more such enterprises.

Amongst the advantages of pursuing this plan we may enumerate the following: (a) The enterprise of pushing abroad the outposts of the Church is according to the mission and the spirit of the gospel, which is appointed to spread like the leaven and grow like the mustard-seed, whose very nature is such that where its real influence prevails it must be aggressive, and whose progress is never to cease until it has brought the whole world to the feet of Jesus. (b) It extends the blessings of the gospel in the immediate neighborhood of the church, which is manifestly the natural and appropriate method of progress, for it must ever be the rule to begin at Jerusalem; besides, if its own suburbs are not cared for by any particular church, what other human agency is likely to be brought to bear upon them? (c) This is the true plan by which to prepare for the establishment of new church organizations. It tries the ground, it gathers the material, it lays the

foundations, so that when the real work of building up a separate organization is undertaken everything will be ready, and it will not in a little while be followed, as is too often the case, by mortifying failure and injury to the cause, (d) It carries the ordinances of preaching, social prayer and the Sabbath-school to many families and individuals in the outskirts of the congregation who otherwise must be deprived of them because of their remoteness from the house of God. This is particularly the case with the aged, the infirm, the poor, and the careless who have not interest enough to take the trouble of going any distance, but may possibly attend when the services are at their door, (e) This plan of extending the gospel gives the people something to do, which is made so essential by the great Master, which will prove such a blessing to their own souls, for which so many of them are ready if the way be open, and which will arouse such new currents of life and happiness in the whole Church. (f) It will strengthen the central church by gathering into it from the suburbs; by helping to drive out of it the spirit of selfishness; by turning upon the objects of Christian enterprise that attention of the members which, if allowed to brood upon imaginary grievances, might lead to serious strifes; and by fanning the noble and ennobling spirit of Christian benevolence, (g) It will prove to be a great benefit to the pastor, by raising up for him a multitude of helpers trained in this important school, and each bringing his own element of strength to assist in building up the general cause. Besides, it will furnish him a profitable opportunity for preaching in a less formal or restrained method than he would be likely to indulge in under other circumstances, and so prepare him for any emergency which may arise. There are other advantages to which we might allude, but these are sufficient to show the importance of this duty which lies upon the church and pastor. Some such mission outposts should be established by every church. It is difficult to conceive of any church so situated that, if it earnestly seeks, it may not find a suitable field for them. Even very small churches would be strengthened in the end by this plan of extending the blessings of Christ's kingdom.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

This is a subject which is surrounded by difficulties, and which the pastor needs to handle with great delicacy and wisdom. On the one hand is the danger of repressing the real Christian zeal which seeks to exert itself in this manner; on the other are the evils which so often arise from a zeal that is not guided by knowledge or experience or the authority of the unerring word. We would throw out a few suggestions which may assist in averting both these dangers—suggestions that, if heeded, may prevent the evils from arising; which is far better in every case than to meet them after they have arisen, scattering discord and awakening unhallowed passions.

1. It is a fundamental principle that God's plan of doing church-work of every kind is always best. The expediency of the hour may seem otherwise, but in the end it will always be found to work out the most satisfactory and abundant results for good. The agents for whose appointment God has ordained, the schemes which have been established by divine authority and the instruments which lie has framed may always be relied upon as safest and most efficient. 2. If the agencies for doing good which God has manifestly appointed are faithfully worked, then no others will be needed, and no others will be ordinarily attempted. In multitudes of cases—perhaps in most cases—voluntary associations are organized for the purpose of doing the work which the church, as such, could do, and ought to do, but is culpably neglecting. Hence the effectual way of preventing the whole difficulty is for the church to be faithful in every work, and to enlist in it the piety and the zeal which are likely to seek some other methods of operation. 3. Independent organizations in a church very often lead to difficulties of various kinds. They distract the energies that ought to be concentrated on the great work, they alienate from the interests of the church, they are in danger of giving rise to invidious comparisons, they sometimes awaken strifes and rivalries that are sorely to be lamented, and they occasionally

run into evils which experience and a riper Christian judgment would have avoided. 4. At the same time, there are certain auxiliaries which have been tested by time and perfected by experience, and are so manifestly in harmony with the scriptural methods for carrying on the gospel-work that they ought always to be approved, guided and used by the authorities of the Church. Among these may be placed: prayer-meetings for young people, where the diffident may become prepared for taking part in more public services; organizations for distributing books and tracts —an agency for doing good which is of incalculable value; pastors' aid associations of ladies; Dorcas societies; and bands of workers to look after young men and to gather strangers and others into the sanctuary. Such helps as these may be used with great profit, and should be encouraged and carefully supervised by pastor and elders.

TEMPERANCE

The evils of intemperance in corrupting the young, debasing the old, depraving the administration of public affairs, sending indescribable miseries into households, leading to crimes of every name and degree, stupefying the intellect, deadening the moral sensibility, placing insurmountable obstacles in the way of the gospel and sinking tens of thousands of souls into eternal death,— these evils are so enormous, so peculiar and so perpetuated by the most unhallowed powers of men that special efforts should be made by all who love their race and their Church and their God to meet them. Here sin appears in one of its most appalling forms, and demands that an extraordinary struggle be made at least to weaken its destructive force. All earnestness of thought and of effort is needed to meet evils which are so tremendous. And the Church should not leave the cause of temperance without its sanctifying and heaven-guided influence. It should not leave the contest with the deadly foe to be carried on by the world alone. It should not give cause for the reproach that it is making no special efforts to stop a tide of moral, physical and spiritual ruin such as makes the heart sick that contemplates it. The Church should take the lead; it should throw in the hallowed influence of religion; it should bring to bear the motives which are drawn from heaven, earth and hell, from time and eternity, from God, Calvary and the soul's immortality.

The pastor should be a leader in all proper movements against the terrible evil of intemperance. By his example and by his untiring efforts he should show that he is in earnest in the strife against this gigantic foe to all that is holy and hopeful for men. On the noble principle of the apostle, “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend," he should take his stand, and by hand and heart, voice and example, assist in a cause which is designed to save tens of thousands. He should preach on it often and emphatically, pointing to the

self-sacrificing example of Christ, appealing to Christians by every feeling of humanity and by their love to Christ and souls, warning them of their danger and pointing to the glorious triumphs which might be achieved if the people of God were only alive to the subject and united in effort. He should lead the church in all her plans for helping in the great reform. Conducted by him and his elders, the church should organize schemes for promoting sound views on the subject of temperance, for rescuing drunkards, for guarding the young against the dangers by which they are surrounded, for creating a public sentiment that will make all drinking habits disreputable, and for gathering men into the true Church of Jesus Christ, where alone they will be safe.

In all the efforts which pastor and church may make in this cause it should be constantly repeated and emphasized that temperance is only one of the rudiments of the far higher thing, religion; for where religion reigns, where the heart has been changed by divine grace, there sobriety will of necessity prevail. Make men true Christians, and they are saved from this as well as from every other foe. The gospel comes to make men free, and those who are redeemed by it can be no more enslaved by the demon of intemperance, for they have entered into the true liberty of the children of God.

CHAPTER VII

THE PASTOR IN THE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH

THE progress of the Church in every object for which it was established, and in every grace which should characterize it as composed of the redeemed people of God, is a subject so vital that it demands the consideration of a distinct chapter. This element of the Church's life is so manifestly ordained of her great Head, so essential to her new nature, so comprehensive in its extent and so blessed in all its influences and results, that the pastor ought to look upon it as a great central aim of his whole ministry. Its nature, necessity, obligations, means and advantages should receive from him the most earnest attention from the first to the last day of his service in the gospel. He should set his mind upon this progress, and determine that by divine grace it shall characterize all his work. Everything should have this aim—all that he does should be bent in the line of this tendency of gospel-work.

PROGRESS ESSENTIAL

It has most obviously been made by its divine Author a fundamental principle and essential quality of the gospel that it is to go on increasing more and more until its earthly work is done. All the scriptural predictions, descriptions and assertions concerning its nature abundantly establish this. At one time it is compared to the mustard-seed, which grows from the smallest germ to be “the greatest among herbs;" at another time to the leaven, which goes on affecting particle after particle until the whole mass is changed; at another to the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which is to expand until it fills the whole earth; at another to “the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." All these and many other scriptural utterances show that progress is intended to be an essential attribute of the Church. The disciples in the time of Christ and under his personal supervision put forth every effort to this end. For this, too, after his departure, the apostles toiled and suffered without wearying until they went to their heavenly rest. The Church exists to glorify God, to edify believers and to extend the gospel throughout all the nations and languages of the world. It is her very nature to reach out after these momentous objects, and they are objects which are illimitable in their extent. There is no law more certainly ordained than that the Church is to gain on the world; there is nothing more imperative on it than that it is for ever to be aggressive on the kingdom of darkness.

In both the individual soul and the united body of believers progress is the normal state. It is of the very nature of grace to grow. The regenerated man, if in a healthy spiritual state, must “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Those who have been saved themselves must bring others to the same salvation. Growth should be considered as an essential element of the Christian life. If there is not advance, there is certainly something wrong. If there is not growth, both in the individual and in the Christian body,

there is great cause for alarm. It is not enough that we hold our own either in the experience of grace in the soul or in our advance on the territory of an ungodly world; we must go forward. Where there is not this normal progress there must necessarily be, and there always is, decline.

This progress should extend to every grace of the Christian and to every enterprise for which the Church has been established. There should be increase in grace, in the goodness which is wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, in the likeness to Jesus which is formed in every believer, in that beauty of character which should distinguish the Bride of Christ, in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, in Christian liberality, and in the active zeal which springs from sympathy in the great enterprise whose object is the redemption of the world. Efforts to gain souls and honor God should become increasingly energetic. There should be constantly increasing numbers of those who are coming out of the kingdom of darkness and joining the blood-bought host of Jesus. If the number of those who are received into the membership of the visible Church does not much increase, it is not a certain evidence that no good is being accomplished, but it is a cause for great anxiety. There should be no rest to the people of God in their encroachments on the world, which they are ever to strive to save.

SPECIAL EFFORTS TO BE SOMETIMES MADE

It is well sometimes, as occasionally in connection with communion services, to awaken attention to the necessity for growth in the Church, and to make special efforts with that end in view. There might be an increase in the number of meetings, additional means of grace could be used, the prayers should be more earnest, the preaching might be more direct, and there should be greater activity and faithfulness with souls on the part of all the members. Such efforts, greater than it would be practicable to continue at all times, should without doubt be occasionally made in every church.

The most appropriate time for holding services designed to awaken such special attention is in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper—not every time that ordinance is observed, but as often as may be deemed desirable. The communion season certainly calls for and justifies special thoughtfulness, special solemnity and special endeavor. Its affecting nature should assist in deepening the impressions which are sought to be made. Then it is generally expected, and justly so, that occasionally at least there should be special services and special interest too in connection with this precious ordinance. In fact, it has always been customary in Presbyterian churches at least, as in Scotland and Ireland, to observe days of solemn worship before or after its observance. It is undoubtedly a wise practice of many experienced pastors, who hold a week of daily services before the communion once in every year.

The custom of improving communion seasons in this way, and using them to assist in attaining to higher measures of grace and efficiency in the cause of Christ, has many things to recommend it. In consequence of the continued services and thonghtfulness by which it is approached the ordinance itself will be likely to prove unusually profitable. Then there will be an important opportunity furnished for reflection as to the state

of the soul and the progress of the new life, for breaking up the unprofitable monotony into which the church may have settled down, and for commencing anew on a higher plane of effort for the upbuilding of the kingdom. Besides, such continued and earnest services will be likely to bring some persons to a decision for Christ who have long halted, or who may be already his followers but have never felt as they should the necessity of acknowledging him before the world by coming to his sacramental feast.

REVIVALS

It is very often the case that the most rapid progress of churches is made during seasons of revival, and so it is necessary for us now to devote some attention to them. The value of revivals is well understood in most evangelical churches. They are often found to be blessed harvest-times which follow months, or years perhaps, of careful sowing and cultivating. A faithful minister will have much to do with them, as they will be most intimately connected with his success, usefulness and the state of piety in his own soul. Very carefully should all pastors study the subject, so that they may duly appreciate such seasons of reviving, and be prepared to improve them to the utmost when the blessing comes.

(a) Revivals of Inestimable Value.

Of their reality there can be no doubt in the mind of any one who casts his eyes over the manifestations of 2race in the Church in either former or latter times. The past and the present give equal testimony that such gracious visitations are of a truth vouchsafed to the people of God. In this laud the records of the Church are full of thanksgiving for seasons of revival more or less powerful in their results. In Great Britain there have been seasons of awakening in which the whole aspect of the Church has been changed both as to its numbers and piety. One great revival, lasting for many years, brought the greater part of Wales up from a condition of spiritual ignorance and degradation to one where true scriptural piety exerts its highest influences. It is impossible to look over the names of the membership in any of our evangelical churches without finding among them many of the most consistent and devoted who were brought to the salvation of Christ in seasons of revival. How often have single revivals been kuown to elevate a whole church to a higher sphere of piety and numbers and usefulness! These thoughts are well worthy of attention: “To argue against revivals, or to say and do anything in

opposition to the idea of revivals, has the appearance of finding fault with God's spiritual and providential administration. The gospel dispensation was introduced by the most marvelous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The conversion of three thousand souls in a day was a miracle of grace in testimony of the glorious era of ‘the fullness of the times.' The providence and grace of God have retained the idea of revivals in the Church. What was the Reformation but a revival of religion carried on by the Holy Spirit from nation to nation? During the early part of the last century divine grace wrought wonderful works, especially in England, Wales, Scotland and America. At the kirk of Cambusling alone five hundred persons are supposed to have been converted to Christ. At Northampton a mighty revival occurred under the ministry of that orthodox, great and good man, Jonathan Edwards; and revivals were numerous and powerful throughout our country under the preaching and labors of the memorable Whitefield and others. It is estimated that in two or three years thirty or forty thousand were born into the family of heaven in New England, besides great numbers in New York, New Jersey and the more southern provinces. Since that remarkable era revivals have at intervals blessed Zion in our own and other lands." The following extract from the Revivals of the Eighteenth Century, a book published a few years ago by the Free Church of Scotland, should be carefully pondered: “And first, is it not true that we also live under the ministration of the Spirit, and, as regards everything essential to conversion, as really as did the apostles? Secondly, is it not equally true that, as a generation, we come sadly short of the power which accompanied the word during the age of the apostles, and also during the times which we have been reviewing? Thirdly, is it not equally true that an awakening is much wanted, because of the prevalence of an ungodly and worldly spirit among professors, and on account of the multitudes who make not even a profession of religion? Fourthly, is it not further true that there is an important end to be served by awakenings, however temporary—namely, in disturbing the deep slumber of an ungodly and worldly age?

The ministry of John the Baptist was awakening and meant to prepare the way for a fuller gospel, and the day of Pentecost itself was but a day, a day of grace; moreover, the apostle Peter seems to refer to something of this kind when he exhorts: ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' And lastly, might it not then be well considered whether we are not sinning in this through unbelief?—whether we are not sinning against the faithfulness of God to his own promises?"

When a true revival prevails in any church the pastor himself becomes one of the greatest gainers; the reviving influence is felt in his own soul, quickening all his graces, giving him a fuller consecration to his work, and imparting a delight in it which was before unknown. Then preaching becomes a real pleasure; he finds easy access to inquiring souls, and the sweetest satisfaction is felt as one after another tells him of the first joys of pardoned sin. As the blessed work goes on he rejoices more and more in being privileged to lead to the cross large numbers of those who shall rise up at last to call him blessed, and to be his "joy" and "crown of rejoicing" "in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." He rejoices, too, in the prospect of having a new accession of helpers who shall engage with him in carrying on the Lord's work. And oh, what encouragement he receives! What gladness takes possession of his heart as he sees that glorious work so greatly prospering in his hands!

Such seasons of refreshing also bring with them blessings that are most precious to all those who are already the followers of Christ. They receive into their souls a baptism of the Holy Ghost which increases their faith, strengthens their love, intensifies their joys in Christ and raises them nearer to their beloved Saviour in likeness and in hope. Then breaches which may have wretchedly separated them are healed; their quenchless love to Jesus is gratified by seeing so many coming to him to swell the tide of his divine satisfaction; they rejoice that relatives and friends are saved from the wrath to come,

brought up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and enter upon the path of “glory and honor and immortality"—that their numbers are being recruited, and a great increase made of the force with which they may come to the help of the Lord.

Then, great as are the blessings which come down upon pastor or private Christians at such times, they are nothing compared with those which are received by the happy subjects of redeeming grace who are then brought into the kingdom. Who can describe the change when they are rescued as “brands plucked out of the fire," released from the dominion of Satan and introduced into the kingdom of God's dear Son, delivered from the prospect of endless agony and made sure of an eternity of blessedness? It should never be forgotten that every soul saved is brought into a state in reference to whose present and future realities the pen of inspiration has written that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"—into the eternal friendship of the Son of God, into the guardianship of angels while on earth and their society throughout eternity. Such a change could have been wrought by no other power than that of Omnipotence, and would have been wrought by nothing else than divine love. Oh, what tongue can tell its blessings! Is it any wonder that angels rejoice over it?—that amongst the blessed there is a joy that cannot be restrained? Then, in striving to estimate the value of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, let it be remembered that there are many such changes from death unto life experienced.

Ought not seasons which are so full of blessings to be constantly longed for and striven for and prayed for and preached for, and every other authorized means used to bring them about? Ought not the aim to be that they should not come intermittingly, but that they should abide in the ever-increasing intensity of the church's life? Why should it not be so? Why should not the church always continue in what is now called a revived state?

(b) The Pastor himself should do the Most of the Preaching.

In seasons of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon a church, sometimes most of the preaching is done by the pastor himself, and sometimes by others whom he may invite, such as neighboring ministers, eminent revival preachers or professed evangelists. We would most unhesitatingly say that the first plan is the better one, and that their own shepherd should at such times lead the people to the fountain of divine truth. This is now generally admitted, for Christian wisdom endorses it, and experience—sometimes very bitter experience—has proved it.

The pastor can present the truth to his awakened and inquiring congregation better than any one else. As he goes from house to house, and converses with one after another—either of revived believers or of others who are beginning to inquire and pray—he will know what the peculiar type of feeling and want of each is as no other person could possibly know it. Moreover, he can follow up, day after day, some fixed plan of presenting the truth, and so impart fuller information, which is so much needed when many are inquiring about the way of life or beginning to walk in it. Besides, he will be in the spirit of the revival, which one coming from a colder atmosphere cannot be expected to bring with him. His heart will be in it—his whole heart, his affections, his interests, his all. No other person could be expected to preach with the deep fervor that would move him.

Then it should be considered that an ill-advised or imprudent discourse at such a time may do an incalculable amount of injury—may even chill and destroy the whole work. Such sad instances are not unknown. If there be a new preacher every evening, people sometimes come actuated by curiosity, and instead of taking home the truth will let their minds run upon the comparison of the different ministers. A stranger coming into the midst of animated revival scenes will hardly be in the same spirit, and may diminish instead of

increasing its flame. Instances could be given where preachers other than the pastor have been invited to assist in seasons of awakening, and by imprudent sermons—sermons utterly inappropriate or offensive in spirit—have crushed out the rising hopes.

It is also worthy of consideration that a minister may impair his own influence by calling in others to do most of the preaching in a time of special ingathering. Such times are his harvests, and after he has long sown the seed and cultivated the ground, why should he, without the best reasons, bring in others to have the credit of reaping it? People will scarcely be able to discriminate, but will be likely to conclude that the preaching which is followed by immediate results is superior to his, even though those results are but the fruit of his years of toil. The pastor will appear to disadvantage when he gives up his pulpit to others, as if he were not capable of preaching at such important seasons. He thus prepares the way for unfavorable comparisons. “We do not think," wrote the Rev. Dr. Thomas H. Skinner, “that the pastor will on the whole find it expedient to introduce another preacher into his parish. An occasional sermon, or an exchange of pulpits now and then with a neighboring pastor, may as formerly be still acceptable, but preaching a consecutive course of sermons by a stranger, especially if he be a man of captivating address or uncommon eloquence, may not favor the advancement of the simple and spiritual work now in progress among the flock, and, what is more to be regarded, may put the pastor as a preacher into a disadvantageous contrast with this more attractive, but perhaps less solid, and on the whole less instructive, less profitable, preacher. There may be cases in which another preacher is necessary, as when the pastor's health fails; but there will probably be no gain, either to the pastor or to the flock, on the whole, by employing an additional preacher or evangelist, unless necessity seems to make the demand." It is a great gain for the pastor's influence to be regarded as the spiritual father of the young converts as they come into the church. He will thereby secure their more lasting affection and

co-operation.

Then, even if preaching is to be continued daily, most pastors will find that they are able to do the greater part of it themselves when the interest is so deep. It is easy to preach while the Spirit of God is poured out in unusual power. Great sermons are not then looked for or needed. Besides, any pastor can well afford to work hard for the few weeks during which such special services are ordinarily continued. It is the harvest-season, when, if ever, he must toil with all his might to gather in the richest store.

(c) Meetings with Inquirers.

When a church is revived and meetings are frequently held and deep feeling prevails, it is undoubtedly important that, after the ordinary services, the pastor and others should meet with those who are awakened to converse and pray with them. Some adjoining room should be fixed upon, and while the audience is singing at the close of the services the inquirers should retire to it. Sometimes it may be better to request them to remain in their seats while the rest of the audience retire, that an interview might be had with them; this plan will be less embarrassing to them than the other. Sometimes, but only when the seriousness is very deep, it may be wise to ask them to stand up in the audience and so manifest their awakened interest. This might deepen their impressions as well as influence others.

There are several reasons why some such means as these should be used in connection with revival services. When special religious impressions are made upon any heart there is so much at stake that every lawful effort should be made to improve the opportunity. In the minds of inquirers there are often some difficulties to be removed, some want of information which needs to be met, something further that is required to induce them to close with Christ. Soul needs to be brought into contact with individual soul in order that the full power of the truth may be seen and felt. Sometimes the mere making it

known to others that they are in earnest commits the inquirers to a course of seeking which is persevered in to the happiest results. Then it is all-important that those who become awakened to the interests of their souls should be made known by some such means as these, so that the pastor and others may visit them and help them in what may prove to be the very crisis of their being.

(d) The Pastor to be Informed who are Awakened.

After all his own efforts to discover the persons who are in this interesting state of mind, there still will be some concerning whose new interest in eternal things he will know nothing. There will often be many such inquirers in a congregation, and the minister cannot be expected to know of them all unless their friends inform him. From diffidence or other causes very many will not themselves let him know unless their convictions are very deep; relatives and friends should therefore tell him of all such cases, that he may visit them at once and that lie may be guided in his ministrations to them. This may be easily done, and it should be insisted on as a sacred duty.

It is not difficult for friends who are frequently with them to discover when persons are concerned about the salvation of their souls. That concern will reveal itself in the unusual seriousness of demeanor, in the more diligent attendance upon the ordinances, or in other symptoms that cannot long be concealed. Sometimes inquirers will tell their intimate friends about their concern when they would not make it known to others. And words cannot express the importance of watching that rising flame, guarding it, and having it kindled into a life that will never be extinguished. By all means should friends make it known to the pastor when such symptoms of turning to Christ appear. Young converts should be encouraged to tell him of others whom they may find beginning to inquire concerning the way of life. This is a duty which should be made very plain

to all Christians.

A word then is too important in its promise of solemn results not to be spoken. The period may have come in the history of that inquirer when he may be induced to set out on the way which leads to life eternal, or when he may harden himself against conviction and seal his doom of woe. A word then may remove some difficulty that obstructs the way of the anxious soul to the cross, may direct what is to be done, may guide to the exact promise which is needed, or may deepen conviction and give an impulse heavenward. It may decide the soul's eternal destiny; and who would not speak that word? or who would not lead some other person, better instructed in the way of life, to speak it?

(e) The Awakened should be Visited at their Homes.

At their homes there will more certainly be an opportunity of seeing them, and of seeing them alone, which is nearly always best. Then conversation can be had with them which will be more full and free and satisfactory. Moreover, when they see that their pastor is willing thus to take trouble to promote their spiritual welfare, they will feel more deeply that he is in earnest, and that there are profound causes for that earnestness.

At their homes persons who are under conviction of sin will open their minds more fully than they could be induced to do in the meeting for inquirers or any other meeting. By the excitement of the public manifestation they would be confused, and by the consciousness of the presence of others they would be restrained. When not thus restrained or confused they will be able to give a better account of their convictions and doubts and difficulties^ as well as to listen more attentively to the counsels they may receive. The minister also can give a clearer statement of the truth as applicable to their state. He can then preach the gospel with a more exact appropriateness to their wants than would be possible in public. He can sit down with

them and show them the Scriptures which bear the precious message they need. Unquestionably, impressions on their minds can be more healthfully deepened and improved when they are apart from all distracting influences.

In seasons of revival, then, the pastor should take great pains to find out who in the congregation are inquiring, and to visit them promptly at their homes. He should endeavor to discover it by urgently requesting relatives and friends and Sabbath-school teachers and others to give him the information. He should be watchful to make the discovery himself. He should endeavor to find it out through meetings for inquirers or any other methods of public manifestation. He should visit those whom he even suspects to be interested about their immortal interests. Even his visit may be the means of awakening them to the first movements toward their Saviour.

At considerable sacrifice even, if it be necessary, much time should be given to this personal work with souls by the pastor when there is such a golden opportunity. It is pre-eminently his harvest-time. Souls are ripe; will he not undergo toil to gather them in? Souls are at stake; their condition for eternity is soon to be decided. The glory of Christ too is at stake, so far as it would be promoted by their salvation. Can any pastor endure the thought of a soul being lost through his neglect or unwillingness to undergo hardness even for a little season? Surely we can afford to work hard while the Spirit of God is poured out in special effusion and souls are pressing into the kingdom. Let us rather neglect anything than inquiring souls at such times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Let it be our rule that no matter what sacrifice, what watching, what trouble, what aid from others may be needed, they shall not be neglected.

(f) Books and Tracts should be Used.

Enough use is not made of the Bible with the awakened in times of revival. Never should it be forgotten that this is the

sword of the Spirit. There is nothing that comes with so much authority, nothing that goes so directly to the conscience, nothing that is so certainly clothed with the power of the Spirit, nothing that is such pure truth, nothing that can do the execution of God's own word. Inquirers should by all means be urged to search it daily, and guided to those portions of it which are most appropriate to their awakened state of mind. Then other books also may be of very great use, and should be put in their hands, so that nothing may be left undone. This is an instrumentality for conveying truth, deepening impressions and guiding inquirers to the Lamb of God, the efficacy of which has been so well tested that much should be made of it in revivals. Books and tracts are easily given, and they should therefore be diligently used.

