





# LECTURES

ON

## PASTORAL THEOLOGY.

BY

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Andover :

WARREN F. DRAPER,

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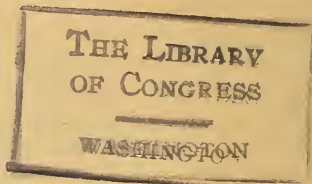
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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE studies pursued in the theological seminaries of our country are chiefly calculated to prepare the youthful preacher for the more *public* duties of the sacred office, — for the devotions and instructions of the sanctuary. But there is another class of duties, of scarcely less importance, which, it may be expected, will speedily devolve upon him. They relate to his more *private* intercourse with his people; to the oversight he is to take of them, and the influence he is to exert upon them, in the house, by the way, in their seasons of prosperity and adversity, in sickness and affliction, when rejoicing in hope, or mourning in spiritual darkness and desertion, or anxiously inquiring the way to heaven. These are obviously *pastoral duties* — duties which cannot, *must not* be neglected; and in regard to the nature and right performance of which, the young minister feels that he needs instruction. Without such instruction he must painfully feel his incompetency to go forth into the world, and assume the responsibility of guiding and feeding the church of God.

The class of duties here referred to is of such importance, that for the neglect or careless performance of them no other ministerial excellences or qualifications will at all compensate. A man may be learned and gifted, an able and instructive preacher of the gospel; still, if he is a *bad pastor*, the good effects of his preaching will be comparatively lost, and he will scarcely be tolerated by an intelligent people. Whereas, if he is a good, a wise, a faithful pastor, he will be borne with, and appreciated, and may be very useful, though he be but an indifferent preacher. I here contrast the two departments of ministerial labor, for the purpose of impressing more deeply the importance of pastoral duties, and of showing how defective must be any system of theological education in which these latter should be omitted. But there is no need of setting the two in contrast, or of separating them the one from the other. Let them both stand

together, be cultivated together, and together be carried out in the labors of the ministry, and they will render him in whom they meet a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth from the sacred desk, and rightly exemplifying and enforcing it in his daily intercourse with the people of his charge.

The department of pastoral duties is precisely that in which some good men have feared that the course of instruction in our theological seminaries must necessarily be deficient. It has not been doubted that the seminaries afforded facilities for instruction in Biblical literature, in systematic theology, in sacred rhetoric, and in ecclesiastical history, beyond what could ordinarily be furnished in the study of a private pastor. But the latter, it has been said, must be the most competent instructor in *pastoral duties*, and can better exemplify his instructions in his daily practice. The first part of this objection might be obviated — as in all ordinary cases it should be — by selecting those to be teachers in the seminaries who had previously sustained the relation of pastors. The force of the latter part of the objection would depend on the fact whether those selected as the most competent private instructors in theology were at the same time the most distinguished patterns of *pastoral* diligence and fidelity. My impression is that this would not generally be the case. Confident I am that it was not the case in years that are past, when all our young ministers were under the necessity of pursuing their professional studies in a private way.

There is danger, however, that in our theological seminaries, both the study and the practice of pastoral duties will be comparatively neglected. In the ardor of their literary and theological pursuits, there is danger that young men will overlook those important lessons on this subject which they will be called so soon to reduce to practice. The teachers in our seminaries should be aware of this danger, that they may the more effectually guard against it.

To preserve from the danger here referred to, it has been thought expedient to encourage young men in the seminaries — so far as this could be done without interfering with their appropriate studies — to engage in something like pastoral labor. In the vicinity of most of these institutions opportunities exist for taking the charge of village meetings; superintending Bible-classes and Sabbath-schools; visiting the poor, the sick, the bereaved, the afflicted; conversing with the inquiring and anxious; and performing other similar duties; and it is doubtless expedient that to a reasonable

extent the discharge of such duties should be encouraged. To my certain knowledge they have in some instances been performed by students to the great advantage of all concerned. At the same time, in all our seminaries pastoral duties are made the subject of direct and earnest inculcation. Lectures are delivered, books are studied, meetings for free conversation are held, and all suitable means are employed to bring the subject before the minds of the rising ministry, in a way to excite interest, and lead to profitable results.

The following Lectures have been often delivered in the seminary with which the author is connected. They might have been retained in manuscript, to be still further repeated and improved. But experience has convinced me that I could better promote the interests of my pupils by putting my Lectures into their hands in the form of a text-book, to be read and pondered and made the subject of conversation in the lecture-room, than by simply calling them together, and repeating the Lectures in their hearing. I have wished also to do something for theological students and young ministers generally, into whose hands the printed Lectures may, peradventure, fall. Nor am I altogether without hope that my older ministerial brethren, whose privilege it is to be intrusted with the care of souls, may derive some benefit from the thoughts of one who was for twelve years a pastor like themselves, and who still delights to look back upon those years, as among the most pleasant, if not the most useful, of his life.

Another motive for publishing the Lectures has been, that there is nothing now before the public exactly adapted to the same purpose with them, or which might profitably be used in their place. The times in which we live, as also the state of our American churches, have each their peculiarities, tending to modify very considerably the duties of pastors; so that works written for another country and age, such as Baxter's Reformed Pastor, Mason's Student and Pastor, and Bishop Burnet's Pastoral Care, — though excellent in their kind, and well worthy to be read and pondered, — are not quite suited to our circumstances.

As the subjects of the following Lectures are almost entirely practical, I have endeavored to treat them in a plain, practical way. I have gone into a consideration of those numerous questions, — some of them minute, but not on that account necessarily unimportant, — which would be likely to perplex the mind of a young minister, and about which he would wish to be advised and directed. The advices

which I have given, with the reasons of them, are submitted with all deference to the consideration of my ministerial brethren. On so great a variety of topics it would be strange if there was not some diversity of opinion. From those who detect mistakes in what I have written, or who think me in any serious error, I shall be glad to receive fraternal suggestions, and shall hope to profit by them.

I only add, that these Lectures are specifically adapted to the case of *Congregational ministers and churches*, such as have existed in New England from the first settlement of the country to the present time. Still, with but slight modifications — such as will readily suggest themselves to the intelligent reader or teacher — they will apply equally well to the pastors and churches of other evangelical denominations.

My earnest desire is not only that they may contribute to render those who are already pastors, or who are expecting soon to become such, more fully acquainted with their duties, and more deeply interested in them, but that they may impress a sense of the vast *importance* of these duties, and lead to greater fidelity and success in the performance of them. So shall the individuals referred to be better pastors while they live, and be prepared for a more distinguished reward — a crown of many stars — from the hand of their great Master and Lord in heaven.

#### POSTSCRIPT.

The first edition of these Lectures was published twenty years ago. They have long been out of the market, and I have often been requested and urged to reprint them. But circumstances have prevented until now. They have been entirely rewritten, and several of them have received important modifications. With all deference they are again submitted to the consideration of the public.

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# LECTURES ON PASTORAL THEOLOGY.



## LECTURE I.

### PASTORAL QUALIFICATIONS.

PIETY: STRONG FAITH — THE LOVE OF CHRIST — LOVE TO SOULS. INTELLECTUAL ENDOWMENTS: COMMON SENSE, KNOWLEDGE OF MEN AND THINGS, PRUDENCE. SOCIAL QUALITIES: EASY MANNERS — ENERGY AND ACTIVITY. ORTHODOXY — GENERAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION.

ONE of the first questions which meets us in approaching the general subject of these lectures, is that of *pastoral qualifications*. What are they? What properties of person, mind, and heart is it desirable that the pastor should possess, in order to his highest usefulness?

The first of all qualifications for the pastoral work is *piety*. Nothing can at all compensate for the absence of this. Without satisfactory evidence of piety, no person is to regard himself as called or entitled to enter on the duties of the office in question. And when I speak of piety as a qualification for the ministry, I mean something more than barely to live and breathe in the spiritual world: I mean a stirring, vigorous, enlightened, consistent piety; and the more of it the better. Whatever else may be said on the subject of pastoral qualifications, this must stand first and foremost. This must never be overlooked or forgotten.

Piety is lovely and excellent in *all* its developments;

and not one of them should be wanting in the ambassador of Christ. He should possess and exemplify *all* the precious fruits of the Spirit. He should have “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, temperance.” He should be “pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”

There are some forms of piety, however, which are of *special* importance to the minister of Christ, and on which it may be necessary, for a moment, to insist. One of these is faith, strong faith. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.” There is no other principle sufficiently powerful to gain such a victory; and yet the faithful pastor must have in great measure gained it. He must have overcome the love of the world, the spirit of the world, the pursuits, the customs, the riches, pleasures, and honors of the world. He must be willing to tread the world beneath his feet, and to forego his dearest earthly interests for the sake of those higher and nobler interests which pertain to the kingdom of Christ. Now faith — that faith which gives reality to the great objects of hope, which brings invisible things near, and makes them seem to us as though they were near — can induce this state of mind; and nothing else can. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chapter xi.) presents us with a great cloud of ancient worthies and witnesses, and tells us of their achievements in the divine life; but these were all accomplished by *faith*. They could have been accomplished in no other way. And this same faith the minister of Jesus needs — the same in nature and in power — to sustain him in all his cares and toils; to make him submissive and cheerful under trials; to prepare

him for crosses and sacrifices in his Master's service ; in a word, to carry him through what is to be the labor of his life, and bring him off at last a conqueror. Woe to the individual who essays to gird himself with the armor of the gospel in his own strength, — who undertakes to perform the work and bear the burden of a Christian pastor without the sustaining power of faith !

Another form of piety, which should live and reign in every heart, and especially in the heart of a gospel minister, is *the love of Christ*. If any one inquired of Paul as to the reason of that course of life which he pursued, — a course which to some appeared so strange that they were ready to say he was beside himself, — he could only reply, "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*" And if the inquiry was pressed, *Constraineth to what?* we have his answer in the following verse : "That we should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again." In the breast of Paul, and of the primitive disciples generally, the love of Christ was a motive of controlling power. If it had less than simple faith that was sustaining and elevating, it had more that was tender, attractive, and subduing. When Polycarp was brought before the Proconsul of Asia, his persecutor required him to swear and reproach Christ. But the venerable martyr replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and he hath never done me any wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" The effect of the love of Christ upon this holy apostolic man was the same that it will be upon every other man in whose heart it abides with equal strength. It will lead him to say, in the hour of temptation, what Joseph said to his seducer : "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against

God? How can I so grieve and displease my Saviour?" No one at all acquainted with the peculiar trials and temptations of the minister of Christ can fail to perceive how important this constraining principle must be to him. With it, he is united to Christ and his cause by a bond which not earth or hell can sever. Without it, he is cut off from the great source of light and life,—cast forth as a useless branch, and is withered.

I notice but another form of piety which is of special importance to the minister of Christ, and that is *an ardent, quenchless love for souls*. He should believe with unhesitating assurance all that the Scriptures teach respecting the immortality and worth of the soul; its present state and its future destiny; and that "he who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall literally save a soul from death." Impressions such as these, deeply engraven on the heart of a minister, will exert a most happy influence, not only upon his preaching and prayers, but upon his whole professional life. They will lead him to avoid all those things which may have a tendency to injure souls, and diligently to employ every means in his power which will be likely to save them. They will not suffer him to waste in secular cares, or in mere literary pursuits, that time and those energies which ought to be consecrated to the spiritual good of his people. They will not suffer him to withhold from them any attention or service which he can consistently render, and which he thinks that the interests of their souls require.

Impressed and influenced by the love of souls, the minister of Christ will not be much moved by personal sacrifices. He will consent to waive often, not merely his private opinions and wishes, but his *rights* and *inter-*

*ests*, rather than incur the hazard of hindering the recovery of some whom he desires to save. Knowing that in the various walks of life he has to do with immortal beings, who are constantly watching him and receiving impressions from his example, he will be exceedingly cautious as to the steps he takes. He will tread softly and circumspectly as he mingles with undying souls, lest by some indiscretion he should fatally injure them. In short, he will endeavor that his whole intercourse with the people of his charge, and with others, shall be of a holy, sanctifying nature, calculated to recommend and enforce religion, and promote, in the best manner, their eternal interests.

It would be easy to dwell on this delightful topic, — the necessity of piety to a minister of the gospel ; piety in all its forms and developments, but more especially in those on which I have insisted, — but I must turn to speak of other important ministerial qualifications.

Among these are *natural endowments*, or *gifts*. Brilliant talents, however desirable, are not indispensable to the useful pastor. But he must have a mind susceptible of cultivation and improvement, and which, when improved, will render him “ a workman who needeth not to be ashamed.” Without *respectable* mental endowments, no one ought to regard himself as called or qualified to engage in the duties of the ministry. He may be pious ; he may be very useful in other employments ; but he cannot expect to accomplish much in public labors for the salvation of souls. Nature has essentially disqualified him for such a work ; and the God of nature thus intelligibly signifies that this is not the sphere of usefulness to which he has called him.

Among the endowments indispensable to usefulness

in the Christian ministry, is what is sometimes denominated *common sense*. By this I mean the ability to take correct views of common things, — things of perpetual recurrence in common life, — and to judge and act with propriety in regard to them. It appears from this definition that common sense is something quite distinguishable from genius. Persons may have good common sense, with but little genius ; or they may have much genius, with almost no common sense. If common sense is an endowment in some respects inferior to genius, it certainly is one not less indispensable to the useful pastor. Without it, mere genius would be to him of but little value. It would be a dazzling, but dangerous accomplishment. In some of its influences it might even be of more injury than benefit. For, destitute of common sense, a man would be continually falling into mistakes and blunders ; and the higher he was exalted in point of genius, the greater and more disastrous his blunders would be. The people who have a pastor blessed with good common sense and respectable mental endowments, and these all consecrated to the service of Christ, need never repine that he is not a great genius. With more genius he might preach, occasionally, more splendid sermons ; but these might be associated, as they too often are, with foibles and extravagances that would render his sermons, in point of influence, of but little value.

Nearly allied to the qualification of which I here speak, is a competent *knowledge of human nature*. This cannot be acquired solely, or chiefly, from teachers or from books. It must be sought by looking carefully into one's own mind and heart, and by mingling more or less extensively with the world. The wisest of men



has said, "As in water face answereth to face, so does the heart of man to man." Every man is possessed of *human nature*, in all its capacities and affections — the same human nature that belongs to others ; hence, the first object of those who would become acquainted with human nature should be to *know themselves*. Let them trace the sources of their feelings and the windings of their thoughts ; let them scrutinize the motives by which they are actuated, and search into the mysterious depths of their own spirits ; and then, as they mingle with the world, let them carefully study the plans, the purposes, the characters of others. Here is a volume ever open, inviting research, into which the most casual observer can scarcely look without increasing his knowledge of human nature.

With a thorough knowledge of human nature, acquired in the manner here pointed out, a man becomes almost a "discerner of spirits." Such knowledge enables him to look into the secrets of human character, and to unfold those secrets, so far as he shall have occasion, with accuracy. It enables him to guard against imposition ; to unmask hypocrisy ; to describe the thoughts and feelings of his hearers better, often, than they could do it themselves ; and to shape his course amidst dangers and trials, where otherwise he would be in utter darkness and uncertainty.

Another kindred quality of great importance to the minister, is *prudence*. This, I am aware, though a good word, is an oft abused one. Prudence is often used to signify a timid, time-serving, man-pleasing policy ; the opposite of Christian frankness, conscientiousness, faithfulness. Of course, I do not here use the word in this perverted and mistaken sense. Prudence — properly,

etymologically speaking — is *foresight*. It looks ahead — not to see how it may evade a trying duty, but how it may best meet it; not to see how it may run round a cross, but how it may most safely and successfully take it up. “Prudence,” in the language of another,<sup>1</sup> “is the opposite of rashness and inconsideration. It neither speaks nor acts till it has had time to think. In rebuking transgression, it strives to conciliate and gain over the offender. It disarms prejudice, inspires confidence, increases the number of friends, and wards off the attacks of enemies. Ordinary talents, under the direction of prudence, will do more in the ministry than the greatest gifts without it.”

It is necessary to the highest usefulness in the ministry that a man possess good *social qualities*. By these I do not mean flippancy, loquacity, volubility of tongue, but the ability to converse with ease and propriety, and to render a social interview improving and agreeable. This ability, though in part, perhaps, a natural gift, is to be regarded rather as an acquisition; else, why the difference, in this respect, between the cultivated and uncultivated; and how is it that many who are naturally reserved and taciturn acquire the ability to converse with freedom and propriety? I would recommend this topic to the consideration of every candidate for the gospel ministry. You hope to accomplish much good in the world, not only by preaching, but by conversation. It should be an object with you, therefore, not only to preach well, but to converse well; to cultivate not only your rhetorical powers, but your social qualities.

Nor is the qualification of *manners* to be altogether

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Humphrey.

overlooked in this connection. This is a point on which scholars, and the most promising scholars, often fail. They are engaged, for a course of years, in the acquisition of knowledge,—in disciplining, furnishing, and improving their minds, and preparing themselves for usefulness in the church; and forget, meanwhile, one essential qualification for the highest usefulness,—the acquisition of *easy and gentlemanly manners*. The consequence is, they go out into the world with their rustic, boorish habits about them, and find themselves excluded from that society which in other respects they are fitted to adorn, and from stations of usefulness which they might otherwise fill; or, if not excluded, they are subjected, for a time, to numberless mortifications. Hundreds of excellent ministers now living know, in their own experience, what all this means; and would unite with me (if they were here to speak) in urging upon all candidates for the gospel ministry the cultivation of their *manners*, as well as their minds and hearts. I would not, indeed, that young ministers should assume the appearance, or affect the manners of the coxcomb or the dandy; better be anything than that; but I would that every minister of Christ should be, not only a grave and holy man, but in his manners a *gentleman*,—a *Christian gentleman*.

I hardly need observe that every gospel minister should be a man of *energy* and *activity*, capable of being warmed, enkindled himself, and of arousing and interesting others. The work in which he is to engage is a great work, a stupendous work— one sufficient to awaken the energies and task the powers of an angel; and the man of stupid, sluggish, leaden temperament and of indolent habits is least of all fitted to enter into

it. Christ calls no drones into the service of his gospel. His language to all his ministering servants is, "Go *work* in my vineyard;" and those who have no heart to work, who do not mean to work and love to work, had better not enter it. Ministers should not, indeed, be fanatics or enthusiasts; they should not be so excitable and impulsive as to run wild, and fall into extravagances; but they should have hearts glowing with the fire of love, and minds that kindle on gospel themes, and lips that give utterance to their deep emotions in "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," and hands and feet that move spontaneously, vigorously, in the service of their Lord and Master.

It is almost superfluous to remark that, in order to do any good in the vineyard of the Lord, or be entitled to have a standing in it, a man must be *sound in the faith*. He must receive and hold, teach and enforce, all the great doctrines of evangelical religion. These constitute the aliment on which alone his own spiritual life can be nourished. They are also that milk and meat which he is to administer for the sustenance and growth of others. Those who enlist as ambassadors in the service of Christ are under indispensable obligations to preach, not their own fancies, but *his Word*. They are to preach it without addition or diminution, without admixture or alloy. If they would be pure at last from the blood of all men, they must not shun to declare *all* the counsel of God. Of course they must receive and hold it all. They must be characterized by a *steadfast orthodoxy*, an unflinching, unwavering *soundness in the faith*.

I add, once more, that every minister of Christ should be a thoroughly *educated* man. I would not, indeed,

prescribe for all the same course, or the same amount of preparatory education. To some extent individuals must be directed by circumstances in regard to this. But what I mean to say is, that every minister should be educated *for his work*, and the more thoroughly the better.

I have reserved this topic to the last, not that I regard it as more important than any other, but because I may have occasion to treat of it more at length. It is sometimes said that the first preachers of the gospel were *illiterate* men — and in a certain sense this may be true; but it is true, in a more important sense, that they were *very extraordinarily educated and furnished men*. They had been trained for several years under the personal ministry of the Saviour. They had followed him in his journeyings, witnessed his example, and listened, not only to his public preaching, but to his more private lessons of instruction. In addition to this, they were furnished miraculously with the gift of tongues — an acquisition to gain which in any tolerable degree costs the ordinary student years of laborious study. Above all, they enjoyed the miraculous teaching and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. What ministers of the gospel since their time have ever enjoyed such advantages as these? What subsequent laborers in the vineyard of Christ have been trained and furnished for their appropriate work in so extraordinary a manner? The example of the apostles, therefore, instead of pleading for an illiterate ministry, speaks volumes in behalf of a thorough preparatory education.

The successors of these early preachers were many of them among the most learned men of their times. Without doubt they were the most learned that could

be obtained, who possessed the other requisite qualifications. The writings of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp in the first age after the apostles; of Irenæus and Justin in the second; and of Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian in the third, are imperishable memorials, not only of their devotedness and diligence, but also of their general and professional learning.

The necessity for an educated ministry was never greater than at the present time; and that for several reasons. In the first place, the age in which we live is one of *peculiar religious interest*, and demands of those who would sustain the office of teachers high and peculiar qualifications. There is abroad a spirit of earnest inquiry on the general subject of religion, which spurns all restraint. Many are running to and fro, and knowledge, if not on the whole increasing, is at least becoming more widely diffused. At such a time, unless the people are to be wiser than their teachers, the teachers, obviously, must be learned and studious men. They must have enough of general knowledge to command respect, and must be thoroughly versed in all those subjects which stand connected with their profession.

Again: the *progress of events* in general, at the present time, is amazingly rapid. Every wheel in providence is rolling onward, and the way is evidently preparing for new and interesting scenes. In such a state of things, it requires no small effort on the part of the religious teacher to keep pace with the times; and if he does not keep pace with them he of course falls behind them, and is soon lost sight of and forgotten. His public services no longer awaken interest, but, being regarded as obsolete, are despised and neglected.

But especially is a learned ministry demanded at the present time, on account of the influence which is now arraying itself against the cause of truth. New forms of infidelity are coming up ; systems of error and delusion are multiplied ; and the church of God is called to encounter a combined and powerful opposition. In the ranks of this opposition are to be found not only the ignorant, the vulgar, and the vicious, but men of learning and talents, of refined minds and cultivated intellects, standing up in the lecture-room, or wielding the pen of a ready writer, — men who are capable of clothing error in the semblance of truth, and making the worse appear the better reason. Now, in what way is the cause of Christ to be sustained against the influence of such men ? How is their respect to be gained, and they ultimately won, by the standard-bearer of the cross, unless he is able to meet them on their own ground, and can make them feel that he is at least their equal in point of knowledge and of power ?

In urging the importance of an educated ministry, I must be understood as referring to something more than mere *preparatory studies*. I regard these, to be sure, as indispensable ; because, without them, the individual will commence his ministry under disadvantages which he will rarely, if ever, overcome. Still, more is depending on the taste and habits of a minister *after* he has entered on his professional career, than on the length and completeness of his preparatory studies. However long and faithfully he may have labored as a student, if he goes to his work under the impression that, having now reached the summit of his expectations, he may safely relax his customary diligence, or continue it only to such a degree as to meet the necessary calls

of his people, he will soon find that the world is getting in advance of him ; his services are not appreciated as they once were ; he is sinking in the estimation of his people, and of the public generally ; and is doomed to sink, unless he reform, into palpable neglect, if not contempt. Whereas, if his preparatory studies have been less extensive and complete ; if he goes to his field of labor with a love of study and a determination to pursue it ; if he persevere year after year, seldom allowing himself an idle hour, gathering up the fragments of time that nothing be lost ; he will assuredly rise in respectability and usefulness, and the fruits of his diligence will appear. After all that can be said as to the importance of preparatory studies,—and certainly no one can have a higher sense of their importance than myself,—it still remains a truth, and a truth that should be rung loudly in the ears of all ministers, and of those who are looking forward to the ministry, that their ultimate attainments and usefulness in the church will depend chiefly, under God, on the courses of study which they shall adopt and pursue, after they have entered on their professional labors. In proof of this point, if proof were needed, I might cite the example of such men as John Newton, Thomas Scott, Andrew Fuller, William Jay, and a thousand others, both in our own country and in foreign lands.

I have thus briefly touched on some of the more important qualifications for the pastoral work. And it will be seen at a glance that this is a great work, a responsible work, one requiring on the part of those who engage in it attainments of a high and peculiar character. They should be endowed by nature with respectable talents, and good common sense ; should have



prudence, discretion, energy, activity, and a thorough knowledge of men and things ; should be blessed with agreeable social qualities, gentlemanly manners, and much general and professional learning ; should be sound in the faith, and mighty in the Scriptures ; and should have all their other good qualities warmed and quickened, set in motion and kept in motion, by the fire of a deep and consistent piety.

The Lord make all our sacred seminaries fruitful in pastors and ministers such as these ! May the great Lord of the harvest raise up and send forth a host of such laborers into his harvest !

## LECTURE II.

### SETTLEMENT IN THE MINISTRY.

TIME OF SETTLEMENT — PLACE OF SETTLEMENT — PREACHING ON PROBATION  
— SATISFACTORY CALL FOR SETTLEMENT — PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS  
— SETTLEMENT SHOULD BE MADE WITH A VIEW TO PERMANENCY — SOLEMNITIES OF ORDINATION.

No subject is more likely to interest the theological student, as he approaches the limit of his preparatory studies, than that of a settlement in the ministry. On no subject does he feel more in need of instruction and counsel. It is proposed, in this lecture, to consider some of the questions which the student, in the circumstances mentioned, would be most likely to ask, and to which he would most wish to receive an answer. Let me premise, however, that my remarks are intended chiefly for those who propose to *settle* in the ministry, or to become *pastors*.

The first question which occurs is this: Should a settlement be desired by the candidate *as soon as his preparatory studies are closed*, or should he rather *defer it to a later period*?

Undoubtedly there are reasons which may justify a young man, after finishing his course of study, in declining a settlement for a season. Such are want of health, extreme youth and inexperience, or a broken, imperfect education, requiring to be improved by lon-

ger study. Nor would I say that there were not persons of whom neither of these things could be said, who, if circumstances favored, might not properly prolong their courses of study, or avail themselves of the advantages of foreign travel and intercourse with the world. But this I think I may safely say, that persons who have had a full course of study, and still feel themselves unprepared for the pastoral office, and who resort to the expedients above named for the purpose of removing difficulties, and increasing their sense of preparation, are generally disappointed. After prolonging their studies another year or two, and visiting other seminaries, and perhaps foreign countries, they feel the same shrinking from the pastoral office which they did before, and the same want of preparation to meet its duties and responsibilities. It is possible, indeed, that their real *preparation* for the work of the ministry has not been at all increased by the delay. They may have become better scholars, and better prepared for some other employments, but not for the holy, humble, self-denying duties of a pastor.

To the successful prosecution of the work of the ministry, a certain amount of preparatory study is, ordinarily, indispensable. The mind must be trained, disciplined, and furnished to a certain extent, or the work cannot be done; and the course of instruction prescribed to the theological student is intended to meet this exigency. If faithfully pursued, it does meet it. As before remarked, if the course of the student has been interrupted or curtailed, it may be necessary that the deficiency should be supplied. But if it has not been much interrupted, — if it has been regularly pursued, and the benefits of it fully enjoyed, — there is *some* danger in

prolonging it ; and the danger is the greater if the individual in question is one of retiring and studious habits. These habits are already, it may be, so far confirmed as to lead him to shrink back with dread from the responsibilities of public life ; and nothing is more natural to him than the conclusion that, after an additional year or two of study, he shall be much better prepared than he now is for ministerial duties. But his retiring, scholastic habits, meanwhile, are becoming more established ; his aversion to public life is increasing ; and he really finds, at the end of a year or two of additional study, that, though he may have added very considerably to his store of knowledge, his shrinking dread of the ministry, and his sense of unpreparedness to meet its duties, are greater than they were before.

The candidate for the gospel ministry is supposed to be a pious man. He ought to be a very pious man. He loves his Saviour ; he feels for the perishing souls of men ; he desires to do what he can for their conversion and salvation. It is feelings such as these that have impelled him to consecrate himself to the work of the ministry, and that have sustained him through all the difficulties of his preparatory course. And now, when this course is honorably completed, if God gives him health and strength to labor in his vineyard, and opens before him a door of usefulness, in ordinary cases, *I think he should enter it.* He must buckle on the harness at *some* time, and he may as well do it now as ever. He may feel deeply and painfully his unmeetness for the great work before him, and his unpreparedness to discharge its duties. This is no uncommon feeling with the student just closing his connection with the theological seminary ; nor is it one of an unfavorable or

unpromising character. But, as I said before, delay and longer study will not, ordinarily, remove this feeling. It may rather increase than diminish it. Certainly, the individual in question ought to enter at once upon his ministerial labors, unless he has some excuse for delay which will sustain him at the bar of God ; and such an excuse must be something better than one of mere whim, or feeling, or literary ambition, or of personal ease and gratification.

It may be inquired further, in case a young man from the seminary commences preaching at once, whether it may not be better for him not immediately to seek a *settlement*, but to exercise himself for a time as an *itinerant* or an *evangelist*. I would by no means have a young man over-anxious for settlement ; so anxious as to lead him into any unwarrantable measures to effect his object, or to feel impatient and discouraged should God see fit to try him with delay. But, as I have before remarked, when the preparatory studies of an individual are closed, and he is favored with health and strength, and God in his providence opens a door for settlement, I see not why he should hesitate to enter it ; or why he should turn away from the open door, and wait for some more convenient season. He may think to gain some valuable experience, or to see more of the world, or to prepare a stock of sermons ; but his experience as an itinerant will be of little value to him as a settled pastor, a sufficient knowledge of the world he may have opportunities to acquire in other ways, and as to a stock of sermons prepared under such circumstances, without any particular object in view, they are of less value than young ministers generally suppose. They may save the labor of preparing new ones ;

but they will be less appropriate and effective than sermons prepared on the spot, less creditable to the preacher, and less profitable to those who hear. Besides, if one door of usefulness is declined, another may not soon be opened; and the individual may deplore his error when it cannot be retrieved.

The next question relates to the procuring or selecting a *place* of settlement. On this subject I hardly need say that places of settlement are not to be run after or scrambled for. They are not to be sought in a use of underhanded or improper means. Such means are not only unchristian and sinful, but they are almost sure to defeat themselves. Candidates for settlement should also be careful not to stand in each other's way, and should under no circumstances treat a brother as they would not wish to be treated themselves.

In regard to a place of settlement, the two following are the most important directions: 1. Seek above all things to ascertain what is the will and pleasure of the great Head of the church. 2. When this is ascertained, yield to it, nothing doubting; trusting to Christ for all needed wisdom, grace, and strength.

The means to be taken for ascertaining the will of Christ, are, first of all, *prayer*. We are to go to the Saviour with the simple, childlike inquiry on our lips, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Where wilt thou have me to go? I am ready to go anywhere, or to serve thee in any capacity or station. I only desire that thy pleasure may be intelligibly indicated, that the path of duty may be made plain." If we go to Christ in this way for direction, simply desiring to know his will, I believe that, ordinarily, we shall be directed. The great Head of the church will make known his

pleasure ; the path of duty will be opened. But then this will be done not by miracle, not by any supernatural revelation, but by the teachings of his providence, his Word, and his Spirit. Our minds will be so guided, our steps so directed, and events will be so ordered and opened in providence that the path of duty can hardly be mistaken.

This being the manner in which Christ ordinarily indicates his will, it is obvious that a young man, in seeking to know it, is at liberty to do something more than merely to pray. It is right that he should use means ; and, indeed, within appropriate limits, this is necessary. In order to be in a situation to watch the leadings of Providence, it is necessary that he should keep up an acquaintance with the field of labor, and, so far as practicable, with the whole field. To this end he may properly read and inquire, and avail himself of the kind offices of friends. To a certain extent he may consult his own taste and inclinations, since these are among the indications in providence in view of which a decision is to be ultimately formed. These means should all be used, however, with honesty and prayerfulness, and for the single purpose of ascertaining the will of Christ and the path of duty. It is one thing to study the book of providence, and quite another to endeavor to write out a book for ourselves. The former we may do, with all prayerfulness and diligence ; the latter is a worse than useless labor.

I have said that when the pleasure of Christ is clearly ascertained, it belongs to us implicitly to follow it. No matter where he directs our path : if he goes before, and makes the way plain, we are to follow, trusting to his proffered grace and strength to carry us through.

Whether he leads us into high places or low places ; into places near by or far remote ; among the refined and cultivated or the rude and ignorant : if we can be sure that Christ's presence goes with us, we have nothing to fear. He knows us and all circumstances infinitely better than we can. It is always safe to follow him, and never safe to lean to our own understandings. We are not competent to direct the great wheel of providence, or to direct even our own steps ; but honestly to search out the will of Providence, and meekly to follow it, is as much our safety as it is our duty.