Appropriate tracts or small volumes put into the hands of a person who is awakened will be read, even though at other times they would scarcely be looked at. Tbey will sometimes give information about points that may not have been reached in the pulpit; they may present some things more impressively than the preacher has presented them; they may enforce his teachings by adding the authority of other honored names; they can influence the anxious heart in its most solitary hours; they will keep the impressions made in the public assembly fixed in the mind. They have been owned of God many and many a time, not only to the comfort but also to the conversion of souls.

Pains should be taken to find out works which are suitable for this purpose. Many excellent ones are now published—brief, impressive, full of the very marrow of the gospel, and pertinent to almost every conceivable case. The minister should make himself familiar with these, and keep a supply of them on hand to give to such inquirers as he may think they would help. Sometimes, when they are expensive volumes, he could lend them; sometimes, when smaller, he could present them, so that they could be perused and reperused.

In times of reviving it is also well to have tracts distributed throughout the community. The pastor himself can do it by

handing them to one and another whom he approaches on the subject of religion; they can be put into the pews of the church; friends can give them to friends; and there can be some arrangements made for their general distribution. The Spirit will certainly accompany them when they are given in faith with prayer. They may awaken some, and some they may bring to Christ. Moreover, the reading of appropriate tracts by Christians at such a time may excite them to more zeal, and direct them how to deal with awakened souls, how to approach the careless, and what else they can do to help forward the blessed cause. Then the distribution of tracts can be made an important branch of Christian effort in which young Christians and others may be exercised.

(g) Danger of Reaction

Sad experience shows that there is danger that after a season of unusual fervor there will follow a time of unusual indifference. After a state of great activity in the Church there follows another of almost none; after the joy of seeing many professing the name of Christ comes the sorrow of seeing scarcely any; after revival there may follow a time of deeper sleep.

We warn of this danger, not because we would plead it as an argument against revivals, nor because we believe it to be a necessary consequence of them, but because the frequency of the occurrence of such reaction is such that special precaution ought always be taken to avert it. It is the great evil which is to be dreaded after revivals. Experience shows that this caution is needed. The thoughtful observation of Dr. Archibald Alexander was undoubtedly correct, that even after genuine revivals there is very often spiritual dearth.

This reaction occurs when the people form for themselves a sort of salvo that the work is now all done. Many friends and neighbors have been brought into the kingdom, the house of God has been filled up with new worshipers, the tone of piety throughout the church has been greatly improved, religion has

been elevated to a higher stage of importance and power: now that so much has been accomplished, there may properly be a rest; and a rest is taken which soon proves a lamentable retrogression.

Such reaction after a season of revival is an evil greatly to be dreaded, and it should be guarded against by every possible precaution. It is a sin against God, a sore calamity to the church and a misfortune to the minister, the bitter fruits of which he may have to reap for many a day. This is a time when animosities and strifes very often break out. From a new-born zeal which is not always according to knowledge or wisdom, from the influence of some individuals recently brought into the church who were self-deceived, and from recrimination because of the spiritual dearth which all must acknowledge, — from these and other causes lamentable discords arise. How often have such things been! and how often have the godly wept over them!

To know and admit the existence of this danger is to be in a great measure prepared to guard against its occurrence. Even during the progress of the revival it will be advisable to use every possible precaution against the return of spiritual lethargy to the church. Then, afterward, much prayer will be needed and sound judgment required to be used, so that there shall not be even the appearance of waxing cold. It will be found of the greatest advantage to keep the people busy in the various avenues of usefulness which at such a time are opened up. In fact, there should be no end to the revival. Why should there be? The number of meetings must be diminished, but why should not everything else that characterizes the favored season be continued as the permanent life of the church? A true revival raises the people of God to a higher degree of spirituality: why should its blessings ever be diminished?

In this connection it must be profitable to study the criteria of a genuine revival of religion as they were given by Dr. Archibald Alexander. They are in substance these: 1. The truth of the gospel is the only instrumentality used—God never makes use of error as an instrument, and it mars the work; 2.

The effects are such as the Spirit produces—namely, trust in God, repentance, meekness, love to the brethren and the like; 3. There is a predominating desire to do the will of God, arising out of love to him; 4. The converts have a high reverence for the word of God—in this it differs from enthusiasm; 5. The subjects of the revival are rendered humble, docile, meek—not self-conceited, arrogant and censorious; 6. The inquirers are brought to the feet of Christ—not puffed up with self-righteousness; 7. It leads to justice, truth, honesty, purity and general uprightness in all the relations of life; 8. It produces reverence for the worship of God, and leads to order and decency in conducting its services; 9. Its fruits are permanent.

(h) Care for Young Converts.

Concerning them emphatically should be received the charge, "Feed my lambs," which Christ gave so impressively and in such memorable circumstances. What they will be in the future as to devoted piety and useful Christian life depends very much upon the attention which is given to them now. If, as babes in Christ, they are not carefully trained now, they may very soon backslide and become mere ciphers in the church. What is to be done for them so as to help them on in the way of spiritual progress is one of the most perplexing problems with which the pastor has to do. It often tries him greatly to determine what will be really practicable in assisting not only to keep them in their first love, but also lead to their growth in grace and usefulness. Here the counsels of experience, gathered up from many pastors and many years, are needed. We would collect a few such counsels, which may be studied, adopted, improved or modified according to the circumstances of any particular church or pastor, or which may suggest other ways of nurturing those who are as yet but babes in Christ.

1. Until they become well established in the faith and practice of the gospel, there ought to be more care bestowed on them than on any other class of members in the church. This advice is undoubtedly sanctioned by the example of the great

Shepherd, who left the ninety and nine in order that he might make sure of the lost one, and by the tender nature of Jesus, of whom it is said, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." They need more care now than others—more than they will themselves need after a while. All is new to them. They meet temptations and difficulties which they did not expect. There are dangers peculiar to the new Christian life for which they are utterly unprepared. The scriptural modes of growth in grace, which are so essential from the beginning, have as yet been untried, almost unknown to them. They are at once met by duties which must be performed, and yet every step of the new pathway through which they lead has to be tried, Their Christian character is at first unformed, but in a few months or, even weeks, it will take on those great features which will fix it for life. Can all these wants of young converts be carefully thought over without leaving the impression that they now need the greatest attention from pastor and other experienced Christians?

2. Some method or methods should be contrived by which to interest them in the study of the Scriptures. This is what God himself has provided as a “lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." The “sincere milk of the word" is that which is to be desired, in order that the soul may “grow thereby." In the Bible they can find Christ, who must ever be the life and strength of the believer. From the pages of the Holy Word they may learn the mind of Christ—the very same mind that must be in them more and more as they advance in the new life. They will become strong in the graces of the Spirit as they grow in “the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," which the Scriptures reveal. They should be led to engage in this study habitually and carefully, and to persevere in it until their keenest interest shall be awakened. They should be shown how to study it, and aided therein by being either teachers or scholars in the Sabbath-school and by the pastor's Bible-class.

3. Through the plan of Bible exercises or Bible readings, as we have already described them, young converts may be

greatly strengthened and especially interested in the Scriptures. This has so many things to recommend it that it ought by all means to be adopted. Its analyses of divine truth, its research through the sacred pages, and the aid it furnishes by the members studying together, cannot but be advantageous in a high degree. It is a kind of Bible study which is practicable and easy as well as attractive, so that any, even the youngest, will engage in it; which is an important point gained. The encouragement, the sympathy and the mutual assistance make it very profitable for numbers of persons to unite in this way for the perusal of the sacred pages. When young converts habitually study the Bible in this way, they will gain important ideas as to the best modes of searching the Scriptures; they will see more and more of the precious depths of the word of God; their interest in its perfections will increase; they will arrive at the knowledge of doctrines and duties that will influence their whole Christian character; their faith in each doctrine which is thus looked at in the light of inspiration will become more firmly established; and their trust and hope and love and every other grace will be increased. Besides all which, young men by reading passages of Scripture audibly in the presence of others will gradually become prepared to take part publicly in social meetings.

4. Young converts should be carefully noticed by pastor, elders and other members of the church. There is too great a tendency simply to receive them into the church, and then give them no further attention, as if henceforward they must take care of themselves. What we now recommend is that they should not be thus neglected, but that they should be well known and noticed and spoken to, and their friendship cultivated. Pains should be taken, especially by the pastor, to see them often, to visit them, and to let them see that he takes sincere interest in them. In this way a corresponding interest will naturally be awakened in them toward the church, its session and its pastor, and, more important still, toward the great cause for which all exist. This will make their views of religion—those early views which are so influential—to be more

exalted, and will attach them more firmly to the church. This is a point which is in so much danger of being overlooked that it ought to receive particular attention.

5. It is an excellent plan occasionally to invite the young converts, in small companies, to spend a social evening with the pastor and his family. They should be in small companies, so that there may be more sociability and that the house may not be crowded. By this means the pastor will have a better opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with them than he could in any other way. They too will know him better, become more interested in him, and learn to look upon him as a personal friend. They will become more and more attached to him through all such little attentions, and that attachment may become to him a source of sanctified influence. Their social nature may thus be made to contribute to the improvement of their spiritual nature. In the cultivation of religion enough is not made of the social elements of our being, as may be learned from the example of Christ and from the wholesome satisfaction which friendly intercourse is calculated to afford.

6. It might be well to assign each young convert by name to some elder or other influential member of the church, male or female, who would have it as a special care to watch over his spiritual interests. Some such arrangement as this carefully matured would keep any of them from being overlooked. It is impossible for the pastor to do all this kind of work himself, and he ought therefore to be cordially assisted in it, especially by the elders. The division of them into suitable numbers for each person could be carefully planned out' in meetings of the session; or better, perhaps, the pastor himself could fix the quota for each, and hand him the names of those committed to his care. The individuals could be selected according to acquaintanceship or neighborhood or social influence. Through this plan the supervision of the spiritual welfare of the young converts could be more minute, and they could be brought into closer personal sympathy with the church.

7. Those who are the subjects of renewing grace should be made to understand from the very first that they will be

expected, as a matter of course, to attend the prayer-meetings, as well as the more public services of the church. These are among the most essential of the means of grace, and progress can scarcely be expected without them. It should be insisted upon that there they must be if they would live near to God, near to his people, and gain the spiritual enjoyment and progress which are their privilege. If they begin to be occasionally absent, they should be looked after at once to prevent their falling away. The habit should be formed at first of going as regularly as the meeting comes, and then afterward the attendance will be given as a matter of custom, as well as pleasure and spiritual profit.

8. There ought by all means to be meetings of the young converts by themselves, where they could engage in prayer and conference without the feeling of embarrassment which the presence of others would produce. At such meetings, being all equally learners, they would be comparatively free from restraint. Then, too, feeling their responsibility for the conducting of the services, they will each take part, while under other circumstances they would certainly hold back. There is no better way than this for them to become accustomed to pray in public. Before they are aware of it almost they will find the great mountain removed, and be able to lead in the devotions of the social meeting with comfort to themselves and profit to others. The pastor and elders need not be present at these meetings of young converts, but they may so encourage them as to render them efficient aid. A meeting of this kind, held with persons who are very young, is thus described in a note by Rev. Stephen W. Dana: “I have had for more than two years what I call the ‘boys' circle.' We meet every Monday evening from seven to eight o'clock. I limit the age from ten to fifteen. I have made the meetings as informal as possible. For many months I led the meetings, and usually assigned the topics from week to week, selecting those of a practical and personal nature. We always had our Bibles, and looked earnestly for a ‘thus saith the Lord' on the questions before us. We generally began the meeting with each repeating

a passage of Scripture. I encouraged them in asking me questions about anything of interest to them. The exercises were interspersed with short prayers; often eight or ten of them would engage in prayer. Latterly, the young men or boys take charge of the meeting in turn, though I am always present. It has given me an opportunity to keep near the boys, and exercise a more personal influence with them than I could otherwise have done. The constant aim is to combine work and worship, zeal and knowledge, to stimulate the young to a generous activity for Christ, but to lead them also to commune much with their own hearts and with God. I am fully convinced that there is too much effort to get people into the church, and too little care for them when in it."

9. It is of exceeding great benefit to those who have but recently come into the kingdom, to keep them busy in the work of the Lord. They are willing now to work at almost anything which their hands can find to do; they are anxious to do something for the Master with whose love their hearts are glowing, and they can render efficient service, especially in a season of great religious interest. If they are at once led to take an active part in doing good, it will accustom them to work, and now is the time for the habit to be formed; it will interest them more and more in the cause of Christ, and perpetuate that interest; it will quicken and beautify their piety, and it will commit them more fully to a life of thorough consecration in the service they have espoused. Besides, the direct effects of their work, in the first glow of its love, will be most important, not only on themselves, but also on their fellow-members of the church, and on their former companions still in impenitency, whom they can influence as no other persons can.

Without any delay, then, should they be set to work, and kept busily at it from the very first. The rule should be that something would be found for each one of them to do. Not one of them should be left idle. If something is not ready to be done, then work should be made. The pastor and elders should enter into the minutiae, and study out work in detail for them all. Ingenuity should be exercised in devising plans so that

something profitable shall be always ready for them to undertake. But what can be found for them all to do? Why, the field of work is boundless. They can teach in the Sabbath-school; they can write letters recommending the salvation of Christ; they can give away tracts as opportunity presents; they can gather neglected children into the classes where they may learn the way of life; they can bring friends and neighbors to church and prayer-meeting; they can influence individuals to seek for the redemption of the gospel; they can hold meetings for prayer in neglected neighborhoods or with the aged and infirm; they can visit the sick or they can watch for inquirers. One or more of these things they can do—many things they can devise or can be devised for them, by which they can help forward the great cause of Christ and strengthen their own graces. This element in the nurture of young converts is of the first importance. They should be kept busy from the very first—busy in cultivating their own hearts, busy in scattering blessings around them, busy in striving to honor the Lord by bringing others to his service.

CONVERSIONS TO BE EXPECTED AT ALL TIMES

It is too common a tendency to look for conversions only in seasons when the Church is revived by the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The influence of this impression is wrong, and ought to be stoutly contended against, for when churches are in a healthy spiritual condition the communion season when there are no conversions to be recorded is very rare. Then the conviction that revival-times are the only ones in which to look for conversions is sure to paralyze efforts for that blessed object at all other times; it limits the Holy Ghost, as if he could work only according to our plans, and it keeps the Church in an unhealthy state, aiming to do its great work only periodically, and all the rest of the time being inert. The true theory is, that conversions are constantly to be expected when the means of grace are faithfully used, and the true plan is to look for them at all times. Why should they not be perpetually occurring? Have we not the ordinances, the word, the Spirit, the promises, the prayers, the motives—all the means that are necessary, all that God has appointed? Why do we not have the faith, and see precious souls coming into the kingdom from month to month, and that always? While God is a sovereign, and does sometimes send down the blessing in copious effusion, yet the more common method is to send the gentle showers and the sunshine day by day and month by month. There are churches which have never been blessed by what is ordinarily called a revival, and yet in twenty years they have been as largely increased with true converts as those which have often had such seasons of refreshing.

Then it is wise to be on the watch at all times for those who are awakened and seeking to know what they must do to be saved. Almost always there are some such persons in every church. Why should there not be absolutely always? Is God unwilling? Is the way of life not plain enough? Are not the gates always open. At all times, probably, in every church, there are

those who are just waiting to be spoken to by pastor or other Christian friend, and taken by the hand and led to the cross. The pastor should himself watch for such persons, noticing the well-known symptoms which indicate a turning Christward; he should have others to watch for them also and keep him informed; he should keep a list of them, so that none of them shall be forgotten, but in due time be visited, and at once and often carried to the throne of grace. If there is not diligent attention they may be overlooked; and oh what a sad thing, to overlook a soul which is struggling for the light of God and the safety which is found in Christ! From them and from others conversions may be constantly expected; and fresh ingatherings to the church from month to month should be the rule, any departure from which should cause serious anxiety.

The conversion of souls is an object which ought to lie very near to the heart of every one whom God has called to the serious work of the pastor. He should long for it; he should keep its importance and its possibility before him in every duty which he undertakes; he should keep his heart set on it day and night; he should pray for it and preach for it, and be on the watch for it, as the only possible thing with which he would be satisfied. He should have others unite with him in striving for it through all the instrumentalities which God has provided. He should regard this work of saving souls as his great work—as the greatest work to which mortal man could be called. If he does not see souls coming into the kingdom, or*at least giving some symptoms of yielding to the claims of God, his heart should be burdened and his prayers rendered more agonizing. And he should rejoice above everything else in hearing the awakened saying, “What shall I do to be saved?" He should be glad in this above mere popularity, which is so dangerous, and above applause, which never can satisfy a noble mind. As the fisherman casts the net, and then looks most intently for the ingathering, so should he fish for souls with every thought bent upon the blessed results. This should so occupy his mind that he never would be satisfied without some such results of his ministry. He should be instant in season and out of season, in

order that he might by all means save some.

A HIGH TYPE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE TO BE CULTIVATED IN THE CHURCH

There should be aimed at in every church a type, air, degree of piety which would be very high, and manifest to every beholder. There should prevail throughout the body which is so closely united to Christ a sensitive conscientiousness, a sanctified public sentiment, a general consistency and goodness of character, and a readiness to engage heartily in every good work, which would leave no doubt, either within or without the church, that the Spirit of the Master pervaded all. Then the degree of all these should ever be increasingly high. With the united body of believers it should be as it was with the apostle when in nobleness of aim he could say, “I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The great weakness of the Church, showing itself in every direction, is, that it has not a more fully-consecrated piety. If there were this thorough devotedness pervading the members, then there would be no difficulty as to any branch of work or life or fellowship. All would go on prosperously. Success would mark every department of Christian work, contributions to benevolent objects would be given generously without a grudge, conversions would constantly be witnessed, brotherly charity would prevail, and all else would be marked by the peace of God which passeth all understanding. For this high type of piety in the Church should the pastor set himself with all earnestness from the beginning; he should keep it before him as a specific aim in all his preaching, praying and pastoral visiting.

That any church may attain to a more eminent degree of godliness there is no question, and the possibility should encourage all to make the effort for it. It is possible. In some churches it may be seen in the scriptural piety and godly walk

of the bulk of its members, as well as in their promptness to engage in every good word and work. And if it may prevail in some churches, why not in all? Have we not all the appointed means for bringing it about? And would it not be in accordance with the mind and work of the Holy Spirit to see his own image reflected in all his churches? Yes, it is possible to reach even this high standard of piety. The most cold and worldly churches might be brought up to a degree of spiritual life that would be felt far and near. And as pastors we should blame ourselves if we do not see our own churches constantly growing in grace.

But how may this type of piety in the Church be reached? We can hardly think that there is one right-spirited pastor who can consider its importance and not earnestly set his heart upon its attainment. And the urgent question arises, What can be done to this end? Our answer is, that the means are at hand, and abundant and easily used. It would be contributing much toward it if the pastor would preach earnestly and often on the subject, showing the blessings of more piety, proving plainly that it might be attained, and pointing out the methods for reaching it. And to elevate the Church to this blessed condition of spirituality should be the aim in all the ministrations of the sanctuary. It is a state of things which ought to be sought after by prayer and all the other ordinances which the great Head of the Church has established; by using every agency to get the minds of the whole congregation imbued with the truths of the Scriptures; by thorough indoctrination of the people in the great principles of godliness; by close spiritual preaching; by the pastor's example of deep-toned and consistent piety; and by utilizing the example and influence of those in the Church who are already the most spiritually-minded. By each of these and by all of them, persistently used, the Church will gradually rise higher and higher in that earnest devotedness which is its highest glory and blessedness.

The pastor should always be laying plans and studying anxiously how his people may be brought up to this exalted character. He should look for their growing piety, and carefully search for indications that it is increasing and the image of the

Master becoming more and more marked. It is an object of so much importance that he should constantly wrestle for it in prayer. And, as the highest motive he can possibly set before him, he should ever be impelled by the sublime thought that Jesus will thereby be glorified.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PASTOR IN THE SABBATH-SCHOOL

THE subject of Sabbath-schools has not hitherto received much attention in works on Pastoral Theology. In most of them it has not even been noticed. Its vast importance, even its existence, is too recent for it to have found a place on their pages. The special training of the young on the Lord's day in their spiritual and eternal interests is a grand branch of the work of the Ch urch which has sprung up within a comparatively few years, and which requires from her careful study and diligent effort. It is a subject which demands very earnest attention from the pastor at the present time, when its importance is becoming more and more obvious, and when it is enlisting so much of the thought and energy of the Christian world. Since it is the object of pastoral theology to assist the minister in becoming thoroughly equipped for all his sacred work, it should indicate to him the present progress of the Sabbath-school cause; it should endeavor to awaken in his mind a deep interest in that cause, to point out its duties, and to give at least some general suggestions as to the management of an institution whose interests, though apparently humble, are among the most momentous that can engage the thoughts of man.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SABBATH-SCHOOL

There are but very few persons, probably, who duly appreciate the importance of the Sabbath-school work. We must fix our minds upon it, awaken our attention to it, measure its proportions and study it well, before we can see it in anything like the greatness to which it has attained. The assertion may be ventured that there has seldom been a religious movement of the world like it. When it shall be looked back upon in the light of history, it will be better appreciated than it is now. It is less than a century since this wonderful movement commenced, and to what has it already grown! It has spread throughout the whole Protestant Christian world. It has taken its stand in the front rank of agencies for the conversion of men. It has enlisted a large part of the activity of the Church. It has committed to it the care of millions of youthful souls. It calls from the press as large an issue as almost any other cause in the world. It has risen to a position which places it second only to the preaching of the gospel. And if it has grown to such a magnitude in so short a time, what is it yet to be? What immeasurable good may it yet accomplish? What dangers may stand in its way? What perversions of it may be made by the great enemy? These are questions of transcendent importance. If we are wise, we shall awake to this subject and look at it with the keenest attention. We shall do it now. There is no time to be lost.

It is a trite saying that everything depends upon the training of the young. The world understands this. Popery understands this. What the Church is to be, what its piety, what its Christian activity, what its theology, what its ministry, what its missionaries, what its seminaries, what its boards, what its liberality, what its influence for good in fifteen or twenty years, all depends upon the religious training of the young.

Look at the thousands upon thousands of our own children upon whom influences are to be exerted that will give them

character for life and affect their destiny for ever. Look at the millions upon millions of children of irreligious parents who, but for the Sabbath-school, would receive no religious training whatever. They are at an age when the deepest impressions can be made—when, if ever, there is hope for them. And look at the Sabbath-school as a field of Christian work. It is a field in which every heart that is burning with love to God can find something to do for him; it is a field in which all who are willing to work for Christ can be employed.

The whole matter of Sabbath-school work is becoming more and more grave from the growing tendency to relax religious instruction in the family and to throw that work upon the Church and the Sabbath-school. This is most deeply to be deplored, but we must accept the sad fact as it is, and do what we can to repair the loss by making the Sabbath-school more efficient and more spiritual. When the matter is viewed in this light, when it is seen that circumstances are compelling the Sabbath-school to make up this deficiency of family religious training, no tongue can utter, no figures can estimate, what should be done in this solemn work.

There was no exaggeration in the assertion of one of our most eminent ministers that no subject of more importance could come before presbytery, synod or general assembly—nothing extravagant in the declaration of the most able of living theologians that no amount of time or money or thought was too much to be bestowed on it. It will help to give impressiveness to these thoughts to see the estimation in which it was held by some whom the Christian world has long delighted to honor. The Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, near the close of his life, said: “If I had my ministry to go over again, I would give more attention to the children." The Rev. Dr. Samuel Miller gave this emphatic testimony: “After the observation and experience of a long life, I have come decisively to the conclusion that if I had my life to live over again I would pay ten times as much attention to the young of my charge as I ever did. If I were now about to take a new or feeble church, I would consider that to give attention to the children and young people

of the neighborhood would be one of the most certain methods of collecting a large congregation that could be employed." The Rev. Dr. S. H. Tyng asserts: “If every pastor would give one sermon on every Sunday especially addressed to the young, and designed and prepared to teach them, he would find himself enlarging his direct usefulness in this particular work, and equally advancing the value and benefit of every other class of his public and private labors in religious instruction." Bishop Janes declares that the time is coming when there will be two sermons preached to children and youth where there is one to adults. Dr. Doddridge said, “I had rather feed the lambs of Christ than rule a kingdom."

THE SABBATH-SCHOOL A PROMINENT PART OF THE PASTOR'S WORK

It will not do for the candidate for the gospel ministry to overlook this, in the supposed greater importance of other branches of preparation for his sacred office.

It will not do for the pastor to look upon these interests as beneath his most earnest attention and efforts. It will not do for him to leave the whole ordering of them to laymen, who may or may not have an opportunity of studying them and preparing for the discharge of the difficult duties they involve. It is just as much his duty to attend to the religious training of the young as it is to preach or to visit the sick or to do anything else to which his office calls. He is a spiritual teacher, and there is no more important or promising class of his scholars than this. To realize in some good degree the importance of this element of his work is fundamental with the pastor who would glorify God and benefit the souls of men to the utmost attainable measure.

It should be realized by the pastor that the young form the majority of his congregation, and that his work must be largely with them. It was a somewhat remarkable, but certainly important, advice of Dr. Bacchus of Hamilton College, to students, that in their ministrations they should give especial attention to the young under twenty and the aged above sixty. Upon this plan he had himself acted, and his ministry had been eminently blessed. From necessity, unless their spiritual wants are ignored, a large amount of the pastor's time and energies must be given to this most promising part of his charge. And there is no better way in which he can reach them, no way more economical of time, no way in which his efforts will be more impressive, than through the Sabbath-school. Nearly all the young of his congregation are or should be in it, and then he can reach them—reach the very youngest of them—as he can hardly do in any other way, reach them so that the prevailing sympathy will awaken deeper attention to his instructions.

The mere fact that the Sabbath-school furnishes the pastor an excellent opportunity of coming in contact with the young is one which should not be overlooked. It is a matter of very great importance that he should, if possible, know every child in his congregation, that not one of them should be lost sight of. To do so will keep up his interest in them, and, what is no less important, it will attach them to him and his ministry. Much is gained when the young become personally acquainted with their minister, when they overcome their ordinary feelings of reserve toward him, learn to have affectionate confidence in him, and come to look upon him as their spiritual counselor to whom they can open their hearts. A lasting attachment will be created which may become of incalculable value to both them and him.

No pastor can afford to neglect the special religious training of the young of his congregation. To do so would be to be unmindful of the larger part of the charge which God has committed to his care. It would be to neglect them at that age when their minds are the most impressible and when the hope of bringing them to the blessings of salvation is the greatest. It would be to throw away a most important influence with those who are hereafter to be the active men and women of the Church and community. It would be to miss the opportunity of securing a lasting place in the hearts of those who will soon be the main-stay of the congregation, who will be its elders, its trustees, its Sabbath-school teachers, its principal workers. Here is a splendid opportunity for laying a solid foundation of a structure in which God may be glorified, many souls eternally blessed, and the minister himself made to rejoice the rest of his days; but it is not improved. It is saying but little to predict that the pastor who can be so strangely remiss will not remain long with that congregation.

It may be confidently asserted that in all ordinary cases the future character of the Church depends upon what is now done for the religious training of the young by the Sabbath-school and other agencies. It is this which is to determine what the Church of the future is to be in sincere piety, in love to God and

his people, in stability, in beneficence and in intelligent zeal in every good word and work. Everything now done will have an important and self-propagating influence for good in the generations to come. In no other field is it more certain that what is sown now will be reaped hereafter. No work of the pastor will more abundantly repay than this. All Scripture, all our knowledge of human nature, and all history abundantly warrant this belief. The teachings of Calvin, of Knox, of Wesley and of others have moulded the religious character of whole communities for generations and generations. What object can the minister or any other mortal man set before him so noble as that of influencing the generations of the future to be better and more useful than those of the present?

Hence, as an overseer who is to care for all the flock, as a pastor who is to feed the lambs of Christ, as a watchman who is ever to stand on the walls of Zion, it becomes the minister to be thoroughly acquainted with the work of the Sabbath-school and all other efforts for the spiritual welfare of the young. The Church in all its branches is becoming more and more awake to the subject: he must be awake too. There is wonderful and healthy progress in the work; he should fall in with that progress and endeavor to secure its benefits to himself and the youth of his charge. He should avail himself of all the real helps in the Sabbath-school work which are being so rapidly developed by the active piety of the age. He should consider it as a matter of the first importance with him to investigate the subject fully and see what is going on in this work, what he can do to help it, and how he may be assisted by its valuable improvements. If all our pastors would do this faithfully, there would soon be a wonderful advance in the efficiency of the Church in the department of Sabbath-schools and in all her other agencies for the promotion of the cause of Christ and righteousness.

THE SABBATH-SCHOOL AND THE FAMILY

The nature and functions of the Sabbath-school can hardly be understood in an adequate manner without considering its relations to the family. Family religious instruction must be first, and paramount to all other. Its efforts must not be interfered with, nor its obligations lessened, by any other plans that can possibly be devised. It is placed first by divine wisdom and authority, and there it must stand. Very plain is the teaching of God on this subject. It is found, among other places, in the command, “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up;" also in the example of Abraham, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him;" also in the apostolic charge, "And, ye fathers, provoke riot your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The Sabbath-school ought to recognize distinctly this divine and unchangeable law, and guard carefully against even seeming to infringe upon it. It should beware of the most remote assumption of the duties which belong to father and mother. According to this rule, of the first obligation resting upon Christian parents, should the Sabbath-school act; in view of it should all its plans be laid; and its wisdom will ever be to utilize the influence of the family in co-operating with its sacred enterprise, instead of in any way running counter to that influence.

The emphatic testimony of Rev. Dr. A. T. McGill on this point is most valuable: “The primary obligation of a parent cannot release him, by any method the Church may adopt, from his personal duty to lay the word of God as early as possible on the memory and heart of his child. The Sunday-school has no

legitimate existence in the Church without a compact, well understood, that the family institute shall remain a distinct and sacred bundle which no conventionalities of men may ever loosen or untie. To delegate holy functions and holy time to persons not known to the parents to be both capable and faithful must be a fearful recreancy of parents under solemn vows which God will punish. Either the parents themselves, therefore, or the pastor, as their own teacher and representative, should never fail to inspect the Sabbath-school, and be sure that it supplements rightly the instruction of a covenanted home, and tends to bind up the family rather than disband it for a communism in the Church that must ultimately reduce alike the strength of true religion and sense of individual responsibility."

It is feared by many that even in Christian households at the present time there is a general relaxing of fidelity in family religious instruction. If this fear is well founded, it reveals an evil that is most formidable and threatening. And certainly there is some real foundation for the alarm, for where is the careful Sabbath-evening instruction by the pious parent? Where is the indispensable catechising of all the children? Where is the laborious indoctrinating of the young? Where is the parental authority that secures the regular attendance of the whole family at the house of God? Where is the careful supervision of the reading which will rigidly exclude the mischievous and the dissipating? Where is the unwearied effort to bring up the offspring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? And where, in many instances, is there even that family worship which should impart its hallowing influence to every household? Alas! is it not the fashion in many quarters to sneer at these things as the narrow bigotry of other days? That there is a deplorable declension and danger in this direction is felt by many of the best and wisest at the present time. The greatness of the danger should be estimated in the light of God's unaltered and unalterable command, which is disobeyed when the religious instruction of the young in the family is neglected. It should be estimated in the light of the fact that this neglect is

raising up a generation without God's own chief agency for training them in virtue and happiness.

There are many who think that this relaxing of family religious instruction is owing, at least in part, to the Sabbath-school. They think that, at any rate, the decline in the one keeps pace with the improvements in the other, while the Sabbath-school is not so much the cause as the occasion of the evil. It is an evil which develops itself when parents gradually come to consider themselves released from their most solemn obligations by the Sabbath-school. They indolently flatter themselves that it teaches their children the truths of the Bible, that it does all that can be done for their conversion, and that it sufficiently indoctrinates them with the great principles of godliness. They think, or at least strive to think, that this is enough. Thus they succeed in stifling the voice of conscience while they shift an irksome duty from themselves to the Sabbath-school. They let this act as a salvo for what is nothing but indolence, unfaithfulness to their children and coldness of heart toward their God.

It may be that sometimes this has something to do with the sad decline in family religious instruction; but there are other causes far more certain and far more potent, and which rather call for increased diligence in the Sabbath-school work. There is no necessary connection between steady improvement in the Sabbath-school and decreasing care of family training. On the contrary, fidelity in the one should lead to fidelity in the other. But there are other causes which are leading directly to this result. The multitudes of other things—studies, books, papers, pleasures, excitements, ambitions—which now attract the young; the louder voices with which the world calls, and the stronger grasp with which it draws the parents; the weakening of the lines of demarcation between the Church and the world; the diminishing value which is attached to doctrines and principles in religion,—these account for the declining attention of parents to the religious training of their children, and only furnish additional motives for Sabbath-schools to be faithful.

The pastor should take special care to prevent the Sabbath-school from weakening the sense of parental duty. There is enough danger in the matter to put him on his guard. He should keep the evil and danger before him as a possibility to be feared, and he should faithfully warn the people of them. He should frequently preach on the general subject, urging parents never to relax their efforts for the spiritual welfare of their children, no matter how many other agencies may come in to help them.

It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that family religious training is first in importance, first in the advantages with which it is accompanied, and first in the ordination of God. The prime obligation rests upon parents. No other agency can possibly relieve them of their responsibility, or even lighten its weight. It would be a great evil if they fancied for a moment that either church or Sabbath-school could take their place in this respect. There is no affection for the children like that which dwells in the parents' heart. The Lord has placed it there, and chiefly that it may constrain them to train their offspring for him. What motive is so likely to produce untiring efforts for the spiritual and eternal welfare of the children as the yearning of a father's or mother's heart? And with this parental affection there goes also a parental authority that may tell effectively in the religious training of the young. It gives an advantage to parents in this work which no other agency can possibly have. To parents, then, God has given the first charge, and on parents has he laid the first responsibility. The voices of God, of piety, of affection, of experience, of all that is holy and wise, unite to press this home upon all pious parents.

These sentiments are forcibly expressed by the Rev. Dr. J. Grier Ralston:

“It is hardly possible to overrate the importance of religions instruction in the household. It is here the foundations of character are laid, and hence flow out the ever-widening streams of influence that blight and wither or refresh and bless whatever they touch. The urgency of the language and the frequency with which the duty is enjoined in the Bible leave no

room to doubt God's estimate of its importance. He has in all ages of the Church been pleased so to bless the faithful labors of parents for the good of their children as to indicate clearly his special approbation of such efforts.

“The results of careful religious training in the family have ever been such as fully to vindicate the wisdom of God in assigning a position so prominent to the proper instruction of children.

“The pastor who does not direct special efforts to the promotion of family religion neglects the most effective means of permanent prosperity in his church. If he would have a steady, healthful growth in his spiritual household, he must provide suitable food for the little ones. But his work in their behalf is not so much with them as for them. The parents must be carefully instructed as to their duty to their offspring. The family is God's university, and to those who preside over it must we look for successful results from its teachings.

“The Jews have a tradition that the fire of the altar was miraculously kept alive under ground during the Babylonish captivity. In like manner God seems to have hidden in the family organization the germ of a church. The proper development of the one is the hope of the other. Aquila and Priscilla had a church in their house, as had also Nymphas and Philemon. No labor for Christ pays so large a reward as that spent in feeding his lambs."

It would tend to render the instructions of both family and Sunday-school more efficacious if some harmony of plan were established between them. This may be done by both studying at the same time the same answers of the Catechism and the same Bible lesson of the week, or by establishing some other concert of study. By such arrangement each would be kept from encroaching on the other, they would be retained in their positions of relative importance, and they would render mutual assistance and encouragement in the same blessed work that lies before both.

RELATION OF THE SABBATH-SCHOOL TO THE CHURCH

The Church in her organized capacity is bound to make the religious training of her children one of her most prominent aims. In her visible form she is composed of both old and young. In her families the aggregate of the young is greater than that of the old. She was organized into a visible form that she might embrace and give good heed to this branch of her interests, as well as every other. In a special manner is she bound to this by her covenant relations. And to this also she must be led by that new nature, that Christ-like nature of pity and sympathy, which has been imparted to her as composed of redeemed men and women. Who can feel for the children and labor for their salvation so well as those who have themselves been redeemed from sin and death and hell?

Now, the Sabbath-school has grown up as a great instrumentality by which this duty of the Church may be effectively performed, and it becomes us to consider well what the Sabbath-school is, what are the foundations upon which it is built, what is the authority according to which it exists, what is the place it holds, and what is the special work to which it is called.

It is not an institution which is separate or independent of the Church. It is not a mere humanly-devised institution, a church within a church. There is a feeling of this kind somewhat prevalent, but it is always wrong and injurious. Instead of being something separate, independent or added to the Church, the Sabbath-school is simply the Church putting forth her energy in the department of the young. The young constitute an important element in the composition of the visible Church, and the Sabbath-school is the agency by which she has found this element can be successfully reached. The school is the Church herself in that department. She has not delegated her work or authority or responsibility to any other. That could not be done. The Sabbath-school is hers—appointed

by her, supported by her, conducted by her, responsible to her, working in and by her authority, and forming an essential part of her life.

Any other theory of the nature of this institution is erroneous, and must in the end lead to confusion and many an evil. It is impossible upon any other theory than this of the identity of the Church and Sabbath-school to justify its existence. We must look to the appointment of God for our authority in what we do in the gospel cause; and as the Church stands by his authority, when the Sabbath-school is thus regarded as a vital, organic part of the Church we see the stamp of divine authority upon it. When we look at it in this light we see that it is from God; it rises into a glorious nobility, and we engage in its work with a new zeal.

(a) The Church as such should Conduct the Sabbath-school

It is now admitted on all hands that on the Church, as a Church and in her organized capacity, devolves the duty of conducting the Sabbath-school. That she should acknowledge this duty, and act accordingly, is most evident. She should sustain the Sabbath-school; she should conduct it; she should look upon it as her indispensable charge; she should feel responsible for its vigorous prosecution; she should make provision for all its wants—just as much as for the worship of the sanctuary or for any other branch of her duties.

She should keep it, either directly through her ordained officers or indirectly through persons whom she appoints and holds responsible to her, in her own hands, and manage all its interests. She should not merely have a general supervision of this important branch of her work, but she should herself perform it. She should not leave it to be conducted by others or attempt to transfer her duty and responsibility, for she has no right by any sort of contrivance to ignore her divinely-appointed task of training her children for the kingdom of Christ. It is hers not only to see who teaches and what is

taught, and to be alive to all the interests of the Sabbath school, but also herself to teach and conduct all these interests.

This duty of the Church can hardly be questioned. She is bound to attend to the religious instruction of the children, especially in the Sabbath-school, because she is commanded to train the young for the service and glory of God; because this is one of the chief objects for which she has been established as a Church; because her organs are responsible as no others are to both earthly and heavenly authority; because she has, or ought to have, the piety and intelligence needed for performing this work; because she has the very best instrumentalities for this enterprise, which is spiritual and eternal in its issues; because, if the Church leaves this teaching of the children to other hands, their minds may be filled with error and falsehood; and because, when she fails to perform this work herself, discords and troubles are almost sure to be the consequence.

(b) Difficulty of Harmonizing the Control, of the Church and the Freedom of the Teachers

This is a very delicate and difficult point, and requires great caution on the part of pastor and elders. Many a strife has been engendered by it and many a Sabbath-school and church shaken to the foundations.

The peculiar difficulty lies in the solution of this question: How can the control of the Sabbath-school be kept in the hands of the session, and yet the teachers have so much freedom in the management of its affairs that they will still keep up that interest which is so essential? When the ordering of all the arrangements of the school is too much given up to the teachers there is danger that the highest interests of the church and school will not be consulted, and that true wisdom and experience will not rule. On the other hand, inasmuch as they do the work and endure the hardness, it is but justice that their voice should be heard; and if it is too little heeded, it can scarcely be wondered at if their hearts cease to be fully in the cause.

It is not probable that any one definite plan can be suggested by which this difficulty may be avoided. Tact, good sense and a sanctified spirit are rather to be relied upon to keep strifes from arising and coming to an issue. There are, however, a few things attention to which may overcome much of the difficulty in the case. These things we will point out as well worthy of consideration.

1. All the members of the session, the minister included, should be connected with the Sabbath-school. They ought always to be present. If they are not regular teachers, they can attend as members and perform other important duties. They can fill vacancies when teachers are absent; they can visit missing scholars and search for new ones; they can assist at the opening or closing prayer-meeting; they can be consulted about any difficulties that may arise in the school; they can encourage superintendent and teachers, and by their presence they can show their interest in the school and the importance they attach to it. Then, being members of the school, they can influence its counsels without any appearance of undue interference.

2. One of the elders ought always, if practicable, to be the superintendent of the Sabbath-school. It is not often wise, though it may sometimes be necessary, for the pastor to hold the office. The superintendent ought to be one of the most devoted men in the church, and such men are almost always in the session. Moreover, the man who is qualified for being superintendent is certainly qualified for the eldership, and ought to be in it. When the vast influence of the superintendent in appointing and guiding the teachers, in visiting the scholars and in numerous other things is considered, it will be seen how important it is that he should be in the session, and so bring all his influence to be tributary to the authorities of the church. As both superintendent of the Sabbath-school and member of the session he can harmonize the relations of the two, and utilize the whole weight of both in building up the cause of Christ.

3. The session ought always to appoint, or at least nominate, the superintendent. They could give the names of two or three

persons, and then let the teachers elect from them; or the election might be made subject to their approval; or they could at once appoint the superintendent, and let him be their agent in carrying on the Sabbath-school. If this rule were incorporated in the constitution of the school, there would not afterward be any friction in the matter. It ought to be made the law in the organizing of every new school. It may generally be worked into others, by proper tact, without much difficulty.

4. It ought to be the established law that the benevolent contributions of the school should be appropriated to the Boards of the Church under the direction of the session. We single out this matter, and would have it fixed, because experience has proved it to be one of the most fruitful sources of controversy and strife. Instances could be given where it has led to the most serious difficulties. We would therefore have the whole thing settled—settled when peace reigned—for all time to come.

Adherence to these few principles, it is believed, will prevent most of the difficulties which ordinarily arise between the teachers and the authorities of the church.

THE PROVINCE OF THE SABBATH-SCHOOL

What is the exact sphere of this institution? what is the place it occupies? what the general work it has to do? In answer to these questions it may be said that its mission is—

1. To assist in the religious training of the Church's own children and youth. It is merely to assist in this, not to take it out of the hands of either parents or pastor. Parents are to give the first, most affectionate and most persistent instruction in divine things. But the Sabbath-school can supplement, and that in a very important manner, this indispensable work of Christian parents. It can impress the teachings of the parents by the varied instructions of the teacher. It can clothe those teachings with the charm by which they are surrounded in the Sabbath-school. It can carry them home to youthful hearts with all the force of the sympathy and example of other children and youth in the same class and the same assembly. Many a time a child will turn away from the truth when presented to itself alone, but will listen attentively to the same truth when others are seen listening. Many a time it will be drawn to Christ when others are seen pressing into the kingdom. This use of the force of example and sympathy is an important element in the Sabbath-school work. It adds the impulse given by youthful companions to the fidelity of teachers, and both to the affection of parents.

In the same manner its work is supplementary to that of the pulpit. The children of the Church have by right a place in the public worship of the sanctuary. There they ought to be as regularly as their parents. And nothing can take the place of this privilege. But the Sabbath-school comes in again to supplement the impressions of the public service. It comes in with a service that is attractive, because it is the children's own service, and especially adapted to the wants of the young.

2. To reach with the gospel the children of those parents who give them no religious instruction, and who themselves are

not accustomed to go to the house of God. There are many, very many, such youth and children in every community. They are not taught to pray, the words of Holy Writ are not impressed upon their memories, they are not accustomed to go to the sanctuary, they have no example of true piety set before them. They are in the midst of gospel privileges, but not one of those privileges is put in their possession. What is to become of them? Who is to bring them into the enjoyment of those blessings of which their parents are themselves practically ignorant?

The Sabbath-school is the very best instrumentality that has been devised for reaching this class of the young. Indeed, it was for the purpose of reaching them that it was first established. It seeks out such youth and children and brings them into its classes. It attracts their hearts to the claims of Christ and of their own perishing souls by the example of other youth who are piously educated, by the affectionate care of teachers, by the pleasure of its sacred songs and by all the blessed allurements of its exercises. And then, be it remembered, that these hallowed influences are exerted upon the young, who need them most, and with whom they will be the most salutary and abiding. The importance of the sphere which the Sabbath-school occupies in this respect cannot be too highly estimated. By its gospel influences it reaches this large and important class of children, who could not be reached by any other instrumentality of which we know. This one thing makes it worthy of the unwearied care and efforts and prayers of all true Christians and philanthropists. And on this account it should be our deliberate purpose to gather into it all the children who have no religions instruction at home, and who have no other friends to draw them to the house of God.

3. To furnish a field of work for every willing Christian hand. There are multitudes of people in all the churches who are willing to work for the kingdom. Their hearts have been touched by the Spirit of God, so that they have something of the mind of Christ, whose great delight it was to go about

doing good. They have been made to see the need that souls have of being saved and purified. They feel in some measure the obligations under which they rest to that Saviour who redeemed them by his blood, and who calls them to his help in seeking to redeem others. They are willing to put forth some effort in the blessed gospel enterprise if the practical thing only lay before them as to what they should undertake.

Now, the Sabbath-school meets this want in a very important manner. It lays open a field of work in which all can engage—can engage at once, can engage with comparative ease, can engage with a promise of success that is hardly to be found in any other enterprise. Here are classes of imperishable minds to which the Christian can go and teach the way of life through Christ; or if no class is ready, he can take the place of some teacher who is necessarily absent for a day, or he can go out among the neglected and gather up a class for himself. Or he can go into an adult class as a member, and so lend his influence in attracting others and increasing the interest of the school; or he can spend the hour in going about from street to street and house to house, seeking for children who neglect the Sabbath, and striving to bring them into the classes. And all can take a lively interest in the Sabbath-school; they can pray for it, they can help in its support, they can visit it, they can speak a good word for it as opportunity offers, they can say something to encourage superintendent and teachers, who often have much to depress and try them. Here is an important field of work for all. There is no other so ready, so easy, or that promises such early and abundant harvests.

DIRECT AIMS OF THE SABBATH-SCHOOL

What are, or ought to be, the direct objects of the Sabbath-school in the study of the Bible and in all its other exercises? We want to enter into the school, visit its classes, listen to its services, watch its working, study its lessons, and see what it aims to accomplish. After careful study of the subject it will be found that there are three objects which should constantly be before the minds of teachers and officers.

(a) The Conversion of the Scholars

This is the object which should stand at the head of all others in this school of the Church. It is for this object primarily that the Bible is to be studied, and its great saving truths reiterated and pressed upon the hearts of the learners. This one pre-eminent purpose will run through the books that are read, the lessons that are studied, the improvements that are devised. It will pervade the devotional exercises of the school, give tone to every movement, and lie on the heart of every teacher. The conversion of the soul is an object which will well repay all that can possibly be done for it. When this is accomplished there is a foundation laid for all other blessings.

That the young may be converted has been established beyond the possibility of question or doubt. It is a practicable thing to seek for the immediate salvation of the young. Why should they not be brought to Christ now? What qualification of heart or head necessary to conversion is not theirs now? Cases innumerable of the conversion of the young warrant us in striving for it with all diligence. Where is there a church in which such instances cannot be found? Tens of thousands of the most devoted Christians were brought into the kingdom when they were young. While they are young is the most hopeful time to look for the conversion of the scholars. It is, humanly speaking, the period when the probability of their

being saved is the greatest. The records of all churches will undoubtedly show that the greater part of all who are ever converted experienced that blessed change before they were twenty years old. This makes the first twenty years of life very solemn. Those who see youth passing through these years in their sins may well tremble for them. The human probability is that if they are ever saved it will be now.

(b) The Indoctrination of the Scholars

The second direct aim of the Sabbath-school is to imbue the minds of the children with the great principles of our holy religion. There is in some minds a prejudice against teaching or laying much stress upon the doctrines. But what are doctrines? Are they not the great principles of the gospel—the momentous truths which God has revealed for the benefit of men? Are they not simply the topics according to which the teachings of the Scriptures may be classified? And what shall we teach about religion if not these? In fact, we must teach doctrines if we would teach anything whatever about the gospel. And doctrines are the foundation for a solid and stable Christian character. It is by a deep-laid substratum of these that that permanency of Christian character is to be obtained which is not afterward driven about by every wind of doctrine, which is almost sure in the end to find its way to the cross of Christ, and which becomes a power for good in the circle of society in which it moves.

Now, it is in the minds of the children that this foundation of doctrines should be laid. Their memories, which will keep as long as life lasts what is now put in them, their wills, now easily influenced, and their youth, needing principles that will be their guide through all their future years,—all indicate that the present is the period for them to store up the doctrines. And this should be an incessant aim of the Sabbath-school. By its teaching of the holy oracles, by its reiteration of the Catechism week after week and year after year, by the great truths contained in its sacred songs, and by all its public addresses, it

should labor to fill the hearts of the scholars with the vitally-important doctrines of our holy religion. On this subject the Rev. Dr. James M. Crowell, in a recent article, uses the following language:

"Careful, continued, systematic instruction in the symbols of doctrine to which we hold as a Church is essential to the perpetuity and establishment and solid growth of true religion. We are not only to 'hold fast to sound words,' but to ‘the form of sound words.' And since the young are at an age when they are most susceptible to the impressions of truth and when the memory is most retentive, that seems to be the best time for the work of catechetical instruction to be attended to. And since, by reason of the force of natural depravity, or original sin, or whatever we may call it, there is undeniably a strong natural bias to error of understanding as well as to evil of heart and disposition, therefore the ground of the youthful heart should be preoccupied, as it were, by the diligent sowing of the seed of divine truth. It is true that objection is made against this on the ground that it is not fair to forestall the mind in favor of religion. But the obvious reply to this is, that it is impossible to leave the mind through childhood without prejudice in regard to religion. The question does not lie between furnishing the mind with opinions in childhood and leaving it empty. The simple fact is that it cannot be left empty. We must either fill it with the sifted wheat of truth or leave it to be filled spontaneously with the flying chaff of all kinds of error. If you do not employ the revealed doctrines of the Bible in the training of your child, you have not maintained neutrality; you have decided for your child against the Bible. Instead of keeping out the error and the evil which were pressing hard to come in like a flood, you have left wide open the floodgates, and you have made your poor child a victim.

"The story of Coleridge is a familiar one—that on one occasion he showed a friend a garden which he had been unwilling to 'prejudice' in favor of fruits and flowers, and the result was that it chose most perversely to bear a prolific crop of weeds. So in the minds and hearts of our children there is a

crop of weeds all ready to spring up, and if we do not educate them in God's truth, they will be sure to grow up indoctrinated in the devil's error; and then when we come, after a while, with the good seed of the kingdom, we shall find the soil preoccupied and a luxuriant crop of rank and noxious weeds covering it all over. This objection is of no account. If we do not hesitate to prejudice our children in favor of true science in the matter of their secular education, we surely need not fear to do the same thing in regard to religion."

(c) The Training of the Children in Benevolence

Beginning with conversion, and following it up with diligent teaching of the doctrines, the Sabbath-school looks for immediate results in acts of benevolence. It teaches this as a doctrine, but it also insists upon its being carried at once into practice. It is made imperative upon us by the command of the Master, by that benevolent spirit which we have received and by the piteous cry of perishing millions of our race, that we put forth every effort to save the lost, and continue to do so while we have prayers to offer or tongues to speak or alms to give. This is the blessed conviction which is taking more and more firm hold upon the conscience of the Church. Everything should be done to foster and intensify it. And the youthful mind is the most hopeful soil in which it can be cultivated. Because of the natural selfishness of the heart this lesson is very hard to be learned; it needs to be taught early and repeated very often. The principle of benevolence, once firmly established in the mind of a child, will live and grow and lead to splendid development. And the Sabbath-school should keep this constantly before it. By teaching the scholars to live for the good of others, and by accustoming them to contribute of their money to objects of benevolence, it should implant and strengthen the spirit of Christ, who ever went about doing good. It is for this purpose, as well as for the actual good that may be done, that the school contributes regularly— that the

scholars are encouraged to save that they may have to give to assist in rescuing souls from endless death and in building up the blessed cause of God in the world.

These three objects, the conversion of the scholars, the filling of their minds with the doctrines of grace, and the training of them to habits of benevolence, are the objects which should ever be paramount in the Sabbath-school. According to the measure of success in these, the school will prove a blessing to the young, to the Church and to the world.

CONDUCTING THE SABBATH-SCHOOL

This is a matter which the pastor should thoroughly influence, even though he does not personally perform it, because of his position as leader in all the work of the church, and because of his qualifications as trained and devoted to religious teaching. For this purpose he should keep himself well informed as to all that is going on in the general Sabbath-school work, with its helps, facilities, improvements and progress. To assist him we will touch upon a few important points without attempting to cover the whole field, which would neither be possible nor in place here. There are valuable works devoted exclusively to the Sabbath-school cause which can be profitably studied to that end. Our suggestions are confined to a few general, comprehensive subjects in which the pastor is particularly interested, and which will give tone and character to all the exercises of the school.