It has been made a question whether, previous to settlement, young men should consent to preach on *probation* ; and if so, how long ? The customs of our churches have undergone some change in this respect within the last century, and, it may be, have passed from one extreme to the other. Formerly it was the practice for young men to preach *professedly* on probation ; and on a long probation, varying from three to six months. During this period they were tried in all suitable, not to say *possible* ways. Every performance was criticized, every movement watched with the closest scrutiny. If they passed the ordeal, they received an invitation to settle ; but if not, they were sent away to give place to another candidate.

This mode of procedure was attended with some evils. Owing to the kind and length of the trial to which young men were subjected, it not unfrequently happened that congregations became divided respecting their candidates. Some were pleased, and others displeased ; one part were for this man, and another for that. Then the position of the candidate during his probation was so disagreeable to modest, sensitive young men that



they could hardly submit to it; or if they did submit to it, they felt embarrassed under it, and could not appear or act to advantage.

From the practice here described, our churches have gradually passed over to what may be regarded as the other extreme. In many cases, young men will not preach on probation at all; nor will they consent to preach to destitute congregations for more than three or four Sabbaths, at most. The consequence is that settlements are often effected with almost no previous acquaintance, and dissatisfaction and an early separation are frequently the result.

A medium course is obviously preferable to either of those which have been described. Previous to settling a minister, and more especially if he is young and inexperienced, every people ought to have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with him; acquainted publicly and privately, spiritually and socially; and he should have the same opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. This mutual acquaintance may be effected without the formality of an expressed probation, and without any of that espionage and of those modes of trial which formerly rendered a probation so disagreeable. It may be effected, too, within a moderate length of time; though if the name and the objectionable features of a probation were laid aside, most young men would be willing to supply destitute congregations as long as circumstances rendered it convenient.

The connection between pastor and people is one of great solemnity and importance. Before it is commenced, and before measures are taken with a view to such an event, there should be opportunity, as I said, for a mutual acquaintance. This opportunity need not

be called a probation. It need not be marked by any proceedings of an indelicate or disagreeable character. It may be prolonged more or less, according to the convenience and inclination of the parties. It should be sufficient, in all cases, to make the parties acquainted ; so that if action is taken with a view to settlement, it should be intelligently taken, and no occasion be furnished on either part for subsequent dissatisfaction and a speedy removal.

The question is one of great interest to candidates for the ministry, What may be regarded as a satisfactory *call* for settlement ? Or under what circumstances is a call entitled to a favorable answer ?

One circumstance of indispensable importance in a call to settlement is *unanimity*. A church and people should be *united* in their call, if not to an individual, at least so far as predominant influence is concerned. I can conceive of but one exception to this remark ; and that is, where a people are divided on some great question of doctrine or duty, so that they can hardly be expected to unite in any man, and are as well united in the individual before them as they would be likely to be in any other. Under such circumstances a conscientious young man may think it his duty to settle, notwithstanding the disunion. The case will be a trying and painful one to his feelings ; still, it may be his duty to go forward and meet it. In other cases of disunion, and more especially where the difficulty is not one of principle, but grows out of the different feelings which are indulged towards *the man*,—some liking and others disliking him,—the man should immediately take himself out of the way. No good man would wish to remain, under such circumstances, to become, not an instrument of usefulness, but a bone of contention.

But unanimity in a call is not enough. In addition to this, there should be manifested a good degree of *interest*. Unanimity is sometimes induced by circumstances, or may be the result of mere indifference. Men agree upon a subject, because they do not care enough about it to make it matter of contradiction. A settlement, however unanimous, proposed under such circumstances, would present but a chilling prospect to the heart of a minister. He might well be justified in declining it.

Again : a call, in order to be satisfactory, must proceed from *the church* as well as the parish. An attempt has been made in our own times to destroy the separate existence of the church, and merge it almost if not altogether in the parish. The right of the church to a distinct and independent voice in the election of its pastor has been denied, and a call has been issued often, by the parish only. But a call so issued no evangelical minister ought to accept. He cannot accept it without betraying the rights and interests of the church. A church and a parish, though closely united for the support of religious institutions, and composed in part of the same individuals, are very distinct bodies. They are distinct not only in name, but in nature. The church is an ecclesiastical body. The parish is a civil corporation. Their voice in the election of one to be established over them should indeed be concurrent, but it should be distinctly and separately expressed. As the church should not think to impose a minister on the parish without its consent, no more should the parish undertake to impose a pastor on the church. The right of every church to elect its own pastor is inherent and essential. It grows out of the very constitution of the

church, was secured to it by Christ and the apostles, and must under no circumstances be given up.

Another thing implied in a satisfactory call for settlement is the prospect of an *adequate support*. I say nothing here as to the amount which ought to be proffered, or the manner in which it should be raised, or the particular terms or conditions of payment. All these may vary according to circumstances. But in some way and on some conditions the prospect of a competent support should be held out. And what I mean by a competent support, is one which shall enable the minister to *live by his profession*. He is charged and is bound to give himself *wholly* to his work; and his Divine Master has ordained that "those who preach the gospel should *live of the gospel*." To the minister of Christ, therefore, there is no alternative. He cannot consider that as an imperative call to settlement which does not hold out to him the prospect of an adequate support. Riches he does not expect. Ease and affluence constitute no part of his plan. But a *living* he must have. And he must be able to live, not as a farmer, a mechanic, a teacher, author, or speculator; but as a *minister of Christ*. He must be willing to devote himself wholly to his work, and must have a reasonable prospect of being able to *live* by it; else his call to settle may well be unheeded.

I mention but another thing which enters into the idea of a satisfactory call; and that is, a *fair prospect of usefulness*. To some extent this is involved in what has been already said; for where a call is unanimous, or nearly so, — where it is presented in due form and with a good degree of interest, and holds out the promise of an adequate support, — there will in all ordinary cases be a fair prospect of usefulness. And yet, in some

few instances here and there, circumstances of a peculiar character may intervene, and the hope of usefulness may be taken away. And where a case of this kind clearly occurs, the call, of course, should be rejected. No faithful young man can consent to labor and receive his bread without any prospect of doing good. He will turn away from the barren spot, and devote his energies to some more inviting, promising field.

In regard to the general subject before us, I have two or three further remarks to offer. In the first place, let no young man consent to receive a call, that is, if he can prevent it, which he has no intention to accept. I have known candidates for the ministry to fall into hurtful mistakes on this point. They would preach in different places, gain friends, raise expectation, and receive a call; and then, time after time, reject it. To such a course of procedure there are many objections. It is trifling with the feelings of serious Christians, and putting them to unnecessary trouble. It is weakening their hands for future effort, and is, in fact, trifling with an institution of Christ. Individuals have no right to gratify a childish vanity, or a nervous prejudice, or a hypochondriac fear at such an expense as this. And in ordinary cases there is no need of it. When measures are being taken, or are about to be taken, to give an individual a call, he can scarcely help knowing it, especially if he is on the ground; and if he has decisive objections to accepting the call, he should put a stop to such measures at once. The fact of having received several calls, and rejected them, instead of raising a young man's reputation, materially lessens it. It proves him deficient in foresight or kindness or decision or judgment, or perhaps in all these important ministerial qualifications.

In all the stipulations and arrangements preceding a settlement in the ministry, let there be as much *definiteness* as possible. The mutual conditions and engagements should be well understood, and so far as necessary should be reduced to writing. Such things may be done before settlement better than afterwards; and, unless they are done, a door is left open for future misunderstanding and difficulty.

In settling these preliminaries, however, a young man is not to assume the appearance of a banterer or sharper. He is not to take the advantage of a confiding, affectionate people, and press them up to the highest terms, and squeeze out of them everything that he possibly can. By such means he would make a most unfavorable impression, and would probably injure himself, even in a worldly point of view. Men are often too sharp for themselves. By the attempt to overreach, they not only fail of that at which they aim, but lose what otherwise had fairly belonged to them; and, although I do not think that ministers in general are remarkable for worldly wisdom, or have much skill or success in driving bargains, still, a word of caution on this point may not be unnecessary. In all his arrangements with a people previous to settlement, although a young man should desire and endeavor, as I said, that the terms of contract may be definitely stated and well understood, still, let him manifest (what he ought deeply to feel) that he seeks not theirs, but them; and that he is about to take the oversight of them "not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

I remark, once more, in regard to a settlement in the ministry, that it should be arranged and consummated

with a view to *permanency*. We live, to be sure, in a changing world. The most sacred relations cannot last always, and may continue but a little while. Circumstances may occur which shall require the dissolution of the pastoral relation. Health may fail; unforeseen difficulties may arise; a society may be weakened and broken up; or God in his providence may evidently call the pastor away. Still, the pastoral relation should not be entered into by either party with the calculation or expectation that it is to be soon or easily dissolved. It should be formed, always, *with a view to permanency*. It should be formed with the intention and calculation that, unless the divine hand shall interpose to dissolve it, it is to be continued. The frequent dismissals and removals which have been taking place in our churches during the last half century are events greatly to be deplored. They are a departure from the *primitive* order of the gospel, and have gone far towards changing that invaluable ecclesiastical constitution, which has come down to us from the venerated fathers of New England. It is to be hoped that public sentiment on this subject is becoming more enlightened, and that the evil is already in the process of being cured.

The day of one's ordination to the ministry, and of his taking upon himself the pastoral care of a church and people, is a very solemn day. It should never be approached without much consideration, self-scrutiny, and prayer. Its momentous transactions should not be engaged in, especially by the individual most intimately concerned, without the deepest emotion. He now takes upon himself new and sacred obligations. He binds himself to Christ and his church by new and solemn vows. He becomes invested with the holiest office on

earth, — that of an ambassador of God and a minister of Jesus. He undertakes *the charge of souls*, and places himself in a situation where their salvation or destruction will depend, very materially, on his teaching, his example, and on the manner in which he shall discharge the various duties of his trust. If he is spiritual, skilful, earnest, faithful, he may hope both to save himself and them that hear him. But if he is palpably the opposite of this, — a blind leader of the blind, — both will undoubtedly be destroyed together. Such is the actual situation of every pastor, and such the circumstances into which every young man brings himself, when he assumes the pastoral relation. No wonder he trembles as the solemn day approaches! No wonder he is oppressed and all but overwhelmed in passing through its momentous scenes! The Lord prepare all the members of this sacred seminary, and all the young men of our land who are similarly situated, for solemn ordination vows!



## LECTURE III.

### RELATIONS AFTER SETTLEMENT.

RELATIONS TO THE PARISH AND TO THE CHURCH — EVERY PASTOR SHOULD BE A MEMBER OF HIS OWN CHURCH; NOT MADE A MEMBER BY HIS ORDINATION — HE IS THE HIGHEST OFFICER OF THE CHURCH; ITS BISHOP, ITS PASTOR.

A MINISTER of the gospel, settled after the usual manner in our churches, comes at once to sustain a twofold relation; first, to his *church*, and, secondly, to his *parish*. The parish is a *civil corporation*, a creature of law; and his relation to it is a civil one, partaking of the nature of a contract. The parish invite him to become their religious teacher; and for his encouragement make to him certain proposals, which he accepts. They agree to pay him a certain sum of money, or to make him a stipulated compensation; and he agrees to perform for them, to the best of his ability, a certain amount of parochial, ministerial labor. This, in brief, is the connection between a settled minister and his parish.

His connection with his church is a very different matter. The church is an *ecclesiastical body*, and his relation to it is an ecclesiastical one, formed and consummated in an ecclesiastical way. These diverse relations into which an individual, by his settlement, has been brought, are commonly expressed by different names. He is the *pastor* of his church; he is the *minis-*

ter of his parish. These relations are so diverse that one of them may exist without the other. Not unfrequently one of them *does* exist long after the other is dissolved. The *civil* contract between a minister and his people may cease, so that he has no longer any claim on them for pecuniary support, nor they on him for ministerial service; and yet his *pastoral* relation may remain entire. This is commonly the case with the aged pastor, when he receives an assistant, a colleague. On the other hand, a church may see cause to dismiss its pastor, and his ecclesiastical relation may regularly terminate; and yet the parish may continue in contract with him, and he may labor for them as before. Or, what is more common at the present day, a minister may enter into contract with a people to supply them for a limited time, and may renew his contract from year to year, and never sustain any proper *pastoral* relation to the church. I mention this practice, however, not to approve of it. It is an innovation upon our established customs, and one which, unless under very peculiar circumstances, should be discountenanced.

Of the two relations above referred to, the *ecclesiastical* one is obviously the more sacred and the more important. The duties growing out of this relation involve *all* those resulting from the other, and many more. We will dismiss, therefore, the civil relation, having just adverted to the nature of it, and go into a consideration of the ecclesiastical relation, or that subsisting between a pastor and his church.

And here a question immediately arises, and one of much interest at the present time, — *should a pastor become a member of the church over which he is settled?* Some excellent ministers have answered this question in

the negative. And the principal reason assigned for such an answer is, that by becoming a member of his own church, a minister throws himself into the hands of his church, and comes under their power. They may make him a subject of discipline, and cast him out of the church, and he has no remedy. If he is to be tried for an alleged offence, reason requires that he be tried by his *peers*, by *ministers*, and not by the members of his church.

In reply to this, I admit that no pastor ought to forfeit his standing in the ministry or in the church without opportunity for a hearing before his equals; nor is it in the power of his church, on supposition he becomes a member of it, to deprive him of this privilege. They may subject him to discipline, they may censure and condemn him; but he has always the right of appeal to a mutual council, which has power to review the proceedings of a church, to repair any injury that may have been inflicted, and to do him justice. Or, if his church should be so unreasonable as to deny his request for a mutual council, he may himself call an *ex parte* council, which would be entitled, under such circumstances, to review the case, and remove any injuries which had been sustained.

All this security the usages of our churches afford to a minister, on supposition he becomes a member of his church; and I see not what greater security he can possibly have on the contrary supposition. Suppose he is not a member; if he gets into difficulty with his church, his not being a member will not remove or heal the difficulty. Nor will it enable him long to continue his pastoral relation (even if he desires it) against their will. And when the matter comes to be investigated, the best he can

expect is, *an impartial hearing before a council*. And this the usages of our churches secure to him on supposition of his membership.

Nor is it true that by becoming a member of his church, a minister puts himself into the hands of his brethren, or under their power, any further than every Christian is willing to do, and wishes to do, whenever he connects himself with the church of Christ. By becoming a member of his church, the minister, like every other member, places himself under its watch and care. He engages to watch over his brethren, and they over him. If they wander from their duty, it will devolve on him to admonish, and if possible to reclaim them; or, if he wanders from his duty, the same obligation will rest upon them. But this is a mutual *privilege* and *benefit*, — a thing to be desired and not shunned. The affectionate pastor does not wish to be exempt from moral restraints or liabilities to which his brethren around him are subject. He does not wish the liberty to perpetrate offences, and escape church censures, simply because he is a minister of the gospel. He believes that such a liberty would be not only dangerous to him, but disgraceful. As before said, he regards the watch and care of the church, not as an evil to be avoided, but rather a privilege to be desired. This is the light in which he presents the matter to others; and in the same light he views it in reference to himself.

That a pastor should be a member of his own church, I argue, first, from the inherent *reasonableness* and *propriety* of the case. By the act of settlement, he has become an *officer* of the church. He is its *first* officer; and what propriety in his holding office in a body of which he is not a member? Who would think of choosing a

person to be president of any other association, or to be the leader and commander of a company, to which he did not belong? The impropriety of such a step would be palpable to every one. But the impropriety is not less in the case of a church than of any other association. Who would think of appointing one to the office of *deacon* in a church who was not a member of it, and could not be induced to become a member? But if a person may not hold the second office in a church without being a member, why should he be permitted to hold the first?

I urge as a second reason why the pastor of a church should also be a member of it, that such a connection brings the parties nearer together, promotes union, and implies and strengthens a mutual confidence. By the very act of joining himself to the church which has called him, the pastor elect signifies that he has confidence in it; that he regards it as a true church of Christ; that he is willing to cast in his lot among his brethren, and become one with them. In this way a feeling of union is awakened, and Christian affection and confidence are increased. The whole aspect of the measure is befitting and encouraging, and the results of it to both parties are agreeable and useful. Whereas, if a minister takes the opposite ground; if he stands aloof from his church, and refuses to join it; more especially, if he does this on the ground that he is unwilling to subject himself to its discipline, or place himself under its watch and care — here, obviously, is a painful want of confidence, a distance, a reserve, which, unless counteracted by other influences, will be likely to disturb the whole connection.

But this leads me to say, again, that for a minister at the time of his settlement, or before, to become a mem-

ber of his church, will be likely to prevent *many bad consequences*. It may prevent unhappy consequences, both to himself, to the church of which he has been and still is a member, and to that of which he now becomes pastor. From the former of these churches he is permanently removed, perhaps to a considerable distance, and is no longer in a situation to enjoy its fellowship, or to be subject to its watch and care. And yet, continuing a member of it, the brethren of that church are bound to watch over him, and he is bound to watch over them. Suppose he wanders from the path of duty, and his character becomes a disgrace to his profession: what shall be done with him in relation to his church standing? The church of which he is pastor cannot deal with him as a member, for he does not belong to them. They can only dissolve his pastoral relation and let him go. And the church of which he is a member cannot well deal with him, for he is away from them, perhaps hundreds of miles. It may be that they do not hear of his wanderings until years after their occurrence; all which time he has been bringing reproach upon the cause of Christ, and grieving the hearts of Christians among whom he dwells. Or if they are notified of his delinquencies, as they should be, they are in no situation to inquire into them, or to deal with him as the gospel requires. They are in no situation to labor with him to bring him to repentance, or, in case such labor fails, to judge of the best time and manner of separating him from the communion of Christians. Hence, in all probability, he will continue on in his errors and sins, and remain a standing ulcer upon the fair body of the church as long as he lives.

To show that these consequences are not all imaginary,

I will state a case which came under my own observation. It was that of a man who, during his collegiate life, became connected with the church in Yale College. He was afterwards settled over a church in Massachusetts, of which he declined becoming a member under the usual pretence that such a measure was inexpedient and unnecessary. After having been settled several years he turned Unitarian, and was dismissed. His conduct as well as his creed was unsatisfactory to the members of the church; and they undertook, after his dismissal, to deal with him according to the rules of the gospel. But he disclaimed their right to make him a subject of discipline, alleging that he was not a member of their body, and never had been, but was still connected with the church in Yale College. On this ground he claimed communion with the church, though he would not submit to its discipline, and had widely departed from its rules both of faith and life. Nor is this a solitary case. It is but one among many that have occurred, and will occur so long as the absurd practice is tolerated of settling ministers over churches of which they are not members.

I urge, once more, that by adopting this practice ministers set a bad *example* before their churches, and thereby exert an unhappy influence. All allow that it is the duty of private Christians, when they remove from one place to another, to transfer their church relation. They should become members of the churches where they reside. But with what face or conscience can a minister of the gospel urge this duty upon private Christians, when he has neglected to perform it himself? With what consistency can he say to them, "You ought not to reside in one place, and have your church relation

in another; you ought, by all means, to be members, and be under the watch and care of the church where you reside;" when it is *well known* that he is himself connected with a church, it may be, hundreds of miles off? It is in no small measure owing, I have thought, to this disorderly practice on the part of ministers, that Christians, when they change their residence, are so backward and negligent in connecting themselves with the churches to which they remove.

It has been said, in reply to the foregoing reasons, that the settlement of a pastor over a church does, in fact, constitute him a member of it, and that he has no need to become a member in any other way. But is this true? If it *be* true, then he *is* a member, to all intents and purposes,—in covenant with the church, under its watch and care, and subject to its discipline; and so the object aimed at in the foregoing discussion is secured. And the same objections would lie against his being a member in this way, as in any other.

But is it true that the mere settlement of a minister over a church constitutes him a member of it? I answer this question in the negative, and for the following reasons:

In the first place, the act of settling a minister over one church cannot, of itself, remove him from another. Up to the time of his settlement, the pastor elect belongs to some other church. He is in solemn covenant with that church, and cannot be released from it regularly but by an act of dismissal. But no such act has been passed, and none requested. Probably the church has not been consulted at all in regard to the contemplated settlement. Under these circumstances, how can an ordaining council, or any other ecclesiastical body,



take the pastor elect out of the church of which he is a member? How can they release him from his covenant obligations to that church, or the church from its covenant obligations to him? The thing is manifestly impossible.

And equally impossible is it for the ordaining council to put the candidate for settlement into the church of which he is to be pastor. If he comes into this body, he must come in by assenting to its faith and covenant. He must come in at his own request, and by consent of the body itself. This is the only way in which a person can become connected with a Congregational church. And to tell of a minister's being put into such a church so as to become a member of it, by an ordaining council, or by the act of settlement, is to talk absurdly.

But this is not all. If the act of settlement over a church constitutes the pastor a member of it, then how is he affected by an act of dismissal? Does this make him no member? And if it does make him no member (as it should seem it ought to, on the theory before us), then where does it leave him? Does it throw him back into the church to which he originally belonged? or does it throw him entirely out of the Christian community, consign him over to the world, and amount to a virtual excommunication? It devolves on those to answer these questions who say that the very act of settlement constitutes a minister a member of his church, and that a formal admission to it is unnecessary.

It will be said, perhaps, that the dismissed minister belongs to the *general* visible church, but not to any church in particular. But what is the *general* visible church, aside from the particular churches which go to compose it? Where is it? Manifestly, nowhere. It

is nothing. As well might we tell of a creature belonging to the *genus homo*, the *human race*, who was not a man in particular and had no particular human attributes. If a dismissed minister belongs to no particular church, then he belongs to no church at all; and in case of scandal, has none to watch over him, or call him to an account.

On the whole, it is my decided opinion that every pastor should be a member of the church over which he is settled; and that he should become a member by admission, in the usual way. This step is perfectly reasonable and proper in itself, and the influence of it is all good, and only good. Whereas, the contrary practice, to say nothing of its inherent absurdity, betrays a want of confidence, lays a foundation for unfavorable inferences and remarks, and is followed often, or is likely to be, by unhappy consequences. I would hope, therefore, that no minister will ever again be settled over a Congregational church, until he has first become a member of it; that no church will consent to receive one as its pastor and presiding officer, who is not a member; and that no council will consent to solemnize the pastoral relation, without seeing to it that the relation of membership has first been formed. Until this is done, our churches cannot claim that their practice conforms to the teachings either of reason or Scripture. They cannot claim to be the consistent followers either of our Pilgrim fathers or the primitive believers.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus expressed the opinion, and shown the

<sup>1</sup> In his *Ratio Disciplinæ*, Mr. Upham says: "According to Congregational usage, no person becomes and remains the minister of a church, without also transferring his relationship and becoming *a member of the same*. The reasons of this are various; but one undoubtedly is, that he may feel himself subject to the needful restraint of its watch and discipline" (p. 167).

reasons of it, that a minister settled over a church should be a member of the body, I proceed to say that he is something more than a member. As before remarked, he is an *officer* of the church, and, under Christ, its *highest* officer. He is its *pastor*, its *teacher*, its *bishop*, its earthly *guide* and *head*.

The term *pastor*, or *shepherd*, is one much employed in the Scriptures to denote a religious teacher and guide. In this sense it is applied to the prophets in the Old Testament. It is often applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the great Shepherd of the sheep," the "chief Shepherd," "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." The term is a relative one, implying in its very composition the existence of a flock. Much of the wealth of the Orientals, in their earlier and simpler state of society, consisted in their flocks; the feeding, tending, and nurturing of which constituted their chief employment. The business of the shepherd was lucrative and honorable, and the relation subsisting between him and his flock was of the most intimate and tender kind. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd, and followed him; but a stranger they would not follow, for they knew not the voice of strangers. The shepherd called his own sheep by name; and when he put them forth, he went before them, and the sheep followed him, for they knew his voice.

This tender, interesting connection, so familiar to those to whom the Scriptures were first given, — a connection involving so much of care and watchfulness on the one part, and of dependence and confidence on the other, — the Holy Spirit has seized upon to set forth the relation subsisting between the religious teacher and the people of his charge. He is their under-shep-

herd, their pastor ; and they are the flock which “ the great Shepherd of the sheep ” has committed to his hands. The duties growing out of this *pastoral relation* are numerous and various, and will be considered in the following Lectures.

## LECTURE IV.

### PASTORAL ACQUAINTANCE.

MEANS OF IT — VISITS — SET VISITS DESCRIBED — DANGERS AND BENEFITS OF THEM — RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN REGARD TO THEM.

ONE of the first duties involved in the pastoral relation is that of a mutual and intimate *acquaintance*. “I am the good Shepherd, and *know my sheep*, and *am known of mine*.” Every good pastor will make himself familiarly acquainted with his people, and with *all* his people. He will know their names, their families, their characters, connections, and circumstances, — everything pertaining to them which would be of interest to a confiding and faithful friend. More especially will he endeavor to become *spiritually* acquainted with them. He will know of them individually, so far as he may, their spiritual state. Without this acquaintance, he cannot possibly know how to preach to them to advantage. He cannot know what truths and duties to enforce, or how to enforce them. He cannot so divide the word of truth, as to give to each his portion in due season. His bow must be perpetually drawn at a venture, and his arrows will be almost as likely to do hurt as good. As well might the physician prescribe for his patient without knowing at all the symptoms of his disease, as the religious teacher proclaim the truths of the gospel without that intimate spiritual acquaint-

ance with the people of his charge of which I have spoken.

The modes of cultivating this spiritual acquaintance are various. The faithful pastor may do it to some extent, by *inviting individuals to his study*. This method has some peculiar advantages. The desired interview being private, will be more likely to be free and unembarrassed, and be less liable to interruption, in the study of the pastor, than perhaps anywhere else. Still, this method cannot be relied on, as furnishing facilities for a *general* acquaintance. It may be the best mode of gaining access to particular individuals, and should be resorted to chiefly for this purpose, while other means should be employed of gaining that extended acquaintance with the people of his charge which the pastor needs.

The faithful pastor may do something towards accomplishing this object by improving as he ought those *occasional* interviews which he will have with individuals of his people. Such opportunities will have some advantages; for, being manifestly undesigned and unanticipated, the individuals addressed will be off their guard, and will often speak more freely than under any other circumstances. Besides, by carefully improving such opportunities, a pastor will show that his religion is not one of *times* and *seasons*; that his heart is really in his work; and by this means he will secure a degree of confidence and attention which otherwise might be denied him.

A most favorable opportunity of becoming acquainted with the religious state of individuals, is furnished in the *inquiry meeting*; since the very object of such a meeting is to bring those together whose hearts are

burthened, and who feel that they need instruction and prayer in reference to their souls' concerns. I shall have occasion to speak of inquiry meetings in another connection. Suffice it to say at present, that the benefits of them must be limited, almost entirely, to seasons of special religious interest and revival; because it is at such seasons only that they will be needed, or can be with interest sustained. It will be vain, therefore, to depend on them for that *general* spiritual acquaintance with a people which is so necessary to the success of a pastor's labors.

I proceed, therefore, to say, that, in order to the full accomplishment of this important object, I know of no substitute for *pastoral visiting*. The pastor must not wait in all cases for his people to come to him: he must go to them. He must visit them at their houses, and there cultivate that intimacy and form that acquaintance with them which will be to him of so much value in the prosecution of his labors.

The visits which a pastor will be called to make are chiefly of three kinds, — *set visits*, *pastoral visits*, properly so called, and *visits to the sick and the afflicted*. Of each of these kinds of visits I shall speak at some length, and in the order in which they have been mentioned.

By *set visits*, I mean those which are made by previous appointment, and in consequence of a formal invitation. They are occasions when friends meet together in considerable numbers, and where there is always more or less of display. I regard this class of visits as less profitable than either of the others, and as more difficult to be managed so as to satisfy the conscience of a spiritual, faithful pastor. Some have thought that

they should be altogether discouraged ; or, at least, that a minister should have no part in them. But such has not been the opinion or the practice of faithful pastors generally. Such is not, on the whole, my own opinion. It would be exceedingly difficult for a pastor, were he to desire it, to prevent all such visits among a people. He would find it difficult to keep himself entirely aloof from them, without exciting prejudice and giving offence. In my own opinion, he had better not attempt either. He should endeavor rather to subject such visits to proper regulations ; to give them the right direction and character ; and thus make them occasions of good both to himself and his people.

If properly conducted, such visits may be of importance to *the pastor himself*. They will furnish him with an agreeable relaxation from the severity of study, and from the more laborious duties of his office. Such relaxation he occasionally needs. For the want of it he suffers, both in body and mind. His digestive organs become disordered ; his nervous system is deranged ; his spiritual vision is consequently clouded ; his heart is dispirited and sad. Relaxation of some sort is absolutely necessary to the health and usefulness of a minister ; and ordinarily it may be sought in agreeable social intercourse among his people, as well as anywhere.

The kind of visits of which I speak may also be of benefit to a minister by improving his *manners*. Much of the preparatory training of young ministers has no direct tendency to improve their manners. This is true, to a great extent, not only of college life, but seminary life. Through a series of years students constitute a community by themselves ; they have their own cares, interests, and pursuits ; they mingle but little with the



world; and the consequence is, that when their course of study is finished, and they are prepared to go out into the world, they lack that ease and elegance of manners which, if possessed, might add materially to their usefulness. It is perfectly natural that this should be so. It is no disparagement to young men, though it may be a detriment, that it is so. It is quite as likely to be the case with the more promising scholars as with those of an inferior character. And yet the evil should be guarded against—so far as it may be without incurring greater evils—during the whole course of preparatory education. And it should be remedied—so far as may be, and as speedily as may be—when the preparatory course is finished. And there is no better remedy within the reach of the settled pastor than to go occasionally into good society, and especially the society of his people. He will here lose, insensibly, the stiffness, the awkwardness, the absence, and occasional embarrassment of the mere scholar, and undergo so much of transformation and improvement in respect to manners as may be needful.

The kind of visits of which I speak will also be of advantage to a minister, by promoting a pleasant acquaintance and good understanding between him and his people. He sees them now at their own home, and at their own invitation. He sees them when they expect to see him, and are glad to see him. The occasion will furnish a thousand opportunities for bestowing those little kind attentions which serve to make him intimately acquainted with his people, and endear him to their hearts. It will sometimes furnish opportunities for that close, spiritual intercourse and acquaintance which the faithful pastor so much desires and needs.

And while the kind of visits of which I speak may be of essential benefit to a minister, it will be not only pleasant but profitable to a *people* to have their minister with them at such times. If it is best that they should have such visits at all, it is best that he should be with them, at least occasionally. He should be there to be an *example* to his people,—to show them, in his own person, how to unite high social enjoyments with strict Christian dignity and propriety of deportment. He should be there, to be, if necessary, a *restraint* upon them,—to prevent those outbreakings of mirth, and the introduction of practices or amusements which are inconsistent with the Christian life. He should be there to give a suitable turn, a direction, to conversation, to introduce useful topics of discourse, and to assist in the *devotions* of the occasion; for a minister should have no meetings with his people from which devotional exercises are wholly excluded. He should be there, in short, to improve opportunities of *doing good*; of honoring his profession, subduing prejudice, and dropping words of instruction, consolation, warning, or even of reproof, as the occasion may require. It was in mixed companies—in some instances at the tables of scribes and Pharisees—that our Saviour's instructions dropped as the dew. He was an example in this respect to all his followers, and more especially to his ministers.

But the kind of visits of which I speak, though capable of being turned to very good account, both to ministers and people, are still liable to abuse. They are liable to be so abused and perverted as to become more a nuisance than a benefit. They may be conducted in such a manner that a minister, if he cannot

regulate and reform them, will feel constrained to absent himself entirely from them.

The following have occurred to me as some of the regulations under which such visits should be placed, especially if they are to have the countenance of a pastor.

1. They must not be permitted to interfere with stated religious meetings. I regard this as a very important rule, and one which ought not under any ordinary circumstances to be violated. A manifestation should be made, in this way, that *religion is the principal thing*, and that meetings for religious purposes are of more importance than mere social visits.

2. They must not be appointed, at least with the expectation that the pastor will attend them, in the latter part of the week. The last two days and evenings of the week the pastor will need occupy *permanently* in his study. They should be set apart, *consecrated*, to this purpose; and so his people should understand it. And they should suffer none of their plans of business or enjoyment, nothing unless it be sore affliction, to interrupt him at this important season.

3. Set visits should be suspended in seasons of *religious revival*; also when hopeful appearances encourage special *preparation* for a revival. There are two reasons why such visits should not be had in seasons of revival. The first is, there will not be time for them,—the leisure hours being chiefly occupied with religious meetings. The second is, they will divert and withdraw attention from more important things, even the great subject of the soul's salvation. When the mind and heart of an individual are engrossed with this great concern, he has little relish for mere social enjoyments;

and if he indulges in such enjoyments, though it be with moderation, they will be very likely to divert his mind, dissipate his seriousness, and retard, if not fatally arrest, the work of grace upon his soul. Many a soul, it may be feared, is now among the lost, which once was not far from the kingdom of God, and which might have been saved but for this very cause.

And the same reasons which should suspend set visits during a revival, should also cause a suspension of them when there is exhibited any unusual seriousness, any decisive indications of the Spirit's presence, and when special efforts are being made by the pastor and church to promote a revival of religion. Seasons such as these will be regarded by all intelligent Christians as of a peculiarly critical and important character. They are seasons calling for deep anxiety and humility, for much effort and prayer; and it is possible for professed Christians to do immense mischief at such times by thrusting in their set visits, or parties, and thus quenching the holy fire before it is properly kindled.

4. The next regulation to which I would subject set visits is, that they should be attended with no *extravagance*, either of expenditure or display. The guests invited should not be numerous, and the provision made for them should be clearly within the bounds of Christian moderation. In these days, when funds are so much needed, and can be turned to so good account, in many ways, for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, I regard it as palpably wicked for a Christian family to expend fifty or a hundred dollars in making preparation for a social visit. And I regard it as little, if at all better, for a minister of the gospel to encourage or countenance such extravagance by his presence.

5. From such visits as a pastor may safely countenance should be excluded, of course, all *unchristian deportment and amusements*. By unchristian amusements I understand, among other things, dancing, cards, vulgar sports and plays, and games of chance. And by unchristian deportment, I mean noisy mirth, indecent levity, ludicrous song-singing or story-telling, evil-speaking,—indeed, everything which will be likely to distress a Christian's conscience and pain his heart after he has returned to his home; or which will be likely to unfit him for secret and family devotion, and for pleasant communion with his God and Saviour. In a word, Christians must not feel, when preparing for set visits, or when present at them, as though they were released at all from the binding force of injunctions such as these: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your minds" — "Let your conversation be always with grace" — "Avoiding even the appearance of evil."

6. I would propose, as another regulation of set visits, that they should be closed always at *seasonable hours*. Unless this is done, not only is family devotion interrupted in all the families represented on such occasions, but a dangerous example is set before the community — one that will be sure to be perverted to the worst of purposes.

7. In all ordinary cases, the visits of which I speak should be closed with *devotional exercises*. And these exercises should be introduced, not (as I fear they sometimes have been) with a view to sanctify and gloss over previous improprieties, but as the fitting, appropriate conclusion of a Christian interview. A judicious pastor will be able, without much difficulty, to control this

matter. He may cause it to be understood that his presence is not to be expected, on any social occasion, where it will be thought impertinent for him, before he departs, to read a portion of Scripture, or sing a hymn, and close the interview with prayer.

I only add that the kind of visits of which I have spoken should not be very *numerous* or *frequent*. In the present state of society, when Christian friends meet each other so often at religious meetings, and on other occasions, there is no necessity for frequent visits in order to promote a social acquaintance. And as the necessity for them does not exist, the trouble and expense attending them and the time consumed in them may be regarded as sufficient reasons why they should not be multiplied. I would not, as I have said, altogether discourage set visits in a church and society, but I would discourage the unreasonable multiplication of them; and I would have them subjected to such regulations, and attended in such a way, and under such circumstances, as an enlightened and tender conscience and the Word of God require.

The Christian pastor will feel, when called to one of these visits, that he is going into a scene of trial, — a place where, if discreet and faithful, he may hope both to gain and to impart benefit; but where, if indiscreet or unfaithful, he will be sure to injure both himself and others. Under a sense of this, let him prepare himself beforehand for the interview. Let him fortify his soul by prayer, and let him furnish himself with appropriate topics of conversation, to be introduced as occasion shall require. Let him go with the determination not to sail passively with the current, and be floated anywhere, as the tide of social feeling and of conversation

may chance to run ; but to *make* conversation profitable ; to *arrest* it, when beginning to flow in a wrong direction ; to give it the turn which a Christian would desire ; and to improve the whole occasion to the glory of God, and the honor of the Christian profession and name.

With such a determination, formed in the strength of Christ, and fortified by solemn prayer, *let him go* ; and the blessing of God will be likely to go with him, and the best results may be expected from his labors.

## LECTURE V.

### PASTORAL ACQUAINTANCE (CONTINUED).

PASTORAL VISITS — SHOULD BE PURSUED SYSTEMATICALLY — HOW CONDUCTED — INCIDENTAL OBJECTS TO BE PROMOTED — RULES RESPECTING THEM — VISITS TO THE SICK AND AFFLICTED — MODE OF CONDUCTING THEM — BENEFITS OF THEM — RECEIVING VISITS.

IN my last lecture, I entered on the subject of *pastoral visiting*. I divided the visits which a pastor will be called to make into three classes; namely, *set visits*, those which may be more strictly denominated *pastoral visits*, and *visits to the sick and the afflicted*. Of the first of these kinds of visits I have already spoken at sufficient length. I proceed to a consideration of the second.

By pastoral visits, properly so called, I mean those to which, as a general thing, the pastor is not particularly invited; to which at least he is not to wait for a formal invitation. They are those which, by common consent, his office as pastor renders it not only proper, but necessary, for him to make. He *must* make them, or the incumbent duties of his office are not fulfilled.

The object of this class of visits is not mere social interest and enjoyment, but *spiritual benefit*. The pastor meets the families of his congregation now, not so much in the character of a friend and acquaintance, as of a religious teacher and guide. He goes to inquire after their spiritual state; to instruct and admonish



them ; to pray with and for them ; to do them good in any way that their circumstances shall seem to require. Such visits constitute, obviously, a very important part of ministerial labor. They are a part with which no faithful and wise pastor can be willing to dispense.

In conducting pastoral visits, as in every other part of ministerial labor, there should be as much of *system* as possible. There should be system or rule in regard to the *time* to be devoted to them. By most ministers, the forenoon and evening are chiefly valued as seasons for study. The afternoon is devoted to miscellaneous and out-door business ; and, unless when prevented by sickness, bad weather, or other indispensable calls and engagements, I should think that three afternoons of every week might well be devoted to pastoral visiting. Three afternoons in a week would amount to something more than one hundred and fifty in a year ; which — deducting those that must be otherwise occupied — would be abundantly sufficient for visiting the largest congregations.

In order that these visits may be properly conducted, it is necessary that a pastor should know, early and accurately, who his people are. On assuming the pastoral office among a people, it will be his first object to ascertain the number and extent of his flock. He will prepare separate lists both of his church and parish ; noting who of them are heads of families, where they reside, with whom they are connected, and such other circumstances of interest respecting them as may come to his knowledge. He is now prepared to enter as he can upon the work of visiting ; in which, as I said, he is not to wait for invitations, but set himself directly about it, as a part of his official duty.

It will be desirable, as a general thing, that the pastor prosecute his visits in some *order*, either of streets or roads, or neighborhoods or school-districts; that he may know definitely what progress he makes, and when he is done, and that none of his people may be passed over. It is advisable, too, that families should know, if possible, when a visit from their pastor is to be expected; that so they may be together and at home, and in circumstances to make the interview agreeable and profitable. I can think of no exception to this rule, unless it be in cases where persons may wish to avoid their minister, and who, if they knew when to expect him, would be pretty sure to be away.

The kind of visits of which I speak need not, generally, be long. Unless some peculiar circumstances require them to be lengthened, half an hour will be time enough for each; so that several of them may be accomplished in the same afternoon. The length of them, however, as well as the mode of conducting them, must vary materially according to circumstances. In some cases, the mode of conducting pastoral visits is altogether a plain matter. Everything is made easy and agreeable to a minister. In some cases, he will need much wisdom and grace, so to discharge his duty as to satisfy himself and not displease the individuals on whom he calls.

In the families of professing Christians, — and in many other families, — a pastoral visit may be openly and almost exclusively of a religious character. Indeed, it will be expected to be of such a character, and disappointment will be felt if it is not so. When the pastor arrives, the household, or so many of them as can be collected, will be called together. They may be

addressed individually, or collectively, on the subject of religion. The pastor may inquire freely into their spiritual state ; learn their doubts, their difficulties, their encouragements, their consolations ; and give them such advice as circumstances require. Happy the minister who has no families to visit and pray for but such as these ! And happy the families who are of this character, — whose affairs the grace of the gospel regulates, and over all whose interests this heavenly grace presides !

But probably every minister will be called to visit families, more or less, which are very different from those which have been described ; in which the subject of religion must be approached indirectly and cautiously, if at all ; else violent prejudice will be awakened, perhaps angry feelings excited, and both the minister and his message will be repelled. In circumstances such as these, the pastor needs large measures of that wisdom which is from above, and which can be obtained only in answer to prayer.

In all his visits among his people, it will be necessary for a pastor to be, and to seem to be, humble, sociable, condescending, familiar, avoiding magisterial airs, and not assuming to himself any special official importance. It will be easy to do this, and yet lay aside nothing of that dignity of deportment which is requisite to be maintained. There is no impression which common people are more likely to imbibe than that their minister is haughty and thinks himself above them. And there is no impression which they *can* imbibe which will prove a greater hinderance to his usefulness. He ought by all means to remove and prevent such an impression ; and the most effectual method of doing this

is that hinted at above. Let him visit his people at their houses. Let him be familiar and social with them, as one friend with another. Let him not despise the poor and ignorant, nor even those who are degraded and vicious. Every human being, every one that has an immortal soul, is in possession of an inestimable treasure, and is entitled to the earnest, benevolent regards of the minister of Christ.

The pastor should associate with his people, so far as he may do it consistently, on terms of equality. He will take a deep interest in all their affairs, and be ready to perform for them, even the meanest of them, any kind office in his power. In his intercourse with them he will respect their feelings, and not *needlessly* say or do anything to give them pain. If he finds those who will not converse with him on religious subjects, then let him converse with them on other subjects. If he may not at once do all that for them that he would, then let him do cheerfully what he can, and wait the favoring opportunity to do more.

The kind of intercourse between pastor and people is very different in this country now from what it was a hundred years ago. Ministers then possessed more of what may be termed *authority* among a people. They associated less with them; kept them at a greater distance; while their demeanor, dress, and whole personal appearance were calculated to inspire a degree of veneration bordering upon fear. Whether the change which has taken place has been, on the whole, for the better or the worse, I need not now stop to inquire. That there has been a change is very manifest; and every wise minister will accommodate himself to it as well as he can. His influence among his people now

must be more that of interested affection than of stern authority. It must be that of love rather than fear. He must associate with them as their spiritual guide, their example, their counsellor, their friend, inspiring their confidence, and drawing them round him with cords of interest and love.

In a course of pastoral visiting, there are some incidental objects of importance which a faithful minister will be careful to promote. He will see that his people are supplied with Bibles; and if any are destitute, he will put them in a way to procure for themselves the Word of life. He will keep constantly by him a supply of tracts, and in his various excursions will distribute such as he thinks may be useful. If his own means are not sufficient to meet the expense of this, he may easily obtain the requisite funds by a public contribution, or (which will be better) from the private munificence of the wealthier members of his church. If in the course of his visits he finds those who frequently, if not habitually, neglect the house of God, he will, by some prudent method, ascertain the *causes* of such neglect, and endeavor that these causes may be removed. Much, I am persuaded, may be done to remedy the prevailing neglect of public worship by a discreet and faithful pastoral influence. I once knew a pastor who may almost be said to have kept a monitor's bill. He literally *noted* absentees from the house of God; and they were sure to be inquired of, in the course of the week, as to the reasons of their absence.

I shall have occasion to speak, in another place, of the interest which a pastor should take in the *youth* of his flock, and in promoting the cause of Sabbath-schools. Suffice it to say here, that much may be done for this

object in the course of his visits. As he goes into families, he will naturally pay some attention to the children. He will *certainly* do this if he desires to conciliate, in the most effectual manner, the good-will of parents. And one of the most natural inquiries to be made of children will be, whether they attend the Sabbath-school. The subject being thus introduced, it will be easy for a judicious pastor to manage the rest. If the children have not been to the Sabbath-school, he will be able, in most cases, ere long to bring them there.

I conclude what I have to say on the subject of pastoral visits with some general directions.

1. Let there be no *favoritism* manifested in them. The pastor should visit *all* his people ; and this, so far as he can, impartially. As a minister is of like passions with other men, it is impossible that he should not love some families among his people better than others. Perhaps he ought to do this. Some families may be much more worthy of his love. But let him be careful not to manifest his partialities in such ways as to come under the charge of favoritism. No part of his flock will be satisfied to be neglected. If he has occasion to visit some families more than others, let it be for good and obvious reasons ; such as, when inquired for, will be sufficient to satisfy impartial minds.

2. As the pastor visits from house to house, let him keep a restraint upon his tongue. He will hear, of course, a good deal of gossip, some of which it may be well to remember ; but let him by no means consent to become a retailer of it. He must speak evil of no man. He should say naught of any one absent that he would be unwilling to say if that person were present. For whatever he does say, he may rest assured will be re-

membered and reported, perhaps in an exaggerated form; so that if he does not set a guard upon his tongue, his visits will be productive of more mischief than benefit.

3. I would recommend to every pastor to keep a private journal of his visits. In this journal should be noted, not only the times of his visits, but the *character* of them, — what was said, what done, how particular individuals appeared; anything peculiar in the circumstances of the family; important changes that had occurred in it; in short, everything of special interest to be remembered. I have said that this should be a *private* journal. It must be strictly so; the object of which should be to assist the memory of the pastor in keeping up an acquaintance with his flock, and to prepare him the better to repeat his visits to the same household.

Without enlarging further, at present, on visits strictly pastoral, I proceed to consider the third class of visits proposed; namely, those to *the sick* and *the afflicted*. These are important, not only as a token of sympathy and friendship, but as affording precious opportunities of doing good. At the same time they constitute a class of duties of great responsibility, and in some cases of peculiar difficulty.

When repairing to the bed-side of the sick and dying, the pastor is to feel that he goes down to the confines of the grave, and very near to the world of spirits. He goes to deliver his *last* messages to immortal beings who are shortly to appear before their God. He is about to offer his last prayers for those who will soon be, either beyond the need of prayer in heaven, or beyond the reach of it in hell. The faithful pastor will feel, under such circumstances, that he stands in a solemn, awful

place, and that he needs preparation and assistance from on high.

When informed that any member of his flock is very sick, or otherwise deeply afflicted, the good pastor will not wait to be sent for. He will feel that it is incumbent on him to repair directly to the house of sorrow, that he may afford such assistance and counsel, such instruction and consolation, as the case may require.

In approaching the scene of sickness and distress, the pastor will remember that he is not now to make a visit of sociability or ceremony, but one of Christian condolence and fidelity. And when he enters the house he will not take up time with remarks upon the weather, or the common topics of the day, but will enter as soon as possible upon the great errand for which he has come. If the case is one of sickness, he will need to learn something respecting the *bodily* state of the sufferer : whether he has the exercise of reason ; whether he is able to converse, or to hear conversation ; and what opinions are entertained as to the nature and probable termination of his disease. He will make inquiries of this sort, not at all as a medical adviser (for such advice he should rarely, if ever, give), but that he may the better know how to proceed in accomplishing the important object of his visit. He may also think it necessary to inquire respecting the sufferer's state of mind. Of course these preliminary inquiries are to be made, not of the sick person himself, nor (if it can be avoided) in his presence.

And now, having gained all the light that is needful, he will enter more directly on the object which he has in view. If his sick friend is in a situation to receive him, and to be profited by his conversation, he will go at once to his bed-side, expressing in his whole appearance



and manner the deep sympathy which he feels for him, and his readiness to afford him any assistance or consolation in his power. He will inquire tenderly, and in a way not to create embarrassment, into the state of his feelings and exercises. Is he resigned to his situation, calmly reposing his soul on God? or is he restive, impatient, inclined to murmur and complain? Has he light, hope, comfort, enjoyment sufficient to overbalance the pains of sickness, and raise him above the fears of death? or are his views clouded, and his heart distressed with painful anxieties, so that death appears to him as "the king of terrors?" or has he been laid upon his bed of sickness without any hope in Christ? Has he been called to look death and eternity in the face with no better prospect than that of being driven away in his wickedness, and going down at once to the miserable abode of the lost? And is he sensible of his dreadful condition, and filled with terror and alarm in view of it? or (what is more discouraging and fearful) is he evidently clinging to some unfounded hope, and sheltering himself under some refuge of lies? or is he hardened, stupid, unfeeling, insensible, ignorant of his situation, or (if he knows it) caring nothing about it?

The cases which present themselves to the faithful pastor, as he visits among the sick of his flock, are exceedingly various. No two will be found exactly alike. Some will be interesting and comforting to him, in the highest degree. They will be an honor to religion; evincing to all beholders its reality and its sustaining power. The death-bed of the rejoicing, triumphant believer will be to the pastor a privileged place. On leaving it he will often feel that he has derived far greater benefit than he has been able to impart. Other cases of sick-

bed experience will be perplexing and trying to him. He will hardly know what to think of them, or what to say or do in respect to them. Still others, though less perplexing, will be even more painful. The pastor is at no loss what to say, but is distressed to find that nothing he can say is likely to have any good effect.

It is not my purpose here to give directions as to what a minister ought to say to the different classes whom he is called to visit. This part of the subject will be considered in another place. He must, of course, diversify his counsels to meet the different cases which come before him. He must exercise his best judgment in this matter, and pray that his judgment may be wisely directed.

The pastor will have strong temptations, often, to deal unfaithfully, — temptations which he will find it hard to resist. He may *know*, in some cases, that if he says what he believes to be true, and what he thinks it incumbent on him to say, he shall wound the feelings of friends, and in all probability give offence. He may be charged by physicians,<sup>1</sup> and others, not to say anything that will be likely to disturb the feelings of the sick; and yet he is bound to deal faithfully and truly under all circumstances, and to obey God rather than man.

The benevolent pastor will have no disposition to trifle with the interests of the body. He will not wantonly say or do anything that will be likely to turn to the injury of health. But then the soul is worth infinitely more than the body, and of this precious immortal soul

<sup>1</sup> As physicians do not wish ministers to interfere with their department, in prescribing for the body, they should be careful how they interfere with ministers, in prescribing for the soul.

he has been put in charge. With such a trust committed to him he cannot trifle. Of the blood of guilty, ruined souls, he must be permitted to clear his own skirts.

The visits of a pastor in the sick-room should not, ordinarily, be long. Having said as much as circumstances permit or require, he should pray with the sufferer and take his leave. Nor should he wait to be asked to engage in prayer. When the proper time arrives for the discharge of this duty, if the subject is not proposed by others, the pastor should propose it himself.

The prayer, like the other services of the sick-room, should be short. Let the pastor come directly to the case in hand, and with all fervency, humility, and devotion, spread it before the mercy-seat. He may often convey an *idea* in his prayer which he could not so well do in direct conversation. In his prayer, too, he may generally produce an impression, not only upon the sick person, but upon other members of the family, which could be produced in no other way.

As to the frequency of his visits to the sick, the pastor will be guided, in great measure, by circumstances. If the case is urgent, and is within a convenient distance, his visits will be repeated often. Under other circumstances they will be less frequent. He will cheerfully subject himself to almost any inconvenience where his sympathies are needed, or where he has a favorable opportunity of doing good. He will prefer rather to bestow superfluous attentions, than to incur the imputation of coldness and neglect.

When individuals who, in their sickness, have been often visited, and been made the subjects of frequent

prayer, are raised up, it is proper that some particular attention should be shown to them. They should be carefully watched, and, if need be, cautioned and warned, lest they forget the mercy which has spared them, hurry back into the world, lose good impressions, and become more hard and insensible than ever.

I have spoken of the visits of a pastor to the sick. It must not be inferred that sickness is the only form of affliction requiring his presence and his prayers. In worldly losses and disappointments; amid the contradiction of enemies, and the desertion or bad conduct of friends; and more especially in seasons of bereavement; afflicted families should be made to feel that they have at least *one* friend who sympathizes with them, and prays for them, and into whose faithful ear they may be permitted to unbosom their sorrows; and this friend is *their pastor*. He will visit them at such times, and hear their complaints and endeavor to soothe and sustain them with words of consolation. In times of bereavement, especially, when the hearts of surviving friends are solemn and tender, a faithful pastor will seize the favorable moment to suggest important truth, to deepen good impressions, and if possible to impart saving benefits to the soul.

It may be thought that so much visiting as has been recommended in this and the preceding lecture will leave the pastor time for almost nothing else. His studies, his sermons, must of necessity be neglected. But experience has proved that such need not be the result. On the contrary, I have no doubt that the minister who is faithful to visit his people, and makes himself acquainted with them, will not only preach better sermons, — better adapted, more appropriate and effec-

tive,—but, ordinarily, the labor of preparing them will be less. His intercourse with his people will suggest *subjects* for sermons, and indicate the manner in which they should be treated. Prepared in this way, when the minister sits down to write, he has a specific object in view. He writes, not because he must have a sermon, but because he feels interested ; he *wishes* to write. He has an important end to be accomplished by writing, and he addresses himself to the task like a man in earnest. A sermon prepared after this manner can hardly fail to be effective. It will be, not like an arrow shot at a venture, but like a nail driven in a sure place. It will reach and affect some, at least, of the congregation, and may prove the means of their conversion.

There is but another topic to which I wish, in conclusion, to direct attention, and this only in few words. It is that of a pastor's *receiving visits* from his people. That he should be not only hospitable, but “given to hospitality,” is an express injunction of the Scriptures. That he should be ready at all times to welcome his people to his house, to share with them his bed and his board, admits not of a question. Or, if he has relatives and connections among his people, he has the same right to see them together at his house that other people have to entertain their family friends. But is it incumbent on a pastor to appoint *set visits*, to send out his invitations, and to entertain, from time to time, large companies at his house ? Is this to be expected of him by those from whom he has received like invitations, and whom he has visited in a similar way ? These questions I answer in the negative, and for the following reasons :

1. A minister ought to see *all* his people in this way,

if he sees any. He must show no partiality. Of all men, it least becomes *him*, and that within the circle of his own parish, to be a respecter of persons. But,

2. Should a minister undertake, by a succession of set visits, to see all his parishioners at his house, an unreasonable portion of his time would be in this way consumed. An expense too would be incurred which, without a large increase of salary, he would be unable to bear. Besides, he would be in danger of bringing those together at his visits who might not be perfectly happy in each other's society, and thereby of exciting unpleasant feelings.

On the whole, I think such a course of *receiving visits* ought not to be expected of a pastor. It should not be attempted by him. His situation is so peculiar, so different from that of friends around him, that it fairly exempts him from those laws of etiquette by which others consider themselves as bound, in the matter of receiving and returning visits.

## LECTURE VI.

### TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT CHARACTERS.

THE IGNORANT — THE DEGRADED AND VICIOUS — HERETICS AND INFIDELS —  
PERSONAL ENEMIES — INQUIRING SINNERS — THE DESPONDING AND MELAN-  
CHOLY — THE SELF-DECEIVED — THE ELEVATED AND REJOICING.

IN my two previous lectures I have discussed at some length the general subject of *pastoral visiting*. In his visits among the people of his charge, a pastor will of necessity come in contact with persons in all the conditions of life, and of almost every variety of character. He will meet parents and children, old and young, heads of families and persons without families, and those employed in families as laborers or servants. He will meet the learned and the ignorant, the moral and the vicious, friends and enemies to himself personally and to the cause of evangelical truth. He will meet the hardened and insensible, the unbeliever and scoffer, as well as the anxious, inquiring sinner. He will meet the melancholy and desponding, as well as the confirmed and rejoicing believer. Perhaps no person has so full an opportunity to see human nature in all its forms — the foulest and fairest, the most and the least promising — as the Christian pastor. A good judgment, sound discretion, plain, practical common sense, the whole being under the guidance of the Word and Spirit of God, will be a minister's best directory, in regard to his inter-

course with these various characters which go to constitute his flock. A few hints with respect to some of the different forms of character which he will be likely to encounter, may not, however, be out of place. And this is all that I shall here attempt.

1. In the first place, a minister will find those among his people who are *ignorant* on all subjects, and specially so on the subject of religion. They may not be vicious or untractable ; but they have had few advantages, and these they have not improved ; and the consequence is that they are decidedly ignorant. How shall such persons be treated ?

First of all, then, I say, let them not be despised or neglected. They have souls which are worth looking after, worth saving ; and they must have a pastor's care. It is the more important that persons of this character should be privately instructed, since the generality of preaching will be above their comprehension. They *must* have familiar instructions in private, else, though surrounded with gospel privileges, they will be likely to perish for lack of vision. The pastor, then, should see them as he can, and converse freely and kindly with them. If he must go into a hovel in order to see them, or find his way into a barn or a kitchen, no matter. When visiting families where servants are employed, the pastor should make it a point, frequently, if not always, to see *them*, either in the kitchen or parlor, as shall be most agreeable.

The conversation with such persons should be plain, kind, level to their understandings, and chiefly on the most important subjects. The pastor should endeavor to draw out from them, by easy, familiar questions, the amount of their knowledge on religious subjects, —



the views and feelings which they entertain ; and he should studiously adapt his conversation to their condition and wants. His object should be to interest their feelings, and to instruct them on the more important points. And he will endeavor, not only to instruct them personally, but direct them to other sources of instruction, — to suitable portions of Scripture, tracts, and other religious books.

In short, the faithful pastor will feel a deep interest in the class of persons of whom I here speak, and this interest he will manifest in all suitable ways. He will visit them, inquire after them, pray for them, and steadily endeavor to do them good. By such methods he will soon gain their affections and confidence ; he will acquire all that influence over them which he could desire, and will be likely (the grace of God assisting) to lead many of them in the way to heaven.

2. The pastor will occasionally find those among his people who are worse than ignorant — who are *degraded* and *vicious*. They are intemperate, Sabbath-breakers, profaners of the name of God, neglecters of his house and worship, or otherwise contaminated with open vice. What course of treatment shall he adopt in regard to such persons ?

Before answering this question, it will be important to ascertain what ought to be the *feelings* of a pastor towards those whose characters have been described. It is manifest that he ought not to approve of their course of life, or to say or do anything which implies that he approves of it. So far from this, he ought to manifest, in all his deportment, that he regards their conduct with strong disapprobation. Still, he should not indulge towards them, personally, feelings of anger, hatred, or

contempt; or manifest that he has any such feelings. He should not rail at them, or reproach them, or utterly neglect them. They should be to him objects of benevolence, of pity, of tender, anxious concern; and these feelings should be exhibited in a great variety of ways. By his whole demeanor the pastor should give the vicious among his flock to understand that he is not their enemy, but their friend; and that he may be relied on to perform for them any kind office which shall not be understood as giving countenance to their wickedness. He will kindly reprove them for their wrong-doing; he will reason and remonstrate; and whenever he sees any indications of good, he will encourage them by every means in his power. If the degraded man has a family, which, though not a partaker, is a sufferer in the sins of its head, the pastor will visit this family; will sympathize with its tried and afflicted inmates; will minister, if need be, to their wants; and will endeavor, by all means, to protect them against the contamination of an evil example. In a word, he will endeavor to pursue such a course as the *conscience* of the wicked man, in his sober, reflecting moments, will be constrained to approve; such an one as he has reason to believe Christ would pursue, were he now on earth, and as Christ will approve and bless from his throne in heaven.

3. In the course of his visits the pastor will sometimes encounter the *heretic* or the *infidel*, the busy and prejudiced opposer of evangelical religion. In what manner shall such an one be regarded and treated?

My first remark in answer to this inquiry is, that the pastor should not be much in the society of such persons. He need not very cautiously shun their society. He will not run quite out of his way to avoid them, thereby

leaving the impression that he fears or scorns them ; nor will he go at all out of his way to meet them, thus manifesting that their society is sought or valued. If Providence throws him into their company, he must acquit himself as well as he can ; but obviously he should not seek it.

When thrown into the society of those here spoken of, I can hardly conceive of a case in which it would be proper for a pastor to *dispute* with them, especially in public. Such persons are generally fond of disputing with ministers ; because, in the first place, they feel honored by the degree of notice which is thus taken of them. And then, let the dispute turn as it may, they always claim and proclaim a victory. Besides, disputation never does them any good. I can think of no case in modern times in which an infidel or heretic has been converted by means of a dispute. It merely furnishes such characters with an opportunity to display their skill in arts and quibbles to which a conscientious minister can never descend, and thus serves to harden and confirm them in their errors. For these reasons, among others, I would say decidedly to every minister, *By all means avoid public altercations and disputes.* They will be degrading to you, and will benefit nobody.

In dealing with the opposers of evangelical religion, there is, I am persuaded, a more excellent way. Do them all the good you can by your holy, consistent, upright example. Command their respect by your serious, intelligent, godly conversation. If they attack you in public, for the purpose of drawing you into a dispute, either expressly decline it, or, by some interesting, practical inquiries, divert the conversation. Whether they are present or absent, pursue your regular course of

ministerial duty, without any direct reference to them. As men, as citizens, as neighbors (if you be neighbors) treat them with kindness and respect. Manifest in all your deportment towards them, and conversation respecting them, that you wish them well and not ill, and that you are ready to do them good, both for soul and body, both for this world and the next, so far as you may have the opportunity and the means. Enter upon a course of treatment such as this, and persevere in it, and you will win their respect and confidence, if not their hearts. If you may not have the privilege of leading them to the Saviour, you may, at least, "by well-doing, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

4. There is yet another class with whom ministers sometimes come in contact in their visits: I mean those from whom they have received *personal injury*, or who from some cause have come to regard them with feelings of *dislike*. How shall such persons be treated?

The mode of treatment here, as in most other cases, will depend materially on circumstances. I will not say that there are no cases in which a minister may properly assert his rights as a citizen in order to obtain a redress of injuries. Paul did this in one or two instances; and I have known other ministers with advantage do the same. But the cases in which it would be advisable for a minister to resort to legal measures to obtain redress, I conceive to be few; and whenever such measures are resorted to, it should be manifest to all that it was done, not of choice, but of necessity; not from a vindictive spirit, but for the honor of religion, and a wise regard to the general good.

In our treatment of those who have injured us, it is

our duty to regard, always, the *spirit* of our Saviour's instructions, and in most cases to follow them to the letter. We are to "love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that spitefully use us and persecute us." "If our enemy hunger, we are to feed him; if he thirst, we are to give him drink; for in so doing we shall heap coals of fire upon his head." It is the duty of all Christians, but more especially of ministers, to regard most sacredly these divine instructions, and to *exemplify* them in their proper meaning; in learning which we are to be guided in part by other scriptures, and especially by the example of Christ.

A faithful minister will be likely to have enemies, if not among his own people, at least among those with whom he lives, and before whom he must occasionally appear. In reference to such persons, let him, first of all, set a watch over his own spirit. Let him guard against any undue resentments; against the risings of envy, revenge, or ill-will. Let his habitual feeling towards them be that of benevolence. In his demeanor towards them, let him be kind and courteous. If an opportunity offers to show them any special attention, or to do them a favor, let it be done cheerfully. A minister must not be *officious* in such attentions. He must not thrust them upon an enemy in such a manner as to provoke him the more. But let him be ready to bestow them, and let his enemy *feel* that he is ready, whenever a fitting opportunity occurs.

It may be well to remark here, that a minister should guard against a *jealous, suspicious* temper. He should not be perpetually on the lookout for enemies, and be ready to interpret every seeming neglect as an indica-

tion of dislike. On the contrary, he should be disposed to put *the best* construction upon appearances, and cultivate that charity which hopeth and believeth all things. And when he has good evidence, or thinks he has, that an individual cherishes towards him some dislike, he is not to discard such individual at once, hold him off at a distance, and decline any further intercourse with him. I have known instances in which ministers have done themselves and religion immense injury by such a course as this. They have made enemies where they might have made friends, and excited incurable hostility and prejudice which might have been easily avoided or subdued.

If a minister is *sure* that a parishioner has taken some affront,—if he has positive proof of it, and his parishioner knows that he has,—it will be necessary to seek and make an explanation. If this is promptly and kindly done, hostilities in most cases may be avoided; but in many cases where a minister is satisfied that some dislike is cherished, it will be best for him not to *seem* to know it. He will discover to no one that he suspects it. Instead of slighting the supposed malcontent, he will treat him with rather marked attention. He will show him some favor if he can; or, if no opportunity of doing this occurs, he may even ask a favor of him. Anything to keep up intercourse and restore confidence will be better than to break off intercourse, and thus suffer some slight affront to settle down into confirmed hostility.

5. The most interesting class of persons which a pastor will meet in the course of his visits are *awakened, anxious, inquiring sinners*,—those whose eyes are beginning to be opened to their true character, and

condition, and who feel concerned for the salvation of their souls. As to the directions to be given to inquiring sinners, I shall not be able to speak at large here. The subject requires a volume. A few general remarks are all that I shall now offer.