(a) Exciting Interest in the Bible

We place this first, because it is of first importance, and because it ought to give impulse, direction and color to everything that is done or attempted in the Sabbath-school. It is one of the saddest things in the world that the Bible, the word of God, the sure guide to an eternity of blessedness and the infallible directory to a life of virtue and happiness, should be so little read and appreciated, even by those who have not a doubt as to its divine authority. The heart, naturally alienated from God and everything he does, lays hold of advantages, such as long familiarity with the Bible and the ease with which it can be obtained, and uses them in closing up the sacred volume, so that it becomes, in effect, a sealed book. Hence the effort of Christian teachers should be to break up this indifference to the word of God, to awaken such interest in its pages that they will be resorted to with pleasure, perused with satisfaction and sought for with quickened curiosity, and to produce some suitable conception of its depths and grandeur and importance

to every man. Whoever succeeds in awakening this interest with old or young is one of the great benefactors of his race.

Now, the essential object of the Sabbath-school is to arouse this interest in the word of God, and to secure the production of the appropriate results in the heart and life of the young. It is, in its very essence and design, a Bible-school. This is its great idea as understood by all those who have just conceptions of its nature. It studies the Bible. It honors the Bible as God's own book. It shows the beauty and perfections of the Bible. It helps to understand the Bible, and strives to open some of the wondrous mines of truth which it contains. The authority for whatever is taught in the Sabbath-school is drawn from the pages of the inspired volume. Hence also are derived the motives by which teachers and superintendent would influence the tender hearts of their scholars. Through the inculcation of the truths of the Bible it would draw the young to Christ, establish in their hearts the doctrines of godliness, and train them to lives of active benevolence. If the Sabbath-school succeeds to any degree in awakening this interest in the word of God and in imparting the influence of its truths, its benefits to the world will be greater than tongue can utter or thought conceive.

In order to arouse this interest in the divine word every possible effort should be made by those who have the conducting of the Sabbath-school. To this end it should be kept in mind that children, and adults too, will be interested in the Bible just in proportion as they understand it. It will also help much if we clothe its histories with life and reality, and invest the persons with flesh and blood, enter into their feelings, and sympathize with them in the events that are recorded. If we do this with the children, they will soon come to think much of the Bible. It almost seems as if there were an eye to the children in revealing so much of the will of God in the form of narrative, which is so well adapted to arrest their attention. What perfection, what variety, what adaptation to all the elements of our understanding are to be found in the Scriptures, and might be used to enlist the attention of the young! We might now

dwell with them on the marvelous history of the Creation; now on the affecting story of Joseph; now on the sublime visions of Isaiah, where at one time hell is seen wide open, and at another the throne of God is disclosed, with the seraphim around it crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of-hosts;" now on the inimitable beauty of its poetry, carrying away our souls with the prophet as he sings, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation;" now on the sweet history of the Babe of Bethlehem; now on the Sermon on the Mount, filled with such words as never man spake; now on the sacredness of Christ's intercessory prayer to the Father in the seventeenth chapter of John; now on the heavenly logic of Paul; and now on the glorious scenes of the Apocalypse. Let the teachers become enthusiastic about these things, about the whole of the wonderful perfections of the word of God, and there will be no difficulty in awakening the deepest interest in the minds of the scholars.

Plans should be contrived for the express purpose of making the study of the sacred volume more and more attractive. We should experiment with ourselves to know how we personally are most drawn to it, and we shall generally find that the same methods are effective with the children. We may also learn from other Sabbath-school workers what methods they have tried and found successful. If one plan does not succeed, we can try another. Sometimes what will do with one person or class will not do with others, and there should therefore be variety. It should ever be kept before us for our encouragement that it is possible to awaken an interest in the Bible in most minds, if the effort is diligently persevered in. It should therefore be made a distinct object, by every pastor, superintendent and teacher, to effect this most desirable end.

(b) Aiming Directly for the Conversion of the

Scholars

The one thing needed in all our Sabbath-schools is to make the immediate conversion of the scholars their great object. This idea must be made to rise above all others. The mode of conducting the school, the study of the Bible, the teachers' meeting and the appointment of teachers should all be influenced by this ever-present motive. What ail feel to be needed in our Sabbath-schools is a more devotional spirit and a deeper sense of the divine presence. The fixed purpose of bringing the young to Jesus will give this air of sacredness. It will produce the feeling that all have met to transact business with God and souls. The idea of a school will then be lost in the far higher ideas of worship, of the mercy-seat and of souls entering the kingdom.

Such a purpose must necessarily affect the teachers. It will ever keep before them the one great thing at which they are to aim. Iii studying and teaching, in managing their classes and in their intercourse with each other, all their bearing will receive its tone from the thought that they are striving for the salvation of their scholars. Such teachers must be successful. The records of Sabbath-school work are full of facts proving that this singleness of aim for the glory of God will not be in vain. This settles the whole question as to who should be teachers. The heart to strive for the conversion of the young is the first and great qualification. It is indispensable. Whoever has it, and is capable of explaining the way to Christ, may teach. Whoever is destitute of it should not be placed in that deeply responsible position. The teacher who cares not for the salvation of the scholars has no business in the Sabbath-school.

The scholars, too, will feel the influence of this great aim whenever it pervades the school; it will not long lie hidden from them; the earnest purpose will soon affect them. They may be reckless, and strive to appear more so than they really are, but something will soon reach their hearts and make an impression that they cannot shake off. The school will be easily managed; in fact, it will need no managing. Its minutes will glide quietly

away, and all will feel that they have been in a sacred presence. This is the true method of securing order. This, moreover, will attract scholars to the school, and keep them there. Innumerable devices — such as exhibitions and shows of various kinds — have been tried to give attractiveness to the Sabbath-school work, but thoughtful friends of the cause are settling down into this conviction. The motive we have now urged will not be temporary in its effects. The school where this great object reigns will, in the long-run, prove to be the prosperous school even in outward growth and permanence.

(c) Catechetical Instruction

Very great stress should be laid upon catechetical instruction as a part of Sabbath-school work. The Catechism for Young Children should be used in the primary or infant department, and the Westminster Catechism in all the rest of the school. The family is the place where this instruction is expected to be given most early, most affectionately and most perseveringly, but it should also find a very prominent place in the Sabbath-school. It should be made a part of the opening or closing exercises of each session, as well as of the class instructions of the teacher. The catechism should be repeated over and over and over; it should be memorized; it should be explained, so that the scholars may never remember the time when they were not familiar with it.

It may seem like a waste of words to recommend the Shorter Catechism after it has been tested for centuries and held in such high esteem by the wisest and best of the people of God; and yet it is well sometimes to call fresh attention to its surpassing excellencies. It is probably the best summary of the truths of the Scriptures that has ever been formed by man. The comprehensive manner in which it presents all the essential points of religion is simply wonderful. Its teachings embrace a full statement of the way to Christ and life eternal, of all the great doctrines of the gospel, of the various duties we owe to both God and man, and of the future destiny of the righteous

and of the wicked. It forms in itself a complete system of theology. It is simply the teachings of Scripture arranged according to their great leading topics. One can hardly help feeling sometimes that its words verge closely on inspiration. The longer it is tried by time and experience and the utterances of Scripture, the more valuable does it appear.

The memorizing of this catechism in youth becomes a matter of overwhelming importance when it is considered that so treasured up it has a vast influence in fixing the doctrines and principles for life. Based as it is on Scripture, and more and more clearly seen to be so as it is better understood, it can hardly fail of having this abiding effect. Experience abundantly proves that where the mind is thus early filled with the truth of God by having it wrought into its very texture, it does not often depart from it. Those who are thus trained become comparatively safe from infidelity and from running after wild and destructive opinions in religion. Surely, it is much needed at the present time, when there is so much looseness of religious belief, so much falling away into errors and skepticism.

On this subject we quote again from the article by the Rev. Dr. Crowell to which we have already referred:

“One great advantage in giving instruction through the Catechism is found in this fact—that it contains, in short and pithy sentences where every word tells, a complete and accurate summary of doctrine. Nor can it be objected that this is exalting it to a place which belongs only to the Scriptures, since every proposition in the Catechism is based upon the word of God, makes its appeal to the word of God, and so by that very thing exalts the Bible to its normal place as the ultimate standard and rule of faith and practice. This ‘form of sound words' is such that sometimes one single phrase or expression, one word rather than another, will condense in itself, and keep for ready use, a whole set of Scripture teachings—in fact, a very body of divinity.

“The advantages of such clear, simple, concise statements of God's truth as these must be evident at once to every candid

mind. And if in early life a systematic view of Christian doctrine be obtained and digested and stored in the memory, the harmony and relation of the teachings of the Bible will be recognized, and the pernicious heresies which gain the assent of so many people will be at once rejected. And in these days of ours, when respect for all that is sacred and venerable is sneered at by many as weakness and superstition, when the march of intellect, as they call it, is the pretext for so much change, and when the very ‘foundations ‘are in danger of being destroyed, what a grand thing it would be, for the young especially, to be 'rooted and grounded' in the truth, that they may not be the helpless dupes of every plausible impostor and be tossed about like feathers by ‘every wind of doctrine'!

“And if, at any time, there should be shown a disposition to banish the form of sound words from the early training of our children, then it should be recognized as a solemn obligation, on the part of those whom God has set as watchmen on the walls of Zion, to inculcate it with renewed zeal as an invaluable bulwark of the truth. The peculiar characteristic of our age in the domain of religious truth is looseness. The tendency most prevailing is to make the way of religious belief smooth and broad and easy, to avoid giving offence, and to please the natural heart, even though God declares that heart to be ‘deceitful and desperately wicked.'"

The value of this formula of divine truth has been abundantly demonstrated by the experience of ages, by the testimony of piety and by the deep foundations of righteousness it has helped to lay in many a highly-favored community. All who have well understood it, all who have compared it with the Scriptures, all who have candidly studied the uprightness and stability of character which have ever distinguished those who were imbued with its principles, will add their testimony. Its influence in making any people intelligent, virtuous, religious, free and stable may be seen in Scotland, in the north of Ireland, and in those parts of America and England where it has been most used. If the Sabbath-school only succeed in fixing this in the memory and hearts of

the great body of its scholars, it will have accomplished a mission the benign effects of which will have no limits either in time or eternity.

We ought to be the more incited to make this a part of the regular exercises of the Sabbath-school from the consideration that if the Catechism is not memorized in youth it probably never will be afterward. Like spelling, reading, writing and other fundamental branches of education, it must ordinarily be learned in childhood if ever. As a matter of fact, it is seen that very few do study it in adult years. Children memorize easily, and it would not be the task for them to lay up this treasure in their memories that it would be for others. Moreover, by committing it in childhood it will be retained more tenaciously, and become incorporated as an essential part of the earliest and tenderest associations of their being. How anxious, then, should we be not to let the golden opportunity slip until this precious acquisition is made! We should be stirred up by the homely motto, so true here, that it is “now or never."

An objection very often brought against the learning of the Catechism by children is, that they cannot understand it—that it is to them nothing but a tissue of unmeaning words. This difficulty is greatly exaggerated; there is far more in the Catechism that is comprehensible by children than is commonly imagined. But supposing it to be so in part, they will understand it more and more fully as reason strengthens, and afterward see it to be a mine of the most valuable of all truth. And then they will thank the Sabbath-school with all their hearts that it persevered—even against their inclination it may have been—in enriching them with treasures of divine knowledge which gold could not purchase.

Now, the Sabbath-school is a most important instrumentality for this teaching of the Catechism. It has collected within its walls the very class of persons who ought to learn it, and who may be induced to undertake the task. The incitement of the example of others learning it, and the influence of pastor, superintendent and teachers, will lead many to begin the work and to persevere in it who would not otherwise think of so

doing. It is a school for learning religious truth, and this comes in naturally as an appropriate branch of its exercises. The experience of many Sabbath-schools, where the Catechism is studied successfully, proves that it is practicable to introduce it into all; and it is to be remembered that many of the children collected in our Sabbath-schools never will be taught the Catechism at home.

We would strongly recommend a plan for its constant study in the Sabbath-school and for making it a part of the regular exercises which has been tested by years of use. In the closing exercises of every Sabbath let the whole school repeat two answers of the Catechism in concert, and then go back and review ten by repeating them in the same way. In this manner the whole Catechism will be recited every year, and reviewed at least ten times. This process, continued year after year, must necessarily make the scholars familiar with it. The plan is perfectly practicable; it takes up but a short time of the school; it becomes an interesting part of the exercises, and it fixes the Catechism in the memory and affections of the scholars with hardly any effort. When any school adopts it, it is not likely soon to be abandoned, as an experience of ten or twelve years has proved. Even if some of the scholars should read them as they repeat the answers, or if they should only hear others answering, still much of the phraseology and of the truth will ultimately lodge in their memories.

We would earnestly recommend that in this or in some other way the study of the Catechism be made a prominent part of the exercises of every Sabbath-school. The school should never tire of it or think that it has been memorized to perfection. It should be repeated year after year—repeated until it never can be forgotten, repeated until it becomes a part of the thought and the language, of the very mind of every child and youth in the Sabbath-school. We would impress this counsel by the words of the Rev. Dr. W. G. T. Shedd as he closes his admirable work on the duties of the pastor: “In closing these brief chapters upon Pastoral Theology we feel deeply that there is not a topic of greater importance than this subject of

catechising; and the last words we should desire to address a young clergymen as he is going forth to his life-long labor would be to make full proof of that part of his ministry to which belongs the indoctrination of the rising generation in the truths and principles of the Christian religion."

(d) Cultivating the Benevolence of the Children

We have already shown, in another place, that one of the three great objects of the Sabbath-school is to cultivate the benevolence of the young; and in doing this it should not merely teach what beneficence is, but should also illustrate it by leading the scholars to its actual practice. It should train them in doing good, especially by offering their gifts to the treasury of the Lord. Its object should be to exercise them in giving out of a. spirit of benevolence, to accustom them to give for Christ's sake, to train them to give because it is an essential element of the Christian life. It should be the established rule of every Sabbath-school that every Sabbath an offering of the scholars shall be made for the cause of God and righteousness. Both in theory and practice it should be perpetually inculcated, as it is taught in Scripture, that prayers and alms must go together in the worship that is true and acceptable. It should be impressed upon the minds of the children from their earliest days by the teaching of parents, pastor and Sabbath-school that this is fundamental in religion.

The great hope of the world today, inasmuch as God has connected its salvation so intimately with human agency, is that the rising generation will be more liberal than their fathers. The principle of beneficence, which demands the giving away of that which is most highly prized among men to objects which are purely spiritual, and at the mere command of God, is a very difficult principle to establish. It encounters the natural and most formidable selfishness of the human heart, and that love of money which even the pen of inspiration declares to be “the root of all evil." And the great thing to be aimed at is to get the

principle of benevolence established before the other principle of selfishness shall have become so firmly rooted as to absorb everything. If ever the nobler principle is to gain the ascendency, except as it is done by the supernatural grace of God, it must be worked into the soul while it is yet tender and susceptible of abiding impressions.

Hence the importance of the Sabbath-school cultivating in the children the spirit of benevolence. To this end they should be thoroughly instructed in the benevolent work of the Church; they should be made to see that it is by far the greatest work of the world, and their minds should be enlarged and drawn out of self by the study of the grandest enterprise of the age. Then it should be impressed upon them that this is a work in which they have something to do, to which God and their own highest glory cull them. They should be so trained that they will love to give—that their whole life will be ennobled and sweetened by the effort to save that they may have the more to give to the cause which brought down Jesus to the cross, and on which the salvation of millions upon millions of souls is dependent. Oh, blessed will it be for them and for their generation if they are so trained that they never shall remember the time when they did not love to give to God and his blessed gospel!

In this matter of developing the. benevolence of the children it is worthy of special attention that their gifts be placed in the treasury of the Lord, and not devoted to their own interests. In many a school all that the scholars contribute is spent in defraying its own expenses—a system which is most objectionable on many accounts. Certainly it is not cultivating their benevolence to have all their gifts terminate in themselves. It is only selfishness. It is moreover a shame for any church to compel its children to defray the expenses of its own school. Unspeakably better is it to accustom them to giving to objects of general benevolence, so that they may learn to do good to others and help forward the cause of Christ and truth.

This is important for the purpose of training the young in the work of benevolence, but it is also important because of the

aggregate amount which might be contributed by all our Sabbath-schools. It would tell in a very important manner upon the whole benevolent work of the Church. It would tell far more on the future, and that the very near future. It would soon impart a new impulse to all the Boards and other benevolent operations of the Church. Let us take examples. Supposing that in a school of three hundred scholars each contributes one cent every Sabbath, the aggregate will be one hundred and fifty-six dollars a year—enough to pay the appropriation of the Board of Education to a young man preparing for the ministry. Supposing each scholar gives three cents a Sabbath, the amount will be four hundred and sixty-eight dollars a year, which would support a Sabbath-school missionary of the Board of Publication. Supposing that each brings five cents, then the sum will be seven hundred and eighty dollars a year, and this would pay the salary of a lay missionary of the Board of Foreign Missions and the appropriation to one of our home missionaries. Or if the contributions were distributed among all the Boards, still the amounts to each would be very considerable. If all our schools would do this the income to the Church would be vast. It would soon shame the adult members of our congregations into giving far more than they now do. As a matter of fact there are Sabbath-schools which actually contribute more to the Lord's cause than do all the rest of the congregation. Let this matter receive due attention in all our Sabbath-schools, let the scholars be properly instructed and trained in giving for the spread of the gospel in all its departments, and the whole aspect of the Church and the world will soon be changed.

The contributions of the Sabbath-school ought to be appropriated to the Church's own Boards or benevolent operations. The united piety and wisdom of the Church have planned and perfected these schemes of benevolence; they embrace the whole field of benevolent operation; they are economical; they are for the propagation of the truth as the Church itself understands it; they are responsible in their management to the whole Church: and they have therefore a

right to look to the Sabbath-school as well as the church for their support. On this point it was very appropriately said by Rev. Dr. John W. Dulles: "Where does "the money go? The money given by our Sabbath-school scholars, we mean. Who get it? Our Sabbath-schools are the hunting-ground of every good cause, from the widows' homes to exploration societies, and of some causes not so good. The hungry and homeless enterprises that cannot effect an entrance to the church, at whose doors sit the watchful session, sidle up to the Sabbath-school and modestly ask for only the crumbs from the children's table. Soft-hearted superintendents shrink from saying ‘No ‘to ‘so good ‘a thing, and the gifts of the little ones are voted away with uplifted hands. In Presbyterian churches this matter should be controlled by the session. Where organization has not reached this perfection the greatest firmness should be exercised by the officers of the school in barring out these miscellaneous appeals. The established Church-channels of benevolence afford abundant outlets for the gifts of the children. Here we have Boards under the strictest supervision and most economical management carrying on the grandest schemes of benevolence. Missions to the heathen, home missions, Sabbath-school mission-work can be aided through these organizations, with the assurance that the money is safely given. Moreover, if our children give through these Boards when they are young, they will love them and give through them when they are old. With such channels open to us for the use of Sabbath-school mission-funds, it is most unwise to dissipate these gifts through agencies of which we know little and over which we have no control."

(e) The Sabbath-school to be kept in Sympathy with the Church

Very much of the value of the Sabbath-school depends upon keeping it in vital connection and strong sympathy with the Church. The Church has this high claim upon teachers and scholars because it was appointed of God; because it was set

up to be the light of the world; because it has outlasted every other institution the world has ever seen; because it is composed of the very best of men, even the redeemed of the Lord; and because with its interests are bound up the interests of the young, the interests of truth and righteousness, all the highest interests of the race. For these and other reasons in the Sabbath-school there should be not an act, not a word, not a thought, in opposition to the Church; neither should "there be any ignoring of its authority, or any disposition to stand aloof or to act independently of that body of which Christ is the Head, and old or young but component parts. The Sabbath-school should take pains to be identified with it in everything. Superintendent and teachers should remember that their manner of conducting the school will have much to do with keeping up this reverence for the Church in the minds of the children.

To this end the scholars should be kept thoroughly acquainted with the Church in all her interests, nature, history and destiny. It is well that the school should be often spoken to concerning it in affectionate terms. Patriotism loves to dwell upon the high honors of its country and relate them to its children; far more ardently should loyalty to the Church of God fill the minds of its offspring with admiration for her glories. The children should be made to see the superior advantages which the Church has above every mere institution of men; they should be taught her honorable history, and they should be kept well acquainted with the various projects she is carrying on for the purpose of saving and sanctifying the human race. The more they are made to know of the Church, the more they will be interested in her and be drawn to her fold. They should be made to feel that the Church is theirs, and awakened to a loving concern in all her affairs. They should also be taught that they have duties toward the Church—duties to help forward her interests, to love her and to strive to bring others to love her. There should be cultivated in the minds of the scholars an intelligent and sincere attachment to their own denomination. If patriotism loves its own country, should not

piety love its own Church? Our own denomination, whatever it is, we think to be the best, as we show by our connection with it; should Ave not teach our children what we so sincerely believe? To stay them in the midst of wildly-floating theories, to fix them in the possession of the blessings of the house of God, it is deeply important that all our children should be taught to love their own Church.

The Sabbath-school should use its influence to induce the scholars to attend regularly upon the services of the sanctuary. They are a part of the congregation, and it is their right and duty to be present at its worship. There they may receive the highest blessings which God comes into the assemblies of his people for the purpose of bestowing. If they are influenced to attend it in their youth, the habit will be formed, and in after years they will be drawn to the house of God by the old hallowed associations. They will be led to love the sanctuary, and in many an hour of retirement o long for its blessings. The superintendent and teachers of the school have peculiar facilities for influencing the scholars to attend the services of the church. They can show them that it is their duty to go; they can arrange plans for taking them there; they can question them about the sermons and other services, and so stimulate their interest; they can always be present themselves, and lead by their example; and they can notice whether the scholars have been there, and thus show that.it is an object which rests upon their hearts. Sometimes the teachers may take their classes, or as many of them as they can induce to go, in a body —a plan that will have influence with many. It should be affectionately and emphatically impressed upon the minds of the scholars that only a part of their duty on the Lord's day is performed when they attend Sabbath-school—the other part is to attend upon the preaching of the sanctuary. Let them be accustomed to go from their childhood, and then they will not be absent from their places in the house of God in their adult years.

If possible, pastor and elders, as well as superintendent, should know the children of the Sabbath-school individually.

This of course will be very difficult in large schools. But much can be done toward it by giving close attention to them personality, and by striving to recognize them, at least by their family resemblance. Nothing will gain their affection more surely than to let them see that they are noticed, and so much thought of as to be known even by name. Then, moreover, they can be personally watched over in their spiritual interests. That pastor who is so highly favored as to be able to tell the scholars of his Sabbath-school by name, or even by their family, has in his hands a wonderful power for good.

(f) Improvements in Sabbath-school Work

The progressive age in which we are living requires that there should be advance toward perfection in this noble enterprise. There are very great improvements in the art of secular teaching; so also should there be in the art of religious teaching. As a blessed fact it is manifest that the whole subject of the Sabbath-school, with its. various interests, is becoming better and better understood. Now, it is clearly our wisdom in this matter to fall in with the spirit of the age and guide the improvements. There must be change, and it is better for us to admit the fact, and if possible control that change. As is admitted on all hands, we should aim at a far higher standard of teaching in our Sabbath-schools. The working of them needs to be vastly improved. This is felt everywhere. Those who are to teach youthful immortals the way of salvation need a preparation that is but seldom appreciated. We can never hope to arrive at perfection here, but we can make it our aim. We can rise far higher. There should be strenuous efforts made, in some way, to qualify our teachers better for their task. Mere novelties in teaching are to be guarded against. Some of these may take the life and spirituality out of the schools. Among the wisest and best of our people these novelties are greatly dreaded. At the same time, every real improvement in the working of the Sabbath-school is to be diligently sought after and adopted. There should be progress here. Our motto should

be, “Higher! higher!" The everlasting truths of the gospel cannot change or be changed, but the modes of communicating and impressing them may be greatly changed and improved.

1. The necessity for constant wakefulness as to all real improvements in the Sabbath-school work may be seen when it is considered that that work is still in a formative state. At first, and for a long time afterward, its main object was to instruct ignorant children in spelling, reading and writing. Then, for a while, little more was aimed after in its teachings than what pertains simply to the intellectual part of religion. Afterward the chief attention seemed to be bestowed upon the machinery of the school and upon the entertainment of the children—upon furnishing them with shows, exhibitions, festivals and other things by which they might be attracted. Now the institution is manifestly settling down into what it should be—namely, the Church working in the department of the young, and that with the aim of leading them, through the study of the Bible, to a saving knowledge of Christ, to the possession of principles formed by the great doctrines of the gospel, and to the practice of true benevolence.

2. It should be the aim, in the management of the Sabbath-school, to adopt all real improvements—all improvements which are calculated to make the work more effective in accomplishing its great end. In order to do this wisely, however, suggested schemes, called improvements, must be carefully scrutinized. And this again will involve an intelligent investigation of what, these proposed improvements are, what their authority, what their aim, what their tendency, and what, as tested by experience, their influence. It will very often be advisable to wait, to watch and to continue the examination. If the suggested plans infringe upon the Bible or Bible truth, if they ignore the Catechism, if they slight the Church which Christ has established, if they propose to worship God in some other way than he has appointed, if they lead to error, if their influence is to divert attention from the real object which ought to be had in view, if they secularize the Sabbath-school, if they pander to the love of novelty and show,—if such be their

prevailing tendency, they ought to be rejected without any hesitation.

Leaving out all these exceptions, it will be found that there are many modern real improvements in this work which ought to be adopted. Many important ideas as to the manner of imparting religious truth have been borrowed from the improvements in the secular schools. Some of the best minds and hearts of the age have been devoted to this subject, and the result of their labors is telling most beneficially. The progress of the Sabbath-school may be seen in its improved methods of interesting the young, in its helps, books, commentaries, journals and other appliances for facilitating the teacher's work, and in the singing by which it attracts and gives a sweet charm to the truths of salvation. There is constant and healthy improvement in all these things. Discoveries are being made for imparting old truths in more attractive and successful ways. Old plans of teaching are better understood, better appreciated and better applied. The one great improvement which is now looming up as to the conception of the chief end of the Sabbath-school is gradually changing and sanctifying the whole character of the work.

Now, in this blessed effort to elevate the Sabbath-school to a higher stage of efficiency, usefulness and spirituality, every pastor, every superintendent and every teacher should stand ready to take a part. Every improvement that evidently promises better things should be tried and worked out to still higher perfection. No plan should be rejected simply because it is new. In the example of the great apostle, who could say of himself, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix. 22), we have scriptural authority for adapting ourselves to circumstances which are favorable to the promotion of the cause of Christ and truth.