(1.) The anxious sinner should be induced, and, so far as possible aided, to *cherish his serious impressions*. He should be cautioned against *resisting* them, and thus endeavoring to banish them from his mind. He should be cautioned against *concealing* them, as a thing of which he is ashamed, and thus smothering them in his own breast. He should be cautioned against suffering them to be *diverted*, and in this way lost. Instead of grieving the striving Spirit in either of these ways, or in any other, he should be directed to yield himself up to the impulses of the Spirit. He should try to cultivate and deepen his religious impressions by every method in his power. In order to this, let him be encouraged,

(2.) To cherish serious, solemn *thought*. Let him think of God, and endeavor to get some right views of his excellent character and his adorable perfections. Let him think of the great goodness of God to him, and of the manner in which he has requited that goodness. Let him think of the perfect law of God, — of its great extent and strictness and purity. Let him think how fearfully he has broken this law, and of the dreadful guilt which he has thereby incurred. Let him think of the love of Christ in coming into the world to die for him; of the grace of the Holy Spirit in consenting to visit him and strive with him; of all the kind offers, the free invitations, and merciful provisions of the gospel; of the forbearance of God in waiting upon him so long as he has; and of the eternal condemnation which

he has merited in so long resisting and rejecting these precious overtures of divine mercy. Let him think of these and the kindred topics, dwell upon them, and press them home upon the conscience and the heart. The direct tendency of such thought will be to deepen impression, and bring the soul to the exercise of those feelings which stand connected with salvation. It was while the Psalmist *thought upon his ways* that he turned his feet unto God's testimonies. While Peter *thought upon his fall and sin*, he went out and wept bitterly.

(3.) The inquiring sinner should be told plainly what the difficulty in his case is, and what must be done in order to remove it. The difficulty, he must be made to see, is in the state of his own heart, his affections, his inclinations, his will. This is averse to God, unreconciled to his government, unhumbled, unyielding; and so long as these feelings of heart continue, there is, there can be, no peace for him. It is vain for him in this state of heart to think of making himself better, or of doing anything to recommend himself to the divine favor, — anything with which a holy God can be pleased, or can accept. His first and immediate duty is to submit to God, fall into his hands, to become reconciled to him on his own easy terms. Till this is done, nothing is done to any purpose. Till this is done, he cannot, ought not to, have hope or peace.

(4.) The inquiring sinner should be urged, therefore, and if possible persuaded, at once *to make his peace with God*. He should be taught that there is a work to be done by himself; a corner to be turned; a decision to be made; and the most appropriate considerations should be urged to induce him to make it. These considerations may be varied somewhat, according to



circumstances ; and here is room for the exercise of *wisdom* on the part of a religious teacher. In some cases, the tendency of the anxious mind will be to *repentance* ; and then considerations should be urged leading to that point. In other cases, the tendency of the mind will rather be to the exercise of love, or submission, or faith. In every case, the *tendency* of the inquiring mind, or — which is the same — the *motions of the Spirit*, should be regarded ; and considerations should be urged in *harmony* with these motions, — falling in with them, — all tending to lead on the struggling soul to the desired result.

Conversions do not all assume the same type or form. The holy affection first put forth, and in the putting forth of which the conversion properly consists, is not always the same. This first right affection may be one of love or repentance or submission or faith ; and whichever of them it proves to be, the conversion is equally satisfactory. It is incumbent, as I said, on the religious teacher to observe the particular *tendency* of the anxious mind, the *motions* of the striving Spirit, and to throw in his influence in the same direction. Thus, under the combined influence of faithfully applied truth, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, the conversion of the soul may soon be realized.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In dealing with inquiring sinners, theologians of different schools have been accustomed to give very different directions. Those of one school — regarding regeneration as a change in which the subject is entirely passive, and for which he can do nothing but use means, and pray and wait — have directed him to use means with such an heart as he has, and wait for God to bestow a better. Those of an opposite school — believing in the natural ability of the sinner to repent, and observing that the inspired writers often urge men to repentance — have felt themselves shut up to this single direction. Whatever may be the state of the inquirer's mind, they can only say to him, *repent, repent*. It will be seen that the directions I have proposed are not in accordance with either of these methods. I cannot agree with the directions first referred to, because I

6. Some of the most perplexing cases which a pastor will find among his people, are those of protracted *despondency* and *melancholy*. Professing Christians and *real* Christians — those respecting whom the best hopes may be indulged — are often found in this unhappy state. They are without hope and without comfort. They walk in darkness, and see no light. Their souls are distressed, and refuse to be comforted. What shall be said or done for persons such as these ?

To this question I answer, the first thing to be done for them is to ascertain the *cause* or *causes* of their distress. This may be owing to want of instruction, or to improper instruction. The individuals in question may have mistaken the nature of regeneration and of true religion ; and while they have actually experienced the needed change, and possess religion, they may have no thought or hope that this is the case. Under the influence of this mistake, they may be looking forward in quest of a change which they have no reason to expect, and which, were it realized, might not be to them of

regard them as unscriptural, absurd, and full of danger to all concerned. Nor can I shut myself up to the sole and simple direction of the other class, because, in frequent instances, this direction would not be the most appropriate, and because it does not accord with the example of the sacred writers. We find those men " who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," frequently *varying* their directions to the sinner, according to circumstances. He must consider his ways ; he must search the Scriptures ; he must ponder the path of his feet ; he must make to himself a new heart ; he must repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. " Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up " (James iv. 7-10). In one instance, we hear our Saviour directing an inquiring sinner to *sell all that he had, and give to the poor*. With such examples before us, we need have no hesitation in directing the anxious sinner to do anything which we think it important for him to do, — anything which we think will tend to further his salvation ; understanding always that whatever he does should be done in the exercise of *right affections*, and avoiding always such directions *as can be followed only in the exercise of sin*.

any benefit; while, at the same time, the precious reality is overlooked, as of no account.

Through fault of instruction, Christians sometimes mistake the nature of their *own exercises*, and fancy them all to be spurious and selfish, when in reality they are such as God requires. Or they may mistake as to the proper question to be decided in judging of their spiritual state; and because they are not *always* in the exercise of right feelings, but are conscious that they have many wrong feelings, and that their best affections fall far short of that measure of holiness to which they ought to aspire;—in other words, because they have not attained almost, if not altogether, to a state of sinless perfection, they conclude that they are not Christians at all.

Such are some of the mistakes into which desponding Christians are liable to fall, and which require to be removed by kind, plain, and appropriate instruction. The nature of regeneration and of true religion must be explained, that they may see what it is, and discover the evidence that they possess it. The distinction between true and false, between genuine and spurious religious exercises must also be explained; that they may see and be satisfied that theirs are not all of the latter character. Also the proper question to be decided in judging of their spiritual state is to be placed clearly before them; that they may not try themselves by a wrong standard, and perplex and distress themselves in vain. Another cause of distress and darkness to the Christian may be, that he lives in the neglect of known and important *duties*, or in the indulgence of acknowledged *sins*. Perhaps the state of his mind keeps him back from the performance of many duties;

while the neglect of these duties increases and aggravates his distress of mind. Or it may be he has committed some particular sin or sins which afflict his conscience, and of which he knows that he has not deeply, satisfactorily repented. The directions to be given in cases such as these are very obvious. The sin which distresses the believer's conscience, whatever it may be, must be put away. If it was a public offence, there must be an open confession of it. If injury has been done to any one, reparation must be made to the utmost of his power. Until this is done, done *thoroughly* and *satisfactorily*, he can never have enjoyment in religion. He ought not to expect it or desire it. And in all cases, Christians who are living in darkness, and who, on this account, are neglecting duties, should be urged to the performance of them. And if they feel as though they could not perform them, no matter. Such feelings require to be directly crossed. They *must* engage actively in the performance of duty, or they cannot expect to be restored. Their melancholy, it may be, is a *moping* melancholy, which the very exertion required in the performance of duty—aside from all its spiritual benefits—may have a direct tendency to remove.

Still another and very common cause of despondency among Christians is *want of health*. They become bilious, dyspeptic, nervous, fidgety. The disordered body casts a cloud over the mind, and envelops it in gloom and fear. In cases such as these—and they are very numerous—moral means will not remove the difficulty. Religious instruction is wasted upon such persons. They need the care of a physician, rather than that of a spiritual guide. They need air and exercise, diet and

medicine, rather than the instructions and motives of the gospel.

7. The class of persons last considered are supposed to have *less* hope and confidence than they ought to have. The pastor will occasionally find those among his people who have *more* confidence than they ought to have. They are self-confident, self-deceived. They have little or no doubt as to their good estate; while their intelligent Christian friends have many and painful doubts respecting them. What course of treatment is to be pursued in regard to such characters?

The individuals here spoken of are not conscious hypocrites, but *self-deceivers*. They have not assumed their religious profession under a false pretence, and with a view to compass some sinister end, but they have mistaken their true characters; and while they hope that they are the friends of God, there is reason to fear that this is not the case. It is necessary, therefore, that the grounds of their mistake or error should be carefully searched out, and kindly but faithfully exposed. They may have mistaken the nature of regeneration, and may regard that as a change of heart which, in reality, is not. Or they may have mistaken the nature of true religion, and may think that, in their own case, to be religion which is but a spurious counterfeit, or an outside show. Or they may have mistaken the proper evidences of piety, and are relying upon that as evidence in their favor, which is of no value in the sight of God. Or persons may lie under all these mistakes at once, and may be closely shielded by a manifold refuge of lies. But whatever the ground of deception may be, as I said before, it must be carefully searched out, and kindly but faithfully exposed. The

whole truth in relation to the matter must be exhibited and applied. This may be done to good effect in public discourses. It may be done, also, in private conversation. Where the faithful pastor *has* fears, he will not hesitate prudently but explicitly to state them. Where he apprehends danger to the interests of the soul, he will kindly express his apprehensions, together with the reasons on which they are founded. In all ordinary cases, this should be done privately and confidentially. It should ever be done in a spirit of love, and with a deep and manifest concern for the salvation of the individuals addressed. It may be so done, in nearly every case, without offence. If properly done, the labor, though a painful one, may be a means of conferring everlasting benefits.

8. I will detain you only while I speak of another class of persons which the pastor will occasionally meet ; and these are the *comforted*, the *elevated*, the *rejoicing*. Among these will be found, often, not only recent converts, but those who have had a long experience in the Christian life.

Before prescribing what should be said to this class of persons, allow me to intimate what I think should not be said. They should not be told that they must not expect to *continue* in this happy frame of mind ; that all Christians backslide, and fall into darkness, and that this undoubtedly will be the case with them. I repeat, let them have no instructions or warnings such as these. On the contrary, let them be assured that it is their duty and privilege to live always near to God ; to have daily, habitual communion with him ; and to dwell ever in the sunshine of his love. But in order to this, let them be assured, further, that they have need

to be very watchful, prayerful, humble, and faithful. They live in an ensnaring world. They are compassed about with many and mighty enemies. They carry in their own bosoms deceitful and treacherous hearts. Their first and greatest danger will be on the score of *self-sufficiency* and *spiritual pride*. They will be lifted up with the thought of their own comforts and attainments. They will come to feel safe and strong in themselves. They will look far down upon their less-favored brethren, — those whom they regard as weaker Christians, — and will judge and censure them, perhaps, without mercy. These, I repeat, are the first and greatest dangers of the *confiding* and *rejoicing*; those to which they will be most insidiously tempted; those into which they will be most likely to fall. These, then, are the dangers of which they are to be seasonably and faithfully admonished. These are the exposed points which they should be instructed most vigilantly to guard. If the individuals of whom I speak are but watchful here; if they keep humble — *keep down*; if, under a sense of their own exposedness and weakness, they fly continually to God for protection and help; if they will deny self, and take up their cross, and so live and walk as to maintain *peace of conscience*, they may also have *joy in the Holy Ghost*.

They should be admonished, at the same time, not to depend too much upon frames and feelings. These, of necessity, are variable; and variable from a great variety of causes. To mortify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; to live in the world without loving it, and use it without abusing it; to persevere in the daily consistent performance of duty, and of *all* duty, whether in itself pleasant or painful, whether involving crosses

and trials, or the contrary — these things are of more value in the sight of God, and more to be relied on in religion, than ecstasies however high, than joys however transporting.



## LECTURE VII.

### THE MORE PUBLIC DUTIES OF A PASTOR.

HE IS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN PUBLIC WORSHIP, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, TO ADMINISTER BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER, AND TO PRESIDE IN MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH — KEEPING THE RECORDS — ADMISSION OF MEMBERS — CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

WE have considered already some of the more private duties of the pastor; especially that of cultivating an acquaintance with his people, and with all his people, by visiting and instructing them at their houses. I come now to speak of duties of a more public character.

And first of all, it devolves on the pastor of a church to *lead the worship* of his people, and to *preach to them the gospel*. He is to be their mouth to God, and God's mouth to them; and to stand up in their public assembly as an accredited ambassador of the Great Jehovah. The solemnity and importance of this class of duties require no illustration; and to give direction as to the manner of their performance, constitutes no part of my present plan. Such directions belong rather to the department of homiletics than to that of pastoral duties.

In the second place, it devolves on the pastor of a church to *administer its ordinances*. He is to administer baptism to the proper subjects of it; and to impart

to the assembled communicants, at stated seasons, the emblems of Christ's body and blood.

The particular *mode* of administering baptism I have not been accustomed to regard as of essential importance. I have a strong preference for *pouring* or *sprinkling*; because this is a convenient mode, and because I deem it the most highly *significant*. It better shadows forth that of which baptism with water is the outward sign; namely, *the work of the Spirit on the heart*. The Spirit is commonly represented as *poured out* upon us; as coming down like rain upon the mown grass. Nevertheless, I would not refuse to administer baptism by immersion, or in any other decent mode that a qualified candidate should seriously prefer. In whatever mode the ordinance is administered, it should be done with all due solemnity, and so as to have a good and an abiding impression on the mind.

The proper subjects of baptism are professed believers and their young children, or those under their immediate care. The latter part of this proposition, you are aware, is disputed; and this is not the place to go into a vindication of it. I have stated what I conceive to be the mind of Christ on the subject. Towards those who differ from us we should feel kindly, and judge charitably; and I trust they are disposed to award the same judgment to us.

It has been made a question whether baptism should be repeated. I feel no hesitation in answering this question in the negative; that is, where the evidence of a valid baptism is clear and decisive. That baptism should not be repeated, appears —

1. From its *signification*. It is the sign of the washing of regeneration; and as regeneration is not repeated, the sacramental sign of it should not be.

2. Circumcision — which was also a sign of the circumcision of the heart, or regeneration, and for which baptism is now the substitute — was never repeated.

3. There is no *necessity* of repeating baptism ; and hence to do so would be to take God's name in vain.

The Supper of the Lord is represented in the Scriptures as an ordinance of great solemnity and importance. Christians are admonished of the necessity of preparation and self-examination before approaching it ; and of the danger of coming to it unworthily. “ Let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” “ Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord ” (1 Cor. ii. 27, 28). These cautions and admonitions bear with all their weight upon ministers of the gospel, as well as upon private members of the church. Every faithful pastor, as the time for the administration of the Supper draws near, will endeavor to prepare, not only his people, but himself, for the solemn service. He will desire and pray that his preparatory exercises with them may prove a blessing to his own soul. He will give himself *time* for previous preparation. He will endeavor to prepare his *mind* and *heart* for the solemn duties in which he is to engage, and will earnestly seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit in this important work. He will prepare himself not only with a sermon suitable for the occasion, but with profitable suggestions, cautions, admonitions, encouragements to be thrown out as opportunity may present, and the circumstances of the case may seem to require. In short, he will endeavor that nothing shall be wanting on his part to make the administration impressive and powerful, — a

means of high enjoyment and sanctification to his church, and of much spiritual profit to his own soul.

As to the frequency with which the Lord's Supper should be celebrated, perhaps no precise and universal rule can be given. On the one hand, the administration should not be so frequent as to cause it to degenerate into a common service; nor, on the other, should it be so infrequent as to be comparatively lost sight of and forgotten. The service should ever be regarded as a *special* service, — one of special sacredness and solemnity, demanding of all those who engage in it special preparation and improvement. Around the sacramental board the members of a church virtually renew their covenant with God, and renewedly *seal* it upon their souls by partaking of the emblems of Christ's body and blood. Unless grossly perverted and abused, the occasion must be one of deep solemnity and interest to both pastor and people, and from which both should realize the most important benefits.

One of the duties growing out of the relation of pastor is that of *presiding* in all meetings of the church; and this is a highly responsible duty. Not unfrequently it is one of much difficulty. In regulating and transacting the business of the church, much depends on the presiding officer. While he must maintain his dignity, preserve order, and keep everything in its proper place, he must at the same time be kind and courteous, condescending and conciliating, — not assuming or dictatorial, not soon excited or impatient, respecting no man's person in judgment, and giving none occasion of offence to the church of God. As pastor and moderator, it will devolve on him to propose subjects of business, and give them such a direction as seems to him

good. Still, he must not dogmatize or dictate, or be displeased if they take some other direction. He will bear in mind that a Congregational church knows no monarch but Christ, and can bow implicitly to no government but his; that, under Christ, the members are all brethren, possessing equal rights, and enjoying full liberty of thought and speech, of opinion and action. Every pastor who has had much experience in his work, and especially if it has been his lot to guide the church through scenes of embarrassment and difficulty, knows that the office of moderator is often a very perplexing one. He has found it no easy matter so to preside in the deliberations of the church as to satisfy himself and the whole body of his brethren around him.

It has been made a question, whether the pastor should officiate as clerk of the church, and keep its records. The more general custom of our churches has assigned this duty to the pastor. Then, if he keeps the records, he can do it in such manner as to suit himself, subject to the inspection and correction of the body. He can also have the convenience of consulting the records, and becoming more familiar with them than would otherwise be possible.

On the other hand, the keeping of the records involves some labor, and, what is worse, has in some cases involved the pastor in difficulty. The accuracy of his record has been disputed. He has been charged with making it more favorable to himself or to his particular friends than a strict regard to the facts of the case would warrant.

On the whole, I consider this question as not one of much importance. If a pastor undertake to keep the records, of course he should endeavor to do it accurately.

He should do it with a conscientious regard to truth, and in such manner as to meet the approbation of the church, and commend himself to those who are to come after him.

A question of more importance relates to the duty of the pastor in regard to *admissions to the church*. It is to be assumed, always, that persons are not to be admitted to the church without examination, and without exhibiting satisfactory evidence of piety. But is it incumbent on the pastor *alone* to examine candidates for admission, and to propound them on his own responsibility? I think not. The admission of members is a matter in which the whole church is vitally interested, and in reference to which the church, as a body, is expected to act. It is reasonable, therefore, that the church as a body should have the means of satisfaction in regard to the piety and other qualifications of those who are to be admitted.

The evidence of fitness on the part of candidates for admission should be exhibited *seasonably* to the church. The pastor has no right to take this business into his own hands, and to expect the church in all cases to be satisfied simply because he is. This is assuming quite too much; and the result of such a procedure will almost inevitably be dissatisfaction. It will be said, either that the pastor is too strict and keeps back some who ought to be admitted, or that he is too lax and receives some who ought to be excluded; and when unworthy members intrude into the church — as they probably will under any regimen — the blame will be laid to the pastor. “The pastor,” it will be said, “ought never to have admitted such a man. He might have known that he had no religion, and was altogether unfit to be a member.”

But because the pastor is not to decide *alone* as to the qualifications of candidates for the church, it does not follow that he has no duties to perform in respect to this important matter. He should confer with individuals often on the subject of a profession of religion, and give them such advice and direction as they need. He should take care that all suitable candidates for admission are brought seasonably forward, and that unsuitable, disqualified persons are kept away; and when individuals are prepared to come before the church for examination, it devolves on the pastor to introduce them, to state their case, and preside in all the deliberations which are had respecting them.

The modes in which the church is made acquainted with the religious exercises and experience of candidates for admission, are different in different places. In some, a narrative of experience is written out in full, and read before the church and congregation. In other cases, the candidate for admission appears personally before the church and is examined. In still other cases, the candidate is examined by a committee who make report to the church. The particular mode of doing the thing is not material. In every case, the church is entitled to receive *satisfaction* as to the piety and other qualifications of the candidate proposed. In aiding the church to obtain satisfaction, the pastor is to take a leading part, although, as before said, he is not to examine and propound persons on his own responsibility.

A question of equal importance with the last has respect to the duties of a pastor in cases of *church discipline*. By church discipline, as the terms are here used, I intend that course of treatment which churches are called upon to pursue towards offending members,

including the course of labor with them, and the final issue of the case, whether in restoration or excommunication.

The general rule to be observed in such cases our Saviour has prescribed for us in Matt. xviii. 15-17: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." The *spirit* of this rule, I think, should be regarded always; and the letter of it so far as circumstances will allow. Except in some very extraordinary cases, — cases, it may be, of flagrant crime, or where the offender is quite out of the reach of the church, there should always be, in the first instance, *private* admonition. "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him *alone*." Most of the cases that are satisfactorily adjusted are settled in *private*, before they come to the notice of the church.

It is in this stage of the process that the influence of the pastor can be most prudently and powerfully exerted. It belongs to him, of course, to converse freely and kindly with the members of his church, whatever their state and circumstances may be. If they are ignorant, he must endeavor to enlighten them. If they are in error, he must labor to correct them. If he finds them wandering from the path of duty, he must kindly admonish them of their sin and danger, and endeavor, if



possible, to lead them back. All this private pastoral dealing comes clearly within the scope of his professional duty.

But when a brother has so far wandered as to claim the immediate notice and censure of the church—when it has come to be evident that a process of discipline must be commenced with him—*is it the duty of the pastor to commence it?* Does it devolve on him to institute the labor, to prefer charges (if need be) against the offender, and arraign him before the church? I think not; and for the following reasons:

1. When the case comes before the church, it will be the duty of the pastor to preside in the meeting. Of course he should be an uncommitted man. He should be a strictly impartial man. He is, in fact, to *judge* of the case, when it shall come before the church. It may devolve on him to decide it by his casting vote. And to be both prosecutor and judge in the same cause,—the person bringing the complaint and one who is to decide upon the complaint,—would place him in a very awkward and embarrassing situation. But,

2. No pastor ought to incur the hazard of exciting prejudice and hostility against himself, which he would be likely to do by entering on the process which has been described. The pastor of a church ought to be to his whole charge, if possible, an unexceptionable man. He should be one whom all love and respect, and to whom all are in a situation to listen with interested attention. And yet this can hardly be the case if he engage personally and actively in the labor of church discipline. The individual complained of will be likely to think hard of him, and personal and family friends will participate in the same feelings. In this way prejudice

will be excited, hostility incurred, and the pastor's usefulness will be diminished.

In every church where the number of members is large, there should be, I have thought, a standing committee, composed of some of the more judicious members, whose duty shall be to look into all cases of offence; adjust them in a private way, if possible; but if not, to bring them in an orderly manner before the church. The benefits of such a committee are various.

In the first place, the work of discipline will be more likely to be promptly attended to. This work is always a painful one; and where there is no committee, one member of the church will be likely to refer it to another, and this to another; and what is everybody's business is nobody's, and the duty itself will be likely to be neglected. But where a standing committee is constituted for this very purpose, there can be no such transfer of obligation, and the work will be more likely to be performed.

It will also be performed *to better purpose*. Where there is no committee, but any one may be expected to enter a complaint and to bring charges, it sometimes happens that individuals undertake the work who are not qualified for it. They may not have the requisite information. Or they may be wanting in point of candor, experience, and impartiality. The consequence is, that complaints are preferred prematurely and irregularly, and the church is troubled with cases of this kind which might better have been settled in a private way. But where the labor of discipline is intrusted to an experienced and judicious committee, they will be able to adjust many cases of difficulty without ever bringing them before the church. And when they fail in efforts of this kind, and the charges are made public, they will

come before the church in the best form, and can be disposed of without embarrassment or difficulty.

It may be mentioned, as another advantage of such a committee, that the labor of discipline may be performed with less hazard of giving offence. As the committee act in a public capacity, taking up the matter, not under the imputation of prejudice or personal hostility, but as a solemn act of official duty, all reasonable ground of offence is taken away. On this account the work will be more likely to proceed harmoniously, and to be brought to a successful issue.

For all these reasons there should be, I think, in all our larger churches, a standing committee, whose duty it shall be to look early and promptly into all cases of alleged offence, and bring them to such an issue as the gospel requires. Nor is the employment of such a committee at all inconsistent with the directions of our Saviour above referred to. For where the committee exists, it is still the privilege, and may be the duty, of the aggrieved brother to labor privately and faithfully with the individual who has offended him. If he cannot gain his brother in this way, the church committee may be the two or three who are to go with him, and assist him in the labor. And if their joint efforts fail, and, through the help of the committee, the matter goes to the church, the aggrieved brother, *indirectly*, tells it to the church. He tells it through the agency of the church committee.

In all ordinary cases, however, a watchful committee will become early acquainted with cases of difficulty or offence, and will undertake the work of discipline before it has been commenced by another; in which case they will proceed with it, and carry it through, according to the directions of Christ.

For the reasons above stated, the pastor should not be a member of this committee. He may confer with them, instruct them as to their duties, and when his advice is sought may freely give it. But unless under very peculiar circumstances he should not consent to be one of their number.<sup>1</sup>

When charges have been brought before the church, and the brethren have come together to consider them, it will devolve on the pastor to preside in their meeting. Here let him feel, and let him manifest, a spirit of kindness, and yet of faithfulness. Let him be, and appear to be, strictly impartial. When the decision of the church is made, it is his duty to declare it, whatever it may be. And not only so: he must be the principal organ or representative of the church in carrying the decision into effect. If the church vote, as they often do, that the offender shall receive a written admonition from the pastor, it will be his duty to prepare it and administer it. If the church declare the offender incorrigible, and vote to separate him from their body, it will be the pastor's painful duty to pronounce his excommunication. Or if the church come to the opposite conclusion, if they declare the offender innocent, or, if not innocent, that he has made full satisfaction for his offence, and is therefore to be restored to the confidence of the church, it will devolve on the pastor to pronounce this decision, and to do what he can to give it effect.

Under all circumstances, and by all concerned, church discipline is to be undertaken, pursued, and consummated in the spirit of love. It is throughout a work of

<sup>1</sup> Our fathers, in the early days of New England, had *ruling elders* in their churches. See Cambridge Platform, Chap. 7. The duties of the committee above recommended are much the same as those which formerly devolved on the Congregational ruling elders.

love. It is often regarded in a different light; but improperly, as it seems to me. When I wander (it may be unconsciously) from the path of duty, and fall into sin, my brother can afford me no so convincing evidence of his love as in taking me kindly by the hand and endeavoring to restore me. But this is church discipline.

## LECTURE VIII.

### OTHER PASTORAL DUTIES.

SOLEMNIZING MARRIAGES: DIRECTIONS GIVEN AND QUESTIONS SOLVED IN REGARD TO THIS SERVICE. FUNERALS: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE—WHAT MAY AND MAY NOT BE SAID AT FUNERALS—FUNERAL SERMONS—FUNERALS ON THE SABBATH—ATTENDING FUNERALS OUT OF TOWN.

AMONG the official duties of a pastor will be that of *solemnizing marriages*; and a few remarks in regard to this interesting service may not be inappropriate.

The institution of marriage is the first and oldest of all our institutions. It is of divine appointment, and like the Sabbath (though previous to it) was given to man before the apostasy. It is a plant, therefore, which has come down to us from the garden of Eden. It had its origin in paradise. It is declared by God to be "honorable in all;" and our Saviour, on one occasion during his public ministry, was pleased to honor a marriage ceremony with his presence. "Forbidding to marry" is also set down in Scripture as one of the characteristic marks of antichrist.

The marriage ceremony is one of so much importance to society that the manner of its performance, as well as the persons by whom it shall be performed, has been made the subject of civil as well as of ecclesiastical regulation. The laws of the land have wisely uttered their voice on the subject; and so long as they enjoin

nothing inconsistent with the divine command, the minister of Christ will feel under obligations to obey them.

The laws respecting the qualifications of those who are to solemnize marriages are different in different countries, and in different parts of our own country. In some of the States every regularly-ordained minister is duly qualified for this purpose. In others (as in our own State) some additional legal qualifications are requisite.

In performing the marriage service, the minister of Christ acts in a twofold capacity: First, as an ambassador of God; and, secondly, as a civil magistrate. Acting in the first of these capacities, he will see to it that the service is performed *religiously*, according to the divine appointment. As a magistrate, he will take care that it is performed according to *the laws of the State*; so that himself shall be subject to no complaint, and the parties united shall not be brought into trouble on his account.

Weddings have always been considered as festive, joyous occasions; and the pastor who officiates is expected to mingle in the joy. Still, it should not be the joy of revelry and mirth, but such as comports with the Christian character and profession, and with the deep and (in some of its aspects) solemn interest of the occasion. There is the less need of caution on this point, since the practice of furnishing intoxicating drinks at weddings has gone into general disuse, at least among sober, respectable people; — a practice which we devoutly hope may never be revived, and against the revival of which every faithful pastor should set his face and exert his influence.

A minister at weddings will see to it not only that his own deportment is such as becometh the gospel, but that everything of an opposite nature in others is checked and discountenanced. It is one thing for a minister on such occasions to be sociable, cheerful, instructive in conversation, condescending and agreeable in his whole demeanor, feeling happy himself, and contributing to make every one easy and happy around him ; and quite another thing for him to be boisterous and mirthful, first in the jest, loudest in the laugh, a leader in the noisy festivities, and lending his whole influence not to check, but promote, indecent levity. The first of these things every minister of Christ will endeavor to be and to do ; from the latter, and from every appearance of it, he will keep himself at the farthest distance.

The marriage ceremony should be begun and closed with prayer. The devotional exercises on these occasions should be short and appropriate. The blessing of heaven should be supplicated on the individuals more immediately concerned ; on the connection formed, or about to be formed ; on the guests who are present ; and on the several families to which they belong. It is always pleasant, when it can be done with convenience, to close the ceremony with a hymn of praise.

It is the practice of some ministers to deliver a formal address to the individuals to be joined in marriage ; but my own experience has led me to dispense with this practice. An address does not come in easily and pleasantly at such a time, nor are those for whom it is intended in the best situation to listen to it, or be profited by it. The minister can better impart to them his pastoral counsels on some more private occasion afterwards.



In order to prepare himself to solemnize marriages in the most proper manner, I would advise every young minister to procure or prepare a marriage covenant, that shall be clear, full, and yet concise, and *commit it thoroughly to memory*, that he may be able to repeat it anywhere without hesitation or embarrassment. He need not confine himself, under all circumstances, to his form; but whether he do so or not, it will be always with him for his guide.

It has been made a question, whether a minister has any discretion, or any right to be governed by his own opinion, in regard to the propriety of a proposed marriage. In other words, if he seriously believes that the parties had better not be married, may he refuse to marry them? It is obvious to remark by way of answer on the one hand, that a minister ought not to be over-scrupulous on this subject; that he ought not to set himself up as a judge, or consent to be governed by his own peculiar notions or conceits. For this would be to hold a *veto power* — so far, at least, as his own services were concerned — over all the marriages in his parish. It would subject individuals to the necessity, before entering into engagements to be married, of coming and asking his consent. By such a procedure, he would soon involve himself and his parish in trouble, and find himself in circumstances where his services would not be often called for.

On the other hand, it is clear that there are cases where the minister *must* withhold his aid in solemnizing the marriage contract. There are cases where he cannot gratify the wishes of individuals without violating the laws of God or man, or perhaps of both. For example, an individual comes to me to be married, who

has not been lawfully published ; or who does not reside within the limits to which my commission for solemnizing marriages extends ; or who has a wife or a husband still living ; or who has been divorced for other reasons than that given by the Saviour ; or who is so nearly related to his proposed companion as to render their connection incestuous ;—in all these, and similar cases, where some positive law of God, or of the land, intervenes — supposing the law of the land to be not contradictory to that of God — there is to the gospel minister no alternative. He *must* decline officiating, let the consequences be what they may.

And in cases that are less clear than those here supposed, if a minister honestly *thinks* that the proposed connection is forbidden by the law of God, I see not how he can become accessory to the formation of it. If, for example, a minister seriously believes it to be incestuous and sinful for a man to marry a deceased wife's sister, I see not how he can consistently solemnize such a marriage. Or, to state another case, if a minister believes it to be sinful in the sight of God for a professed believer to marry an unbeliever, I see not how he can consistently become instrumental in forming such a connection.

I am not called upon now to decide whether either of the cases here supposed is, or is not, forbidden by the law of God. All I have to say is, if a minister seriously *thinks* they are forbidden, I see not how he can officially take part in them without making himself a partaker of other men's sins.

The case last supposed — the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever — is one with which the mind of a conscientious minister is often perplexed, and his heart

is distressed. Such cases frequently do and will occur. They occur among his own people — perhaps in the circle of his personal friends; and for him to decline officiating at such marriages, would be exceedingly unpleasant to all concerned, and might lead to the most unhappy consequences. As I said, it is no part of my present object to discuss the question as to the right or the wrong of such marriages. And yet it may be well, perhaps, just to *state* the question, and show how it has been viewed by wise and good men on either side.

On the one hand, it is insisted that the language of Scripture is *express* on the subject. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” “She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, *only in the Lord*” (1 Cor. vi. 14, vii. 30). In reply to this, it has been urged that the term *unbeliever* in the days of Paul had not precisely the signification that it has now. The unbelievers at Corinth were all of them *idolators* and *infidels*; and for a Christian to become connected with one of them would be to incur the fearful hazard of being drawn again into idolatry. It was as if a member of one of our mission churches among the heathen should become connected in marriage with a professed idolator. But those in our congregations, not members of the church, are not idolators. They are not, in many cases, the abettors of any gross heresy or vice. They respect religious institutions, support them, attend upon them, and are willing and desirous that those connected with them should attend. These are not *such* unbelievers as the apostle had in mind when he wrote the passages above quoted. Nor is it by any means certain, because he prohibited the connection of Christians with idolators, that he would prohibit their connection with unbelievers such as these.

On the validity of this reasoning I shall not take upon me now to decide. Let every one who has any special interest in the question be fully persuaded in his own mind. As much as this, I think, may safely be said, that a connection in marriage between individuals, who do not, and cannot, sympathize on the important subject of religion, does not promise the highest degree of happiness, and ought, in general, to be discountenanced. I will further say, that there are those among us who are so opposed to evangelical religion, so prejudiced against it, and whose lives are so abhorrent to its precepts, that a professed believer might as well have married a Corinthian idolator as one of these. And Paul might as well have officiated at Corinth, in marrying one of his converts to an idolator, as a Christian minister may now officiate in marrying one of his church members to an individual of the character above described.

But it is time that we turn from the subject of solemnizing marriages, to consider another, of a very different character. In a previous Lecture I have spoken of the duty of the pastor to visit his people in times of sickness and distress. This is not the last duty which he has to perform for them. When sickness has finished off its work, and death has come and torn some member of his beloved flock away, it will devolve on the pastor to attend *the funeral solemnities*. He must go and "weep with them that weep," and pay his last tribute of respect to the memory of those for whom he can now pray and labor no more. He must go and comfort surviving friends, pointing them to the great sources of heavenly consolation, and earnestly committing their case to God.

The attending of funerals is one of those branches of a minister's duty about which he can hardly be said to have any option. He *must* attend them. The service so enters into the very idea of his contract with his people, that, were he to decline or neglect it, he would be charged at once with an essential dereliction of official duty. And if a minister was not *bound* to attend the funeral solemnities of departed members of his flock, still he would wish to do it. The proprieties of the case would lead him to do it. His feelings of sympathy and interest would *impel* him.

The mode of attending funerals varies very considerably in different places. In cities and large villages, funerals are comparatively private. But few attend them except the relatives and particular friends of the deceased. The services consist of reading the Scriptures, singing, and prayer, with sometimes an address to the mourners.

In the country, funerals attract more attention, and are much more numerous attended. From the state of society, it is natural that it should be so. In country villages and neighborhoods the greater part of the people are intimately acquainted; so that when one of them dies, the survivors all feel a deep interest in the event, and there is a general assembling at the funeral. There is almost no religious occasion in the country, if I may judge from my own observation, which draws together so many persons of all sects and sorts and parties as a funeral. Hence funeral services in the country are necessarily more public than in the city, and more importance is attached to them. They include not only an address to mourners, but a more formal address to the assemblage convened, accompanied by singing and

prayer. Not unfrequently a sermon is expected, and a regular service, as on the Sabbath.

The services at a funeral, whatever they may be, should all be characterized by *appropriateness*. They should be adapted to the occasion which called them forth. In appropriate services there is not only an inherent beauty and excellence, but this is the surest preservative against a wearisome *sameness* and *uniformity*. Every instance of death is attended with *some* peculiar circumstances. No two are in all respects alike. Let a minister, then, when making preparations to attend a funeral, take into consideration all the circumstances of the case. Especially let him consider its *peculiarities*; and let him endeavor so to adapt his services as to meet these peculiarities exactly. In other words, let him endeavor to say just what every intelligent hearer acquainted with the circumstances would think was appropriate to the occasion. In this way he will be delivered from giving utterance to those stereotyped, common-place remarks which are continually heard at funerals. His services will possess enough of originality and freshness to awaken interest. They will also be characterized by this one peculiar excellence,—they will be *appropriate*.

As to the pastor's appearance and manner at a funeral, they should, of course, be *sympathetic*, *subdued*, and *tender*. If he possesses the heart of a minister, they can hardly be otherwise. He will, in this case, *love* his people. He will feel for them, and sorrow with them. And when he is called to appear in a circle of distressed mourners, he will stand there as a fellow-sufferer. There will be nothing assumed, nothing hypocritical about him. His voice, his manner, his general appearance, everything he does and says, will be indicative of

tenderness and sympathy. It is perfectly obvious how appropriate such a manner must be at funerals, and how much it must tend to endear a minister to the bereaved and afflicted portion of his flock. It is obvious, too, how inappropriate, grating, and repulsive must be the opposite manner, — one savoring of harshness and insensibility. Some ministers may think to excuse such a manner, on the ground of their obligations to be faithful; but this excuse will not avail them. A minister may be very faithful, under all supposable circumstances of affliction, and yet be tender. He may be much more faithful, impressive, and persuasive in this way than in any other.

I remark, further, that funeral services should, in general, *be short*. Ministers are often under peculiar temptations to make them long. The tender, sympathizing pastor *feels* at such times as though he had much to say. His heart is full, and he is inclined to pour it out, especially in his addresses to the Throne of Grace. Most funeral prayers in which I have ever had the privilege of uniting have been too long; — in some instances because they have been too general and inappropriate, and in others because they have been too minutely particular and repetitious.

There are two reasons why funeral services should, in general, be short. One is, that the people are often uncomfortably situated, especially if convened in a private house; the other is, that a good deal of time is commonly needed after the services have been closed. Friends wish to look for the last time on the face of the loved one gone, and to shed over it their parting tears. They must have time to follow it in slow and sad procession to the tomb, to deposit it there, and to return

in like manner to their desolate home. A considerate pastor will think of all these things, and will determine the length of his services accordingly.

The *object* of what is said at funerals should not be so much to eulogize the dead as to instruct, comfort, and benefit the living. It is proper, indeed, in some cases, to speak of the characters of the departed. If they have been holy and virtuous characters, if their lives have been marked by any peculiar excellences, it is proper to refer to them in this light. But this should be done, as I said, not so much with a view to praise and honor the dead as to benefit survivors. The dead have gone to a world where mortal praises or censures cannot affect them; but the living are in this world, where they may receive essential benefit from the pious example of departed friends; and it is important that such examples should be exhibited, so far as they may be with propriety and truth, for this purpose.

In some few cases, perhaps, it may be necessary to speak at funerals of the *vices* of the deceased, especially when these vices have been followed by their legitimate consequences, and have issued in the ruin of their votaries; but this should be done—if done at all—not with a view to reproach and calumniate the dead,—and so all persons should be made to understand it,—but as a warning, a beacon-light in the way of survivors. The grossly wicked, as a general thing, do not live out half their days; and it may be proper (at least in some strong cases), when they are gone, to hold up their example for the good of the living,—that those who come after them may take warning, and turn away their feet from those dangerous paths which lead down to the chambers of death.



In his endeavors to administer consolation to the bereaved there are some things which the pastor may always say, and which, to mourners rightly disposed, will always be comforting. They may be referred always to *the overruling providence of God*. The event which has bereaved them, in all its circumstances, whether of palliation or aggravation, has assuredly come to pass in the providence of God. God has done it. Of course it has been done in infinite wisdom and goodness. There has been no mistake in regard to it. No error or wrong has been committed. The stroke has fallen from the hands of One who had a perfect *right* to inflict it, and who, they know, will overrule it for the best and noblest ends. The event which they deplore is a part, and a necessary part, of God's infinitely wise and holy scheme of providence. It is a link in that long, that endless chain which stretches from eternity to eternity, and which could not be broken in any of its parts without injury, and perhaps ruin, to the whole.

Considerations such as these may *always* be urged at funerals. When circumstances are so trying and peculiar that a minister hardly knows what else to say, he may safely and properly say this; and this will always be comforting to pious hearts. Indeed, to such hearts, the consideration of God's overruling providence is the grand *foundation* of comfort, — that without which they could not enjoy life at all. It was this which comforted Eli when warned of the approaching destruction of his house. "*It is the Lord*: let him do what seemeth him good" (1 Sam. iii. 18). It was this which comforted David in a time of great affliction. "I was dumb. I opened not my mouth, because *Thou didst it*" (Ps. xxxix. 9). And the same consideration will be com-

forting to all those who are truly reconciled to the will of Heaven. Such will humble themselves under the mighty hand that corrects them, and rejoice, even in tribulation, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

There are other sources of consolation to mourners which the pastor will need to administer with more discretion. There are those growing out of the character of the deceased, on which I have already remarked. Bereaved friends are always partial friends. They love to hear, and from the lips of their minister, of the good qualities of those for whom they mourn. And their sympathizing minister will love to gratify them, so far as he can do it consistently with truth and with what he owes to the interests of survivors. He *must*, however, keep soberly within the bounds of truth, and of the general estimation of the community; so that none shall have occasion to think or say that he has been acting the part of a eulogist or flatterer.

There are other consolations derived from the hope that departed friends have died in peace and gone to heaven. This, as we all know, is a very precious hope to the stricken mourner. It is one which he will hang upon almost anything, and to which he will cling with the utmost tenacity. It is one which he will be very anxious that his minister should cherish with him, and express for him; but let a minister beware as to what he says openly upon this delicate subject. In cases of distinguished piety and usefulness, where the Christian character has been maintained consistently and for a considerable time, it may be proper at funerals to hold it up as an example, and to refer to its happy termination. It may be proper to express the hope, and to use it as a means of comfort to mourners, that the departed

is one of the blessed dead, who have died in the Lord, who rest from their labors, and whose works follow them. But in cases of rather doubtful piety, where there has been little manifest spirituality, or where the character has been shaded with dark spots, and especially in cases of sick-bed seriousness and seeming repentance, a minister should be silent at the funeral in regard to the probable state of the dead. He need say nothing to disturb the hopes which partial friends are disposed to entertain. He need say nothing publicly to confirm such hopes. He may entertain hopes himself which he will not think it his duty publicly to express. An indiscreet expression here, while it cannot benefit the dead, may prove an irreparable injury to the living. It may serve to lower the standard of Christian character. It may leave the impression that it is no difficult matter after all to be Christian enough to go to heaven. It may lead the careless survivor to think, if not to say, "I will live just as this dead man has lived. He, it seems, has come to a happy end; and if I pursue the same course, I may be happy too."

When persons have apparently died in sin, leaving no hope of their repentance and salvation, ministers have sometimes thought it their duty to say openly, and at the funeral, that in all probability they were lost. But I do not think such a course necessary or advisable. No good will be likely to come of it. The *inference* in such cases is sufficiently hard to the feelings of surviving friends, without having it formally drawn out and published by their minister. Such a course, on the part of a minister, will be regarded as one of harshness and severity. He will be thought not only to trifle with the

sensibilities of the living, but to tread with unfeeling rudeness upon the ashes of the dead.

It has been made a question among ministers whether *sermons* at funerals were to be encouraged and expected. That at the funerals of individuals who have been distinguished for their usefulness in church or state, there should be sermons or appropriate public addresses, the general sense of the community seems to demand. The question does not relate to cases such as these. Nor is the question one of much interest in cities, and large villages, where funerals, as I have said, are mostly of a private character. But in the country, where funerals are more public, and more people are drawn together to attend them, ministers are very often requested to preach funeral sermons. In some places persons can hardly be satisfied to have a funeral without a sermon. A minister *must* preach, or he will be likely to give offence. Now the question is, whether this practice is to be encouraged, or not. Is it best for ministers who are settled in the country, as a general thing, to preach funeral sermons? In favor of the practice it has been urged that many attend funerals who do not attend public worship, and who will scarcely have an opportunity of hearing the gospel unless they hear it on such occasions. It has been also urged that at funerals the minds of people are generally solemn, and in a better situation to hear the gospel than at almost any other time.

In opposition to funeral sermons it has been insisted that they impose too much labor on ministers; and that, by being encouraged, they become so common as to lose, in great measure, their impression. It has been denied, too, that at a funeral the minds of people generally are in a favorable state to hear the gospel with profit. The

occasion, it is said, is too exciting; and there are too many outward things to call off the mind from a close and personal application of the truth. Accordingly, it has been found, or is supposed to have been found, that funeral sermons rarely do any permanent good. Experienced ministers have declared that they could scarcely recollect an instance of conversion, or of deep and lasting religious impression, effected under a funeral sermon.

On the whole, my own judgment is against the plan of encouraging and preaching frequent funeral sermons. On some occasions they will be, with reason, demanded; and on others they can hardly be avoided without giving offence. But, in general, a discreet pastor may direct this matter according to his own mind, and will be able to get along pleasantly and usefully without multiplying funeral sermons.

In some places, when sermons are not preached at funerals, occasional discourses are expected on the following Sabbath. With regard to this practice, I remark, that it is certainly proper for ministers, in discharging the important duties of the Sabbath, to have some reference to the occurrences of the week, and especially to any distressing instances of mortality which may have been experienced. They may with propriety refer to such cases not only in their prayers, but in their discourses. In some instances they may select subjects of discourse, having this object in view. But that a minister should preach a *formal funeral sermon on the Sabbath* whenever he has been called to attend a funeral among his people during the week, certainly ought not to be expected or attempted. This would be even more objectionable than preaching at the funeral. For in this way a large proportion of his sermons would come to be reg-

ular funeral discourses. He would hardly have time or opportunity for preaching much else. Besides, when a funeral sermon is preached on the Sabbath, not a few of the congregation are hearing for the mourners, and not for themselves; while the mourners, being conscious that they are the objects of so much thought to the congregation, do not themselves hear with that degree of profit which they would be likely to receive under other circumstances. The consequence is that such sermons, in general, are almost lost upon a congregation. They may interest and gratify a certain class of hearers, but the permanent good fruits of them do not appear.

I cannot dismiss this topic without saying a word as to the practice of attending funerals on the Sabbath. This is pretty common in some parts of the country, and a strong partiality is manifested for it by many people. If a person dies during the latter half of the week, the funeral will be deferred, if possible, till the Sabbath, and will be attended, probably, in the house of God. Time will thus be saved for labor during the week; and besides, there will be more of parade and show than there could be at a private funeral. Such proceedings will, of course, be discouraged by every discreet and faithful pastor. They will be discouraged by *all* who desire the sanctification of the Sabbath, and who have at heart the best interests of religion. I do not say that a funeral ought never to be attended on the Sabbath. But obviously it should not be except when circumstances make it *necessary*; and then it is to be put on the same ground with other works of necessity and mercy. To bury the dead on the Sabbath, except under such circumstances, is to profane God's holy day. I would not say that a funeral should never be attended *in the house of God* on

the Sabbath, and as a substitute for one of the regular services. But I should think such an occurrence exceedingly undesirable, and one to be avoided if possible.

There is another question of some importance to a minister: Under what circumstances will it be his duty to attend funerals out of town, or beyond the limits of his own parish? Must he always go when called upon, to whatever distance, and without compensation? or may he, under certain circumstances, refuse?

To these inquiries, which are sometimes very perplexing to a minister, I will answer in few words. If a neighboring minister invite you to come and assist him at a funeral, and if his request seem to you reasonable, and you can conveniently comply with it, go. Or if a church and parish are destitute of a minister, and are intending to procure one as soon as practicable, and wish you, meanwhile, to attend funerals among them, I would do it. I would do it on the same ground that I would assist such a destitute church and people in any other way. Or if there is a settlement in your vicinity, the inhabitants of which are too poor and feeble to supply themselves with gospel privileges, and they request you occasionally to attend a funeral among them, I would go. They are proper objects of charity, and should be helped. But when (as not unfrequently happens) a people are *able* to supply themselves with the preaching of the gospel and neglect to do it, and persist in such neglect year after year, and keep calling upon neighboring ministers to attend their funerals, I should, under such circumstances, refuse. "*Let the dead bury their dead.*" By attending their funerals a minister may subject himself to much inconvenience, and do them no good, but hurt. He may encourage them to persevere

in contemning the gospel, and in neglecting still longer the support of its institutions.

I will only say further, that at funerals, as at all his other appointments, a minister should be *punctual*. Let him be on the spot, and prepared to commence the service, *at the time*. It is trying to a people, mourners and others, when the hour for a funeral has arrived, and all things on their part are ready, to be under the necessity of waiting for their minister. Nor is the trial of their patience the only or the greatest evil involved. Habits of remissness in regard to other engagements are formed; mutual confidence is shaken; the pastor is complained of; his character suffers; and his ability to exert a controlling good influence among his people is materially lessened. In whatever other respect a minister may fail to meet the expectations of his people, let him never fail in point of *punctuality*.



## LECTURE IX.

### EXTRA RELIGIOUS MEETINGS.

THE NUMBER OF THEM — MEETINGS ON SABBATH EVENING — A LECTURE AND PRAYER-MEETING IN THE WEEK — DIRECTIONS AS TO THE MANNER OF CONDUCTING THESE MEETINGS — DANGERS TO BE AVOIDED.

THERE is a class of public religious services, the performance of which enters into the very idea of a minister's contract with his people, so as to leave him no option or discretion in regard to them. They may be called *stated* services. The times of performing them are, in general, fixed, and instruction as to the manner of their performance belongs more properly to another department than to that of pastoral duties.

In addition to these stated services, there is a class of *extra* religious meetings, which will necessarily engage the attention of the pastor. The amount of this extra labor will, of course, vary according to circumstances. In times of special seriousness and revival, the number of meetings will be increased. They will be *so* increased, as to meet the exigencies of the case. But in times of no more than ordinary attention, *what ought to be the number of them?* What extra weekly meetings should a pastor undertake to sustain during the general course of his ministry?

My own impression is, that *three* meetings in a week, of the kind here spoken of, are enough. Perhaps these

are more than some pastors will think it their duty to attend. I have designed to set the standard sufficiently high. In ordinary cases, I should think a pastor might better fall short of it than go beyond it.

When there are three extra meetings during the week, one of them will be likely to fall on the evening of the Sabbath. But as to the propriety of holding meetings on the evening of the Sabbath, different opinions have been entertained by evangelical ministers. In opposition to such meetings, it has been urged, that two sermons in a day are as much as most people can hear with profit; that the evening of the Sabbath is needed for religious instruction in the family; and that under the pressure of so much continuous labor on the Sabbath, the health of ministers must necessarily suffer.

It has been urged in favor of these meetings, that the evening of the Sabbath is on many accounts a favorable time for a religious exercise; that people then have leisure, and greater numbers will attend; that their minds are in a more serious state, and less burthened with worldly cares than at any other time during the week; that such meetings prevent visiting, unprofitable conversation, and other things of an improper character; that not a few attend them who do not go to the house of God during the day, and who would otherwise spend the evening unprofitably and wickedly; and, finally, that in a great many instances God has blessed these meetings, and made them the means of saving souls.

In reply to the objections above stated, it has been said that the question is not, how many sermons in a day a people *can* profitably digest, but, how many *will* they? that most people hear so carelessly and inatten-

tively, that three discourses will not be likely to overburthen their minds. It has been further urged, that most families may attend three meetings on the Sabbath, and yet find time for the religious instruction of their households; that if any cannot do this, they may well be excused in absenting themselves from the third meeting. There will be a large number to attend, if these stay away. And as to the health of ministers, it has been urged that these meetings may be so conducted, if need be, as not to impose upon ministers a large amount of extra labor.

In view of the whole subject, it is obvious that a minister ought to take a prudent care of his health; and if he cannot, without endangering life and health, attend three meetings on the Sabbath, he should not attempt it; even if the third service is entirely dropped. But when ministers are favored with sufficient health, and other circumstances are not particularly adverse, they will, I am persuaded, endeavor to seize the favorable moment, and hold a meeting on the evening of the Sabbath.

In fixing the *place* of this meeting, a minister will, of course, be guided by circumstances. He may also vary as to the mode of conducting it. He may preach a sermon, or give an expository lecture, or turn the meeting into one for religious inquiry, or for mutual conference and prayer. His performances, let them be what they may, should be of a free, extemporaneous character, having for their object, so far as practicable, to follow up and deepen the impressions of the day. In order to this, the *subject* of the evening meeting should be one growing out of the services of the day, or, at least, an intimately connected subject. In the mode of

presentation, also, the same object should be kept in view. By neglecting this rule, a minister will be likely to distract the minds of his hearers, and his meeting in the evening may go to destroy the good effects of his sermons through the day; while by adhering to the rule, and aiming at a general unity of impression, the good effects of his sermons may be rendered more lasting and sure.

It has been the practice of some ministers to make their meeting on Sabbath evening one of conversation and inquiry in regard to the sermons of the day; the minister proposing questions to test the knowledge and recollections of his hearers; and they proposing questions to him, if any point has not been sufficiently illustrated, or when any difficulty remains upon their minds. Such was the course pursued by the good Richard Baxter at Kidderminster. A meeting of this description, where it can be introduced and sustained in a proper spirit and manner, must be a very pleasant and profitable one. It will have a good effect upon both preacher and hearers, leading him to prepare his sermons with care and accuracy, and them to listen to them with attention and interest.

Besides the meeting on Sabbath evening, there may be, ordinarily, two others during the week. The one of these, I think, should be a lecture, and the other a meeting for social conference and prayer. The lecture should be a free, extemporaneous performance, on some appropriate subject requiring attention. There is a class of subjects, which a minister may be inclined to discuss, which are more appropriate to a lecture in the week than for a sermon on the Sabbath. Occasionally he may give a course of such lectures. One minister

of my acquaintance has delivered a very interesting course of weekly lectures on Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress; another, on the Assembly's Shorter Catechism; and another on the parables of the Saviour.

I have said that these lectures should, in general, be extemporaneous. They should be so for two reasons; first, because a minister will not have time to write them; and, secondly, because an extemporaneous discourse will be more free and direct, better adapted to circumstances, and consequently more interesting and impressive, than a written one will be likely to be. Besides, it will be an advantage to the speaker, who writes his sermons for the Sabbath, to preach once extempore during the week. He will in this way become accustomed to extemporaneous preaching, and will be able to resort to it, when necessity calls, without embarrassment. By extemporaneous preaching, however, I do not mean preaching without preparation or thought. The subject of the discourse should be seasonably selected; a plan of it should be carefully drawn out and digested; and, with such preparation, let the minister go forward, trusting in God to sustain and assist him, and to crown his labors with success.

The other meeting during the week, I have said, should be one for religious conference and prayer. In addition to other reasons for sustaining such a meeting, it will be one of much importance to the brethren of the church. It will afford them an opportunity of opening their minds to one another, and to the church, on the great doctrines and duties of the gospel. It will also give them an opportunity for exercising and improving their gifts.

But because the brethren of the church are expected

to take part in such a meeting, it does not follow that it is to be an easy one for the pastor. So far from this, a meeting for religious conference and prayer is a very difficult one for the pastor to conduct so as to give it interest and make it profitable. Especially is this true in seasons of coldness and declension in the church. It may not be difficult, indeed, for the pastor to go to such a meeting, and sit there an hour, and call upon the brethren to offer prayer and make remarks; but to conduct such a meeting skilfully and properly, to give it interest, and make it pleasant and profitable to those who are there, so that they shall wish to come again, — this is no easy matter. For myself, I had much rather prepare an extempore discourse and deliver it, than to take the responsibility of conducting a prayer-meeting in such manner that I should be happy in it while in progress, and satisfied with it when it was past. In order to this, there must be not only grace and fervor, and some degree of system, but ingenuity and tact. There must be the ability to originate conversation, and in some instances almost to provoke it. There must be the ability, also, to *sustain* conversation, and to turn and keep it in the right channels. There must be a readiness both to turn aside adverse influences, and to seize upon those which are favorable and make the most of them.

In such a meeting some members of the church require to be held back, others to be brought forward. Some need to be excited and encouraged, others to have their ardor checked. And all this should be done with such ease and affability as not only to avoid creating embarrassment, but in fact to remove it; so that those who are called upon to speak shall feel perfectly free to express their opinions in their own natural way.

As a general rule, meetings for conference and prayer should be opened by the pastor. A hymn may be sung, prayer offered, and some suitable portion of Scripture read, accompanied by brief explanatory remarks. The meeting should then be thrown open for conversation. If nothing is quickly said, some brother may be called on to pray, having some specific object in view, — perhaps for the presence of God in the meeting, and that there may be freedom and engagedness among the brethren. This done, if no one rises to give utterance to his feelings, some important question may be proposed, and some individual may be called upon to express his views in regard to it.

Nothing is so heart-chilling in a conference meeting as those long and painful pauses which sometimes occur, importing that the mouth of the church is shut, and that no one has anything to say for God. Let a minister by all means guard against these. If the exercises drag heavily and seem likely to stop, let him be ready with a short hymn, or a pertinent question, or a few stirring remarks, or an appropriate prayer, to be offered either by himself or by another; and if none of these expedients suffice to give spirit and interest to the meeting, let him bring it to a speedy close. Better go home and attend to something else than to sit longer together, and freeze and discourage the hearts one of another in the formalities of a conference meeting, when there is no *heart* for conference and prayer.

It is sometimes proper, in place of the weekly conference, to hold an *inquiry meeting for the church*, in which each member present shall be personally inquired of as to the state and feelings of his heart. A meeting of this kind, if attempted frequently, would

lose much of its interest and importance ; but when resorted to only occasionally, will be found exceedingly interesting and profitable.

It should be an object with all who take part in a conference meeting to have the exercises *short* and *specific*. The hymns, the prayers, the portion of Scripture read, the remarks made, — all should be short, and all should tend to some specific object. The prayers in such meetings are commonly too long ; and they are too long because they are general and commonplace, having no particular object in view. Some persons seem to feel under obligations when called upon to lead the devotions of others to pray over a whole system of theology, commencing with the being and perfections of God, and running down through Adam in paradise, the fall and the atonement, to the winding up of the great scheme of redemption. Others are afraid to take one step out of the beaten track, and, as a necessary consequence, they pray continually for about the same things in nearly the same commonplace words. Every one knows how such a form of prayer detracts from the interest of a public meeting. It is perfectly natural, and perhaps necessary, that it should. How long ere conversation with our earthly friends would become uninteresting if it related always to the same topics, and was couched in nearly the same words ? The best remedy for the evil here hinted at (if we except, indeed, a fervent spirit) is to insist upon *short* prayers, and to assign to each individual some specific object of prayer.

Most of the examples of prevalent prayer recorded in the Scriptures were offered up for specific objects, and were confined chiefly to those objects. Such was Abraham's prayer for Sodom ; and Jacob's, when he wres-



bled with the angel of the covenant, and prevailed ; and Elijah's, when he prayed for rain ; and Daniel's, when he supplicated the return of his exiled people. Such were the prayers of the disciples before the day of Pentecost, and those of the church for the release of Peter. It would have been preposterous, for example, in Elijah, when praying for rain, to have commenced with a tedious round of general supplications expressed in general, commonplace terms. He bowed his knees before God to pray for *rain*. This was the specific object for which he prayed, — his *errand* at the throne of grace, — and it was in this way that he prevailed ; and so let others do who would hope to meet with the like success. Let their hearts be filled with some great and important object pertaining to Christ's kingdom. Let them bring it directly before God, and pour out their supplications that *this* object may be granted. A succession of prayers of this description in a public meeting cannot fail to make it interesting ; while a succession of prayers of the opposite character, — general, formal, repetitious, commonplace, — can hardly fail to render the meeting dull.

I have dwelt the longer on the mode of conducting meetings for conference and prayer, because I regard the subject as one of special importance ; and one in reference to which not a few of Christ's ministers have much to learn. It depends materially on the mode of conducting such meetings whether they shall be full, attractive, interesting, profitable, or whether they shall be cold, dull, and tedious, — as bad, almost, as no meetings at all.

The weekly meeting for conference and prayer should be attended, ordinarily, in some central place,

where the members of the church can conveniently attend. And whether it should be held in the afternoon or evening, or alternate from the one to the other, will depend on the circumstances and habits of a people.

In most country parishes it will be proper to have the other weekly meeting, — the lecture, — in *different* places, to accommodate remote districts or neighborhoods. There is this to be considered, however, in appointing meetings in the remote parts of a parish. They must be so managed and explained as to *encourage* people to attend public worship on the Sabbath, and not to quiet them in staying away. There is more danger on this latter point than a minister may at first suspect. With the best possible intentions he institutes a weekly meeting in some remote district of his parish. He does it for the convenience and benefit of his people in that quarter. But ere long he finds that less of them attend meeting on the Sabbath than formerly. They feel less necessity for it. They see their minister every week, and hear a sermon from him in their own neighborhood; and why should they be at the trouble of going some two, three, or four miles to see and hear him on the Sabbath?

I know of no way in which this evil can be prevented but by making it matter of conversation, caution, and warning in the neighborhood itself where the meeting is held. Let the people be told plainly that their meeting is attended with some dangers as well as benefits; and that they have need to be watchful and faithful, lest it prove to them more a curse than a blessing.

I have another remark to offer in regard to extra meetings generally. By multiplying such meetings, and seeming always ready and pleased to attend them,

a minister may be in danger of making his services *too cheap*. He may leave the impression that the people where he goes confer a greater honor and favor upon him by coming together to hear him preach than he does upon them by riding several miles in order to preach to them. A minister of Christ should indeed be ready — always ready — to seize every opportunity of doing good. He should be willing to go to any reasonable distance, and attend meetings, and preach the gospel, where a congregation can be collected and souls saved. But let him make the impression all the while that his services are *worth something*; that they *cost something*; that he attends the meetings not for his own pleasure, but for the benefit of his hearers; and that, unless they show that they prize his services and profit under them they must ere long be discontinued.

In short, a minister should make the impression, uniformly and everywhere, that his extra meetings are an important matter, that their object and influence are important, and that they must not be shoved off, or put by, or neglected for any ordinary secular appointments. He should manifest in his degree of preparation for them how much *he* thinks of them. His people should understand that they cost him an effort, and should be made to feel that by neglecting them they not only incur guilt, but suffer loss.

I only add further in respect to these meetings, that a minister should be very explicit in his *appointments* of them, that there may be no mistake as to the time and place. He should also be *punctual* in his attendance. This remark has been made before; but its importance will justify me in repeating it. Wherever and whenever a minister has encouraged his people to expect

him, let him be present, if possible, at *the time*. Let them not be disappointed. Strict punctuality will have an important bearing not only on his meetings, but on his whole ministerial character; securing respect, inspiring confidence, and preparing his people to listen to him with interest and profit.

## LECTURE X.

### REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

DESCRIPTION OF THEM—NOT PECULIAR TO ANY COUNTRY OR AGE—FRE-  
QUENT IN OUR OWN COUNTRY—REVIVALS THE WORK OF GOD, OPERATING  
BY MEANS—MEANS NOT TO BE UNDERVALUED, NOR TRUSTED TO AS ALONE  
EFFICACIOUS—IN WHAT SENSE A MINISTER SHOULD LABOR FOR A CON-  
STANT REVIVAL.

A SEASON of revival is one when the people of God are awakened, humbled, unusually impressed with the great realities of religion, and specially engaged in the performance of its duties. It is also a season when sinners in considerable numbers are convinced and converted.

These visits of mercy have not been peculiar to any country or age; but in every place, and in every period of the church's history, when the people of God have been awakened to their duty, and his ministers have faithfully dispensed his truth, he has afforded them the tokens of his gracious presence, and crowned their labors with a blessing.

In the primitive age of the church, there were special and powerful revivals of religion. The Spirit of God was gloriously shed forth, sinners in vast numbers were converted, and the religion of the cross spread in a few centuries over the greater part of the then known world.

The reformation from Popery was accomplished in

no small degree by revivals of religion. The term *revival*, indeed, was not then in use ; but the thing signified by it was everywhere visible. God's ministers were aroused to great earnestness in prayer, and boldness and faithfulness in preaching the truth ; and their labors were eminently successful. Sinners by hundreds and thousands were converted, churches were purified and established, and the professors of a false and corrupt religion were induced to forsake it and embrace the gospel.

After the lapse of nearly two centuries, Germany was visited with another revival of religion. The principal instruments in this work were Arndt, Franke, Spener, and their fellow-laborers, who originated the sect reproachfully called *Pictists*. They were the means of arousing the dormant Lutheran church, and bringing a portion of it back to the standard of the reformers.

The history of the Moravians and of their early settlements, is no other than a continued narrative of revivals. The Spirit of God was poured out upon their stations, not only in Germany but in heathen lands, and sinners in great numbers were awakened and converted.

The times of Owen, Baxter, and Bunyan were seasons of much spiritual refreshing in different parts of England. No one can read the account of Baxter's labors at Kidderminster without perceiving that the scenes there exhibited, in everything except the name, resembled the modern revivals of religion. In the following century evangelical religion was again revived in England, and the spirit of it was widely diffused, under the ministry of Whitefield, the Wesleys, and their followers.