3. At the present time there is 'probably need for special care that too much machinery be not wrought into the management of our Sabbath-schools. In many quarters the tendency is strongly in this direction. It may be that abuses of this kind are merely temporary, as the result of the wonderful

progress of the whole work. The danger lies in the disposition to adopt mere novelties, and in the tendency to spend the energies of the school in drills, entertainments, banners, fancy names, responses, fantastic plans of studying Scripture, and in other contrivances which have no other promise than to interest and amuse. But experience has already proved that many of these are impracticable or useless, or detrimental to the real object of the Sabbath-school in the spiritual welfare of the scholars. The evils are curing themselves. The pastor should carefully guard his school against this multiplication of harmful machinery, and yet not so as to exclude that which is really valuable.

The Sabbath-school ought never to be turned into a drill-room. That is not its design, and never can be one of its perfections. The effort to make it such has been carried to the most absurd lengths; even to the degree of proposing that the boys be subject to military drill during the week in order that they might yield more prompt submission to the discipline of the school. Too many and useless rules are sure to be violated, and so lead to interminable difficulties. A school may be very easily systematized to death, as many sad instances prove. Prof. John S. Hart, whose ripe judgment and large experience in both Sabbath and secular schools give his opinion peculiar weight, has forcibly said upon this subject: "There are two ways of killing all life out of a school. One is to load it down with a complex machinery of laws and by-laws—to ‘constitution ‘it to death. The other is to make its offices a bone of electioneering contention."

A good rule to adopt in this matter is that just as much machinery shall be used in conducting the school as may be necessary for securing good order and attention, and no more. Whatever plans are calculated to produce a devotional spirit on the Lord's day, or to impress the truth more deeply on the heart, or to aid in turning the feet into the way of life, are worthy of being faithfully tried. These will probably prove advantageous, but it will hardly be safe to go beyond them. And even these should be used as means to the higher end, never as

the chief object of the school.

(g) Promptness in Everything

This is the one great, comprehensive principle extending to the opening and closing of the session, the conducting of its public exercises, the movements of the superintendent, the instructions of the teachers, the work of the librarians, and the duties of the scholars, which involves nearly all that need be said as to the management of the school. It is, in fact, the great secret of managing the Sabbath-school. The exercises should always commence at the appointed minute. There should be no dragging in giving out hymns or announcing notices, and no whispering by superintendent or other officers between the parts of the services. The scholars should never be allowed to become weary by pauses or by dull and tiresome exercises. There should always be something to do, and it should be done to the minute. By every movement and every word the children should be made to see that those who conduct the school are deeply in earnest, and that they have an important business on hand. If this one counsel is carefully heeded, thought out and followed, it is believed that there will be but very little trouble in conducting any Sabbath-school.

(h) The Library

It is not the purpose in this treatise to enter with much minuteness into the consideration of the management of the Sabbath-school; but the library has grown to be such a prominent feature of the work that it would not be justifiable to pass it over without some notice. The making of books for the Sabbath-school, the purchasing of libraries and the furnishing of the reading of the scholars have become matters so vast in their magnitude and important in their influences that few persons are properly awake to them. The Sabbath-school libraries, to an important extent, constitute the reading of the youth of the community. They are helping very greatly to shape the taste for reading in the rising generation. Looked at in this

light, as furnishing both the material and taste for reading in this reading age, the subject of the Sabbath-school library becomes one of immeasurable importance. Every pastor should look into it most carefully, for it is sending out its influences all around him, and affecting his work to a degree which he perhaps little imagines.

That there are serious difficulties and dangers connected with the subject will appear manifest to everyone who enters into its investigation. Because of the great demand and profit immense numbers of these books are published and pressed into libraries. As a consequence, books are often found in Sabbath-school libraries that have scarcely any religious element in them; others, again, that are purely secular, such as the lives of generals and statesmen; still others that are simply novels; and others that as to literary merit and every other merit are worthless. And all these are given to the children on the Sabbath, to be read on the day that is set apart for the service of the Lord! When Sabbath-school libraries are composed of such books they do more harm than good. By their constantly reading them the minds of the children become crammed with matter which is of no profit—often crammed with that which is unreal or worse—and often, after a while, they become so accustomed to such reading that they will scarcely look at anything else.

At the same time, it is manifest that fiction ought not to be excluded from all the books that are placed in the hands of the Sabbath-school scholars. Stories illustrative of gospel truth are well adapted to the minds of children. They will read them, and through them receive and understand the truth as they cannot be induced to do in any other way. The fact is well established that such stories may impress religion in a most beneficial manner. Then the works that contain them may be made to take the place of other books of an evil tendency that would certainly be read. In the parables of our Lord, and in such stories as the Pilgrim's Progress, we have abundant proof that this method of presenting sacred truth is both lawful and profitable. Fiction, then, cannot be banished, but its character

should be guarded with the most watchful care.

There are two things in reference to this matter which ought to receive diligent attention from the authorities of the Sabbath-school: 1. The books for the library should be selected with exceedingly great care, so that none but those which are suitable may be admitted. And such selection cannot be made directly by either teachers, officers or pastor. They cannot go over all the books that are offered for Sabbath-school libraries; and, unless they could do so, it would be impossible for them to choose only those that are reliable. Hence, the only safety is to select from catalogues of books which have been carefully read and approved by persons whose judgment can be trusted. Much time should be devoted to the purchasing of books, so that there may be as few mistakes as possible. No book should find a place in the Sabbath-school library unless it is known to be appropriate for that sacred purpose.

2. Every possible effort should be made to have other books, as well as stories, read by the children. Books on religious history and biography, on the Bible and personal piety, will sometimes be read by even very young persons if they are properly brought before them. If the pastor or officers of the school, having themselves first read them, would commend such books by name, publicly and privately, some of the scholars would be induced to read them and to persuade others to do so also. A single good book, made popular in this way, becomes a treasure in the school.

(i) Prayer-meeting Before or After the Exercises of the School

This is a practice which we would very highly recommend. It brings down the influences of the Holy Spirit upon the teachings of the day and seals them upon the hearts of the scholars. It stamps the impress of sacredness upon all the other exercises. It sanctifies the whole work, leads the teachers to a proper sense of dependence for success in their labors and turns the school into a glowing scene of worship. The best time

for holding this prayer-meeting is at the close of the exercises of the Sabbath-school. Then more of the teachers and scholars will be likely to attend, and it will seal the instructions of the past hour by a special, earnest and united petition for the divine blessing to follow them. In order to make such a prayer-meeting interesting and permanent, it must be exceedingly brief in each of its exercises and in its whole continuance; it ought not ordinarily to last more than twenty minutes.

THE PASTOR'S PERSONAL WORK IN THE SABBATH-SCHOOL

He is pastor of the whole congregation in its various branches, and we have already seen that there is no part of his charge which demands of him more sedulous attention than the young. Hence his whole duty toward the Sabbath-school will not be done if he simply turns it over to superintendent and teachers and holds them responsible for its management. There are some things in connection with it which he alone can do, and which are indispensable to the faithful discharge of his office. To avoid the omission of these duties through inadvertency or temporary disinclination, he should keep before him a fixed plan of what they are, and when and how they should be performed. They should not be left to the capricious feelings of the hour. We suggest the following programme, which may be of use to the pastor in the formation of a fuller one for himself.

(a) Regular Attendance

In order that he may show his sincere interest in the school, that he may be at hand for consultation about its management, that he may keep up an intimate acquaintance with teachers and scholars, that he may be thoroughly identified with all its operations, and that he may render any other needed assistance, the pastor ought to be present at every session, as far as his other duties will permit. This should be regarded as an essential part of his general pastoral work. That pastor loses much, very much, who does not keep up this practice throughout his ministry.

Then, when present, it will of course be expected of him that he will generally make a short address. On such an occasion, when all the children are assembled, it would be scarcely justifiable in him not to utter at least a few words that might help to fix the truth in their hearts. He can reach them there as

he cannot reach them in any other place. In this way he can make up in part for the deficiency which it is feared there is, and always will be, in the instructions of some teachers. That these addresses may have more coherence, and consequent profit, it would be well to adopt some system in reference to them. Some such order of subjects as this might be adopted and carried out month after month: First Sabbath, the current answers of the Catechism; second, the various objects of benevolence for which contributions are made, in turn; third, some important subject of Christian duty or practice; fourth, review of the lessons of the month. It will be seen at a glance that this would give variety and comprehensiveness to the remarks which the pastor might make to the school Sabbath after Sabbath.

In some schools it may not be necessary or desirable that the pastor should make an address at every visit, but a kind word and an encouraging look will do much to cheer superintendent and teachers and to incite the scholars to diligence. These he should always be ready to give, and then his presence in the school will be welcomed with pleasure.

(b) General Supervision

It is manifestly the duty, and may be the great pleasure, of the pastor to be fully alive to all the plans and operations of the Sabbath-school. He should keep himself well informed concerning all its interests, in order that he may guide them. All the influence which his office carries, and all the facilities which his superior training gives him, should be used in helping forward this institution. His identification with it should be so thorough and constant that the idea would never prevail for a moment that any important movement could be undertaken without his knowledge, approval and help. Prof. John S. Hart undoubtedly presented this point in its true light when he said, “I most fully believe that the minister should be the chief animating soul of the school. The superintendent should be his right-hand man, his counselor and co-worker in

all his plans for sowing the seed in the hearts of the young of his charge. The minister should spend some time, not less certainly than half an hour, in the school every Sabbath. He should know all that is going on in it. He should know every teacher and every scholar by face and by name, and what influences are at work in each department and in every class; and he should find the means to make his own influence felt in every movement of the school. Every scholar and every teacher should feel that the pastor is cognizant of his or her doings in the school—not, of course, by any system of espionage, but simply by the fact of his constant and pervading presence. The school, in short, should be thought of and spoken of as his." Never should he forget that the Sabbath-school is an important part of his charge.

The actual direction of the Sabbath-school ought always to be in the hands of the pastor, either directly or indirectly through its officers. He is responsible for the management of his whole charge. He is in theory, and almost always in fact, better qualified for the wise guidance of its affairs than any one else. It is justly expected of him that he will exercise this control. If the helm is kept in his hands it will very often prevent the introduction of schemes which are merely novel or Utopian, or highly mischievous in their tendency. And it is but very rarely indeed that the right of directing the school will not be conceded to him with cheerfulness. By the proper spirit and tact he may exercise it without even the semblance of offensive interference with any of the officers of the school.

Among the duties of this pastoral supervision of the Sabbath-school, the selection of teachers is one of very grave importance. This will appear if we consider the harm which may be done by an unsuitable teacher. Such an one when placed over a class will do far more harm than good. He may teach the most preposterous errors to his class; he may be a troubler of the whole school by bringing strife and discord into its counsels; or he may be a reproach to his fellow-teachers and damage their influence for good. Hence the greatest possible care should be taken in selecting persons for this responsible

office. The pastor should not be willing to leave this duty wholly in the hands of any other; he should have the chief voice in it; he should at least be consulted on the introduction of every new teacher. Here again we would avail ourselves of the wisdom of Prof. Hart. As the result of his experience he says: “I never saw a church yet, big or little, in country or city, that did not contain in itself the materials, the men and women, capable of fitting out a school with a first-rate corps of teachers and a good superintendent. But usually these materials bear about the same relation to the actual work that cotton growing in the field bears to the finished fabric. The man who is to pick the cotton, gin it, sort it, spin it and weave it into cloth ready for use is the minister. He must select the men and women of his flock who have the natural fitness for taking care of the lambs. He must enlist their sympathies in the work, and know how to counsel and direct them in it. He is not to do the work of the school himself, but he should be the animating spirit of those who do it. To do all this he must, however, be himself practically familiar with it." If the right persons for teachers cannot be found, it is better to make large classes under the care of those whose value has been well tested.

Should the pastor hold the office of superintendent? There would be many advantages in his so doing. His superior qualifications, the influence of his ministerial office, the very deep interest he has in the cause, his facilities for promoting its welfare in moving about through the congregation, his knowledge of all the families, and the importance of his personally knowing and having the affection of the young,—all these point to him as a person most suitable for it. But there are also disadvantages. Among them we may enumerate that to hold this additional office imposes too great a burden upon the pastor, and very few have the strength to bear it; that the odium often incurred by exercising the discipline of the school ought not to come clown upon the minister and so impair his influence; and that it is unwise to keep suitable laymen from holding an office the exercise of which would greatly benefit them and extend their usefulness. It is best, then, to be guided

in this matter by circumstances. When there is in the church a layman suitable for the office it is better that he should hold it, the pastor still guiding. When there is no such person to be had, then it is clearly the duty of the pastor to be not only the guiding, but also the acting, head of the school.

(c) The Pastor's Bible-class

Considering the very full explanations of the lessons which are now furnished by the Sabbath-school journals of various kinds, it seems scarcely needed that the pastor should spend his time in giving the teachers instruction upon them. Besides, there is objection in the minds of many teachers to the minister going over the lesson in the presence of some of their scholars previous to the Sabbath, as that might take away the interest when they come to teach it in the school. Hence it is better for him to devote his energies in this direction to the study of the Bible as a whole. His object should be to direct them how to teach the Sacred Book. He should endeavor to go over the ground which is ordinarily known as the “Introduction to the Bible." It is very evident that the pastor is the proper person to give instruction in this important study of the Holy Book.

The advantages of his giving weekly instruction to teachers, scholars and others in this particular branch of Bible study are very great. It does not interfere with the ordinary teaching of the school, as it covers entirely different ground. It prepares the teachers for the more thorough and loving discharge of their duties. By opening new fields of investigation it awakens a deeper interest in the study of the Sacred Book. Through it the people will gradually grow to prize the Bible more highly. The congregation will ultimately become more intelligent in the Scriptures and in scriptural doctrines. It lays a solid foundation of truth in every mind which undergoes its process of training. By means of it the pastor has a splendid opportunity of influencing the congregation to their highest profiting, and for keeping himself also more thoroughly versed in all the wondrous depths of scriptural knowledge.

The best time for holding this pastor's class for Bible study is at the close of the principal week-evening service of the church. It ought not to occupy more than half an hour, so that adding it to the hour of the other service will not make the whole time too long. By holding it at that hour it will be more likely to be well attended, as most of those who come to the other meeting will probably remain for it. Besides, in holding it then there will be the advantage of not multiplying meetings, which in most churches is a thing which should be considered.

In conducting the exercises of this class certain brief, well-defined courses of Bible study should be carefully planned out; they should be distinctly announced and described and their value indicated, and then taken up one after another until the whole field is gone over, no matter how much time it may take. The blackboard should be freely used, and there should be so much repetition and drilling as will fasten the important facts and truths indelibly in every mind.

We suggest a list of such courses for Bible study, the importance of which will be seen at a glance. Its subjects a.re these: 1. Memorizing the names of the books of the Old and New Testaments in their order; 2. The leading chronological epochs of the Bible; 3. Prominent places in biblical geography; 4. Author, history, design, contents and place occupied by each of the books of the sacred canon; 5. Leading evidences of the authenticity and genuineness of the Scriptures; 6. A few comprehensive rules of biblical interpretation. When these subjects have been mastered by any class, then the study of the Bible will become one of the greatest pleasures.

(d) PREACHING TO THE CHILDREN

That the pastor should preach expressly to the children at stated periods seems now to be admitted as an essential duty of his sacred office. This practice appears to be necessary in order that he may present the truth to this class of his people more fully than can be done in the short addresses of the Sabbath-school. He must have such opportunity of reaching the

children expressly. By so doing he can attach the young to the Church, which is important for both them and it. He can also attach them to himself, and so gain an influence that may be used in promoting their highest well-being. He is pastor of the children, and toward them, as well as toward adults, he must discharge the highest duty of his office, which is to preach the gospel of Christ.

How often and under what arrangements sermons should be specially addressed to the children must be determined by each pastor according to his circumstances and facilities for that peculiar service. Some ministers do it every month, some oftener, and some less frequently. An excellent plan which has proved acceptable is to preach to the children on a fixed Sabbath in each quarter, to have the sermon take the place of the ordinary Sabbath-morning discourse, and to have all the children of the church and Sabbath-school assembled and mixed in the seats with the ordinary congregation.

This plan of preaching to the children, not apart from the ordinary congregation, but in connection with it, has many advantages. It gives the pastor an opportunity of reaching all the children of the church in connection with their parents. It accustoms the young to going to the house of God from their earliest days. It makes them acquainted with the church, and familiarizes them early with its worship. It keeps up a sense of their covenant obligations, and of their interest in the privileges of God's house. It also interests adults, who will often obtain clearer views of the truth when they hear it presented to children than at any other time, and who will sometimes listen to duties set forth in children's sermons to which they would scarcely give ear if addressed directly to themselves.

It is a great mistake to suppose that only those ministers can preach to children who have a special faculty for so doing. Many think they cannot do it, and consequently never make a determined effort. But there are very few cases indeed where a minister, if he made the proper preparation, could not preach to the children of his church with acceptance and profit. The great secret of it consists in these two things:

1. The preacher should know exactly what he wants to say, not only in the leading beads but also in the subordinate points of his sermon. lie should so completely master the thoughts that he could, if desirable, express them in other than the ordinary technical phraseology with which they are associated; and then the plainest possible words should be used in communicating what is thus clearly in the speaker's mind. Childish language is not needed—should not be used—but language which will convey the thoughts in the most natural manner.

2. The subject should be divided into several distinct heads, which should be clearly enumerated and announced and repeated, so that they may be understood and take hold upon the memory. This is a most important element in successful preaching to children. It will enable almost any one to do it. To make it clear and show its advantages, we shall give three examples. Let us take the text, "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Zech. viii. 5. Introduction—what is meant by the city? Then the heads: 1st. Boys and girls may be in the church—they were in the streets of the city; 2d. They would be very happy in it—they were playing in the streets; 3d. They would be safe in it—cities were walled for safety; 4th. It would be a great honor to be in it — this city was the residence of the King of kings; 5th. How to get into the city. Let us take, again, the text, "And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." 2 Kings v. 3. Narrate the circumstances of her being captured, brought to the slave-market, bought by Naaman's wife, who Naaman was, his honors, his leprosy and trouble, the little maid uttering this wish, and the results. Then, 1st. The importance of the young learning about God and his servants—if the little maid had not known him she could not have directed to him; 2d. God brings the richest blessings out of afflictions—the sorrows of her captivity, and blessed results of Naaman's cure; 3d. Great results may come from little causes—the wish of the little maid, and the influence upon Israel of the great Syrian being

miraculously cured; 4. Children can often do much good—how much this one did. 5th. God honors children—this one spoken of wherever the Bible is read. Let ns take a third example, the substance of which is from a sermon of the Rev. Dr. Richard Newton. The text is, "The whole family in heaven and earth." Eph. iii. 15. Introduction—what is meant by this family? Then, 1st. It is a family composed of old and young; 2d. It is a large family; 3d. It is an old family; 4th. It is a happy family; 5th. It is an honorable family; 6th. It is a useful family; 7th. Are you in that family? It can be seen at a glance how easy it would be to interest children for a few moments on each of these points, and to work them out into a sermon.

Is it advisable to use many anecdotes in this kind of preaching? Rev. Dr. Richard Newton, that prince of preachers to children, uses them very abundantly, and to the best effect. Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, who could enchain an audience of children in a most profitable manner, on the contrary, hardly ever related one— perhaps never, except it was some fact within his own experience in proof of his subject. Whether they should be much used or not depends greatly upon the speaker's facility in relating them. A few pertinent facts that do not overshadow, but really illustrate, the subject, are certainly advantageous. But in the use of them care should always be taken that they are not ludicrous or extravagant or improbable, for such anecdotes will rather impair than assist the impression it is desired to make. They may amuse, but they certainly will not profit. It is an excellent plan to lay up and arrange a store, as it can be collected from time to time, of facts, anecdotes, texts and plans of sermons, which can be used at any time in preaching to the children. This plan is carried out by many of those who succeed so well in this important service. Such a store, if judiciously collected and well arranged, will grow to be an invaluable treasure to the pastor who devotes himself with proper fidelity to the religious instruction of the young.

(e) Promoting the Interests of the Sabbath-school Through the Congregation

In his pastoral visits and general intercourse with the families of his charge the minister has constant opportunities of doing something to help forward the work of the school, and if he is vigilant to improve them he can thereby add greatly to its prosperity. Indeed, there is not one agency, outside of the school-house, on which so much depends as on his. He can be watchful for new scholars, and exert himself to have them attend. He can inform himself about missing scholars, and, if possible, secure their return. No one so appropriately as he can search for persons suitable for teachers, and induce them to enter upon the duties of that office. He can create an interest in it throughout the whole congregation that will be most helpful to the school. He can enlist the prayers of the people on its behalf, and call forth their contributions for its liberal support. He can contrive plans by which it may become more and more dear to the people, and through them send out wider and deeper streams of influence for good. He should have its interests continually on his mind, so that he may promote them whenever an opportunity is presented.

We would say to every pastor, with all earnestness, Remember that the Sabbath-school is a most important part of your pastoral charge; remember that what is now done for the children will tell upon the Church in a very few years; remember that their most impressible and hopeful days are fast passing away. Oh, give yourself no rest, give your praying people no rest, give God no rest, until they are all brought into the fold of the Great Shepherd.

CHAPTER IX

THE PASTOR IN THE BENEVOLENT WORK OF THE CHURCH

In this subject another class of ministerial duties is involved which is not discussed in older works on pastoral theology. The benevolent work of the Church, in anything like its present magnitude and importance, was unknown in former times, and hence it occupied a very subordinate place in the consideration of pastors and churches. Very much of that work, as it now exists, has been commenced within less than a century. It has brought with it a new class of pastoral duties, and they are amongst the foremost duties which claim the attention of the sacred office. We can only touch some of the leading points which ought to be carefully considered by every gospel workman who would make full proof of his ministry.

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE THE GREAT PRACTICAL QUESTION OF THE AGE

It involves obedience to Christ's final charge given to his Church as he ascended from our world: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." It involves the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom of truth and righteousness and life, with all its unspeakable blessings. It involves the salvation of the world, now lost, depraved, wretched, hopeless. It involves the true elevation and moral well-being of the race. It involves the higher life of the Church, which is to be developed only by the exercise of that benevolence which was perfectly illustrated in her divine Lord. All other questions, of government, of commerce, of improvements, of discoveries and of science, are really nothing in comparison with it. The Church is awaking to its importance. The most thoughtful minds are beginning to turn to it as the last, only reliable hope of mankind.

What does it aim to do for our race? It aims to disenthrall men from their most terrible bondage to sin and Satan, to enlighten them with the brightness of divine truth, to change that corrupt nature—which, continuing, would never allow the prevalence of righteousness and peace—to fill the hearts of men with that gladness, the first notes of which were heard as the angels heralded the advent of Christ, and to raise them from "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation “to an eternity of bliss and joy unspeakable. It not only purposes and promises these great objects, but in the might of the Lord it will certainly accomplish them. Is it not true, therefore, that all that is really hopeful for our race hinges upon the Church's work of beneficence, which God has made his great instrumentality for disseminating the blessings of salvation?

This great enterprise, committed to the people of God, is growing sublimer as it is better understood and more fully developed. It is becoming vaster in extent and deeper in its influence upon the whole framework of human society. New instrumentalities for carrying it on are being developed age after age, which give it a wider sweep and a mightier impulse. The vast missionary enterprise in its various departments and ramifications; the circulation of the Bible and other publications, which seems almost like the gift of tongues imparted to tell all nations, in their own languages, the wonderful works of God; and the Sabbath-school, making its impress upon the whole rising generation,—are among the grand agencies through which it is now working. New classes are cared for, new communities are opened to the gracious influence, new methods of using old instrumentalities are developed. The benevolent enterprise is penetrating more deeply into every avenue of life. It is sweeping more widely in great tides of blessings over the nations.

The benevolent work of the Church has become a sublime science. It is a noble Christian science. It has its distinct and important phenomena, and these phenomena are linked together by many relations, and the whole compose one vast body of sacred knowledge which involves the glory of God and the highest interests of humanity. The great facts are worthy of the most careful study:

Phenomenon A. The field now open for Christian activity is as extensive as the world. This is a very sublime and noteworthy fact.

Phenomenon B. Through the arrangements of Providence and grace, it is so ordered that all the benevolent enterprises have to be carried on largely through the instrumentality of money. From this divine plan it results that all believers can do something, that what is the most prized among men can be offered to the Lord, and that there can be a check put upon the selfishness which is the bane of our nature.

Phenomenon C. As vaster fields of usefulness are opening up before the Church, God is putting vaster wealth into the hands

of her people for cultivating them. Tenfold greater than a century ago is the practical work which now lies before us, and tenfold greater are the means we possess for carrying it on.

Phenomenon D. The benevolent enterprises of the Church, through her Boards, which are her working arms, have become the great business to engage the attention of her ecclesiastical assemblies. In Associations, Conferences, Conventions, Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies, missions and other agencies for extending the gospel are the subjects which are the most frequently heard and which awaken the deepest interest.

Phenomenon E. Liberal giving to Christian enterprises is both the cause and the effect of deeper piety in the Church. All experience proves this. When believers love much, they give much, and when they honor God with their substance, he blesses them in their own souls.

A great problem of practical importance which in every quarter now presses for solution is, how the liberality of Christians may be brought up to anything like its capabilities or to the crying demands of the perishing millions. Unbounded means are in the hands of the people of God. Vastly more of them could be expended in a most advantageous manner. The need for them which is developed in almost every department of Christian enterprise is appalling. How, then, can the consciences of the professed people of God be so aroused that they will look upon the matter as pressing upon them, and feel their responsibility as they ought? How can they be persuaded to believe God fully when he commands, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again''? How can they be brought up to the standard of giving in anything like just proportion to the means which have been put in their hands, to what has been done for them, to what they spend on selfish gratifications which might easily be dispensed with, or to the wants of a world lying in sin? If this could be done, then, humanly speaking, there is not

a doubt but that the gospel would make far more rapid progress than has ever yet been witnessed.

The enterprise of modern benevolence is not only a science, but it is the most sublime of all practical sciences. Look at the changes which the gospel is making, bringing up whole communities from the lowest state of barbarism to one of substantial Christian civilization. Behold the vastness of the work that is going on throughout every continent, and by the operation of such noble instrumentalities. Consider the indirect influences which it is sending out on the piety, the intelligence and the general improvement of society. Think of the aim which it keeps before it, even that of changing the face of the whole world, subduing it, and bringing all things into captivity to Christ. When we reflect upon all these we shall be prepared to say most emphatically that men do not know what Christian benevolence is doing, even as they did not know Christ when he was among them.