Similar scenes have been witnessed at different periods in Scotland, from the Reformation to the present time.

There was a revival in the west of Scotland about the year 1625, called by the profane rabble "the Stewartson sickness." Five years later there was a revival at the Kirk of the Shots, where as many as five hundred were converted under a single sermon. At nearly the same time a revival occurred in the north of Ireland, which Mr. Fleming regards as "one of the largest manifestations of the Spirit that hath been seen since the days of the apostles."

There have been frequent and powerful revivals during the last century, in Wales. A work of this kind commenced there in 1827, as the result of which, within a period of about fifteen months, not less than three thousand persons were added to the Congregational churches.

I hardly need notice, in this connection, the revivals which have since occurred in Scotland, Ireland, and different parts of England, and under the labors of missionaries in various parts of the earth. In consequence of these gracious visitations, thousands upon thousands of the benighted and perishing have been brought into the light, and been made partakers of the hopes and privileges of the gospel.

I have glanced at these facts for the purpose of showing that revivals of religion are not (what they are sometimes represented to be) *peculiar* to our own country. They are not peculiar to *any* country; but in every place, and in every age, when appropriate means have been used, accompanied with earnest, believing prayer, God has poured out his Spirit, revived his work, and cheered and comforted the hearts of his people.

It would be wrong, however, not to admit, and to do it with humble gratitude and praise, that our country

has been distinguished, perhaps above every other in modern times, by the special operations of the Divine Spirit, and by the frequency and power of revivals of religion. They commenced almost at the first settlement of New England, and were of frequent occurrence under the preaching of such men as John Cotton, Richard Mather, Thomas Shepherd, and other eminent ministers of that day.

Revivals prevailed over all the settled portions of New England, and in many parts of what are now the Middle and Southern States, more than a hundred years ago. The principal instruments in this "Great Awakening" were President Edwards, Whitefield, the Tenents, and others of a kindred spirit, whom God raised up and sent forth to labor in this blessed work.

Another era of revivals commenced near the beginning of the present century, and has continued to our own times. Indeed, revivals in this country have been so generally connected with the labors of a pious, faithful ministry, that they have come to be regarded almost as things of course; so that, when they do not occur, a degree of disappointment is felt, and inquiry is instituted as to the cause. Our young ministers are expected to be trained to be *revival preachers*; to know how to labor for the promotion of revivals, and how to behave themselves in the church of God when seasons of refreshing come.

The knowledge here referred to involves the most important branch of *pastoral duty*. Better be ignorant and unskilful anywhere else than here. This is a kind of knowledge in regard to which young ministers, most of all, need right instruction. They *feel* that they need it. And yet, after all that can be said, much will remain



to be acquired in other ways ; to be suggested by their own experience, and learned under the teachings of the Holy Spirit. In this and the following Lectures which are to be devoted to the subject, I shall not attempt to answer all the inquiries which may be proposed in regard to revivals ; but I shall hope to furnish some hints, to lay down some general principles, which, to a certain extent, may serve as a guide in this most interesting department of ministerial labor.

It is asserted in the Scriptures, and is implied in much that has been already said, that revivals of religion are *the work of God*. They are a fruit, a result, of the special operations of the Holy Spirit. But in causing, promoting revivals of religion, *how does God work?* This is a very important question : *How does God work?*

He works, indeed, as a *Sovereign*, who “hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth ;” who bestows or withholds the blessings of his grace as seemeth good in his sight. But though God acts as a sovereign in this matter, he does not act as an *arbitrary* sovereign. He does not act against reason, or without reason. He does not act in a neglect of those means, or in violation of those mental laws, which he has himself appointed. “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” But on whom *will* he have mercy ? and whom *will* he harden ? On whom *will* he bestow the blessings of his grace ? and from whom *will* he, in righteous sovereignty, withhold them ? These are very important questions ; the solution of which will aid us materially in coming to a knowledge of the subject in hand.

It should be remarked here, that in a revival of religion, as in the conversion of individual souls, God works

by *means* — by *appointed* means — by *appropriate* and *well-adapted* means. He also works in and through *the human faculties*, and in strict accordance with those *laws* of thought and feeling, motive and action, which he has himself instituted. He does not suspend or violate these laws in a single instance ; and the individual, when under the strivings of the Spirit, is conscious of being at the same time under the influence of motives or means, and of exercising all the powers of his soul with unembarrassed freedom. But if this is true, then, in laboring for the conversion of a soul, or to promote a revival of religion, there is as much room and necessity for *the skilful adaptation of means*, and the *faithful use of them*, as though no special divine influences were needed or expected in the case.

With regard to the question of means, there are two extremes to be avoided. The first is that of *undervaluing* and *neglecting* special means — paying no regard to them, making no use of them ; but leaving it to God to revive his work in his own way. Those who fall into this error entertain high and peculiar notions of the sovereignty of God, especially in the dispensations of his grace. They seem to regard him, not only as a sovereign, but a perfectly *capricious* sovereign. He not only does as he pleases in the kingdom of grace, but he pleases to set aside all rule and method, so that there is no calculating, under any circumstances, what he *will* do, and no such thing as “working together” with him with any hope of success. If the persons of whom I speak wish to convince and persuade their fellow-men in reference to any other subject, they know very well how to proceed. They can adapt their means as skilfully, and urge them as powerfully as any others. But

in convincing men of their errors and sins, and persuading them to become the followers of Christ, they think it profane to make any special efforts, or to exercise any wisdom of their own. This is *God's* work, and they have nothing to do but to wait his pleasure ; or, at most, to proceed on, in the same unvarying course of means, leaving it to him to perform his own work in his own way. If he is pleased to come among them and revive religion, they are ready ; but if he is pleased to pass them by (as he almost invariably does) the responsibility is his, and not theirs.

The other extreme — the opposite of that just described — consists in laying an *exorbitant stress upon means*, or, at least, on some *particular* means. Men employ means in their own way, and, it may be feared, in their own strength. They resort to a favorite course of measures, and *trust to them to create a revival*, whether the Divine Spirit work with them or not. If these measures are of an exciting character, and if those who resort to them know how to work them to advantage, they may generally succeed in producing an excitement — often a very great excitement. They may begin, in a little time, to count their converts by hundreds and thousands. But the changes produced are, in most instances, very superficial and very transient. Seeming good impressions pass quickly away, like the summer brook or the morning cloud, and the heart is left harder, and the whole character in a much worse condition, than it was before. Some of the most degraded and abandoned characters to be found in society are those who have passed through just such a process of awakening, of professed conversion, and then of apostasy, as has been described. It is in this way, too,

that the whole subject of revivals has been brought into suspicion and contempt.

Between these two extremes, and at a wide remove from either, there is a *medium ground*, on which the faithful minister will plant himself, and where he may labor in promoting revivals with great success. Knowing that God works by means, and by appropriate means, he attaches a high and sacred importance to the means of grace. He labors to understand aright the truths and motives of the gospel; to feel the force of them upon his own heart; and to urge them with skill and power upon the hearts and consciences of others. He studies the *characters* of those whose salvation he seeks; inquires into their opinions, feelings, temptations, difficulties, objections, prejudices, and excuses; ascertains what particular types the terrible disease of sin has assumed in their minds, — what forms of ruin it has put on; and having satisfied himself on these points, he addresses one class of motives to this individual, and another to that, endeavoring rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give to each his portion in due season. He is as careful to adapt the means he employs to particular cases, and to urge them with tact and skill, with earnestness and perseverance, seizing favorable opportunities and making the most of them, as he would be if endeavoring to convince and persuade in reference to any other subject; as he would be if no special divine interposition were needed, and his hope of success depended on means alone.

At the same time, he feels that he is a “worker together with God,” and his whole trust and dependence are placed on him. Without his accompanying grace and Spirit, he is sure that nothing can be done. He is

careful, above all things, so to labor as to enjoy the approbation of God. He desires, above all things, to secure his coöperation and blessing. He feels as deeply his dependence upon God, and prays as earnestly for the gift of his Spirit, as though everything depended — as in truth it does — upon this precious gift; as though himself were nothing, and God was all.

Nor is his confidence in God diminished because of the careful attention which he pays to means, but the contrary. For he remembers that these means are of God's own *appointment*; and that it is only through their instrumentality that God performs his works of grace. He believes, therefore, that the more regard he has for appointed means, and the more skilfully and faithfully he employs them, the more he shall honor and please God, and the more likely he shall be to secure his blessing.

In this wise and faithful use of appointed means, accompanied with a deep sense of dependence upon God, and earnest prayer for his Spirit and blessing, lies the whole secret — if it be a secret — of promoting revivals of religion. It is not prayer alone, nor labor alone, nor is it every species of labor and prayer combined, that leads on to such precious results. It must be labor *wisely directed*, and *diligently* and *perseveringly employed*, accompanied by such a sense of dependence, and such confidence in God, as will impel to *earnest* and *continued prayer*. Let these things go together, in due proportion, in the labors of the ministry, and the profured blessings of heaven will not be withheld.

To be sure, God is a sovereign in the dispensations of his grace. He bestows his favors as he will. And he *will* bestow them, in connection with such prayers

and efforts as have been described. They may be confidently expected. They may be safely calculated on. The skilful and faithful laborer for Christ may go forth to his work weeping, bearing precious seed; but he shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

It has been made a question, whether a pastor should labor for a *constant* revival of religion among his people. It is often said, in conversation and in religious meetings, "We ought to have a *constant* revival. It ought never to stop, or to abate; and every minister and church ought to pray and labor, having this object in view."

The proper answer to this question, as of a great many others, will depend on the manner in which it is to be understood. If by a revival of religion is meant only those seasons in which sinners are in considerable numbers converted; and if the inquiry be, whether a minister ought *constantly* to preach and labor with a special view to the conversion of sinners, I answer no; and for several reasons. In the first place, a minister has a great many other things to do—other subjects to preach about, other objects to promote—besides the conversion of sinners. He has a church to instruct, watch over, and care for. He must unmask hypocrisy, refute error, reclaim the wandering, comfort the desponding, and maintain the discipline of his church. Then he must pay a proportionate share of attention to the children and youth of his flock. He must enforce upon his people the moral as well as the spiritual precepts of the gospel.

There is a class of subjects, and they are subjects of great importance, which relate specifically to the con-

viction and conversion of sinners. On these a minister will preach often. And at particular seasons, when circumstances favor, he will preach upon them almost exclusively. But he cannot preach upon them constantly. Our Saviour did not. The apostles did not. And no minister, who means to declare the whole counsel of God, and discharge all the duties devolving upon him, can do it.

Again: those seasons which are strictly denominated revivals of religion, when special efforts are made for the conversion of sinners, and sinners in considerable numbers are converted, are always seasons of more or less excitement. It is perhaps necessary that they should be so. Of the fact that they *are* so, there can be no reasonable doubt. But whatever of unnatural excitement at any time prevails among a people, cannot, from the nature of the case, be perpetual. It *must* subside. To attempt to keep it up constantly would be unwise, even if it were possible.

It may be further remarked, should a minister, in his preaching and efforts, aim constantly at the conversion of sinners, and should his efforts be in some good degree successful, a large proportion of the adult part of his congregation would, ere long, be converted. None would remain, except a few scathed and hardened individuals, on whose hearts the truth had long spent its power, and of whose conversion there would be little hope. And for him to neglect all the other important objects of his ministry, and be aiming constantly at the conversion of these, would be manifestly injudicious and unwise.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In large congregations, or where the population is frequently changing, this last remark may not so strictly apply. But in most country congregations, where the population is stationary, it does apply.

On the whole, then,—understanding a *revival of religion*, in the sense above explained, as a season when particular efforts are made for the conversion of sinners, and when sinners in considerable numbers are converted,—I think it not incumbent on a minister, with all his other responsibilities upon him, to labor for a constant revival of religion.

But if the terms may be taken in a somewhat wider sense, to denote a season when the church is united and engaged; when Christians are growing in knowledge and in grace; when they feel and live in some good degree conformable to their covenant obligations; when the children and youth are suitably trained and instructed, and all that pertains to Christ's kingdom is rising and prospering among a people;—if this be a revival of religion, there can be no doubt that there should be a *constant, uninterrupted, perpetual revival*. Unquestionably it is the duty of both church and pastor to labor ever for a revival such as this.

With regard to the particular *direction* of a minister's labors, at any given time, no unvarying rule can be laid down, except that he should keep himself acquainted with the state and circumstances of his flock, and act wisely in view of them. When circumstances favor, when they indicate the propriety of such a course, let him preach and pray and labor with a view directly to the conversion of sinners. In his conversation with individuals, in his selection of subjects for the pulpit, and in his mode of discussing them, let this object be kept prominently in view. Let his church understand him in regard to this matter, and earnestly unite their prayers and efforts with his. When labors of this kind have been pursued as long as circumstances seem to



require,—until the interest of them has in some degree subsided, and sinners, in considerable numbers, have been gathered in,—a new direction to pastoral effort will gradually be given. The nature of true piety will be clearly set forth; its evidences will be exhibited, its counterfeits detected, and the hopes which have been indulged will be sifted and tried. The new converts will be carefully instructed, and those of them who give satisfactory evidence of piety will be gathered into the church. The doctrines of religion will be unfolded; its external rites, ordinances, and institutions will be explained; the church will be put in order, and kept in order; incidental things will be attended to; and the way will be prepared, so soon as circumstances shall again favor, to aim directly at the conversion of sinners. Thus the pastor will be always busy; always engaged in his great Master's work; and always doing, or aiming to do, the very things which he has reason to believe will be most conformable to his Master's will.

The minister of Christ is in Scripture denominated a *watchman*. He is a watchman. It is his duty to watch the changes of circumstances, the indications of Providence, the influence of truth, the motions of the Spirit, among his people, and so to direct his efforts as to meet the exigencies of the case, be they what they may; always maintaining in his own heart, and laboring to excite in others, a spirit of prayer; always engaged in appropriate duty; always endeavoring, to the best of his ability, to serve and please his Lord and Master, and to promote his cause and kingdom in the world. Happy the minister who has health and strength, wisdom and grace, ability and opportunity, thus to pursue his appropriate work! His is the noblest employment

on the earth; the nearest allied to that of angels, or rather to that of the Holy Spirit and the Son of God; — an employment in the pursuit of which he may turn many to righteousness, and be prepared to shine among the stars in the firmament of heaven forever.

## LECTURE XI.

### REVIVALS OF RELIGION (CONTINUED).

ORDINARILY COMMENCE IN THE CHURCH — FIRST EFFORT SHOULD BE TO AWAKEN, HUMBLE, AND PREPARE THE CHURCH; NEXT TO AWAKEN, CONVINCE, AND CONVERT SINNERS — CONVICTION AND CONVERSION DESCRIBED; MEANS OF PRODUCING THEM — IMPORTANCE OF SYSTEM AND METHOD IN THE WORK.

REVIVALS of religion usually, if not invariably, commence in the church. It is natural, perhaps necessary, that it should be so. The gift of the Holy Spirit, in his convincing and converting influences, is *conditioned* upon prayer. It is promised only in answer to prayer. Consequently, some among the people of God—at least, *some* who have an interest at the throne of grace—must be awake to pray, or the Holy Spirit may not be expected to descend to convince and convert the ungodly. The whole church may not be engaged together, but a portion of it, I think, must be.

The fact that revivals of religion commence in the church, if not one of invariable occurrence, is so nearly so that no other order of things is to be expected. We are not to calculate that sinners, in any considerable numbers in a congregation, will be converted, until the church is revived and prepared for such a blessing. Hence, in endeavoring to promote a revival of religion, the first efforts of a minister should be with his church.

In order to determine what these efforts should be, it may be needful to inquire into the state of a church, during a season of *backsliding* and *declension*. And as every church is composed of individual professing Christians, this inquiry resolves itself into another; namely, What is the state of *individual Christians*—supposing them to be true Christians—during such a season as we have supposed?

Such persons may not have wandered from the truth, or fallen into essential error; but the truth, for the time, has lost its power over them. It does not affect and influence them as it should. They have not lost all their religious affections, but their affections are comparatively cold and inconstant. They have not renounced the grand purpose of their soul, to live for Christ and for the advancement of his kingdom; but they have strangely wandered from that purpose. They have become engrossed in other things. Their thoughts, their affections, their conversation, their pursuits, are more earthly than heavenly; more upon the affairs of this life, than upon those mightier interests which pertain to the soul and eternity. Christians in the state supposed have not altogether ceased to pray; but their prayers are for the most part cold and formal. There is but little *heart* in them, and of course but little spirituality and enjoyment. They have not abandoned the forms of religion, but their religion is too much a matter of form. It is characterized by a want of interest and engagedness; by a want of enlightened fervor and zeal. They have no proper *sense* of religious truth, or of the obligations resulting from it. They do not realize where they stand, or what responsibilities are resting upon them. They can look on, and see the cause of

Christ declining, without any deep and pungent regrets. They can see their fellow-men dying and perishing around them, and yet do little for their rescue and salvation.

Such, in brief, is the state of the great body of Christians — *real* Christians — in a time of general coldness and religious declension. Of course, such will be, in general, the state of *the church*. There may be some in it, and there will, in a better state, — a higher degree of religious feeling and enjoyment. And there may be some in a worse condition, — a state almost of apostasy, — whose hopes, in the season of winnowing, have been blown nearly if not utterly away. But the condition of the church in general is such as has been described.

What now is to be done for a church in a situation such as this? What *can* be done, with any prospect of promoting a revival of religion?

The church above supposed, or the members composing it, obviously need a *change*, — a change strongly analogous, though not precisely similar, to that which impenitent sinners need in order to their salvation. First of all, these church-members need to be *awakened*. They are comparatively asleep now, and they must be aroused from their slumbers. Their closed eyes must be got open. Their dull ears must be unstopped. They must become deeply sensible of their condition, and be made to see objects around them in something like their true light. A course of preaching, and of personal pastoral labor, having *this* object in view, is first of all appropriate, and should be first attempted.

In the second place, the church supposed needs *humbling*. Their coldness and inconstancy, their backslidings and wanderings, their worldly conformity, their

delinquencies in duty towards God, themselves, and their fellow-men, must be set before them, and urged home upon them, till they are effectually humbled and heart-broken for sin ; till they begin to say, with David, " Behold, we are vile ;" till, with Job, they begin to " abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes." There is little danger that this work of humiliation and repentance will be made too thorough. The ploughshare of truth must be driven deep through the stony soil of the heart. The fallow ground must be thoroughly broken up. The whole mind must be softened, the soul melted, and the tear of penitence must begin to flow.

Until a backslidden church can be brought into this state of humiliation and repentance, nothing effectual is gained. There may be noise and excitement without repentance ; but it is all wind. But when a church comes into the state described, almost *everything* is gained. Whatever more remains to be done, is now easy. By deep repentance and brokenness of heart for sin, the church comes into a state of reconciliation with God. It humbly seeks his forgiving mercy, and *secures* it. And now the members of the church are in a situation to pray. God seemed at a great distance before, and they could not pray. If they attempted to pray, their prayers were but an " empty noise." Their own hearts condemned them, and they were sure that God was greater than their heart, and knew all things. But having humbled themselves before God, become reconciled to him, and sought and obtained his forgiving mercy, they can now go to him as children to a father. They can approach him, through Christ, with affection and confidence, and pour their requests into his faithful ear, assured that they shall not plead with him in vain.

The same humble, heart-broken state of mind, which has brought the members of a church into peace with God, will also give them peace *among themselves*. If there have been alienations and divisions among them, hard feelings and hard speeches, it will be easy now to cure these evils. Those who have thought themselves injured will cherish a tender, forgiving spirit, feeling that it ill becomes them, who have been forgiven ten thousand talents, to take a brother by the throat because he owes them a hundred pence. At the same time, those who have committed injury will be deeply humbled in view of what they have done, and be disposed to confess their faults one to another, that they may be healed. While such a state of feeling prevails in a church, it is comparatively easy to remove difficulties, and the pastor should see to it that they are thoroughly taken out of the way. The fellowship of the church should thus be restored, that henceforth they may pray as with one voice, and labor together for the advancement of the gospel as with one heart and soul.

The church being prepared for so great a labor, their attention will now be directed to the case of the impenitent around them. The whole church — the pastor, the deacons, the brethren, the sisters — should be, if possible, *united* in this thing, and should engage together in the important work of endeavoring to bring sinners to the Saviour.

But how shall they engage in it? Where shall they begin? What is the *first* thing requiring to be done?

In the case of stupid, slumbering sinners, as in that of backslidden, slumbering believers, the first thing to be attempted is to *awaken* them. Their attention must be arrested. Their eyes must be opened. They must

be led to see where they are, and what they are, and what is before them, and what is likely to become of them. They must be made to feel that their salvation is worth something; that the religion of the gospel is a vast concern, which they have neglected quite too long already, and which they cannot, *must* not, neglect longer. There are a variety of subjects connected with the gospel which are of the most *awakening character*; such as the worth of the soul, the immediate and urgent claims of religion, the danger of delay, the death-bed of the sinner, the scenes of the last judgment, the final separation, the glories of heaven, and the retributions of a lost eternity. These, and the like subjects, should be dwelt upon, not in a cold, unfeeling manner, but with all the tenderness and earnestness of faith — with all the vividness of a near reality. Let the minister first be penetrated with them himself; and then let him bring them forth as one who *believes* what he says; as one who has received his commission from above, and who cannot but utter the warnings with which God has charged him.

If this course of preaching, attended (as it must be) with earnest prayer, and with appropriate personal labor on the part of both minister and church, has the effect to awaken sinners so that they begin to show some signs of feeling, then let him, in the next place, aim directly at their consciences, with a view to produce *convictions of sin*. Without these convictions, the awakening of sinners will do them no good. They will soon go to sleep again; and their slumbers will be even deeper than though they had not been disturbed.

In the endeavor to convince men of sin, one of the first things to be done is to tear away the vain excuses



and “refuges of lies,” under which they cover up their sins so that they cannot see them. We must remove their false standards of character, and hold up in prominent view the great and only standard, — the strict and holy *law of God*. In estimating character, as in everything else, he who judges by a false standard must always come to a wrong result. And this is the reason, or a principal reason, why so many moral, amiable men continually make a false estimate of their own characters: they judge of them by a false standard or rule. For example, one makes *morality* his rule, — mere outward morality, — a decent performance of relative and social duties. This is *his* standard: he tries to live up to it; and perhaps in some good degree he does live up to it. Of course he has no convictions of sin; and while he measures himself by such a rule, he can have none.

Another man, in addition to outward moral duties, includes in his standard a decent respect for the observances of religion. He must have a Bible in his house, and must occasionally read it. He must keep the Sabbath with external decency. He must go to the house of God, and aid in supporting religious institutions. Such is the standard which he sets for himself, to which he tries to conform, and to which, in the general, he does conform. Consequently, *he* has no convictions of sin, and with his present standard he can have none.

In laboring to produce convictions of sin, one of the first things to be done, as I said, is to remove these false standards of character. We must show people, and satisfy them, that these are not the rule which God has given us, by which he estimates us now, and by which he will judge us in the final day: no, nor any-

thing like it. God's rule of judgment is written out very plainly in his Word. It is written with scarcely less plainness on the tablet of every human heart. It meets us in every condition and relation of life. It binds us everywhere, and at all times, to *love God* with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourself. It requires that we glorify God on the earth, in our body, and in our spirit, which are his ; and that, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, all be done with a view to his glory, This is the law by which, Paul tells us, "is *the knowledge of sin.*" He was himself alive without this law once ; but when *the commandment came*, a sense of sin revived within him, and he found himself morally, spiritually dead.

In our endeavors to produce conviction of sin, *the law*, in the sense here explained, must be faithfully and earnestly exhibited. We must preach it in its *spirituality* and *great extent*, as reaching to the thoughts, the affections, and to the most secret springs of action in the soul ; that, in this view, the transgressor may see the number of his sins ; or rather, that he may see them to be, like the sands on the seashore, innumerable. We must preach the law in its inflexible *strictness* and awful *purity*, that in this view the transgressor may learn the *greatness* of his sins. We must preach it in its infinite *reasonableness*, *propriety*, and *excellence* ; that in this view he may see the *baseness*, the *odiousness* of sin. We must preach the *penalty* of the law, as well as the precept ; that in this view the sinner may see himself to be utterly, hopelessly lost, with no deliverance possible except through the Saviour.

Nor in our endeavors to convince men of sin must we fail to set before them that *greater* guilt which they

have contracted, and that *sooner punishment* to which they have exposed themselves, in not only transgressing the law of God, but in *rejecting his suffering Son*, and doing despite to the Spirit of his grace. In the last address of our Saviour to his disciples, he promised to send the Holy Spirit *to convince the world of sin*. And how convince the world of sin? "Because they *believe not on me*;" importing that *unbelief*, or a rejection of Christ, is *the great sin* which the Holy Spirit will set forth with peculiar prominence, in the convictions of which he is the author. But if the Holy Spirit, in producing conviction, will give such prominence to this terrible sin of unbelief, then surely those who hope to be "workers together with him" should not fail to do the same.

In the estimation of some there is much mystery hanging round this subject of conviction. They know not what to think of it, or how to explain it. But this is all needless mystery. The subject is a plain one, and is as capable of explanation as almost any other. Conviction of sin is nothing more than a being *convinced* of sin. It is a *conviction*, deep and thorough, produced in the mind by the light of truth, and the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit, that we really are *those great and guilty sinners*, those *justly condemned and ruined transgressors*, which the Bible represents. This conviction is, perhaps, always accompanied with more or less of distress, as we might suppose it would be; but then the distress involved is not the conviction, nor is it the certain measure of conviction. In some instances persons are deeply convicted without great distress; but more frequently they are the subjects of much mental distress — distress arising from various causes — when they are but slightly convinced of sin.

It is sometimes desirable to increase the convictions and the distress of the awakened sinner. And this may be done, ordinarily, by holding up in prominent view the doctrine of *divine sovereignty*; by throwing the anxious but unhumbled rebel into the hands of an angry God, who will kill him, or spare him alive, save or destroy him, as seemeth good in his sight. This view of the case will invariably arouse the latent opposition of the heart, and show the sinner to himself. In many cases it has produced conviction and distress when all other means have failed.

Not unfrequently persons are anxious to know when they may regard themselves as *sufficiently* convicted; when they may be satisfied that the law has had its perfect work, and that they are prepared, so far as conviction is concerned, to embrace the gospel. For the satisfaction of such persons I will mention two marks of thorough conviction, which seem to me decisive. The first is, when the mouth of the sinner is stopped, and all his vain excuses for sin, and his objections against the law and the government of God, are taken away. The second is, when he is prepared to acknowledge the *justice* of God in his final condemnation. When the sinner has come to this point, when he is stripped of all his vain excuses and self-justifying pleas, and sees and knows that God would be just were he to cut him off, and cast him off forever, then is he thoroughly, *sufficiently* convicted. Divested of all claim upon the justice of God, he is now prepared to become a beggar for mercy. From the heart he can offer up the publican's prayer. He feels his need of that Saviour which the gospel presents, and is prepared to embrace him as the portion and refuge of his sinking soul.

I have dwelt the longer on the subject of conviction, because I deem it a very important matter. For the want of deep and thorough convictions, awakened sinners often fall back into stupidity and carnal peace; or they embrace a false and delusive hope; or, if they are born into the kingdom of Christ, they are but just born. The lamp of spiritual life burns but feebly, and the evidences of their good estate are dubious and uncertain.

To all those who are laboring, or are expecting to labor, for the salvation of souls, I would say emphatically, *Understand well the subject of conviction*. Study the nature of it, and the means of producing it; and in all your efforts to bring sinners to Christ, endeavor that they may have thorough convictions of sin.

When sinners are awakened and convicted, the next labor of a pastor and his church should be for their *conversion*. Mere convictions, however desirable on some accounts, will not save them. They must *repent and be converted*, that their sins may be blotted out. They must be *born again*, of the Holy Spirit, or they cannot see the kingdom of God.

When the time arrives, in the progress of a revival, that direct efforts should be made for the conversion of sinners, it is important that the subject should be, first of all, explained. The misapprehensions of sinners in regard to the nature of conversion (for they almost always misunderstand it) should be removed. They should be made to see that conversion is no *physical* change, — no change in the substance, the faculties, or the constitution of their souls. It is no change of which they are to be the mere passive recipients, and for which they can do nothing but wait. It is rather a change in their *active exercises and affections* from those which are sin-

ful to those which are holy. It is the *first turning* of the sinner from his evil ways. It is the first springing up of holy exercises, of some kind, in a heart where such exercises never before existed. These exercises may be *love, penitence, submission, or faith*. It matters not what form they assume, or by what name they are called, if they be but *holy* exercises : the first putting them forth, on the part of the sinner, is the act of his conversion.

In this view of conversion, which I am persuaded is the scriptural one, it is proper to use *motives* with the sinner, and the most *urgent motives*, to induce him to turn, or to be converted. In fact, the great business of preaching to sinners, with a view to their conversion, consists in urging motives upon them to induce, or bring about, this important change.

It should be recollected, however, while urging motives for this end, that *all* the truths of the gospel are not directly motives to conversion. There are many truths which a minister must preach which are calculated rather to *awaken* than convert, and should be relied on chiefly for their awakening power. Such are the terrors of the law, and the promises of the gospel ; the glories of heaven, and the pains of hell. Considerations such as these are much insisted on in the Bible, and should have a place in the ministrations of the pulpit, and in the more private intercourse of ministers with their people. They are not (as some have said) appeals to the selfish principle, but rather to that instinctive desire of happiness and aversion to misery, which constitutes a part of our moral nature. They are just what stupid, slumbering sinners need to awaken them out of sleep, and arouse them to effort for their souls' salvation. But when sinners *are* awakened, and measurably convicted,

and we wish to use motives directly for their conversion, a different class of motives, I have thought, should be chiefly relied upon. Such, for example, as the *right*, the *duty*, of loving God, and submitting to him; the *duty* of repenting and turning from sin; the *duty* of an immediate trusting in Christ; the perfect *reasonableness* of these requirements; the inherent *propriety* and *excellency* of them; the binding *authority* of God in the case; our obligations of *gratitude* to him; the *sufferings* and *love* of Christ for us; his infinite *sufficiency*, and our *helplessness*; his full *atonement*, and our *guilt*;—these are some of the considerations which should chiefly influence the sinner in turning from his evil ways; and hence these are the motives on which ministers should chiefly rely when laboring directly for the conversion of souls.

When we find the heart of an individual torpid and listless, or comparatively so; or when we have reason to think that this is the case with a *company* of professed inquirers; other motives are to be resorted to for the purpose of awakening and conviction, or with a view to deepen impression and arouse to effort. But when we aim *directly at conversion*, and expect conversions to follow our labors, we should urge motives of the kind hinted at above, — motives under the influence of which the sinner will be likely to be converted, and his conversion be genuine.

I only add further on this subject now, that in our preaching and personal efforts to promote revivals of religion, to prepare the church for spiritual labors and blessings, and to bring impenitent souls to Christ, there should be as much of *system* as possible. The pastor should understand what *needs* to be done. Then he

should know, as accurately as possible, what *is* done, and what *remains* to be done. By careful observation and inquiry, he should *feel his way*, know where he stands, know what to do next, and how to do it. He will have occasion often, it may be, to go back and repeat efforts which have once been made. For instance, a *church* may need to be labored with directly and repeatedly, in the progress of a revival, that its members may be kept awake and humble, united and engaged. Also, repeated efforts may be necessary to *awaken* and *convince* sinners, after such efforts have once been faithfully made, and numbers who were first awakened have been converted.

In regard to all these movements, I have only to repeat what I said before. Let a minister know where he stands, what is the situation of things around him, and what is incumbent on him to do. Let him give to all his measures as much of system and plan as possible. Let him not venture (if he can avoid it) to strike a single stroke in the dark. It may be a fatal stroke to some poor sinful perishing soul.

For the want of wisdom and understanding, system and plan, much labor is lost in times of revival, and it may be worse than lost. Discourses are preached which do more hurt than good. Things are done which require to be undone. Efforts are made, and with the best intentions, to promote the work, which serve rather to retard than advance the chariot of salvation, rather to clog than to roll on its wheels.



## LECTURE XII.

### REVIVALS OF RELIGION (CONTINUED).

EXTREMES TO BE AVOIDED, AS TO THE AMOUNT OF MEANS EMPLOYED — THE SUBJECTS OF A REVIVAL TO BE AWAKENED, CONVICTED, DRAWN OUT FROM THEIR HIDING-PLACES, BROUGHT TO REPENTANCE, TRIED AND PROVED, AND GATHERED INTO THE CHURCH — IMPORTANCE OF A REASONABLE PROBATION — PROBATIONER'S CLASS.

IN the two previous Lectures I have spoken of the *means* to be employed in promoting revivals of religion. As to the *extent* to which meetings should be multiplied and means used, two extremes are to be avoided. The first is the extreme of *caution*; or a scrupulous, needless fear of overdoing, — of stepping aside from the usual course of means. In the indulgence of this fear, religious impressions will languish and die for the want of culture. The revival will wane and come to nothing, for the want of a vigorous coöperation and support.

The other extreme is that of *overdoing*, of pushing the revival too fast, and thereby injuring its character, and bringing it to a speedy close. Good ministers are sometimes in danger of doing this, and of doing it with the purest intentions.

The feelings of the vigilant, faithful pastor during a season of declension in his church, are well expressed by the Psalmist: “ My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, *more than they that watch for the morning.*” The figure is that

of the literal watchman, who has been patrolling the streets through the livelong night, and whose eyes are turned eastward, with impatient longing, to catch the first gleam of breaking day. It is in this state of mind that the eye of the anxious, waiting pastor catches the first indication of spiritual good. With intense desire he watches over it, cherishes it, and does all in his power to promote and diffuse it. As it spreads, and becomes more and more decisive, his hopes, his confidence, his diligence increase. He suffers no inquiring mind to be neglected, and no opportunity of promoting the good work to pass unimproved. He increases the number of his extra meetings to any amount that his strength will admit, and that the exigencies of the case require.

Now all this is very well. No faithful, conscientious pastor could think of doing less. But it is just here that the danger of that second extreme, to which I adverted, overtakes us. The good pastor rejoices in the begun revival; he feels his own responsibility in regard to it; his soul is quickened and excited under its influence; and he rushes into it under the impression that he cannot labor too fast, or do too much in a given time, for the promotion of so good a cause. The consequence is that he goes beyond his strength, and is soon prostrated, and unable to do anything. Or, in his heated, excited state of mind, he is chargeable with indiscretions, which impair his influence and hinder the progress of the work. He changes, it may be, the whole character of the revival, and turns it into a scene of excitement and extravagance. Or, at best, he hastens what may be called the *crisis* of the revival, and brings it to a speedy end.

There is a degree of awakened activity beyond which

the human faculties, in their present state, cannot go, and in which they cannot be long sustained. They will soon begin to droop, and their energy will be relaxed. On this account there is a season in every general revival of religion, when the work is at its *height* — a season which may not improperly be termed its *crisis*. This season once past, it is next to impossible to restore it, or to make any considerable *approaches* in that direction. The power and glory of the revival have gone by. Little more remains to be done, except to pass over the ground, secure the precious fruits, and gather in the gleanings of the harvest. Hence, every wise minister will endeavor to *put off* this dreaded turn of things as long as possible. He will be sure to keep the revival in progress; but in such progress that it may be continued on. He will fear to press the work *unduly*, and thereby bring it to a speedy termination.

In the progress of a revival, there are several things to be done for those who are the subjects of it. The first, as I before remarked, is to arrest their attention; to awaken them; to bring them to serious consideration and reflection; to convince them of their sinful character and ruined state; to make them earnest and anxious for the salvation of their souls. This is the first thing to be attempted for the impenitent — the first, under God, to be accomplished.

The second is to *draw out* these awakened persons from their hiding-places, and induce them to make their feelings known. This second thing is often as difficult to be accomplished as the first — sometimes more so. In frequent instances it is more easy to bring persons to consideration and deep feeling than it is to induce them to declare themselves, and make their feelings known.

Either fear, or pride, or shame, or something else keeps them back, and it is next to impossible to bring them to an open declaration of their state. And yet this point must be gained, or, it may be feared, they will never come into the light and liberty of the gospel. They will smother and quench the striving Spirit. Their closely-concealed impressions will languish and die. Or, if this should not be the result, their sufferings will be needlessly protracted, for the want of appropriate religious instruction.

Of all the methods which have been devised for bringing the anxious sinner to an open acknowledgment of his case, — next to private, personal conversation, — perhaps the inquiry-meeting is the most unexceptionable. There is no trick or artifice about this. There is no undue excitement or ostentatious display. Those who feel concerned for their souls are invited to meet their pastor at a given time and place, to make him acquainted with their state of mind, and receive his counsels and his prayers. Such, surely, is an unexceptionable meeting; and it has been followed, in thousands of instances, by the most precious results.

The next point to be gained with the inquiring sinner, is to bring him to an *unconditional surrender of himself to God*; or, in other words, to effect, instrumentally, his *conversion*. In some instances, this point and that last considered coincide. The struggle in coming to an open declaration of one's case is so great, that the decision of this question decides all others. The soul is born of God at once. But ordinarily conversion *follows* the first disclosure of feeling; and follows, it may be, at some considerable distance. Persons will visit their minister, or come to the inquiry-meeting, time

after time, and yet not come to the knowledge of the truth. This interval is always one of great anxiety to the faithful pastor. He regards the souls thus situated as in a most critical, awful state. They are suspended, as it were, between hell and heaven. They are balancing motives and destinies for eternity. In these circumstances he feels for them, watches over them, prays for them, and accompanies his prayers and efforts by the most earnest and appropriate instructions. He solicits for them the prayers and the labors of others, and does everything he can to prevent their grieving away the Holy Spirit, and to bring them to that *great decision* on which is suspended the destiny of their souls.

When an individual begins to indulge a hope in Christ, the next thing to be done is to *instruct* him, *prove* him, and, after a suitable probation, to bring him into *the church of Christ*. There are those, indeed, who attach no importance to this period of probation, who deny its necessity, and insist that as soon as individuals profess to be converted they should be received at once into the church. In support of this practice the example of the apostles is adduced. The same day in which the three thousand were converted they were baptized and admitted to the church. And the same was true of the eunuch, of the jailor, of Cornelius and his family, and of many others.

But in judging of the practice of the apostles, their *peculiar circumstances* must be taken into the account. So far as their circumstances and ours are alike, we may be bound to follow their example. But where there is a wide and manifest difference — as in the case before us — we are to practice, not precisely as the

apostles did, but as we have reason to think they would, were they in circumstances like our own.

In the age of the apostles there was much less *inducement* to deception, and proportionally less danger of it, than there is at present. The exposure, at that period, not only to reproach and shame, but to palpable persecution, was so great, that none would be likely to make *profession* of their faith in Christ who were not in possession of the great reality. It should be considered, too, that the apostles were under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, to assist them, not only as to their instructions, but in the discernment of character. In this last respect they were well-nigh infallible. We have evidence of this in the readiness with which Peter detected the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, and of Simon the sorcerer. As *we* have not the power to unmask hypocrisy after this manner, so neither have we power to decide — as the apostles often did upon the spot — who are and who are not proper candidates for admission to the church of Christ. We lay no claim to the supernatural direction of the Holy Ghost in this matter, but are left to the slower processes of probation and inquiry.

But though we dare not follow the example of the apostles to the letter in this thing, we do profess to follow it in *substance* and *spirit*. The apostles admitted persons to the church so soon as they were satisfied of their *conversion*; and we are entitled to do the same. The only difference is, they had the means of obtaining satisfaction sooner, ordinarily, than we can.

I have said that we are entitled to receive professed converts to the church so soon as we can obtain reasonable *satisfaction* on the question of their piety. But

this cannot be obtained in one day, or two. It cannot, as a general thing, be obtained in one week, or two. Persons need *time* for reflection and self-examination, after they indulge the hope of being converted, before it will be prudent for them to *offer* themselves as candidates for the church. And the church needs *time* in which to judge of the experience, and observe the character and walk of professed converts, before they can be satisfied on the question of their piety, and can prudently receive them to the fellowship of God's people. *Satisfaction*, I repeat, is what the church wants; and as soon as this can be obtained, and not before, should the candidate for membership be permitted to enrol himself among the professed disciples of the Saviour.

I urge the importance of some delay in this matter, because churches and ministers have, not unfrequently, strong inducements to be precipitate. They rejoice in the hopeful conversion of individuals. These persons appear well for the time; they promise well for the future; their Christian friends judge charitably of them, and would be glad to see them in the church; and they urge their admission as soon as practicable. In some instances *sectarian* feelings induce to haste. "If A. B. does not join our church now, he will join some other, and we shall lose him." But the discreet and faithful pastor will not be much influenced by motives of this nature. He considers the danger to *religion* of publicly pronouncing an individual a convert before he has been sufficiently tried. He considers the danger to the *church* of prematurely pressing a person into it, whose seeming goodness may be very transient, and whose impressions and hopes may soon vanish away. He considers the danger to the *individual himself* of encouraging him in

an unfounded hope, and of placing him in a situation where, if he is not converted, it is hardly likely that he ever will be. The example, too, will have an influence, and may lead to greater evils in the case of others, than would be likely to result from that actually in hand. Impressed by considerations such as these, the wise minister will hesitate, at least for a time. He will seek that satisfaction in a temporary probation which, from the nature of the case, he can obtain in no other way. A little delay can be of no essential injury to any one; while undue precipitancy may put at hazard the most important interests.

But while I urge a reasonable delay in gathering new converts into the church, there is such a thing as *unreasonable* delay. It is not uncommon for hopeful converts — either from the suggestions of their own minds or the influence of others — to put off a public profession of religion till they lose the ardor of their first love, become cold and worldly in their feelings, and their minds are filled with doubts and fears; and then they are afraid to perform the duty. And so they hide their light under a bushel, and lead a comfortless and useless course of life, it may be for years, halting between two opinions, and enjoying neither religion nor the world, till at length another revival wakes them up, and brings them to the position which they ought to have taken long before. There is a medium somewhere — a safe and proper medium — between the extremes of precipitancy on the one hand, and of delay on the other, which every pastor should endeavor to find and take. Nor is it to be understood that this medium-line is an *unvarying* one. *Satisfaction*, I repeat again, is what the church wants. This is *all* it wants. But satisfaction may be gained in



respect to some persons much sooner than others. Here is a person, we will suppose, of mature age, of sober, discreet life, of good reputation in the community, who becomes a hopeful convert. The evidence of his conversion is clear and decisive. Of such an one satisfaction may be gained in a little time. He will satisfy the church as soon, perhaps, as he has satisfied himself. Here is another professed convert in mere childhood, or early youth. Or, he is one whose previous character has been vicious and profligate. The evidence of his conversion may seem to be clear. And yet, from the nature of the case, he cannot satisfy the church so soon as the individual first supposed. His Christian friends will need to watch over him for some considerable time — if he is wise he will wish them to do it — before they can be satisfied that the seat of his corruptions has been broken up, and that his future life will be honorable to the gospel.

The period which elapses between the first dawns of hope and a public profession of religion is one of great interest and importance, not only to the supposed convert himself, but to his Christian friends and to the church. It is one when the mind is peculiarly open to instruction and impression, and which should be turned to the best account. It is also a period, in some respects, of more than ordinary exposure, during which the inexperienced convert needs, perhaps more than he ever will again, a friendly and watchful care.

I have often thought that we needed some provision in our churches, beyond what we now possess, for the special benefit of hopeful converts during the period of their probation for the church. Under a sense of this

necessity, an expedient was proposed several years ago,<sup>1</sup> which met the approbation of some of our more judicious ministers, but has not been extensively adopted in practice. I shall take the liberty to repeat it here :

“ Let a class be formed of such as have become hopefully pious, to be denominated *the probationer's class* ; and as fast as others begin to give evidence of piety, let them be induced to join it. This should be considered as the *first* step towards a public profession of religion. Having taken this step, individuals may be expected to remain in the class for a longer or shorter period, according as age and other circumstances may seem to dictate.

“ The members of this class should be regarded as *on probation for the church*, as under the inspection of the church, and should be the subjects of much prayer, and of continual and appropriate religious instruction. For the purpose of instruction, they should be accustomed to meet the pastor at stated seasons ; and should be visited individually by the pastor and by other members of the church. The object should be to give them clear and correct views respecting the nature and evidences of piety, that they may not be deceived respecting their own characters ; to watch the progress of their minds, and the exercises of their hearts, that a correct judgment may be formed respecting them ; and to acquaint them fully with the duties and responsibilities connected with a public profession of religion, that they may be able to count the cost, and to come forward with right apprehensions to the work of the Lord.”

The advantages to be expected from the measure here proposed are many.

<sup>1</sup> See Spirit of the Pilgrims, vol. iv., p. 656.

1. In the important interval between conversion and a public profession of religion, young converts will not be left exposed to temptation with nothing thrown around them for their security.

2. Opportunity will be afforded to *lengthen* the period of probation, especially in those cases that seem most to require it. Owing to the exposed situation of persons during this interval, ministers are under strong temptations to shorten it. But the honor of religion and the safety of the church require that it should not be unduly shortened. Persons must have time for instruction and self-examination. Still, the duty of a public profession of religion must not be suffered to pass out of their minds. Measures should be taken to keep the subject continually before them, to make it one of thought and care, and to prepare them for it in the best possible manner.

3. It is an obvious advantage of the probationer's class, that persons will be likely to come into the church with more adequate and better views. Individuals not unfrequently become pious in families where they have not had much religious instruction. They have hardly been taught the first principles of the gospel. Now to such persons, as well as to all others, this period of probation must be one of great benefit. Having been instructed in the class as to the nature and evidence of true piety, and the more important parts of Christian doctrine and duty, they will be likely to come into the church *more truly evangelical Christians* than could otherwise be expected.

4. The method here proposed will be likely to keep those out of the church who do not truly belong there. It is a great injury to unconverted persons to admit

them into the church ; and it is a source of constant hazard and trouble to the church to receive them.

Now the probationer's class will be like the fan spoken of by the forerunner of Christ, to separate between the chaff and the wheat. A principal object of it should be to *try* the characters of its members, that those who are found wanting may be set aside, and those who are approved may be made manifest.

5. Another good effect of the measure proposed will be to bring all those in a congregation who are properly entitled to the privileges of the church to become its members. There is usually a class of persons in every congregation who indulge a hope in the mercy of God, and give some evidence of piety, who are not prepared, as *they* think, — nor are they in a way to be prepared, — to profess Christ before men. Such persons should be induced, and in most instances would be pleased, to join the probationer's class ; and here, under a course of appropriate instruction, their minds would soon come to be decided, one way or the other.

6. It may be hoped, too, that the plan here recommended may be a means of raising the prevailing standard of piety. There is no period more favorable to permanent religious impressions than that immediately subsequent to conversion. This is the day of one's espousals, — the season of his first love. The mind and heart are now susceptible and open. The views now inculcated as to practical religion will be likely to remain. Hence the opportunity is a very favorable one in which to raise the standard high, and lead persons onward and upward to the elevation of the gospel."

The probationer's class is more particularly adapted to seasons of revival ; though in our larger congrega-

tions, it may be, appropriate at all seasons. It will be an advantage to persons of every age, but more especially to the *young*; those who are awakened and converted in our Sabbath-schools, and are coming forward to the communion of the church. Let such persons have a season of probation and instruction, and if they continue to afford satisfactory evidence of piety, let them be joyfully received into the number of God's people. If they really are the children of God, who would dare to exclude them from their Father's table?

## LECTURE XIII.

### REVIVALS OF RELIGION (CONTINUED).

PROTRACTED MEETINGS NOT NOVELTIES IN THE CHURCH — AN INSTRUMENTALITY OF MUCH POWER — OBJECTIONS TO SUCH MEETINGS CONSIDERED — BENEFITS OF THEM WHEN PROPERLY CONDUCTED — QUERIES IN REGARD TO PROTRACTED MEETINGS SOLVED — SHOULD BE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE PASTOR, AND BE FOLLOWED BY MUCH PASTORAL LABOR.<sup>1</sup>

PROMINENT among the means of promoting revivals of religion in former years were *protracted meetings*, or meetings continued for a considerable portion of the time through several successive days. It is proposed to offer some remarks in relation to these meetings.

I commence by saying that they are not, what they are sometimes represented to be, *novelties* in the church. So far from this, they are of great antiquity, and have been continued, in one form or another, through almost every period of the church's history. At the religious festivals, under the former dispensation, the people of God were required to assemble from all parts of the land, and their religious solemnities were continued for several successive days. So great was the interest on one of these occasions, that when they had been together

<sup>1</sup> This Lecture was written more than twenty years ago, at a time when protracted meetings were more frequent than they are now. It was written under a close, a solemn, and prayerful consideration of the subject; and on a careful revision I find very little that I wish to change. I commend it anew to the consideration of pastors and churches.

seven days, "the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days" (2 Chron. xxx. 23).

Previous to the day of Pentecost, the disciples held a protracted prayer-meeting. "They continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," from the time of Christ's ascension until the Spirit came, a period of eight or ten days. Also, after the Pentecost, "they continued daily, with one accord, in the temple, and in breaking bread from house to house" (Acts ii. 40).

At Ephesus Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue "for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing"—that is, *reasoning, teaching*—"daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus." Here was an apostolical protracted meeting, continuing, not for a few successive days, but for more than two years. The result was, that "mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed" (Acts xix. 8-20).

The annual festivals in the primitive Christian church were many of them stated protracted meetings. Thus in the celebration of Easter, "religious services were held, not only on Easter-day, but during the whole week following." The canons of the church required that "servants should rest from their labors during the whole week, that they might attend the sermons and other offices of divine worship. In many of the larger churches, religious service was held every day during the whole season of Lent."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Henry's Compendium of Christian Antiquities, pp. 271-277.

In the Scotch Presbyterian churches, the Lord's Supper is administered but once in a year, and the occasion is observed as a great religious festival, during which preaching and other religious exercises are continued for several days. These have often been seasons of great spiritual refreshing. It was on a sacramental occasion that a sermon was preached at the Kirk of the Shots which resulted in the conversion of five hundred souls.

In the labors of the revivalists in this country more than a hundred years ago, we often find them holding daily successive meetings in the same place. During a season of revival in the county of Hanover, Virginia, the people were visited by Rev. William Robinson. For four days he continued among them, preaching to the crowds that assembled at their place of worship." This is spoken of as a remarkable season.<sup>1</sup>

The late Dr. Cone of New York received his first religious impressions at the "Great Hopewell Meeting," — a protracted meeting held in New Jersey, in 1793.<sup>2</sup>

I make these statements for the purpose of obviating an objection to protracted meetings that they are of recent origin — an innovation in the church. Whatever else may be said against them, the charge of novelty, certainly, is not well founded.

It must be acknowledged, however, that in years past they were more common among evangelical Christians in this country than they had been before; and they were held more specifically with a view to promote revivals of religion. It should also be acknowledged with devout gratitude that in many instances they were followed with the best results. Thousands and thousands

<sup>1</sup> Memoir of Rev. Samuel Davies, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Review, vol. XXI., p. 46.



of immortal beings are now in the kingdom of Christ, — some in this world and some in heaven — who were brought there through the instrumentality of protracted meetings. Hundreds are now in the Christian ministry, in our own country and in foreign lands, who owe their conversion to the same means.

The protracted meeting is obviously an instrumentality of *great power*. The gospel itself is a powerful instrument; and in a series of successive meetings it may be preached with peculiar advantage, and often with a mighty efficacy. These meetings serve to restrain and to hold in check, at least for a time, that overflowing tide of worldliness by which religious impressions are so often choked or swept away. They not only bring divine truth before the mind, but *hold* it there till an impression is made too deep to be effaced.

At the close of public worship on the Sabbath, it is not uncommon for persons, and more especially young persons, to leave the house of God with very serious impressions. They feel the importance of religion, — feel their need of it, — and are ready to resolve that they *will* give it their attention. Something *must* be done, and for the time they feel resolved that something *shall* be. But as the cares and pleasures and business of the week crowd upon them, their religious impressions wear off, and their good resolutions are forgotten. Probably this same process of awakening and impression on the one hand, and of relapse and forgetfulness on the other, is often repeated until the conscience becomes seared and the heart is hardened. It is in this way that the hearts of men, under the gospel, actually do become hard as the adamant rock.

Now this difficulty in the way of conversion — which

all who understand the subject know is as common as it is formidable — the protracted meetings are adapted to obviate ; and it is to this circumstance, under God, that their power is, in great measure, to be attributed. Religious impression in these meetings is followed closely up. Before the effect of one sermon is lost, another is heard. And soon the arrow of truth has pierced too deep to be easily extracted. A wound is inflicted which none but the Great Physician can heal. The current of the affections is changed, and the soul is born of God.

In the protracted meeting we do, on the subject of religion, what we should be likely to do on any other subject in reference to which it was our object to make an impression. If we wished to present any other subject (for example, that of *temperance*, or *education*, or *political reform*) in a strong light, and deeply to impress it upon the community around us, we should not content ourselves with delivering a formal discourse upon it once in seven days, meanwhile suffering it to pass into forgetfulness ; but we should have set conventions and eloquent speeches, and make it matter of daily discussion and conversation. We should present it in various attitudes and lights, not suffering it to grow cold, or to become stale and uninteresting by neglect. In something like this manner the subject of religion is presented in the protracted meeting ; and interesting, *absorbing*, as the subject is in itself — urged upon us, as it is, by so many and powerful motives — I do not wonder that it makes an impression. The wonder is that it does not make more.

Let it not be thought that in speaking thus of the adaptation and tendencies of protracted meetings, or of any other means of grace, we detract aught from the

necessity or sovereignty of the operations of the Holy Spirit. It is, indeed, the work of the Spirit to give power to means, and make them effectual to the sanctification of the soul. Without him we can do nothing. But since, in performing his appropriate work, the Spirit operates through the medium of *our faculties*, and in conformity with the established *laws of the human mind*, there is as much occasion for a wise adaptation of means, and we may reason with as much propriety in regard to their tendencies and effects, as though the special operations of the Spirit were not needed or concerned.

Several objections have been urged against protracted meetings which it may be necessary briefly to consider.

It has been said, in the first place, that they are calculated to produce a feeling of *false dependence*,—a dependence upon meetings and means, rather than upon the Holy Spirit. With regard to this objection I have several remarks to offer. And first, the objection itself is an indirect testimony to the *power* of protracted meetings. Were it not for this power, they certainly could have no tendency to generate a spirit of dependence on the meetings themselves; their tendency would be in the other direction. But may not the evil referred to in the objection (and it must be confessed that there is danger of it) be obviated in the manner of conducting these meetings? May there not be so much of prayer mingled with the other exercises, and so much be said as to the necessity of the Spirit's power, as to *deepen*, rather than weaken, the impression that without him we can do nothing? And besides, will not the Divine Spirit himself be likely to take care of his own honor in this thing? When he sees a feeling of false dependence growing up, will he not be likely to with-

draw his aid, and show his people that they cannot proceed alone? Will he not in this way rebuke their false dependence, and teach them where their great strength lies?

I know that the human heart is proud and treacherous, and always prone to pervert success in the use of means into an occasion of confidence in means. But this is no reason why we should cease to use means — the most powerful means, — those best calculated to insure success. It is a reason, rather, why we should watch our deceitful hearts, and guard against that dangerous perversion of which we have spoken.

It is objected again to protracted meetings that they lead to a disregard of the *stated* services of religion. Persons will come to like other ministers better than their own, and prefer the protracted meeting to the stated services of the Sabbath. It will be seen that in this objection we have another indirect testimony to the power and interest of protracted meetings. For if they were not meetings of power and interest, they could never result in those evils which the objection supposes. Nor with all the interest which attaches to them can they result in these evils, if the pastor of a church is what he should be; if he maintains his place, and if the meetings are conducted in a proper spirit and manner. To be sure, if a pastor is cold, formal, and dull, manifesting but little interest in the subject of religion, either in his public performances or parochial labors, a protracted meeting may lead a people to feel dissatisfied with their own minister; and so would ministerial exchanges be likely to produce the same result. Perhaps a people *ought* to feel dissatisfied with such a minister. Or when a minister retires from his post during

a protracted meeting, gives up the direction of affairs to others, perhaps to strangers, and consents to be a mere underling at their disposal, it may not be easy for him to recover afterwards the respect and confidence which he has lost. But when a minister is what he should be, — one who loves revivals, and labors to promote them; one who stands erect before his people as their organ and their guide, whoever else may be present, and whose heart and hand are in his work, — I can see no tendency in protracted meetings to create dissatisfaction with such a minister; certainly not, unless they are conducted in a very improper manner.

Neither can I see any inherent tendency in these meetings to promote dissatisfaction with the services of the Sabbath. If persons become Christians at the protracted meeting, they will love the Sabbath. They will love it better and prize it higher than they ever did before. Or if any Christians have been wrongly instructed, or have come to entertain erroneous impressions in regard to this matter, I know of no place where they can better be set right than in a well-conducted protracted meeting. Let them be plainly told the design and object of these meetings; that they are an *extraordinary* means of grace, which cannot be made common, which cannot with propriety be often repeated, and that Christians must rely chiefly (as they ought to) upon *stated services*, and especially upon those of God's holy day, for that spiritual instruction and edification which they need.

It is further objected that protracted meetings tend to produce rather a *fitful* than a *steady* religious life. Persons will arouse themselves, and appear very religious at the time of the meeting, and relapse into slumber

during the remainder of the year. It is remarkable that in *this* objection, as in those above considered, we have a convincing testimony to the power and interest of protracted meetings. Were not this true of them, they would fail to produce in the characters referred to so much as a religious fit. These persons would slumber through the protracted meeting just as they do through the other services of the year. But may not the evil alleged in the objection be not only avoided but *cured* in the protracted meeting, and cured there as well as anywhere else? May not Christians be addressed in the meeting, on this very subject, and be solemnly warned against the evil to which they are exposed?

The services of the Sabbath sometimes induce a fitful religion. Persons put on their religion for the Sabbath, as they do their Sunday clothes, and put both off together when the Sabbath is past; and what shall be done for the remedy of this evil? Shall we dispense altogether with the services of the Sabbath? or shall we employ some portion of the Sabbath hours, when we have the persons in question before us, in instructing and warning them in respect to the evil into which they have fallen? And so of the protracted meetings. Instead of dispensing with them altogether, and thus losing the benefit of them, because some persons abuse them in the way supposed, let them be improved, as there shall be occasion, for the purpose of correcting the evil, and instructing those who are exposed to it, in regard to their duties and their dangers.

It is objected yet again to protracted meetings, that they are calculated for *excitement* rather than for sound instruction, and are liable to result in *spurious conversions* and *unfounded hopes*. But the evils here alleged

can hardly be realized, except where the meetings are grossly perverted and abused. I know that noisy, indiscreet men may aim chiefly at excitement, and may succeed in producing a ferment of the passions, which, from the necessity of the case, will quickly subside. They may do this anywhere ; they may do it in the house of God on the Sabbath, they may do it in the weekly prayer-meeting, they may do it in the protracted meeting. But this *need not* be done in the latter more than in the former. It *will not* be done by enlightened, discreet, evangelical men : they will aim in such meetings, as everywhere else, to *instruct* their hearers ; and will endeavor that whatever impressions may be produced, or changes wrought, they shall be the result of sound and faithful instruction. And I know of no place where such instruction may be imparted with more effect than in the protracted meeting ; or where false and spurious conversions may be more thoroughly exposed.

Other objections to protracted meetings, such as that they are of a disorderly character, that they consume an unreasonable portion of time, and that they impose too great a labor upon ministers, are hardly worthy of serious consideration. If a minister is in feeble health, and unable to endure the labor of such a meeting, he should not attempt it. For the mere purpose of holding or attending a protracted meeting, let no one put at serious hazard his life or his usefulness.

On the whole it is manifest, as I have already said, that these meetings are an instrumentality of great power ; that they have accomplished already a vast amount of good ; that, if properly conducted, they may do much good in years to come ; that the evils sometimes attending them are not inherent, but incidental,

and ought to be avoided ; and that the meetings themselves should not be altogether reprobated or laid aside. Let them be instituted at proper seasons, and conducted in a judicious and faithful manner, and there need be no fear as to the results. The *gospel of Christ*, with its holy truths and persuasive motives, is the grand instrument employed in these meetings ; and when this gospel is faithfully preached, from day to day, in the ears of a thoughtless, careless multitude, accompanied with appropriate devotional exercises, what Christian need fear as to the result ? What Christian can give way to fear without distrusting either the power of the gospel, or the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God ?

There is another reason why enlightened orthodox ministers should not go upon the plan of dispensing altogether with protracted meetings. Ministers of another stamp *will not* dispense with them. They have learned their power, and they will avail themselves of it to promote their designs. Hence, if judicious men abandon them altogether, they abandon them to those who *will* employ them with great effect, and, it may be feared, often with bad effect. Perhaps some will think this a reason why judicious men should let protracted meetings alone. But so it does not appear to me. So we have not acted in respect to other things. Because infidels have done a vast deal of mischief by the circulation of their pernicious tracts, we do not cease to circulate ours. Because the minds of thousands of children are perverted and poisoned in a certain class of Sabbath-schools, we do not think it best to put a stop to all Sabbath-school instruction. So far from this, we feel constrained, *impelled*, to push our Sabbath-school efforts with the greater vigor. And so I think we should do in regard



to protracted meetings. Let us endeavor to show to the community around us the difference between an orderly religious meeting, and one that is disorderly ; between one of sound religious instruction, and one of mere excited passion ; between one whose results are only good, and others where the results are evil. But if protracted meetings are to be revived and continued, several important inquiries present themselves in regard to them.

And first, how frequently ought they to be held in the same place ? In answer to this question, I think no definite rule can be given. They may be held more frequently in some places than in others. Where the population is numerous, and frequently changing, protracted meetings may be held more frequently than in societies where the number of inhabitants is small and more stationary. In no place, however, are they to be made *common*. This would defeat, in great measure, their object. They are to be regarded everywhere as an *extraordinary* means of grace, to be resorted to only under special circumstances, and when the indications of Providence shall seem to render such a measure expedient.

As a pastor and church must necessarily be guided, in great measure, by circumstances, in determining upon a protracted meeting, it may be inquired, secondly, what circumstances are to be regarded as *unfavorable* to such a meeting, and as rendering the appointment of it *inexpedient*.

In answer to this inquiry, several things may be mentioned ; such as *unsettled difficulties* in a church, which must necessarily embarrass a meeting, hinder prayer, and prevent a blessing. Or the season of the year may be unfavorable. People may be unusually occupied,

have no leisure, and cannot reasonably be expected to attend a meeting. Or there may be no particular desire felt, or interest manifested, in relation to a protracted meeting, or to any other means of promoting a revival. Or if a pastor has reason to believe that a considerable portion of his people are laying too much *stress* on such a meeting, — *depending* on it to create a revival, — he may well be excused in deferring to gratify them till he has had time, at least, to correct their mistakes, and prepare them to engage in a protracted meeting, with profit to themselves, and with a reasonable prospect of good to others.

It may be inquired, again, whether it is proper, in any case, to commence a protracted meeting until the church is awakened and humbled, and a revival of religion is actually begun. In answer to this inquiry, I remark, that however desirable it may be to enter upon the services of a protracted meeting in the midst of a revival, still, I do not think it necessary, in all cases, to delay an appointment until a revival is actually begun. Such a meeting may be the means of *commencing* a revival, as well as of promoting it after it has commenced.

The mode of conducting a meeting, and the subjects presented in it, will of course vary according to circumstances. If a meeting commences in the midst of a revival, those engaged in it will enter directly into the work. The subjects discussed, and the mode of discussing them, will be appropriate to the particular state of things at the time. But if a meeting commences while there are yet no decided indications of a revival, the first object will be to prepare the way for one, and to promote it. The meeting, at first, may be a church-meeting — a continuous prayer-meeting for the church.

Nor should it be open for the impenitent, until the church is prepared, by humiliation and confession, and a renewed self-consecration to God, to enter directly and vigorously on the work of saving souls.

As to the mode of conducting a protracted meeting, no precise and uniform rule can be given. It may be a continued conference meeting, or there may be stated sermons, or the two may be blended together. But whatever form the meeting may take, there should be, at every stage of its progress, a feeling of entire dependence on the aids and influences of the Holy Spirit, and much earnest prayer, in private and in public, that those precious influences may be bestowed. At the same time, there should be a deep sense of the importance of *means*, and of *wisely adapted* means, and an earnest endeavor to employ those very means which the Holy Spirit will be most likely to approve and bless.

Another important inquiry on this subject respects the most proper time of bringing a protracted meeting to a close. How long should it continue? When should it end? To these questions it is impossible to give any precise answer; but I will state my views in regard to them as definitely as possible. A protracted meeting should not close (unless there be some peculiar impediment or discouragement in the way of its continuance) until the object of it is, in some good degree, attained; until Christians are humbled, revived, and quickened, and impressions are made upon the impenitent which will not be lost. It should not close, if possible, until an impulse has been given to the work of the Lord, under the influence of which this blessed work will be likely to go forward.

On the other hand, such a meeting should close be-

fore it is (so to speak) *worn out*, and before the interest of it begins materially to subside. It may be said of a protracted meeting, as of an individual sermon, it should always close before those attending upon it are tired of it. It should close while they are wishing it to be continued longer. Then they will hope and ask that it may be repeated.