INFORMATION CONCERNING THE BENEVOLENT WORK OF THE CHURCH

It is important that the pastor should keep himself and his people well informed concerning the progress of the various agencies which are working for the spread of the gospel throughout the world. This is one of the very best things which can be done toward solving the problem of how the Church may be brought up to her duty in the great enterprise of benevolence. The people generally do not know much of what is going on in the kingdom. If they knew more, they could not but be more deeply interested. If they were more interested, they would pray and give and do more to help forward the blessed cause. This is knowledge that would expand the mind and heart, that would elevate the whole moral and intellectual nature. Moreover, this is a kind of study which might be made most attractive, especially to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, for what is more fascinating than to watch the sublime footsteps of God through the nations and the ages? Most diligently, therefore, should the pastor labor to have his people well informed about the missions and other benevolent operations of the Church. He should never rest until he excites enthusiasm in his congregation about this most noble of all enterprises. To this end

(a) The Pastor should keep himself well informed

He should make himself acquainted with all the instrumentalities that are used, and all the enterprises that are undertaken, and all the progress that is made in every part of the field, both at home and abroad. He should know what is going on throughout the whole kingdom. Ministers ought to read the various reports of the Boards of the Church, for they contain a reliable summary of what is going on in the various departments of Christian benevolence. Facts will show that

those pastors who are the most eminent for their Christian intelligence, and for the lively interest their churches take in the great work, are conscientious in perusing all these documents as they appear. They are not dry or uninteresting reading to those whose heart is in the work and who follow them up from year to year. They should not only be read, but also studied, so as to make the deeper impression and exhibit the work in its various relations and progress. The pastor should follow it out into its minute details. He should become enthusiastic as to the great work. He should get his head, heart, conscience, his whole mind, filled with intelligent admiration of what Christ is doing through his people for the redemption of the world.

When his mind is thus filled with a glowing knowledge of the present operations of the kingdom, that knowledge will gradually but surely work itself down into the minds of his people. It will do so even without an effort on his part. It will come out in special sermons preached when collections are to be made, in addresses, in prayers, in the Sabbath-school and in private conversations; and it will affect the people before either they or their minister will be aware of the influence. They will catch his enthusiasm, and insensibly become imbued with the spirit of Christian beneficence. What the pastor is in this matter, his church will soon become. A missionary pastor will have a missionary church, as will be seen in the interest, the liberality and the air of benevolence that will pervade it. And this, rather than dogged importunity for larger contributions, is the true way to excite liberality in the people and bring them up to a higher standard. This is the first step toward effecting such a reformation in the Church as will cause her wealth to flow tenfold more copiously into the treasury of the Lord.

It is to be greatly lamented that, whilst it is their special calling, and they have every opportunity of knowing, and so much depends on it, many of our ministers are so poorly informed about the missionary and other benevolent operations of the day. It must surely be through inadvertence that they allow it to be so. Shall the watchmen know but little of the

movements of cither friends or foes to that cause in which they are enlisted? Shall the stewards be ignorant of the vast interests which their King has committed to their trust? Is not ignorance on the part of pastors here both a sin and a disgrace?

(b) The Pastor should Communicate this Information to the People

He should preach on the obligation and magnitude of the general benevolent work of the Church, upon the important and detailed operations of each branch of it, and upon its present condition and wants. He should incidentally introduce into his sermons and addresses matters pertaining to the cause. He should keep the people informed by reading the deliverances of the Church courts concerning collections and other duties connected with the furtherance of the gospel; and he should encourage them to inform themselves, and direct them in the study of a subject which is the grandest that can engage the thoughts of man.

People need to be well informed about the progress of Christ's kingdom in the world, in order that they may be led to labor and give and sacrifice, if need be, to help forward the blessed enterprise. If they know but little, they will care but little and do but little. But there is that in the objects contemplated in the gospel which cannot be clearly understood by the pious heart without awakening its sympathies and calling forth its efforts. Any church, by keeping these objects clearly and impressively before it, may be brought up to a high degree of liberality. Some pastors have the faculty of so doing in a very high degree. As soon as they enter upon their ministrations in any church it instantly feels the touch of their enthusiasm, waking up its interest and increasing its gifts to the treasury of the Lord. To reach this holy art is a duty; it should be a pleasure, and it may be an actual attainment with every gospel workman.

COLLECTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN UP FOR EACH BENEVOLENT CAUSE OF THE CHURCH

The rule should be that whatever objects the General Assembly, or highest authority of the Church, may appoint shall be faithfully presented to the people for their contributions. There are some pastors who are strangely insensible to the obligations which rest upon them in this respect. They urge as reasons why they should not take up collections for all the objects of benevolence, either that such objects are too numerous, or that their churches cannot afford to give to all, or that the amount which they could contribute to each would be so small as to be mortifying, or some other excuse which satisfies themselves. But it is a great mistake. There should be a rigid adherence to the rule of presenting to the people, for whatever amounts God may put in their hearts to give, each object which the Church appoints. Be the amount expected large or small, the congregation should have an opportunity of contributing something. The importance of this rule is manifest — because

(a) The United Wisdom of the Whole Church, surveying the Entire Field, has fixed on them

It should be remembered that the whole field, both home and foreign work, in all the relative importance of its various branches, has been carefully surveyed, and then the existing objects of benevolence decided upon. They have been tested by experience, and found to be practicable and efficient, and also necessary as auxiliaries to each other and to the complete operation of the sublime enterprises of the gospel. The seal of God has been set upon them in the measure of success to which they have already attained. None of them are unimportant. The authority of the Church, which appoints them

all, and enjoins upon each of its members to do his part in the support of each, is not to be disregarded. A part of the responsibility for carrying on the work with more and more efficiency rests upon each minister and each private member of the Church.

There are individuals in every church who are ready to contribute to each of its Boards; and will the pastor or session take the responsibility of saying that they shall not have the opportunity? He may think that it is a matter of no consequence to the people—that they will only be too glad to escape from the obligation; but there are some of them who know something about each cause, and are expecting to hear from it. There is no benevolent enterprise of the Church in which some individuals are not specially interested, whether the pastor is or not. There are other persons who make conscience of giving systematically and appropriating something for each object. All these will be disappointed if the opportunity is withheld because minister or elders think otherwise. We have no right so to do. We have no choice but to let the people of God give as it may be in their hearts to each object which the united wisdom and experience of the Church have designated.

This should be done, though the amount contributed or expected should be ever so little. The fear that the sum given will be small is no doubt what keeps many pastors from doing anything. But is it not more honorable in the sight of both God and man to do a little than to do nothing? And then when a little is given, it tends to form a habit of giving, and it recognizes the object and the authority of Him who has made us simply stewards of whatever he has put in our hands. Besides, consider what a very little contributed by each member throughout the whole Church will amount to in the grand total. Only twenty-five cents from each member would amount to three times as much as is now given to some of its Boards; one dollar from each would almost double what, is given to any of them. There is no practical point of more importance in this matter than that of giving an opportunity to

each individual, and getting all to do something.

(b) The More there is contributed to the Boards, the More there will be given to one's own Church

The duty which we are now considering is that of giving to the cause of missions, to the circulation of the Bible, to the distribution of religious publications and other such objects of benevolence. And the truth we assert is, that if we induce our people to contribute liberally to these objects, it will not interfere with the support of our own individual churches. It will not abate their interest in their own particular church; it will not diminish the amount they contribute at home; it will rather increase that amount. We may go a great deal further, and say that the true way to increase the people's liberality at home is to cultivate it toward the general objects of benevolence.

Many pastors act as if they thought otherwise. They are afraid to have their people give to anything outside of their churches, for fear that there should be a falling off in what is needed for domestic expenses. At least they have this excuse when some object of general benevolence is presented to them. They always have something at home which is absolutely necessary, and must receive all that can be gathered. They seem to think that every cent which goes to an outside object of benevolence must be just so much taken from their home purposes. Many ministers who ought to be better informed appear to act on this conviction.

But let us look at the subject as it really is. "When the claims of God and duty and humanity are admitted in one direction, they sweep on until they cover the whole field. When the principle of benevolence is cultivated as to one object or set of objects, it must also extend to others and regard them all in their relative importance. Then the church which yields a generous obedience as a recognition of the authority of God, and out of love to him, is sure of the divine blessing in other

ways, for the promise is, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Besides, very few people indeed ever give to the cause of God as much as it is in their power to give, and there is but little danger that the treasury of their benevolence will become exhausted by what they contribute outside of their own church. Moreover, the testimony of all experience is that, instead of curtailing their gifts to their own church, Christians become more liberal to it as their sympathies are drawn out to the wants of the world beyond. A fact of his own ministry, as related by the devoted Andrew Fuller, will illustrate this. He said to a friend: “There was a period of my ministry marked by the most pointed systematic effort to comfort my serious people; but the more I tried to comfort them, the more they complained of doubts and darkness. I knew not what to do nor what to think, for I had done my best to comfort the mourners in Zion. At this time it pleased God to direct my attention to the claims of the perishing heathen in India; I felt that we had been living for ourselves and not caring for their souls. I spoke as I felt. My serious people wondered and wept over their past inattention to the subject. They began to talk about a Baptist mission; the females especially began to collect money for the spread of the gospel. We met and prayed for the heathen— met and considered what could be done among ourselves for them—met and did what we could. And whilst all this was going on the lamentations ceased; the sad became cheerful and the desponding calm. No one complained of a want of comfort. And I, instead of having to study how to comfort my flock, was myself comforted by them. They were drawn out of themselves. That was the real secret. God blessed them while they tried to be a blessing."

There could not, therefore, be worse policy than for a pastor to countenance the withholding of contributions from missions and other similar objects lest it might interfere with the

revenues of his own church. It is to lend his influence toward withering up the hearts and sympathies of his people, and toward cultivating in them a narrow and selfish spirit in reference to every good object. The Lord will not bless such a people, but his frown will rest upon them even in their own church affairs. When nothing is given to objects outside of the particular church, there is generally a miserable struggle within it to find the means for meeting its necessary expenses. Ministers who either adopt or yield to this wretched policy do a great injury to the whole cause of Christ.

(c) Collections should be given to the Church's own Established Boards

It is not wise or right to keep collections away from these well-arranged schemes, and devote them to what the fancy of the hour may deem better or to other objects over which our Church has no control, or to squander them in projects which are doubtful, untried and perhaps unknown. The evident course of both wisdom and duty is to regard them as sacred trusts belonging to those great enterprises of benevolence which the united wisdom of the Church has carefully matured.

These enterprises or Boards have the first claim, because the protracted deliberations of the Church and its piety and its prayers have worked them out and tried them, and recommended them as best adapted to accomplish the desired ends—ends which are themselves necessary for the spread of truth and the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom. The whole field of benevolent activity has been carefully surveyed to find out its most important points; the most anxious study has been bestowed upon the subject; the collective wisdom of the best of minds has been devoted to it; the successful experience of years has added its authority; and these schemes of benevolence are the result. They have been established for the purpose of disseminating the doctrines of the gospel. Then, too, all the authority of that Church which we love, and to which we owe so much, presses upon us to comply with her appointment

and help to sustain the works of benevolence which she has appointed. It should therefore be regarded as a privilege to do something for each of these enterprises. It ought to be looked upon as a sacred duty that none of them should be ignored. We should deem it a dereliction in the obligations which rest upon us if as pastors we do not distinctly present each object and urge its claims upon all our people.

It should not be forgotten or overlooked that the continued existence of these benevolent schemes of the Church depends on the contributions of Christians. They have no other income on which they can rely. It is through what the churches in their individual and collective capacity may give that they must work. Without these contributions none of our Boards can be kept up. Then the church of each pastor is just as certainly responsible for the continuance of the work as any other church. Supposing all our congregations should do as do those which withhold their contributions from some of the Boards, supposing all should squander their gifts upon objects which are irresponsible and untried, then what would be the result? Some of our great enterprises of benevolence, which are so essentially woven into all the others, must cease, amidst a wail of sorrow from all those who have a clear perception of what is needed to build up the walls of Zion. Should not, then, even every little be gathered up that may help to swell, the volume of influence and blessing which these enterprises might carry with them?

It is undoubtedly better to concentrate the contributions of the Church upon those well-tried and responsible schemes of benevolence than to scatter them upon objects which are not likely to tell much upon the promotion of the general cause. When the liberality of the Church is brought together in a few reliable enterprises it is likely to impart to them a stability and a force the weight of which will be far greater in the end. Whatever our temporary impulses may be, there is no doubt but the principle will hold good that the established agencies of the Church will devote its gifts to those objects which are the most important, all things considered; and the duty rests upon

every pastor and private Christian to lend his aid in the support of them all.

SYSTEMATIC GIVING

That there ought to be some plan according to which Christians would lay aside the amounts which it is their intention to put into the treasury of the Lord, some rule to guide them in determining what these amounts shall be, is becoming the settled conviction of the most thoughtful and godly. A matter of such immense importance ought not to be left to be settled by the varying impulses or the uncertain circumstances of the hour. What shall be given to the Lord, and the amount of supplies by which his work is to be carried on, ought not certainly to depend upon the state of the weather or on the degree of force with which the subject may happen to be presented. It should be made a matter of principle, and as such be provided for by each person according to his own peculiar circumstances.

There is no doubt but that some such system and proportion is in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures. We discover unmistakable traces of it in the Old Testament. Before the time of Moses we find Abraham giving one-tenth to “Melchisedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God." We find Jacob also, on the night when God appeared to him in the vision of the ladder extending from heaven to earth, vowing to the Lord and promising, “Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." In the Mosaic institutions the exact proportions to be dedicated to the Lord were repeatedly prescribed. In the New Testament the systematic devotion of a proportion of property to purposes of benevolence is specially appointed by the apostolic injunction, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."

When some such plan is adopted, the exercise of benevolence becomes a fixed and well-regulated principle, and is not left to the capricious impulses of the moment. The amounts to be contributed to the service of the Lord, and the proportions to be devoted to each object, can be carefully

calculated beforehand and made a sacred treasury. Far more will be given when the amounts are arranged according to some system and dedicated out of love to God and souls. And this plan, faithfully pursued, will also furnish a steady revenue on which the Boards can rely in following out their complicated work.

It is manifest that in this plan of systematic giving the first element included is that of determining beforehand the absolute amount or proportion of income which is to be devoted to the treasury of tbe Lord. This is a matter which each one must carefully decide for himself with the demands of benevolence and a sense of his responsibility before him. Following scriptural examples, many devote one-tenth of their income. In very many instances this is a wise arrangement, but multitudes could and should give more than this, while others may not be able to contribute so much. The scriptural maxim, "As God hath prospered him," is the principle which should govern in the matter. By all means, some such rule should be adopted, so that the claims of God, the demands of benevolence and our own spiritual growth and comfort may be duly heeded.

One great benefit of such previously arranged system would be its tendency to foster the habit of saving and economizing in order that there may be the more to give. This habit formed, the whole of life would be ennobled. It would be a sublime economy; it would be an industry which would turn the whole of life into a service of worship—to toil and treasure up, in order that there may be the more to devote to the glory of God and the redemption of men. The pastor should often dwell upon this point, explaining the methods, urging the duty and depicting the nobleness of a life thus consecrated to God in a benevolence which extends to every day and every act.

PLANS FOR MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS

The way in which the whole subject is brought before the people, as well as the presentation of each branch of it, especially the mode in which they are expected to make their contributions, has much to do with their liberality in giving. The minister should therefore study the matter well, in order that the benevolence of his congregation may be thoroughly developed. As an assistance to him the chief plans of making contributions may be here enumerated. By the study of them, in connection with the peculiarities of his people, he may determine the method which is best suited to them. The five modes we here give are the chief ones; all others are but modifications of some of these. A custom highly recommended is to offer up special prayer either before or after making a contribution in the church. It treats the offering as an act of worship, it sanctifies that act, and it is scriptural, for we find that prayers and alms are placed together. The general methods of making offerings are the following:

1. The old and ordinary method is to take up the collection in the church on the Lord's day after the object has been previously announced and its claims presented with more or less fullness. This plan has the advantage of furnishing an opportunity for exciting an interest in the special object, and having the people make their offering under the impulse of that feeling. Some pastors who are among the most successful in stimulating liberality adhere to this. But it has the disadvantage of being dependent on the earnestness of the pastor's address, upon momentary impulses, and even upon the state of the weather.

2. The second plan is to have elders or others who are interested go through the congregation, to each family and each individual, and receive whatever amounts they are willing to contribute. This brings the duty home personally and with a greater weight of obligation to each individual. It, however, involves so much attention and labor that it is not likely to be

continued long in any congregation without a large amount of devoted piety.

3. The foundation-fund plan, as it is called, is the next one which may be described. Its most essential feature is that of obtaining a subscription of one cent a day each from as many members of the congregation as possible, to be gathered by collectors appointed for the purpose or in any other way deemed best. Once a year the aggregate is distributed among the various Boards by the session according to some scheme arranged and published beforehand. Supplementary collections for all of the Boards are also taken up in the church on the days appointed by the General Assembly, so that there may be an opportunity of presenting the cause, and that contributions may be made by those who have not subscribed and by those who may wish to give in addition to their subscriptions. This plan may often be advantageously modified by allowing persons to put down their names for more or less than one cent a day as their means may allow or demand. For a church the body of whose members are in moderate or humble circumstances this is an admirable method. But its permanent success depends upon having at least two or three persons of piety, energy and perseverance who will diligently work it out.

4. The next plan that we would mention is that of putting into the hands of the members of the church at some definite period, say the beginning of the year, cards properly prepared with space for each Board, and asking them to fill them up with their names and the sums they will give to each cause. The subscriptions can be collected either by envelopes or in any other way the subscribers may choose. This plan allows every person to contribute according to his own estimate of the importance of each object, and it secures a steady-revenue for benevolent purposes. It is well adapted to a church where there are persons of wealth who may wish to make a careful distribution of their benefactions.

5. The best plan of all is that of the apostle: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." This is best, because it is scriptural,

because it makes giving an act of every Sabbath worship, and because experience has proved that small sums given statedly and frequently will amount to far more in the end than larger ones given as the impulse of the moment may prompt. The collection of the amounts treasured up on the Lord's day can be made in any of the ordinary methods.

MONTHLY CONCERT

This has become a hallowed institution of Protestant Christianity throughout the world. And most appropriate it is that all of every land who love the Lord Jesus Christ should meet in concert at least once in every month to unite in prayer for the coming of the kingdom, to show their interest in the great salvation, and to study the progress of the gospel throughout the world. No pastor should be satisfied unless this meeting is regularly observed in his church.

It is a service which may be made very profitable to both people and pastor, as well as in its general influence upon the cause of Christ. Such prayers of believers in concert cannot be in vain. We cannot conceive them to be so unless we discredit the promise of Christ: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." The coming together so often and praying and talking over the spread of the gospel will keep up the missionary spirit with all its blessings. The knowledge, too, which is there gathered and communicated will be very valuable; and the pastor's research for information to be imparted from month to month will keep him well acquainted with the grandest movements of the world and tend to enlarge his sympathies and enrich his mind.

The great difficulty about the monthly concert in most churches is that so few persons ordinarily attend it. The pastor and the few others who do attend become discouraged, and not unfrequently abandon the effort for its continuance. The remedies to be suggested are: First, that it be held on Sabbath evening, either taking the place of the regular service, or, if there be no stated service, having a special one appointed for it. Second, that the pastor exert himself to make the meeting interesting. This he can do by filling his own mind with the details of the missionary work in various lauds, and then presenting that information along with the prayers, and by enlisting others to study and describe what God is doing among

the nations. Only let the people be instructed and interested, and there will be no difficulty about their attendance.

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY ASSOCIATIONS

This is a new phase of missionary enterprise in the churches which is meeting with extraordinary success and promises immense results for good. It is well worthy of the close attention and hearty co-operation of every pastor. It is not intended to take the place of the older missionary operations of the Church or to infringe upon them in any way, but to supplement them by awaking new sources of benevolence and working in a new department of the great gospel field.

The special object which it contemplates, through collections taken for that purpose, is the evangelization of heathen women—women fearfully degraded and oppressed—women hitherto almost neglected, because it was supposed that they could not be reached—women peculiarly needing the blessings of the gospel—women who, judging from the reception the sex has always given the gospel, would welcome it as that alone by which they can be freed, elevated and saved. This is a peculiarly appropriate work for Christian women. It is a noble work—a work which is as promising of success as any which the hands of piety can undertake—a work which it is strange devoted zeal and ingenuity had not discovered before. The women of the Church, old and young, should engage in it with all ardor. It is illimitable in its extent and promise. Those who embark in it with loving zeal will undoubtedly grow in the spirit of Christ, and their influence for every good word and work will be deeply felt in the discharge of their other duties to the Church at home.

The rapid progress of this department of the great gospel enterprise is most encouraging to all who love Zion. The whole Church, as it looks for the coming of Christ's kingdom, approves it; humanity, groaning beneath the burden of sin and longing to be released, approves it; future ages, upon whose interests it has such a bearing, will approve; all eternity, rejoicing in its glorious results, will approve; and, with becoming reverence, we may assert that God the Father, God

the Son and God the Holy Ghost looks with approbation on this and the other enterprises of the missionary work.

CHAPTER X

THE PASTOR IN THE SESSION

As presiding officer of the session and leader in its counsels and activities, a class of duties lies before the pastor which demands his earnest attention, for on their faithful discharge depends very much of the character and usefulness of the church. The management of the spiritual affairs of the church is in the hands of the session. With them also rests the duty of exercising an oversight of its members and of guarding the door of entrance to its privileges. It is theirs to stimulate and guide the activity by which the cause of Christ is to be promoted within the bounds of the congregation. We shall understand how momentous the interests which have been committed to the session are if we consider that it is theirs to promote the peace of the church, upon which so much depends; that they are to guard the purity of its doctrine, worship and practice; that the measure of its spirituality will always be, to a great extent, what they make it; and that the credit of the church, involving the honor of the Master, the extension of the gospel and the present and future blessedness of believers, has been given to them as a special trust. All that is holy and hopeful in that best of causes, to the oversight of which they have been appointed, is most intimately connected with the fidelity, the piety and the zeal of the session.

A LARGE SESSION DESIRABLE

When persons suitable for the sacred office can be obtained, it is desirable, in most cases, that the session should be large in number. It will be possible then to have in it individuals who represent the various social elements of society, which is a point of considerable importance. Its doings and decisions will also have more weight of influence with the congregation over whose spiritual interests it presides. Besides, the more persons there are in the session, the more hands there will be for its appropriate work, which is so vast in extent and importance.

Great care should be taken in selecting persons for this responsible office that they be men well known, tried and proved to be of the proper spirit. Before they are ordained to a calling so sacred it should be indubitable that they are men of suitable intelligence, who will keep themselves well informed about the interests of the cause of Christ; men who will exercise brotherly charity and study the peace of the church; men of patience, who, for Christ's sake, will bear with much that is trying in conducting the complicated interests committed to them; men who are willing to deny self in order that they may honor the Master; men of good repute, who have the confidence of the whole community for real godliness; and men who can be looked up to as examples and confided in as following in the footsteps of Christ. Very much of the peace, prosperity, usefulness, comfort and honor of the church depends upon the character of its elders, and hence the exceeding great care which should be taken in selecting men for that office.

WORK OF THE ELDERS

In almost all cases far more church work would be performed by the elders if it were only committed to them and they were held responsible for its faithful discharge. They were ordained to their exalted office not only that they might exercise rule in the Church of God, but also that they might help in the work for which the Church was established. There is enough of it for them all to do, and many of them are willing and waiting to put their shoulders to any task which may be assigned them. Their duties are neither few nor unimportant. Even a superficial survey will show that they can help in the social meeting; can assist the pastor in visiting, especially those who are sick, sorrowing and anxious; can act as peacemakers in the strifes that will too often creep in among the people of God; can defend the good name of the pastor, so often wantonly assailed to the great injury of the cause of Christ; can gather worshipers into the sanctuary from those who are living in its utter neglect; can welcome strangers to the house of God; can look after the interests of the church in their respective neighborhoods; can watch over young converts and care for those members of the church who are backsliding. In these and innumerable other duties they can help, as well as in the more obvious ones of serving at the communion, conducting the Sabbath-school, attending ecclesiastical meetings and the like. The session should be a band of laborers closely knit together and intently bent on doing the work of God in the church and community.

As we have shown in another place, it is a great mistake for the pastor to undertake too much himself, and not entrust work to the elders and others. By so doing he keeps their individual and united powers of doing good from being developed, and he overtasks himself, and so injures his energies and endangers his health. There is too much work for him single-handed to accomplish, and he must enlist others or it will be left undone. This attempting too much themselves, and giving too little to

others, is a very common error with ministers, and greatly hinders the efficiency of the church where it prevails.

Most elders would work willingly in the cause of Christ if the work were only given them to do. Far more might be accomplished in this way if pastors would call forth and employ the energies of their sessions. There are many duties from which the elders can relieve the pastor, and give him more time for his own appropriate work of preaching. There are many things which they can do better than he, because of their more intimate intercourse with the people and identity of sympathy with them. Then, if the elders are busy, their interest in the cause of Christ and his Church will be kept alive, they will study the things which make for the peace of Zion, and they will be happier in themselves and spread good feeling over all the circle in which they move. To do nothing is to be unhappy and make others unhappy also. Enough is not made of this divinely-ordained agency in the work of the church. The ingenuity of the pastor and session should be taxed to find work for every elder and to keep him diligently at the post of duty.

Unless it is absolutely necessary, the pastor ought not to incur ill-will by becoming the agent of inflicting discipline. It is to be lamented that enmity is so often aroused, not only on the part of him who is disciplined, but also on the part of his relatives and friends. And when the discipline comes directly from the pastor, he is often made the victim upon whom the weight of the displeasure is heaped. And those who take offence at him are likely also to become offended and alienated toward the whole church. From this difficulty, therefore, the pastor ought to be saved by one or more of the elders being appointed as the ostensible agents for communicating or inflicting the censures decided upon by the session. Very often such censures will come with more weight from elders, inasmuch as they will appear less functional and enter more into the realities of society. From mingling with the people in daily life, and sympathy with them and participation in their views and wants and trials and modes of thinking, elders will

frequently be able to exert an influence that would be impossible to the pastor. No doubt one of the great benefits of the office of the eldership is this very thing of being able to get near to the people and enter into their feelings. Then it should not be forgotten that the government and discipline of the church are the elders' work, just as preaching is the pastor's, and that they should therefore bear its burdens. Moreover, if the pastor stands aloof as much as possible when discipline is inflicted, he will have a better opportunity of coming in afterward and striving to heal the wound and restore the wanderer.

The elders ought to be leaders in all that is undertaken for the edification of believers, for the progress of the church, and for the promotion of objects of benevolence. They are appointed to that office, they are qualified for it, the discharge of its duties is expected of them, and their position in the church gives them an influence which will make their efforts successful. They should plan work for the church to undertake; they should use their influence in getting others to assist in the various enterprises for doing good; and they should set an example of zealous industry in the blessed work. When any church is cold, idle, unprofitable, and, as a consequence, filled with bickerings, much of the blame is almost always to be laid at the door of the session, which neither performs its own duties nor sees to it that the members are busy in doing good.

It is a serious matter when an elder persists, year after year, in the neglect of those solemn duties to which he was ordained, and which are expected of him by the church and by the church's Lord. To do so is to prove unfaithful to his ordination vows, to set an example which must necessarily be deleterious, and to keep back others who might have been happy and useful workers in the church. When one has fallen into this lamentable state he should repent before God and his people, and diligently redeem the time in the future.

PLAN OF SESSIONAL WORK

We would here present a scheme of sessional operations which may be profitably adopted, and which, if carried out with any measure of fidelity, can hardly fail of raising a church to a high degree of prosperity. Its main features, as they have been actually adopted, are as follows:

A. Division of Sessional Work

In order that the interests of the church may be conducted as efficiently as possible, the following standing committees of session shall be maintained: 1. Committee on benevolence; 2. Committee on music; 3. Committee on prayer-meetings; 4. Committee on the poor; 5. Committee on Sabbath-schools. 6. Committee on strangers.

1. It shall be the duty of the Committee on benevolence to keep itself well informed in reference to the general work of benevolence in the whole Church, to recommend to the session when and for what objects collections shall be taken up, and to devise the best means for collecting these contributions, to develop the spirit of benevolence in the congregation, and to propose in what amount and at what times appropriations shall be devoted to the various Boards of the Church.

2. The Committee on music shall have special oversight of all the music in the church; it shall confer when necessary with the trustees in the appointment of those who are to lead it; it shall see that some one is present to conduct the singing in the weekly meetings; it shall recommend the hymn and music books to be used in the devotions of praise, and it shall devise plans for the improvement of this department of the church's worship.

3. It shall be the duty of the Committee on 'prayer-meetings to fix upon the places for holding the cottage prayer-meetings, to recommend any desirable changes in the times and places of holding other prayer-meetings, to appoint persons to conduct these meetings, and to have full superintendence of all this

branch of church's work.

4. The Committee on the poor, when there are no deacons, shall have special charge of such members of the church as are in want. It shall examine all such cases, visit them, apply to the treasurer for such assistance for them as the sessional fund will afford, when that is exhausted use special means for their relief, and make other needful efforts to succor and comfort them, in their trials.

5. The Committee on Sabbath-schools shall, if possible, be composed of officers of the Sabbath-school. It shall be the agency for exercising the sessional authority over this branch of the church's activity. It shall recommend from time to time whether any, and where, branch schools shall be established, and be in everything the bond of connection between the session and the schools.

6. It shall be the duty of the Committee on strangers to use all practicable means for discovering strangers who may come occasionally or regularly to the church, to report them to the member of session in whose district they reside, to make their acquaintance, to introduce them to other members of the congregation, and to make them feel at home in the church. The members of this committee shall either themselves be present, or appoint some others to be present, at the doors of the church on every occasion of public worship and at the weekly lectures, to seat strangers. It shall be the medium of communication between the session and the pastor's aid association, and furnish the ladies with lists of such families as should be visited. And it shall devise all practicable means for increasing sociability and friendliness in the church.

B. Oversight of the Families of the Congregation

The following rules are adopted by the session for the better performance of this duty:

1. The territory of the congregation shall be divided into as many districts as there are elders in the session, and to each

district one elder shall be assigned, whose duty it shall be to exercise a general supervision of the interests of the church within these bounds.

2. In the exercise of this supervision it shall be the duty of each elder to keep up a personal acquaintance with all the families of the church in his district, visit them as often as he may find convenient, and report at the meetings of session any persons who are. anxious about their souls, or sick, or in sorrow, or disaffected, or anything else that should be known; also to keep a constant outlook for any families of our denomination that may move into the bounds of his district, and for children who may be brought into the Sabbath-school.

3. When, for any particular reason, an elder may deem it advisable, he may secure the assistance of any other elder or of the pastor, to confer with him or to visit any of the families of his district.

4. An elder who from relationship or from any other cause has special influence with any family not in his own appointed district shall not be considered as intruding on the prerogatives of others if he shall visit and strive to keep that family interested in the common cause.

C. Meetings of Session

It is manifest that the very important work thus laid out cannot be successfully done unless there be frequent and full meetings of the session, to report the progress of its various departments, to devise methods for its greater advance, to keep alive an interest in the cause, and to pray for the divine guidance and life-giving power of the Holy Ghost. To this end, therefore, it is established—

First. That a stated monthly meeting of the session shall be held on such day of the month as may from time to time be determined.

Second. That it shall be considered a sacred duty of each member regularly to attend these stated meetings, unless prevented by sickness or other unavoidable cause.

Third. That the following order of business shall be observed in the meetings of session: 1. Twenty minutes in devotional exercises; 2. Reading the minutes of last meeting; 3. Excuses for absence from last meeting; 4. Reports of special committees; 5. Reports of standing committees; 6. Free conversation about the interests of the cause in the various districts; 7. New business; 8. Adjournment with prayer.

DISCIPLINE

This is of all duties devolving upon pastor and session the most difficult and unpleasant. And yet it cannot always be ignored without bringing the church into contempt and seriously injuring the cause. The purity of the church, the honor of the cause of God, the value of the privileges of membership, the good of offenders, even the existence of an organized body of believers, demand that it shall sometimes be exercised.

But it ought to be resorted to as seldom as possible, and only when persistent injury is done to the cause of Christ by the unchristian conduct of members. It is extremely difficult at the present time so to conduct a process of discipline as to impart to it any value either to offenders or to the church; and when not so conducted it will do harm rather than good. On this account a process of discipline should never be entered upon until it is seen to be absolutely indispensable. Every possible effort to reclaim the offender should first be made in private, for the man who cannot be influenced by the personal appeal made to him, in the right spirit, by pastor or elders, is not likely to pay much regard to their censures, whether threatened or inflicted. It is hardly ever wise for a pastor to encourage the prosecution of a member of his church when the matter is one which is personal with himself.

When the session has determined to impose the censures of the church, it is best not to make them any more public than necessary. To publish them in the church is likely to render the person disciplined more reckless and to give offence to his relatives and friends, and it needlessly exposes the sores of the church to a world only too ready to gloat over them. The announcing of the sentence in the meeting of session, or sending it to the person disciplined, will ordinarily be sufficient; and the consideration had for his feelings will leave more hope of ultimately reclaiming the offender.

On the roll of every church there will be found, after the

lapse of years, the names of many persons who have ceased to appear at its communion-table or to attend any of its ordinances. They have fallen away from their regular standing by removing from the bounds of the congregation without taking with them their certificates of membership, or they have gone into other communions, or they have lost all interest in divine things. To know exactly what to do with such cases is very perplexing. There are only three ways in which persons can cease to be responsible members of a given church—namely, by death, by certificate of dismission, or by discipline. Hence it will not do merely to strike their names from the roll; at some future day they may claim the recognition of their membership. Neither will it do to retain their names as in regular standing, for then the roll will not present a fair record of the actual membership of the church. The best plan, probably, of disposing of them is to place opposite their names some conventional word or expression denoting their irregular standing. Their status will then be seen at a glance, and their names can be found if ever afterward they should be wanted, while at the same time they will be distinguished on the roll from regular members.

The pastor need not be surprised if he finds troublers in his church. The discovery of such persons among the professed people of God sometimes shocks ministers, especially inexperienced ones, and discourages them, and sometimes leads them unwisely to give up their charges. But it should be understood as a lamentable fact that such persons are most likely to be found in every church, that the pastor will almost certainly encounter them, and that he ought to be prepared for the discovery, and not to be too much cast down by it.

It is well for the pastor to be forewarned on this subject, and to be undismayed if he encounters many dispositions which are calculated to disturb the peace of the church. He will find that some are sadly inconsistent, bringing constant reproach upon the cause; some are complainers and fault-finders, acute at finding or inventing things to annoy; some take pleasure in criticising and opposing everything that is done or said by the

pastor; some are so utterly unreasonable that they will listen to neither argument nor entreaty; some are restless, always finding something to agitate and distract; some are quarrelsome, as if they found their greatest satisfaction in strife; and others again there are whose business it seems to be to pull down, never to extend a helping hand even to the cause which they profess to love. The injustice and the cruelty of such persons toward him—and that, too, when he is conscious of doing the very best in his power—will sometimes almost break the minister's heart.

We would recommend as the sovereign remedy for such troublers in the church simply to let them alone. Our advice would be, Do not notice them; do not speak of them; do not oppose them; if possible, do not think of them;—and they are disarmed for evil. If they cannot excite any commotion, they soon become weary of their fruitless efforts to annoy.

Then there are certain considerations which ought to be borne in mind by the pastor concerning such unhappy spirits as are found in every church: 1. It is impossible to satisfy them by any excellency of preaching or action. As was truthfully said by Dr. J. W. Alexander, “If you could act like an angel, some would blame. Do your best, and in the long run you will please more than by doing anything for the bare purpose of pleasing." 2. Though there may be one or more such persons in the church, yet their number is but small compared with the great body of the true-hearted members who are ever ready to stand by the pastor and help him in his work. 3. Even such troublers and the dissatisfied and the constitutionally unhappy are a part of the material upon which the minister is appointed to work as he strives to build up and beautify that spiritual temple which will be perfected only when the Church's earthly work is done. 4. Moreover, they are not without their mission and use; for if the knowledge that we are watched by critical or unfriendly eyes should serve to make us more vigilant, more consistent and more active, then even this, one of the pastor's sorest trials, may be turned to good account.

Certain it is that this is a part of that salutary discipline to

which it is the good pleasure of our All-wise Father we should now be subjected. On this point Dr. James W. Alexander says: “It is unreasonable to hope for a situation where men will not be found to oppose, envy and blame. To expect this would be childish. Humble perseverance in plain duty is the way to maintain an easy mind. Apply the Lord's rule about anxiety for the morrow. Work by the day; you may not live till to-morrow. Why cripple to-day's exertions by forecasting a trouble which may never come? Such vexations are trials sent of God. They have been common to all saints. Learn to bear the reproaches of even good men, for many sincere Christians are far from perfection in wisdom; there are degrees in knowledge and experience; there are diversities of opinion and strange and extravagant tempers. Some virtue is put to the test by every one of these troubles. Humility, patience, meekness, courage, fortitude, love of truth, faith, hope and charity are exercised. If a man's ways please the Lord, he will cause even his enemies to be at peace with him."

CHURCH STRIFES

It is a lamentable fact that these will often arise and do incalculable harm. They are deplorably frequent, and their evils are aggravated and exaggerated by an unfriendly world. The feeling which they engender is peculiarly deep, because of the important interests which they are supposed to involve. And they often spring from the merest trifles, which ought to have been ignored by Christian people. Such strifes are amongst the greatest evils that can possibly come upon a church. It is one of the greatest inconsistencies ever witnessed to see those whose distinguishing badge ought to be brotherly love arrayed in bitter hostility against each other. If there is anything in the wide world against which the pastor should steadfastly set his face, it is this.

Never should he allow himself to be drawn into strife as a participant. There is a special scriptural injunction laid upon him to this end: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." He should dread strifes as among the most dangerous attacks that Satan can possibly make upon the Church of God. If there is anything he can do to prevent their occurrence or allay them when they prevail, it ought to receive his most earnest attention. He should make sacrifices of his own personal feelings in order to prevent them. Every sort of right motive presses upon him to flee from contention. Very emphatic on this point was the counsel of John Wesley: “Oh beware, I will not say of forming, but of countenancing or abetting, any parties in a Christian society. Never encourage, much less cause, either by word or action, any division therein. In the nature of things there must be divisions among you, but keep thyself pure. Leave off contention before it be meddled with; shun the very beginning of strife. Meddle not with them that are given to dispute, with them that love contention. I never knew that remark to fail: ‘He that loves to dispute does not love God.' Follow peace with all men, without which you cannot effectually follow holiness. Not

only seek peace, but ensue it; if it seems to flee from you, pursue it nevertheless. ‘Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' Happy is he that attains the character of a peace-maker in the Church of God! Why should not you labor after this? Be not content not to stir up strife, but do all that in you lies to prevent or quench the very first spark of it. Indeed, it is far easier to prevent the flame from breaking out than to quench it afterward. However, be not afraid to attempt even this; the God of peace is on your side. He will give you acceptable words, and will send them to the hearts of the hearers."

The effects of dissensions in churches are so baleful that they may well be looked upon with a feeling of horror. The very best that can be said of them is that they never do any good. But, alas! far more must be said of them, for in the language of the Spirit, “where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." They destroy all true happiness in the minds of those who are agitated by them; they grieve away the Holy Spirit, to whose peaceful influences they are so much opposed; they lead to the most lamentable divisions and alienations between those who were once dear to each other in Christian fellowship; they rend asunder churches and make incurable breaches in households; they dishonor religion and expose it to the contempt of the world; and they inflict deep wounds upon Christ, of which he may bitterly complain as having been received in the house of his friends.

THE PASTOR'S PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES

These are the worst of all, inasmuch as they involve not only the minister and those with whom he is immediately at variance, but also generally spread throughout the congregation. They also destroy his happiness, blight his energies, and prevent his ministrations from having that weight which would make them edifying to almost any class of his hearers. Moreover, they are so conspicuous, from the eminent position which he holds, that they are more seen and known and trumpeted, and therefore send abroad more influences for evil than if he moved in a more obscure sphere.

The minister cannot afford to descend to the contentions which are sometimes indulged in by others. It is such a gross inconsistency that he almost necessarily throws away everything if he does. He throws away influence, he lets himself down in public esteem, and he dishonors the cause. He also destroys his own happiness and brings upon himself sorrows on sorrows. Quaintly was it said by Bishop Hall: “I never loved those salamanders that are never well but when they are in the fire of contention. I will rather suffer a thousand wrongs than offer one; I will suffer an hundred rather than return one; I will suffer many ere I will complain of one and endeavor to right it by contending. I have ever found that to strive with my superior is furious; with my equal, doubtful; with my inferior, sordid and base; with any, full of unquietness."

It need hardly be said, therefore, that the pastor who has the proper spirit will be careful to avoid falling into such personal strifes. The rule with him will be that of the apostle when he exhorted, “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved;" and again, “Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." The minister should do everything that lies in his power — make any personal

sacrifice that is consistent with principle—to prevent these difficulties from arising. He should determine that such strifes shall not be if he can prevent them. And to this end Christ's injunction should be the motto of his life: “Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves." A little yielding when no principle is involved, a kind word, the suppression of a harsh thought, or a slight explanation, will often avert a whole train of bickerings and alienations. Then, if the pastor finds that he is unhappily involved in a personal strife, he should use all wisdom and tact and Christian spirit to have it settled just as speedily as possible.

It is an important rule for the pastor to keep aloof from all parties which may have arrayed themselves against each other in the church. It is well for him to keep in mind the inspired maxim, “He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." Both sides in any controversy stand in the same relation to him as the pastor of the whole church. Some ministers very unwisely embroil themselves in every quarrel by espousing one side or other of it. By this course they incur the ill-will of those who are on the opposite side, and lose the opportunity of coining in as arbitrators to harmonize the parties. Far better would it be for them to stand aloof, unless when they can interfere as peacemakers to settle the strife.

In this connection there is great need for the caution that ministers should guard against everything which looks like gossip, to the malign influences of which they are peculiarly exposed. They should not listen to gossiping rumors about themselves or others which so many will be ready to pour into their ears. They should not allow idle or scandalous news to be imparted to them. They should not themselves indulge in gossip —a habit into which they are liable to fall as they go from house to house.

Personal difficulties, or personalities of any kind, ought not to be brought into the pulpit. This is sometimes done, but never either to the edification of the people or the advantage of the pastor. There are objections to it on every hand. It is cowardly

to arraign persons under circumstances where they have no opportunity of replying; it enrages those who are assailed, and leaves scarcely any hope of healing the breach; it makes offensive matters public which ought to have remained in the dark; and it prostitutes the dignity of the pulpit, whose appointment is to nobler themes. The answer of the Rev. Dr. Francis Wayland on this point is not too emphatic: “But it may possibly be asked, Should a minister use personalities in the pulpit? I answer, If he does, he ought never to enter it. To use the office of an ambassador of Christ for the purpose of personal abuse is shameful and intolerable."

Absolute silence in reference to those who would annoy or oppose or even slander him is generally the pastor's best course. Great is the power of silence. It allows brands of discord to go out, which if blown up would soon kindle into a flame. It is often the keenest rebuke that can be given to wanton assaults. It saves one from saying many things which he might afterward regret. It is dignified. In most cases it is by far the safest course. Let the minister bear in silence many things which are sorely trying, and in the end he will see the wisdom of having pursued this course.

Most oppositions and slanders are easily lived down. Real, consistent, devoted piety will generally disarm the attacks which are made upon it. The simple rule of life given to ministers by Dr. J. W. Alexander is worthy of being written in letters of gold: “Do that which you think will please God, and you will keep a good conscience. By so doing you will, in the long run, as much avoid the censure of men as if you made it a special object to please them. Every act of your life will be tending to form the right kind of character. You will be more likely to be useful, and will certainly be happier. If you fail, you will not have the additional pain which arises from blaming yourself. This is the simplest of all rules of life. It admits of perpetual application, nor is there any conceivable case which it does not reach. Please not yourself nor vain human creatures, but God."

THE PASTOR AND THE FINANCES OF THE CHURCH

The management of the financial matters of a church, frequently involving the erection of new buildings or the repairing of old ones, current expenses and the liquidation of debts, requires much skill as well as attention. Sometimes, when the church is very weak or new, it may be necessary that much of this work should be done by the pastor. Sometimes he is forced into it against his inclination. More generally he takes a prominent part in these affairs because he thinks that he can conduct them better than the people would.

But, as a general rule, the pastor should have as little as possible to do with the money affairs of the church. (1) It is not his calling to manage them. (2) He has not time for it, and cannot bestow much attention on it without drawing away from the energies which ought to be concentrated upon his appropriate spiritual work. (3) If he has much to do with such affairs, he will almost necessarily become more or less secularized. (4) He will be in constant danger of involving himself in difficulties which will damage his ministerial usefulness, for what would be but injudicious in others will be considered criminal in him. (5) There are often in the church far better business-men than he—men better trained and practiced in business—who can perform all this work. (6) If the people themselves conduct these important affairs, they will be more interested in the church and all her work.

The minister should not always interfere in the secular affairs of the congregation, even when he thinks that the people are not conducting them in the wisest and-best manner. He may be sincere in his conviction, but he may be in error. The event may prove that those who are in the actual management are doing what is the most advantageous. At any rate, he has a higher work before him on which he should fix his whole energies. Then in the end his own soul will prosper and be in peace, the Christian people will appreciate his efforts

to build up the church in the righteousness of Christ, and God will bless the toil which is put forth with a single eye to his glory.

CHAPTER XI

THE PASTOR IN THE HIGHER COURTS OF THE CHURCH

The minister sustains other important relations besides those which belong to him as pastor of a particular congregation. These relations impose on him duties which require very close and persevering attention. He is a member of presbytery and synod, or of General Assembly, conference, association or convention, and as such has a part to take in conducting the general interests of the kingdom of Christ. When the gravity of the duties devolving upon these bodies is considered, it will be easily understood that the responsibility of each of their members is very great. It is theirs, under the teachings of the inspired word, to frame the rules which are to control every department of order and worship and work, to settle controversies that may arise in the complicated working of the Church, to hold the keys of admission to the sacred office, to guard the purity of the doctrines which shall be taught, and to manage the machinery of the Boards through which the benevolent work is carried on. These duties are momentous in themselves and in their results. They involve the peace, the purity and the perpetuity of the Church. The minister should assume his share of them with a deep sense of his responsibility, with an earnest desire for the glory of God, and with a full purpose of being faithful in every personal duty which they involve.

ATTENDANCE UPON THE HIGHER CHURCH COURTS

In this matter the first duty which rests upon the minister is to attend promptly upon every ecclesiastical meeting of which he is a member, and take part in its duties and responsibilities. He should attend his presbytery and synod at each of their meetings, and the General Assembly when appointed so to do. The rule of regular attendance should be laid down as inviolable.

This is a matter of serious duty which should be recognized and appreciated by every minister. His ordination vows include this as well as the other class of duties which belong to his peculiar pastoral work. These higher organizations of the Church are undoubtedly appointed of God, and that because they are necessary for conducting the interests of the kingdom. Each minister is one of the elements which make up their combined wisdom and force for performing that momentous work, and as such he cannot lawfully be absent. Duty to God, duty to the Church and duty to himself all require him to do his part. The plea that his mite of influence will be of no account is no excuse whatever, for he is not the judge; but he is a constituent part of the great whole, and cannot stand aloof without damaging; all the rest.

Our fellow-members have a right to our presence and assistance. The obligation resting upon us is as solemn as that which is on them. We wrong them when we stay away. We desert them in their troubles, their toils and their hopes, and we keep from them that portion of aid which we might render. We may appreciate the evil tendency of this course, if we depict to ourselves the sad results which would follow should all be as unfaithful as those are who unnecessarily absent themselves from meetings where the great interests of the cause of Christ are to receive attention. It is enough to say that, so far as human agency is concerned, all those great interests would be necessarily paralyzed.

The minister who is not found regularly in the meetings of presbytery, association or convention is also himself a great loser. He soon loses the run of the business, and that is followed by his losing all interest in what is going on. And then, when occasionally he comes in, he must interrupt and delay the business and annoy his brethren by asking questions about matters with which he would have been perfectly familiar had he been present. Besides, he does not know at what meeting or what hour business may come up which is of great importance to himself or his church or the general cause, but by his absence he loses it all. Then such meetings are calculated to strengthen the sympathies, to quicken the faculties, to lodge in the memory important information, and to establish most valuable friendships. All this those ministers lose who cannot be induced to perform their duty and enjoy their privilege of statedly attending.

Connected with this matter of attendance upon ecclesiastical meetings is another which ought not to be passed over without a word of notice—namely, that of staying to the close of their sessions. This caution is rendered necessary by the conduct of many who come in, perhaps, after the opening services, and then in an hour or two, or at most long before the sessions close, go away, and leave their brethren to finish the business as best they can. They might almost as well not come at all. The result of this habit often is to leave the greater part of the business to be hurried through at the close by a mere handful of the members. The reasons given in excuse for these withdrawals are such, in almost all ordinary cases, as might have been provided against by a little forethought. Arrangements should be made previous to leaving home, so that there may be no need to withdraw until the close of the sessions. Meetings of presbytery or other ecclesiastical bodies do not come so often but that some trouble might be taken to stay throughout them all.

It is singular that many ministers are so thoughtless about absenting themselves from these meetings or slighting them by a mere nominal attendance of an hour or two. This may seem

like a small matter, and yet attention to it is one of those things which have very much to do with the minister's influence and usefulness. To be always in his place at such meetings is likely to result in the faithful performance of his duties as a member. He will thereby make the warrantable impression that he is in earnest in all his work. He will thus acquire the confidence of his brethren and the respect of the people, and be looked up to as one worthy of being consulted about church affairs, and that to such a degree as will give him opportunities of helping forward the blessed cause. The men to be relied on are those who can look back upon their ministerial life and say that they have never been absent from presbytery, synod or other ecclesiastical meeting which it was their duty to attend.

THE PASTOR'S INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CHURCH COURTS

It is difficult duly to estimate the responsibility of the members of such courts, owing to the vastly important interests committed to them; and each one has a portion of it resting on him—so resting on him that he cannot flippantly cast it off. Each one is, in his measure, blamable for whatever duty is either omitted or wrongly performed. It is important that this personal responsibility be recognized by the minister, so that he may not fail of taking his share in the general interests of the Church through neglect or the vague impression that he has nothing to do with them.

It is a responsibility which extends to the adjudication of questions of discipline, to the admission of candidates into the ministry, to the appointment of representatives to the General Assembly, to the conducting of schemes for the promotion of the cause of Christ at home and abroad—to every thing for which the higher courts of the Church exist. No member can justifiably shrink from his share of responsibility in each and all of them. No one, without unfaithfulness, can sink his own duties in the general mass; he must take them up and perform them according to his own personal convictions.

ASSUMING THE DUTIES ASSIGNED IN ECCLESIASTICAL MEETINGS

Much of the work of these bodies—such as serving as clerks, drawing up reports, shaping business, examining candidates for the ministry, visiting congregations in difficulties, installing ministers and organizing churches—must necessarily be performed by individuals or committees, and each member should promptly consent to whatever part of it his brethren may assign to him. Sometimes the task required is difficult, laborious and disagreeable, and the first impulse is to shrink from it. There are ministers who are constantly declining every such duty that is asked of them, and thus embarrassing the business, imposing upon their brethren and injuring themselves. But the rule should be promptly to accept every appointment as the call of duty, and at once enter upon its fulfillment.

This is a matter which the minister ought not to neglect. If the task be an onerous one, he ought to reflect that it must be performed by somebody, and why not by him as readily as by any one else? His appointment implies some supposed fitness in him for that particular service; and if he does not think that he is qualified for it, he should regard himself in the light of a learner who ought to be prepared at some time to take up every duty of the ministry. By declining the duty he misses the training which its performance would furnish. Besides, it greatly embarrasses the business of the body when members are constantly refusing the various duties requested of them. Moreover, for the minister to indulge in the habit of shrinking from the tasks required of him is to throw away his influence, and finally to become a mere cipher in the body.

Promptness in assuming and discharging the various duties required of him as a presbyter will do much toward securing that confidence and respect that will be of such assistance to the minister in his exalted work. It will enable him to perform those duties more acceptably, and prove him to be actuated by

true principle in every part of his sacred calling. His brethren will then understand that he is to be relied upon. He will be enabled to do far more good, and the talents which have been given him, and for which he is accountable, will be used to better advantage. Many a name could be given of the most highly esteemed of presbyters whose invariable rule has been to accept of every duty committed to them and promptly proceed to its performance.

THE PRESBYTERY SHOULD TAKE PART IN EVERY GOOD WORK

It is the working body in the general enterprises of the Church. It is the exponent of whatever is active in the united body of believers or aggressive on the kingdom of darkness. It should therefore be the aim of every one of its members to make it a living, active, progressive body. Very much of the measure of piety and Christian activity in the churches under its care depends on the presbytery. Hence it ought to make much of the influence which it is in its power to exert over these churches. And each one of its members should feel bound to do all in his power to set it to work, and keep it working, in every department where its duty lies.

If the presbytery were properly awake to the great work to which it is called, it would foster its Sabbath-schools—amongst other ways, by devoting one session of each of its stated meetings to the children of the church where it assembles; it could stimulate its congregations in the great work of benevolence; it could superintend the carrying out of the various deliverances of the General Assembly; and it could assist in bringing up each of its churches to higher degrees of spirituality. All these things come within the province of the presbytery. To these interests it was appointed, and to none of them can it, in faithfulness, be indifferent.

THE PRESBYTERY A MISSIONARY ORGANIZATION IN ITS OWN TERRITORY

Every Christian in his sphere, every church in its vicinity, every presbytery in the district of country it covers, and every General Assembly or conference in the country and world, is obligated to be aggressive on the kingdom of darkness. It is its duty to pray, to plan and to work so as to bring that portion of the great field into subjection to Christ's righteous reign. The whole presbytery and each of its members should recognize this high calling. The question which demands consideration from each of them is, What is the portion of the field which is specially committed to me or to us? and then follows the imperative obligation of applying every energy to its cultivation.

(a) The Territory of the Presbytery to be regarded as its special Missionary Field

Pastors ought not to consider that their ministrations in the gospel are to be confined exclusively to their own congregations. There is an important sense in which the field to which they are appointed is the whole world. But then, in company with their co-presbyters, they are to look upon the district of country covered by their presbytery as the portion of that great field which has been specially entrusted to them. Each pastor should regard the immediate vicinity of his church as his peculiar charge. Then the whole territory of the presbytery lies before him and his fellow-members, and by their counsel, their work and their prayers it is to be leavened by the saving influences of the gospel. Here each one should put forth his most strenuous efforts—efforts as strenuous as if the whole work depended on himself.

The district in the midst of which he lives has been

committed to the minister for his gospel efforts by the providence of God, which has placed him in it as his post of duty and toil. It has also been entrusted to him by the Church, which has called him and ordained him and settled him there to do her work, not merely in the midst of his own particular fold, but also in all its vicinity. For the cultivation of that part of the field he is accountable to the authorities which had such confidence in him as to place him there.

Not many pastors are so happily located but that in their immediate vicinity, or at least within the bounds of their presbytery, there are places which are in need of the stated ordinances of the gospel. There are some communities where, if proper investigation were made and efforts put forth, it would be found that churches could be planted to great advantage. There are neighborhoods where great good could be done by establishing Sabbath-schools and holding occasional preaching and prayer meetings. Everywhere there are multitudes living in utter neglect of the ordinances whose case should never be forgotten, but plans of various kinds be devised for bringing them to the knowledge of the truth. In almost every presbytery there are destitute fields where colporteurs might spread the gospel through the printed page and gather the nuclei of future congregations. That no field, no opportunity, no agency, for extending the truth as it is in Christ, shall be neglected should be the rule with every minister and every presbytery.

(b) If its own Territory is not Cultivated by Presbytery, it wilt, not be by Others

There is a sort of vague impression in the minds of many that, somehow or other, the work will be done even if they do omit it. But the question is not whether these home destitutions shall be supplied by us or by some one else: it is, whether they shall be met by us or utterly neglected. They must be supplied by us, to whom God has entrusted this part of his field, or be overlooked and souls be lost.

The people themselves who are destitute of the blessings of the gospel will not put forth the efforts needed to secure its ordinances, for the gospel has always to be pressed upon men. Other denominations will certainly not plant it in that form which we think the best, whatever name we may bear. Other presbyteries and synods cannot be expected to come in and take up our work by encroaching upon our territory with its rights and duties. The field must be cultivated by us, or, so far as our denomination is concerned, be left utterly waste. It is entrusted to us, and it is expected of us that we shall be faithful to its every call. God calls, duty calls, the pressing wants of perishing souls call, and we shall incur great guilt if we do not obey these calls of duty.

(c) Constant Outlook for New Localities

The faithful performance of this missionary work will require that there be a constant outlook for places where enterprises can be started which may finally culminate in churches. It ought not to be taken for granted that such fields will come to light of themselves, but destitute places should be sought for; unwearied diligence should be exercised to find appropriate spots in which to set up the banner of Christ. Especially should there be watchfulness by each pastor in the immediate neighborhood of his own congregation. If this be not done, many a settlement which sorely needs the means of grace will be overlooked so long that the opportunity of taking possession of it will be lost. The obligation which rests upon each member and the whole presbytery is to be unceasingly aggressive upon the world.

It is not difficult to determine where there is a providential call to commence operations with a view either to establish a missionary outpost or to gather the nucleus of a future church. It is an appropriate place where there is a neighborhood that is peculiarly destitute of all the means of grace; where there is a community that is likely rapidly to increase in numbers; where there is an opening for commencing a Sabbath-school with

good promise of success; especially where there are warm-hearted, active Christians who will take the lead. Such locations ought not to be neglected.

(d) What Presbytery can Do in such Locations

It is well to have a distinct understanding of this matter, and to form some system by which to conduct operations in extending the gospel within the presbytery's own bounds. It is a matter which ought not to be left at loose ends, but should be performed according to some definite plan persistently carried out. Where there is some system the work will be more comprehensive, more regular, more thorough. We will therefore specify some of the plans which may be adopted by presbytery to aid in its evangelistic efforts at home.

1. There might be a standing committee of presbytery whose duty it would be to exercise a general supervision of the missionary work within its bounds. This committee could keep its eye upon the various destitute places of the district and estimate them in their relative importance; it could counsel with new and struggling enterprises; it could advise presbytery where to commence its efforts; it could be the medium of communication with the Board of Missions; and so, with its comprehensive views, it could lead in an economical prosecution of the work of domestic evangelization. It ought to be composed of some of the most active and persevering men of the presbytery, so that it may systematize the work and keep the whole body alive to the claims of the destitutions in their midst.

2. The ministers of the presbytery might be detailed to preach in turn at such missionary stations as are not yet ripe for the entire services of one man. This could be done in most presbyteries by each member giving one or two Sabbaths in the year to missionary work. This is an excellent arrangement. It gives all the ministers an opportunity of seeing and becoming interested in the various points of aggressive operations, and of

doing that missionary work which is an important branch of their calling. It also provides supplies to such new or weak enterprises as are not able to support a ministry of their own. Its whole value and success, however, will depend upon the members faithfully fulfilling their appointments when they are detailed to such evangelical work.

3. Presbytery should constantly have some new church enterprise on hand on which its efforts and contributions may be concentrated until its building is completed. One should be kept on the anvil until it is finished, and then it may be dropped and another taken up. Who can tell the gain when an additional church edifice is completed, with a congregation well equipped for maintaining and propagating the truth in the ages to come? It is better to concentrate the contributions on one, and finish it, than to scatter them over many where they will do but little good. The only caution needed is to be careful about selecting such an enterprise—that it be in a location where it is needed and where it will grow up into a church that will have a permanent life.

SPEAKING IN ECCLESIASTICAL MEETINGS

This is a duty which will sometimes necessarily devolve upon every minister, and to which it is therefore desirable that attention should be given, in order that it may be done in a profitable manner. It is certainly important that one should be able to present his thoughts so clearly to his brethren that they will be fairly understood and make the impression which they merit.

At the same time, a much-needed caution in such deliberative bodies is to avoid saying too much by either prolixity of address or by being too frequently on the floor. There are some ministers who are constantly on their feet, to the great annoyance of their fellow-members. They seem to think that nothing can be rightly transacted unless they have a voice in it. This habit should by all means be avoided.

Whoever indulges in the practice is sure to weaken the force of all that he may say. He lowers himself in the esteem of his brethren and takes away from the influence which he might otherwise wield. He shows a self-importance which is exceedingly offensive to all his fellow-members; he keeps back others whose words would have far more weight; and so he wrongs them as well as the whole assembly. His course is also a culpable wasting of the time of so many ministers and elders, all of whom have important duties in their respective charges.

Again, no one ought to take the floor and consume the time of himself and others unless he has something to say—something that is important and relative to the point in hand—something that has not been said over and over again. No one should be guilty of the wrong of talking merely for the sake of making a speech. Great prudence is needed to know when to speak, as well as what, to say; and to have this prudence is the secret of success in addresses before deliberative bodies.

BROTHERLY KINDNESS IN ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLIES

Christian affection ought to distinguish those who are so closely united to Christ and to each other. The members of these bodies are brethren in the Lord Jesus; they are animated by the same loving spirit; they all have their hearts set upon the same great interests; they are all looking forward to an eternal residence in the same heavenly mansions; and the character common to them all is that which was indicated by the Saviour when he breathed peace upon his followers. A very different temper should pervade the assembly which is composed of such persons from that which is found in the gatherings of the world. The highest and holiest motives call for the spirit of brotherly love to characterize all that is said and done. This should reign for the comfort of the whole body and of each of its members, for the prosperity of the cause, and especially for the honor of the great Master, the blessedness of whose spirit will be the better understood when it is illustrated by the loving intercourse of his servants with each other.

We make this subject very emphatic, because we feel that there is great need for awaking special attention to it. Scenes are sometimes witnessed in Church courts which are a shame and a scandal to religion, and which do incalculable harm. There are some persons who seem to lose their Christian spirit and temper as soon as they engage in public discussions. They enter upon them in a wrangling and angry manner, and at once render the exercise of calm, Christian wisdom impossible. Such a spirit is utterly inconsistent with the character which should be found in Christ's servants. It disappoints and sorely grieves good people of the laity who come to have their hearts warmed by hearing of the prosperity of Christ's kingdom. It disgusts the ungodly with religion and with those who are its advocates. It injures the church where the meeting is held, and sometimes renders it very difficult to find a congregation that is willing to entertain a body which is almost sure to leave a legacy of evil

behind it. It is strange, passing strange, that this harsh and unlovely spirit will be so much indulged in even by good men.

We cannot account for it in any other way than that custom gives it a sort of respectability. The feeling is, that inasmuch as so many yield to an irascible temper in conducting religious discussions, therefore it cannot be so very censurable. Thus others are induced to follow in the same course, and the evil is perpetuated. But custom, no matter how long or by whom it is followed, can never make it right, or even palliate it. The evil is the more formidable if it has become a habit in religious bodies. It must be inadvertence that will allow any true minister to look with anything less than abhorrence upon angry discussion amongst Christian brethren concerning the interests of the peaceful kingdom of the Son of God. It is an evil which cannot be calmly considered without exciting a sense of incongruity and wrong that should cause it to be shunned with all intensity of purpose.

It is, then, the duty of each member to exercise a spirit of forbearance, of courtesy and of kindness in public deliberations and in all his intercourse with the brethren. If each one keeps a watch over his own spirit, an air of Christian friendliness will soon be felt pervading the whole assembly. Each one, as he has opportunity, should strive to banish angry strifes. He should pour oil on the troubled waters when from any causes they are aroused. The evil effects of contention should always be dreaded, and the blessings which flow from brotherly love should be earnestly sought. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Every servant of God should learn to endure contradiction, even when it comes in the form of wounds inflicted in the house of friends. Offences will come as long as there are so many human infirmities adhering to us, as Christians are only partially sanctified. It is like men to resent opposition, but it is like Christ to bear it. In this, as in everything else, it is our blessed privilege to imitate his glorious example. To do so will require self-restraint; but with such an exalted aim, who would not rejoice even in that?

WRITING LETTEES AS A PRESBYTER

This may at first sight be regarded as a small matter, but when it is more closely considered it will be seen to have considerable bearing on the comfort and usefulness of the minister, and will be appreciated as an instrumentality that may be used to very great advantage in helping forward the interests of the gospel. Who can read the correspondence of such men as Calvin, or Rutherford, or Hamilton without being impressed with the importance of the agency for good which this may be made?

As a matter of course, all letters received, especially those which pertain to the interests of the Church in any of its branches, should be answered with as little delay as possible. We should adopt the rule, and rigidly adhere to it, of replying to them, if practicable, the day on which they are received. It is easier to answer letters at once than it is to put off the task—if it be a task—even for a day. Then the matter is off the mind. Besides, though the subjects of the letters may be of very little importance to us, they may be of great consequence to our correspondents. At any rate, they will be pleased with prompt attention to their communications, whilst neglect will give offence.

By attention to this subject a minister may do much toward establishing his character for promptness, and so enlarging his power of doing good. Certainly, common civility requires that letters which persons take the trouble of writing and sending should at once be noticed. And if it be so in the ordinary intercourse of life, how much more is it demanded by Christian courtesy! And how much more, again, is it demanded of those men of God who should be pre-eminently distinguished by “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report"! To heed this apparently small matter will prove that the kindness of the religion of Jesus has penetrated the whole

man and affected all his principles. It will be business-like in a high Christian sense. It will save from subsequent embarrassment, and from the necessity of contriving awkward apologies. There are not many things by which ministers will be more surely judged, outside of the circle in which they daily move, than by this.

It should also be considered what an admirable vehicle letters may be made for conveying comfort, instruction, warnings, affectionate entreaties and other gospel messages to those whom we may not be able to reach by the voice or whom we may more deeply impress by the pen. We may also in this way hold profitable intercourse with other ministers at a distance concerning matters in which the interests of the kingdom are involved; with churches which we may assist in their trials; with private Christians about their spiritual progress and the work for Christ which they may accomplish; and with impenitent relatives or acquaintances, striving to win them to the salvation of Jesus. In this way we can reach many persons to whom we could never go with the message of grace. This is an instrumentality for preaching the gospel which is not sufficiently appreciated.

OUTLOOK FOR YOUNG MEN FOR THE MINISTRY

It is the duty of every pastor to have an eye upon the young men of his charge with a view to discover any of them who may be suitable in piety and talents and other qualifications for entering upon a course of preparation for the ministry. We specify this particular duty because it involves the continuance of the ministry in the Church, with all the important interests connected therewith. In fact, it is an indispensable and solemn duty of every man who is himself in the active work of the ministry. He should constantly bear it in mind, and strive to find the young men who may be prepared to take his place and that of his brethren in the sacred office. There may be suitable young men in his church for that calling, and they ought not to be overlooked through his negligence.

But very great care should be taken that only those who have the appropriate qualifications of piety and talents are encouraged to commence a course of preparation for a calling so sacred. With individual pastors mainly rests the responsibility of opening the door to the ministry with which the future purity and prosperity of the Church are so closely connected. It is the pastor, in fact, and not the presbytery, who judges of the call of the young man presenting himself as a candidate for this office. It is but seldom that the presbytery goes behind, or can go behind, the recommendation of the pastor. And then, after the young man has entered upon the course of preparation, it is difficult to arrest him at any of its future stages. The die is ordinarily cast for life when his minister awakens within him or establishes the purpose to preach the gospel, and then, presents him, together with his favorable opinion, to the presbytery. Great care should therefore be exercised at the first. A young man of doubtful qualifications ought not to be fixed upon. It will be great kindness to him and to the Church not to speak the first word or encourage the first hope unless the evidences are very clear

that he would be called and blessed in the sacred work. For this, as well as for many other reasons, a very high appreciation of the noble work of the ministry should be entertained.

CHAPTER XII

THE PASTOR IN HIS RELATIONS TO OTHER DENOMINATIONS

SCARCELY any minister can have a pastoral charge so located but that he will be surrounded by ministers and members of other denominations, and be brought into more or less intimate relations with them. He will meet them at funerals, weddings and other gatherings of society. He will be brought into ministerial relations with them at union meetings, temperance gatherings, Sabbath-school conventions and other public occasions. Union religious services should be held occasionally in every community for the purpose of keeping up acquaintance among Christians of the various denominations and of manifesting to the world that they are one in the essentials of the gospel. The pastor should remember, in all his intercourse with Christians of other names, that he is a public man, and is therefore watched and his demeanor closely scrutinized. His own denomination will, in his circle, very largely bear the character that he makes for it. His bearing toward his brethren of the other branches of the Church will greatly affect his comfort in the ministerial work, his success in building up the cause of Christ, his standing and influence in the community, the credit of the denomination with which he is connected, and the glory of his divine Master and Head.

FRIENDLY INTERCOURSE WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Much of the character of the feeling which prevails between the denominations depends on the pastor. He can irritate or he can soothe. By his example and by his words, public and private, he can drive them farther and farther asunder, or he can bring them together in happy Christian intercourse. He should therefore cherish kindly relations toward all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. He should shape his own conduct with a view to keeping up this Christian feeling. It is far easier and pleasanter to do this than to indulge in the opposite course of feeling and action.

It is the duty of every Christian man, and especially of every Christian minister, to take some pains to become acquainted with the people of God with whom he is likely to meet in the ordinary intercourse of life. Some of the most excellent of the earth are in parts of the fold that bear a different name from our own. Many of them have so much of the spirit of Christ that to know them is to love them; and why not enjoy the pleasure of their Christian fellowship? On every account it is better, more Christian, more for the prosperity of the cause, more for the honor of Christ and our own comfort, to know them, to be neighborly with them and to rejoice in their welfare.

The most charitable judgments should be formed concerning those who entertain different views from ourselves about some points of doctrine and order. They should receive credit for being sincere in their belief. We should sympathize with them in their peculiarities. They are dear to them, even though they may appear insignificant or erroneous to us. We should not be too sensitive with regard to seeming encroachments upon our rights by attempts to lead away families or individuals from our church. It may not be so intended on their part, or they may not have anything to do with it, or they may be so circumstanced that they could not do otherwise; and they may be doing just as we would if situated as they are; or the whole impression on

our part may be a mistake. At any rate, it is best to give them credit for good intentions, and neither act nor feel toward them as if they were enemies.

To cultivate this Christian friendliness in our intercourse with all other evangelical denominations will take away from the enemy one great advantage in reproaching us. It will illustrate and recommend the charitable spirit of the gospel. It will help forward the cause of Christ on every hand. Moreover, at some future day it will turn to our interest, and we shall experience the wisdom of it in the reaping of benefits that we now but little suspect.

EXCHANGING PULPITS

It is advisable for neighboring pastors occasionally to occupy each other's pulpits for either the whole or part of a Sabbath's services. Undoubtedly, such exchanges should be made with ministers of our own denomination, but it would be wise to arrange them sometimes with others also. Of course, they are to be made only with ministers who are reliable and evangelical in their views, for we have no right to impose, even for one service, upon our congregation a person who might preach erroneous doctrines or by word or act awaken discord. It is also an unwise belittling of himself for a pastor to bring some brother into his pulpit to say that to his people which he is afraid to say himself. But, guarding against these two abuses, an occasional exchange of pulpits by neighboring pastors, even of different denominations, is profitable to both churches and ministers.

By making such exchanges a minister enlarges the circle of his influence and opportunities for doing good. Then the people, as it is well that they should, have an opportunity of hearing other clergymen of their vicinity without leaving their own house of worship. Besides, the minister being relieved for a week from the necessity of preparing a new sermon, will have the time to devote to other important studies.

How often is it advisable that pulpit exchanges should be made? Circumstances will ordinarily decide this question, but it is well to have in the mind some general rule that may serve as a guide. They ought not to be so frequent as to distract the minds of the people and look like restlessness on the part of the pastor. They ought not to be so seldom that scarcely any of the benefits we have named will be gained. It would not be far from a proper medium if the boundaries were fixed for once in five or six weeks. On this point we may cite the judicious advice of the Rev. Dr. Enoch Pond in his Pastoral Theology: “The question as to the frequency of exchanges must be determined somewhat by circumstances. They may be so frequent as to

prove a serious interruption to the regular ministrations of the pastor, rendering his services in his own pulpit rather occasional than habitual. They may be so unfrequent that the benefits of them shall scarcely be realized. Ordinarily, they are less frequent in cities than in the country, chiefly perhaps because they are less needed, the city minister having sufficient help in his pulpit without resorting to exchanges. They are less frequent also in new countries and where there is a comparative destitution of ministers than where there is a more abundant supply. Under the most favorable circumstances, an exchange once in four Sabbaths may be regarded perhaps as the extreme of frequency. An exchange once in eight Sabbaths may be considered as verging to the other extreme."

PROSELYTING

This practice is carried on by some ministers in such a manner and to such a degree as to do great harm to themselves, their churches and neighboring churches. Others are too sensitive about it, and neither indulge in it themselves nor bear it as much as it is both allowable and a duty that they should. It is one of the first practical difficulties that most ministers have to encounter in their intercourse with other ministers and other churches. Almost all must meet it at some time. There is nothing else which is in so much danger of stirring up animosities between different churches, and consequently nothing which, on that account, needs to be so carefully watched. It is well to have some definite understanding concerning it—that is, as to when it is wrong, discourteous and unchristian, and when it is not only right, but a duty.

(a) When Wrong

The question should be settled in the mind of the pastor as to when it is wrong, and when it is right, to attempt to draw people away from any other connection to his own church. There are circumstances when proselyting is wrong in principle, wrong in practice and wrong in policy, and should be so regarded by every minister.

Of course, it is a great wrong to attempt to unsettle persons by drawing them from one congregation to another of the same denomination. So also is it culpable to endeavor to proselyte from one evangelical denomination to another. The whole thing is calculated to arouse unchristian feelings between churches and ministers. It unsettles those who are proselyted, so that they soon lose all healthy attachment to any particular church. It is discourteous, dishonorable, dishonest. A pastor's members and families are his treasures, and to attempt to draw them away from him is to attempt to rob him of what he prizes among the dearest of earthly things.

The evil effect of such proselyting may be still further seen if we consider the unhappy state of feeling it produces between the churches. It awakens evil surmisings; it fosters unhallowed strifes; it diverts the energies from the great cause of Christ, upon which they ought to be concentrated, and it wastes the powers in hateful controversies. It taints the character of the preaching, of the Sabbath-school instructions and of the pastoral visits, and it is calculated to grieve away the Holy Ghost.

And, still further, it never proves to be any real, permanent gain to the church and pastor by whom it is practiced. The persons whom they succeed in attracting to themselves from other churches add nothing to their real strength. Very often they were among the dissatisfied and the troublers in the churches from which they came, and they will be quite likely to make difficulties in their new connection, or they will not be long satisfied with it. Hence it is wise, on the other hand, not to be too much depressed when persons are persuaded to leave us and enter other congregations. We ought not to harbor the thought of retaliation. The dignified course of true Christian honor is the one that will come off best in the end. Under no circumstances should we have anything to do with low, selfish intriguing or taking advantage of circumstances for weaning persons away from their own churches and attaching them to ours.

(b) When Right

There is a sense in which proselyting is right, and there are circumstances under which it is obligatory and is simply carrying out the aggressive spirit of the gospel. What is true proselyting but winning over converts to the cause of Christ? This, therefore, should be studied out carefully as an important ministerial duty.

It is obviously right to attract as many persons as possible into one's church from the ungodly world. This is made an evident duty by the command, “Go out into the highways and

hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Compassion for the souls of men will justify us in also seeking to draw them from connections where fundamental error is taught and where salvation by the death of Christ alone is ignored. We are also under obligation to endeavor to win to our fold those who, though once connected with some other church, have abandoned it and turned their backs upon all the ordinances. There can be no objection to the effort to influence all-these. On the contrary, the progressive nature of the gospel demands of us that we should earnestly strive with them.

The only care we need to have is that the efforts which we put forth for them be prompted and guided by true scriptural motives, that they be pure, honorable and aboveboard, and that in them all we have a proper regard for the rights and feelings of others. Whatever we do should be done in such a way as will bear the clearest light and closest scrutiny. Our aim should always be to constrain the world to admit that the Christian minister is a gentleman of the highest type. Of this kind of proselyting there cannot be too much. This is the very genius and spirit and object of the gospel. Its mission amongst men is to bring the whole world unto itself. In all its great movements and in each of its members it is to strive to convert men from irreligion and to bring them into the fold of Christ. In accordance with this divine appointment, the pastor should constantly have some persons definitely before his mind whom he will strive to win over to Christ and his Church. In every community there are many ne-glecters of religion who, if they were dealt with in fidelity, might be influenced by the truth. It is in this way that the gospel is to be spread farther and wider, and to sink deeper into society. It is in this way that souls are to be brought into the kingdom, where they may glorify God by testimony and example.

A NEIGHBORLY SPIRIT TO BE CHERISHED WITH ALL

This kind of spirit should be aimed at by every pastor and church. Freedom from an over-sensitive disposition to take offence will do much toward producing it. It can be cultivated by a frank and open demeanor in all the necessary intercourse and relations of life. Friendliness of manner and efforts to oblige even in little things will surely cause its blessings to be enjoyed.

We may see the evil of the contrary spirit—the spirit of unamiable, unfriendly selfishness—as it is sometimes exhibited in ministers, and between them and the community where they dwell. It brings odium upon the cause of Christ, it creates disrespect for the ministry, it wounds the Saviour among his friends, it retards the blessed cause of Christ in society, and it makes its possessor wretched. Its meanly selfish aims defeat themselves. It is worthy of no sympathy, and it receives none in the community where it continues to reside. Often it becomes the cause of unsettling pastors, and forcing them away from neighborhoods which have no affection for them and for whose esteem they have never striven.

But the good-neighborly feeling which we advocate will adorn the doctrines of Jesus Christ the Saviour, it will add greatly to the pastor's own personal comfort, it will increase his influence and means of doing good, and it will undoubtedly make him more successful in his great work. Some of those persons whose good-will he gains by the kindness of his ordinary demeanor may be induced to come to his church occasionally, and finally to become constant attendants, or, touched by the Spirit of God, consistent members. Nor should we overlook its reflex benefits upon the pastor himself in expanding his heart and drawing out all his affections into a warmer glow of Christian charity.

It should never be forgotten that the increase of the Church —both of the whole body and of each congregation—must

largely come from without. It is not enough that we merely hold our own, either in graces or members or families; there must be expansion throughout the community and the world. Others, and still others, must be constantly gathered in. Hence we must not alienate those who are around us by our unfriendliness. We must not treat them as if they were utterly outcast and hopeless. Men are lost, it is true, but it is our appropriate work as ministers of Christ to try to save them. They are diseased, but we are deputed to go to them and seek to restore them by the healing balm of the gospel. If they were already safe and perfect there would be no need of our ministrations, and our office would be at an end. But in order rightly to perform its momentous duties we must first labor diligently to have our own hearts full of love to our blessed Master, full of kindness toward Christians of every name, and full of compassion for those who are perishing in the midst of the richest gospel privileges. Then will our efforts go forth spontaneously and with the very delight of our hearts, and through them souls will be gathered into the kingdom; Christians will feel the sweet influence, and grow in lovely graces; Christ will see of the travail of his soul, and feel an infinite satisfaction; the richest joys will come back upon our own hearts, and we shall every day be preparing for the immortal ecstasy of those who, having turned many to righteousness, shall be “as the stars for ever and ever."