Our last inquiry relates to the feeling with which a protracted meeting should be brought to a close. And in considering this point, I assume that the meeting has been in some good degree successful; that it has been the means either of commencing or advancing a revival of religion; and that during the revival it is brought to a close. Under these circumstances, it is important that the meeting close, not with the feeling that the revival must necessarily terminate with it, but that, under a system of continuous and appropriate labor, the good work is to go on, from week to week and month to month, till the number of converts is greatly multiplied. With the prevalent feelings and impressions, the expectations and purposes of a church at such a time, the actual results will be likely to correspond. If Christians have so identified the revival with the protracted meeting as to feel that the former *must* stop because the latter does, in all probability it will stop. Both will come to an end together. But if Christians feel, on the contrary, that although *one* means of promoting the revival which God has blessed is about to cease, still there are other means which God is equally able to bless: if they enter on a vigorous and faithful use of these other means, earnestly imploring the divine blessing upon them, and looking, *expecting* that through them the revival is to be continued, in all probability

it *will* be continued. According to the *faith* of God's people at such a time, so may they hope it will be done unto them.

It must be admitted, however, that to bring a protracted meeting to a close in the best time and manner, in such a manner as not to interrupt an existing revival, requires not only skill and wisdom, but much *grace and faith*. The thing may be done : it has been done ; but unless there is great caution and effort, united with persevering prayer, the revival will be interrupted and hastened to its close.

I conclude this discussion with two remarks : First, let all the exercises of a protracted meeting, like all the other services of a church, be under the supervision and direction of the pastor. If a church ever needs her pilot at helm, her teacher at her head, it is during a season of protracted religious exercises, in a time of revival. Nor has he any liberty or right, at a period of so much interest and responsibility, to desert his post, or to yield it up to others.

Secondly, the services of a protracted meeting require to be followed up by *much faithful pastoral* labor. They go to prepare the way for such labor, and render it indispensable. New converts must be instructed and watched over ; anxious individuals must be visited, prayed with, and directed to the Saviour ; frequent meetings must be held for inquirers and others, and the whole field of pastoral labor must be superintended and cultivated. The labor incident to a season such as this is indeed very great ; but then it is *pleasant* labor. It is the labor and the joy of harvest. The pastor has been, it may be, for a long time breaking up the fallow ground, and casting abroad the precious seed ; and now

he is permitted to thrust in the sickle, and gather home the ripened sheaves. Who among our pastors shall first engage in this blessed work? Who shall first be partakers of this joy?

## LECTURE XIV.

### REVIVALS OF RELIGION (CONTINUED).

EVANGELISTS — PRIMITIVE EVANGELISTS DESCRIBED AND APPROVED — MODERN EVANGELISM AS A SYSTEM DISAPPROVED — REASONS AGAINST IT URGED — OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

EVANGELISTS are expressly mentioned among the ascension gifts of Christ. When he ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, “he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some *evangelists*, and some pastors and teachers” (Eph. iv. 11).

As to the particular office and work of the evangelists here spoken of, there can be no doubt. Philip was an evangelist;<sup>1</sup> and from the brief account which we have of his labors, it would seem that he was an ardent and successful itinerant minister or missionary, who for the most part published the gospel in regions where it had been but little known. We first hear of him as a preacher at Samaria, where his labors were followed by a great and precious revival of religion. Next, we find him instructing and baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch. Some time after, we hear of him at Cesarea, which he seems to have made his home. (Acts xxi. 8).

Timothy was an evangelist, and his office and work were evidently the same with those of Philip. (2 Tim. iv.

<sup>1</sup> Not Philip the apostle, but Philip who was first a deacon. See Acts vi. 5; xxi. 8.

5). He was the chosen companion and assistant of Paul, and often travelled with him.

Among the primitive evangelists, whose names occur in the New Testament, were Titus, Luke, Mark, and many others. They were the *missionaries* of those times, who penetrated into regions near and remote, and were chiefly instrumental in spreading the gospel through the vast Roman world. Such is the account given of them in the Scriptures, and the representation is confirmed by the testimony of Eusebius. He describes the evangelists as a class of ministers who aided the apostles in their labors, not by taking the charge of churches, but by acting as itinerant preachers and teachers, wherever their assistance was needed.<sup>1</sup> Very nearly resembling them in point of office and work are the missionaries of our own times, — both those who go to the heathen, and those who labor in the more destitute parts of our own country. Such men are pioneers in the Christian conflict and work, who break up the ground and prepare the way for pastors to come after them. Their duties are not only prior, in the order of nature and time, to those of the settled pastor, but they possess, to say the least, an equal importance. They more nearly resemble those of the apostles and first evangelists; and such men have a better claim to be called *successors of the apostles* than perhaps any other in the world. Would that evangelists of this primitive stamp were multiplied a hundred-fold! The world hath need of them.

But there is another sense in which the term “evangelist” has been frequently used; and it is of the class of men which the term so used designates that we are now

<sup>1</sup> Ecc. Hist., lib. v., chap. 9.



to inquire. These are not missionaries to the heathen, or to the destitute within our own borders, but *revivalists by profession*, whose calling it is to labor among the churches and pastors, to stir them up to a consideration of their duties and delinquencies, and take the lead in promoting revivals of religion. These may be called *modern evangelists*, in distinction from those of the primitive stamp. By some they are regarded as of great importance in the church—an instrumentality which can hardly be dispensed with. By others they are regarded as intruders upon the work of pastors, and disturbers of the churches, whose assistance is not to be desired or sought. It becomes, therefore, a question of serious interest, in connection with the general subject of revivals: *Are evangelists, in the sense in which we here use the term, needed in our churches? Are they to be countenanced and encouraged? Is a system of evangelism after this pattern to be entered upon, and provision to be made for it accordingly?*

It will be seen that the question, as here stated, relates rather to evangelism as a *system* than to the encouragement of *individuals* whom in seasons of prevailing coldness and declension God may have raised up and specially qualified to go forth, with trumpet tongue, and proclaim his truth. Such individuals have made their appearance, from time to time, through the whole period of the church's history. Such were many of the old prophets, under the former dispensation. Such was John the Baptist, — “a burning and a shining light;” — “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” Such were Luther and many of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Such were Whitefield, the Wesleys, the Tennents, and other honored instruments, in the great re-

vivals of the last century. Such were Christmas Evans and Summerfield, and our own Nettleton; to say nothing of honored individuals, in different countries, who are still alive. Such men God evidently raised up and prepared for their high vocation. His love was glowing in their hearts; his word was as a fire shut up in their bones. They were endowed with gifts and grace for their work, and they went forth to it with a mouth and wisdom which no adversary could gainsay or resist. There should be no question as to the receiving and encouraging of evangelists, or rather *revivalists*, such as these. To resist them would be to resist the Holy Ghost. To malign and oppose them would be to fight against God.

But the question of modern evangelists, as set before us by some of its advocates, is a very different one from this. It is said that we have as much authority in the Scriptures for evangelists as we have for pastors; and have as much need of them. They are needed to move round among pastors, to look after them, and stir them up to diligence and fidelity. Ample provision should be made for their support, and a regular system of evangelism should be introduced.

But to such a procedure there are strong objections. In the first place, there is no foundation for it in the New Testament, but it is contrary to that system of church organization and government which the apostles established. We have seen already that the evangelists of the primitive age — those which our Saviour commissioned and his apostles employed — were an entirely different class of teachers from those here urged upon us. They were the missionaries of that age, who labored for the most part under the direction of the apostles, and

helped to diffuse the gospel among Jews and heathens. In first publishing the gospel, and organizing churches, and watching over them in their infant state, and thus preparing the way for a more settled order of things, there was need of the labors of the primitive evangelist, or, in other words, the missionary. But when this primary work was accomplished, and the way was prepared for an established ministry, God's method seems to have been *to employ such a ministry*, and by means of it to accomplish, in the general, all those purposes which the ministry, in any form, was intended to effect. Thus when Paul and Barnabas had performed their mission at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, and had confirmed the souls of the disciples and exhorted them to continue steadfast in the faith, *they ordained them elders in every church*; and "when they had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed" (Acts xiv. 23). So when Paul, with his evangelists, had passed through the island of Crete, and many had been converted, and churches had been gathered, he departed, leaving Titus behind him, that he "might set in order the things that were wanting, and *ordain elders in every city*," to whose care the flock might thenceforth be committed (Tit. i. 5).

In Paul's enumeration of our Saviour's ascension gifts to his churches, the apostles, prophets, and evangelists are *first* mentioned, and so they should be; as their office was to go before the pastors and ordinary teachers, and prepare the way for them. The mention of pastors and teachers naturally followed. But no class of church officers was appointed to follow them. When *they* had been introduced and established, on them rested the responsibility of caring for the flock, and laboring for the

edifying of the body of Christ. If God's method of procedure is such as is clearly indicated in the passages here referred to, then the question of evangelists, in the modern sense of the term, would seem to be settled. To raise up and send forth a class of ministers, to itinerate in the midst of churches and pastors for the purpose of stirring them up to a consideration of their duties, and promoting revivals of religion among them, is to break in upon the settled order of the gospel, and undertake to alter and improve what God has established.

My second remark on the question before us, is, that where pastors are what they should be, and what the Scriptures require them to be, the labors of the evangelist, in the modern sense of the term, are not needed. Let any one take into consideration the qualifications of ministers as laid down by our Saviour in his instructions to his disciples, and by Paul in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus, — “blameless, vigilant, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach ;” “sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word, that they may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers,” — and what need can such pastors have of the labors of evangelists to rouse them up to diligence and fidelity, and promote religion in their congregations? They are themselves diligent and faithful men, who hold fast the faithful word of the gospel ; who preach it with energy and power ; who accompany it with prayers and labors, and enforce it by a blameless life ; and to call in evangelists to the aid of such men in securing the appropriate ends of the ministry must be regarded, at best, as a superfluity, — a help not needed or required. If urged upon the pastor against his will, it is worse than this. It is an

implied reflection either upon his ability or fidelity. If the pastor is what he should be, and has health and strength sufficient for his work, the evangelist is not needed. Hence, if he *is* needed, or if any considerable portion of a congregation think that he is needed, this is as much as to say that the pastor is deficient. "Our minister is ignorant, and needs to be enlightened. Or he is dull and stupid, and needs to be awakened. At best, he does not understand the subject of revivals, and needs some one to go before him in this most important part of the ministerial work."

On supposition that a pastor is in health, and is *physically* competent to the discharge of his duties, I see not how an evangelist can be called in to his help, at least by his people, so that the fact of their calling him shall not seem to utter itself in language like that which has been given above. And it needs no great acquaintance with men and things to understand that a pastor cannot long live, and retain his standing and reputation, under such circumstances. He must inevitably sink, at least for a time. He may recover himself after a season, when his people shall have become sensible of their mistake, and better counsels shall prevail. But the probability is, that division and alienation will be excited, the church will be rent asunder, and a dissolution of the pastoral relation will ensue.

It may be further remarked, that a frequent resort to evangelists must necessarily tend to break up the quiet, settled habits of a people, and induce what the apostle calls, "itching ears." They become fond of change and excitement, and, like the Athenians of old, would be glad to spend their time in telling or hearing some new thing. They think little of steadfast, holy living,

but much of impulses and impressions ; and he who succeeds best in awakening these is to them the best minister. An uneven, fitful state of religious feeling is thus produced, lacking consistency and uniformity. When a revival of religion is felt to be needed, instead of humbling themselves before God, and seeking blessings at his hand, the first thought is to send for an evangelist. Nothing can be done to any purpose without him. While he is present, all hands engage in the work ; but when he retires, exertion is relaxed, and the excitement is followed by a season of slumber. Such a state of things in a church and society, I need not say, is a most undesirable one, promising little improvement or comfort to a people, and rendering the situation of a pastor precarious and unhappy.

In every view which I can take of the subject, therefore, a systematic evangelism is of disastrous influence, both upon pastors and people. It is a breaking in, as I have shown, upon the established order of the gospel, and would result, if generally followed, in the dissolution of that order. From the nature of the case, modern evangelists and settled pastors cannot long exist together. Hence, if the former are to be generally patronized, the latter must soon disappear from the church. And then our congregations must either do without ministers, or must depend for a supply upon itinerants and evangelists. The ministerial character in a little time would lose all respect, and were it not that we rely on the sure promise of God, we should fear that the church of Christ might be rooted from the earth.

There is yet another view to be taken of the system of evangelism. I refer to its bearing on evangelists themselves. What kind of ministers will this system,

should it be adopted, be likely to produce? What sort of characters will it have a tendency to form?

It is obvious that they cannot be men of much reading and writing, of laborious study and solid learning. Their course of life entirely forbids it.

Nor will they be likely to be *stable men*, men of foresight and judgment, who form their plans with far-reaching wisdom, and with a view to remote, as well as immediate results. They will be naturally excitable, impulsive; and this infirmity of character, which the very nature of their calling seems to require, the exercise of it is calculated to foster. Living in the midst of excitement, they come at length to live upon it. They feel that they can hardly live without it. And as they go from place to place, with the responsibility of creating an excitement resting upon them, they have strong inducements to have recourse to questionable means for this purpose. They must say and do exciting, startling things. Aware that their services will be estimated according to the measure of their success, they are tempted to magnify their successes; to represent conversion as an easy thing; to swell the number of the converted; and with slight examination to hasten them into the church.

The persons of whom I thus speak are not worse by nature than other men. I do not call in question their sincerity, or their piety, or suppose them to be actuated, necessarily, by bad intentions. But their employment is without warrant in the Scriptures, and is one of dangerous influence, not only upon the church generally, but upon their own characters. If these persons think themselves called to do the work of evangelists, then let them follow the primitive evangelists, and

do as they did. Let them press out into the great missionary fields of the world, which are all white and ready to the harvest. Here let them labor and organize churches, and prepare the way for settled pastors, instead of pressing upon pastors already settled, and preparing the way for their dismissal.

I am aware that there are objections to the views here expressed, and it may be well, before closing, to notice some of them. It will be said, perhaps, that pastors, and even good pastors, do sometimes become dull and stupid, and need just that kind of influence to be exerted upon them which the labors of a glowing, flaming evangelist are fitted to produce. All this may be true, and in some instances is true; and yet there are many ways in which the zeal of a pastor may be aroused, without making a stated provision beforehand for such a purpose. If a people think that their pastor is becoming dull and uninteresting, then let them encourage him, and pray for him. Let them awake to duty themselves, and show him, satisfy him, that *they* are in earnest. If he has the heart of a pastor within him, he will rejoice in their revival and their increased fidelity. He will awake, and join his influence with theirs. To institute a system, and make provision for it with a view to awaken unfaithful pastors, would probably induce more drowsiness than it would cure. For such a system would carry on the very face of it, that pastors were expected to be dull at times, and were to a certain extent excusable in their dulness. As little or nothing could be done without the evangelist, the pastor might be excused during the interval of his visits, in relaxing effort, and living somewhat at his ease.

It has been further urged in favor of evangelists, that



faithful pastors have more labor on their hands than they can perform, and often stand in need of assistance. And are there not many ways in which overburdened pastors may receive assistance without training up evangelists for this express purpose? Must the incompetency of pastors for the full discharge of their duties be presumed on beforehand, and a corps in reserve be prepared to meet it? Or shall a pastor and church, when an exigency of this kind occurs, be left to provide for it as circumstances shall seem to dictate?

It is urged again, that evangelists have in some instances done much good, and God has signally blessed their labors; which he would not have done if he did not approve the system. That evangelists have in some cases been a means of good, I do not doubt. And that in other cases they have done injury — much injury — can be as little questioned. Whether the evil or the good has, on the whole, predominated, I will not undertake to say. God loves and honors his own truth, by whomsoever dispensed. He has made it a means of conversions, and even of revivals, when dispensed — as it sometimes has been — by unregenerate men. Yet who would infer from this that God calls unregenerate men to preach his gospel, or that he sanctions their doing it? No more can it be inferred from the fact that God sometimes blesses the labors of evangelists, that a system of evangelism is in accordance with his will.

Finally, it is said that souls are perishing, and that no likely means of bringing them to repentance are to be discouraged. It is true, indeed, that souls are perishing; but it has been rightly said that even “souls may be saved at too dear a rate.” If we enter upon a course of means, and are successful in it, for the salvation of

one soul, which necessarily involves the destruction of ten, no one would think such an operation justifiable. Convinced of this, many excellent men, once evangelists, have subsequently sought the pastoral office, and been eminently useful.

God knows the worth of perishing souls better than we do. He appreciates them more justly, and values them more highly. He has instituted a course of means for their recovery and salvation. Our wisdom is to follow earnestly and faithfully the course which he has appointed, and await the result, rather than incur the hazard of breaking in upon it, and subverting it by our inventions.

In conclusion, we repeat what was said in the opening of this discussion, that it is to evangelism as a system that we object, and not to the occasional employment of an individual whom God shall have raised up and qualified for this very purpose. That there have been and are such individuals, I have no doubt. They seem not adapted to a settled course of life. They could not long discharge the duties of pastors if they were to become such. But to move round, without disturbance, among pastors and churches, and rouse them up to engagedness in duty, and promote revivals of religion, they are specially qualified. The cases of Whitefield and Nettleton have been before referred to in illustration of this remark.

If it be inquired, in reference to an individual, How shall we know whether he has God's mark of approval upon him or not? I answer: When God truly calls a person to this important work, he pretty soon makes it manifest, not only to the individual himself, but to all discreet and competent observers, that this is the fact.

The preacher himself, too, soon makes it manifest. His spirit, his temper, his intercourse with pastors and with other men, his fidelity in declaring the word of truth, his skill and wisdom in winning souls — in these, and a thousand other ways, he will soon show whether he is a true revivalist, whom God has raised up and prepared for his work ; or whether he is a disturber of the churches — a firebrand, rather than a quickening flame. Discreet observers will soon be able to settle this question, and will know, without any special revelation, whether the individual in question is to be received and encouraged, as a servant and messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ, or whether he is to be discountenanced and avoided.

## LECTURE XV.

### CO-OPERATION OF PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

THE PASTOR SHOULD ENLIST THE CO-OPERATION OF HIS CHURCH FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT, AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS CHURCH — THE TIMES FAVORABLE FOR THIS OBJECT — DIFFERENT KINDS OF EMPLOYMENT SUGGESTED.

HAVING devoted several Lectures to that most interesting department of pastoral labor connected with revivals of religion, we turn now to other branches of the same general subject.

From the very nature of his office, it devolves on the pastor to take a general supervision of his flock. He must live in the midst of them, direct their religious movements, and keep himself acquainted, so far as practicable, with their spiritual state. But it is not his duty *to do everything that is done* for the spiritual benefit of his people. It is not his duty to *attempt* it; and that for two reasons. In the first place, he cannot do all that should be done; and, secondly, it would be a great injury to his church, if he should.

The duties of the ministry are onerous, I had almost said overwhelming, at the best. With all the assistance that a minister can derive from his church, his labors often seem to him greater than he can bear. Were he, then, to dispense with the coöperation of his church, and undertake to do everything himself, the consequence would be, either that many things would be left

undone, or he would soon break down, and find himself incapable of doing anything.

There would, moreover, be that other evil consequence at which I hinted. The members of his church would suffer injury, for the want of appropriate spiritual employment. In this way a great many church members actually do suffer. They rust and languish for the want of something to do, — something which they can *appropriately* do, for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

It is a great blessing to God's people that he has called them to *labor* directly in his service; and this, doubtless, is a principal reason why so many and arduous labors are assigned to them. God might dispense with their instrumentality; he might carry forward his designs of mercy by his own direct agency, or by the ministry of angels; but in that case he knows that the spiritual interests of his people must necessarily suffer. They would be deprived of a great *honor* which appropriately belongs to them; the honor of being "workers together" with God. They would be left to the corroding, corrupting influence of spiritual sloth, — left to mope away their time in melancholy musings, or to engage in unworthy and unprofitable pursuits.

It is by active exertions for the promotion of Christ's kingdom that the *best affections* of God's people are called into exercise. The more diligently they labor for the spiritual good of their perishing fellow-men, the more deeply do they feel for them; the more earnestly will they pray for them; the more truly do they sympathize with Him who consented to lay down his life for their salvation; the more closely do they bear his image, and come to be like him.

In this way, too, the spiritual *enjoyment* of God's people is promoted. They are much happier as well as holier when actively employed in the service of Christ than when left to indolence and sloth. Who was ever more diligent in the work of the Lord than the great apostle of the Gentiles? And viewing him in his whole Christian course, where shall we look for a more highly privileged, or a more truly happy man? Notwithstanding his toils, perils, and sufferings, he customarily speaks of himself as having "great joy," as being "filled with joy," as being "exceeding joyful in all his tribulations." With heartfelt gratitude he welcomed every opening door of usefulness, and spoke of it as a *grace given unto him*, that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

It was doubtless a principal cause of the rapid growth and prosperity of the primitive Christian church, that its members were summoned to such ceaseless toils and sufferings for its advancement. They had no time to be melancholy. They had no time to quarrel among themselves, or to become engrossed in other matters. By constant use, their spiritual armor was kept bright and perfect. By constant exercise, their inward graces were increased and strengthened in a high degree.

The same effect which this holy activity had on the primitive church it may be expected to have on the church of Christ now. The human mind and heart are the same. The nature of religion and its demands upon the active exertions of its friends are also the same. It is a great privilege now, as it was in the days of the Apostle Paul, to be permitted to labor for Christ.

Impressed with considerations such as these, the

watchful, faithful pastor will seek *employment* for the members of his church. He will enlist their diligent coöperation in the work of the Lord. He *cannot* himself do all that requires to be done among the people of his charge. He would not do it if he could. He knows that the members of his church need just that kind of discipline which a division of labor and responsibility would give them, and, while he superintends, and in some sense directs the whole, he sees to it that as many of the church as possible have something allotted to them to do. One brother is to attend to this matter, and another to that. On this sister some appropriate labor is devolved, and something else upon that. In this way the whole church is brought to labor together under the direction of the pastor; and while they are thus united in labor, they grow together in faith and love.

I count it one of the peculiar privileges of the present age that it presents so many opportunities for labor in the cause of Christ, — labor not only for the officers of the church, but for all the members. Every one who has a hand and heart to labor in the Lord's vineyard can now find something appropriate for him to do. In this respect the times are very different from what they were two generations ago. Then there were no Sabbath-schools, no extended circulation of Bibles and tracts, no education, missionary, and other charitable associations. A great many Christians, more especially females and persons in humble life, whose hearts prompted them to labor in the service of Christ, saw little or nothing presented which they could do; and they *pined* and *languished* often for the want of appropriate spiritual employment. In some instances their

feelings would break over all restraint, and they were led to engage in services of a questionable character.

But Christians have no need to suffer in this way now ; and ministers of the gospel need be at no loss in devising modes of employment for the members of their churches. The institution of Sabbath-schools is a great blessing to the churches, inasmuch as it furnishes employment for so many of the members. One must be superintendent, another secretary, another librarian, others constitute important committees, others are employed as teachers, others still are connected with adult Bible classes ; and in this way nearly the whole church is occupied, or may be, in connection with the Sabbath-school. And while most of the members are connected in one way or another with the central school, some are encouraged to commence smaller schools in remote districts of the parish or town.

It is but an imperfect view of the Sabbath-school system to regard it as benefiting only the children which are instructed. The benefits to connected adults are often greater than to children. How much more do *teachers* study the Bible than they would do were it not for the trust they have assumed ! How much more *closely* and *faithfully* do they study it ! and to how much better purpose ! Besides, as we have seen, it is a blessing to Christians in private life to have important trusts confided to them ; to have responsibility rolled upon them ; to have appropriate employment furnished to their hands. Talents which would otherwise have been buried, are thus called forth ; graces, which would otherwise have languished, are brought into exercise and thereby strengthened ; Christians who otherwise would have done little good and laid up little treasure



in heaven, become in this way greatly useful, and are preparing to shine among the stars for ever and ever.

The remarks which have been made respecting Sabbath-schools may be extended to most of the other religious enterprises of the day. In the *distribution of papers and tracts*, the blessing descends not merely on those who receive, but on those who give. And this is another mode in which the members of a church, whether male or female, may find appropriate and useful employment,—useful, not only to others, but to themselves. As the distributors go from house to house bearing with them the little messengers of truth, they will be excited to much *prayer*, which otherwise had not been offered; they will find *friends*, it may be *pious friends*, which otherwise they had never seen; they will have many opportunities for profitable *conversation*, which otherwise had never been enjoyed. Especially, as they visit the dwellings of the poor and the afflicted, a great variety of religious *affections* will be called into exercise,—kindness, sympathy, Christian benevolence, gratitude,—which otherwise had remained unawakened and dormant. I doubt whether the faithful distributor ever returns from his monthly excursions without feeling that, whatever may be the effect of his labors upon others, they certainly have been a blessing to himself.

In the various charitable *societies* of the day, more especially those for the circulation of the Scriptures and for missions, the members of a church will find much interesting employment. These societies should extend their ramifications in some form into every church and congregation; and wherever they exist there will be a necessity for warm hearts and diligent hands to conduct them to advantage. One must do

this thing, and another that; one brother or sister must be assigned to this post, and another to that. In the division of labor and responsibility, each required instrument must have its place, and all must work harmoniously together for the advancement of the good cause in which they are engaged. And here, as in the instances before cited, an important part of the benefit reverts to those who make the sacrifice or perform the labor. In the foreign missionary effort, for example, the whole benefit does not go to the heathen. An important part of it remains at home, and rests on the heads of those by whom the contributions are collected and made. This is an object in reference to which the words of our Saviour hold true: "Give, and it shall be given *you*: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Those who labor and pray for the advancement of this object, find their prayers returning into their own bosoms. Whatever they do in faith for the salvation of the perishing heathen serves the better to prepare themselves to be partakers of the same salvation.

It is a great privilege, as I said, to live in the present age of the world, when so many important enterprises are presented to engage the hearts and employ the hands of God's professing people; when so many channels of benevolence are opened through which their awakened affections and energies may flow forth.

But these are not the only ways in which a minister may find employment for his church. In a season of revival, how much they may do in visiting from house to house, assisting in religious meetings, conversing with individuals, administering comfort to the desponding, and directing the anxious sinner to Christ,—la-

bors which may be greatly blessed to those around them, and scarcely less a benefit to themselves.

Nor should efforts of this kind be confined to seasons of revival. They may be continued with much profit to all concerned, at *all* times. There may be meetings in a parish, stated or occasional, which the pastor is not expected to attend. The responsibility of conducting them may rest on particular members of the church. There may also be occasional parochial visitations to be performed by members of the church, which shall be greatly profitable, not only to those who are visited, but to those who visit.

In frequent instances, church members may assist their pastor, and benefit themselves, by visits to the *sick* and the *afflicted*. Here is a sick person in the remote part of a parish, at a distance from the pastor's residence, whom it is inconvenient for him to see as often as would be desirable. He will not neglect his distressed parishioner: he will be present with him as much as he can. Still it may be desirable that he should receive more frequent visits than the pastor has it in his power to bestow. Now his lack of service may well be supplied by some judicious church member in the neighborhood, who should be given to understand that he is *relied upon* for this special purpose. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: *to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*" The duty of visiting the sick and the afflicted is one much insisted on in the Scriptures. It is one devolving not merely upon ministers, but upon Christians generally. It is one which private Christians cannot throw off upon their minister, and of which he must not suffer them

thus to rid themselves. He must insist that they share the labor with him, not merely for his relief, but for their benefit.

The same remark may be made in regard to relieving the necessities of *the poor*, and especially the poor of the church. It is the duty of the pastor to *see* to this matter; but not a duty which belongs to him exclusively or chiefly. He must see that the thing is done; but the labor of doing it belongs more appropriately to other hands. This is the very object for which deacons were originally appointed; to provide for the necessities of the poor of the church, and thus relieve the apostles of a responsibility with which they could be no longer burthened.

I have spoken already of the duty of church members to search out serious inquirers, and converse with them on the subject of religion. The importance of this duty demands for it a further consideration. As the members of a church should be continually praying, so they should be continually watching for favorable indications. They should watch the countenances and the conversation of individuals around them, their attendance upon religious meetings, and their appearance there, and be ready to catch and to cherish the first appearances of unusual seriousness. And when such instances are discovered, they should be reported to the pastor. The serious inquirer should be induced to seek an interview with his pastor, or the pastor should seek an interview with him. Serious impressions by being neglected are often lost, and immortal souls are lost with them. The members of a church may do much good in the manner here pointed out; and while doing good in this way, as in every other, they will be

getting good. While assisting to water others, they will be themselves watered from that "river of God which is full of water."

In the foregoing remarks I have pointed out several ways in which the members of a church may be employed, so as not only to assist their pastor, and bless their fellow-men, but to promote their own spiritual interest. Doubtless other modes of usefulness will be thought of which have not been noticed. And now what I would say in conclusion, is, that the pastor should keep his eyes open to this whole subject; should feel the importance of it to himself, to his Christian brethren, and to the world; and, if need be, should *study*, should *task his ingenuity*, to find suitable employment for the members of his church. He must not suffer them to *rust out* for want of use. He must not suffer them to hide their light under a bushel, or under a bed, for the want of a candlestick on which to set it. He must endeavor to preserve them from sloth and melancholy, and from the indulgence of a worldly spirit, by keeping them employed and interested in things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ.

In this way the church may be brought back to something like its original design. The church of God on earth was never intended as a *resting-place* for Christians, where they might hear sermons, go to sacraments, enjoy privileges, and live at their ease. It was rather intended as an organization for *labor*, — for mutual and more efficient *action* in promoting religion, and bringing souls to Christ. This, obviously, was the original *design* of the church; and the primitive disciples lived and acted in accordance with it. They knew that there remained a rest for the people of God, but they did not

expect it in the present world. They seem hardly to have *desired* it. This was their time for *action* and *suffering*, — for devoted labors and sacrifices in the cause of their Divine Master; and upon their several courses of duty they entered cheerfully together. They bore one another's burdens, and so fulfilled the law of Christ. And as they labored and suffered together, they *grew* together, they *rejoiced* together; and together they were preparing for mutual and everlasting rejoicings in heaven.

The sooner the church of God can be restored to something like this divine original pattern, the better; better for its members, better for the world. And that the course recommended in the foregoing remarks would have a powerful tendency to restore it, I can have no doubt. Let the pastor seek out appropriate employment for his church. Let him enlist their coöperation in every way possible. Let him embue them, individually, with the spirit of missionaries. Let him impress upon them all that they must be *working men* and *working women* — “workers together” with him, with one another, and with God, in the great enterprise of promoting Christ's kingdom. Let there be no place found for drones in the spiritual hive; let none be tolerated there. Instead of the pastor's being under the disagreeable necessity of looking after the members of his church, let them unite with him to look after others. Instead of their troubling him (as is too often the case) to take care of them, let them engage with him, to the utmost of their power, in promoting the salvation of others. Most assuredly such a church will be a *growing* church. It will also be a *happy* church. Its members will be steadily advancing in knowledge, holiness,

love, and peace. Its members will be multiplied. As one after another shall be released from their labors to go to their eternal reward, others will be coming forward to take their places; and thus the good work will go on, and the kingdom of Christ will spread and prevail, till at length all the promises shall be accomplished, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge and love of God.

## LECTURE XVI.

### DUTIES IN RELATION TO THE YOUNG.

DUTIES OF A PASTOR IN RELATION TO THE YOUTH OF HIS FLOCK—THOSE THAT HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED, AND OTHERS—THE SABBATH-SCHOOL—CATECHISING, ETC.

THE ministers of Christ are instructed to feed, not only his sheep, but his *lambs*. The children and youth of his flock will be, to every good minister, a most interesting and important part of his charge,—a part which he will not suffer, under any circumstances, to be neglected.

The youth of a congregation may be divided into two classes,—those who have been consecrated to God in baptism, and those who have not.

The baptized children in a congregation are to be regarded as appropriately *the children of the church*. They sustain a near and covenant relation to the church, and on this account have peculiar claims upon the attention and instructions of the pastor.

The relation of baptized children to the church has not been very accurately defined, and there is some diversity of opinion in regard to it. All who practice infant baptism do not view it in the same light; at least, they do not use the same phraseology respecting it. Some speak of baptized children as already *members of the church*; but this, it has seemed to me, is going too



far. It is using stronger language than the truth will warrant. Mere baptism does not make an adult person a church member. It is an established *prerequisite* to a standing in the church, but does not, of itself, constitute membership. An adult person is received into a congregational church *by vote*, taken either before or after baptism. He can be received in no other way. But if baptism alone does not constitute membership in the case of the adult, it surely cannot in case of the infant.

It is admitted by all evangelical Christians, who practice infant baptism, that baptized children are not members of the church *in full*. They are not entitled, on the mere ground of their baptism, to the *communion* of the church. Neither are they subject, directly, to its *discipline*. Christian parents and guardians are amenable to the church for the manner in which they train up their children; and in case of palpable malversation or neglect, should be made the subjects of church censure. But beyond this, church discipline cannot properly go. To extend it directly into the domestic circle, interfering with the training and government of families, calling children to an account before the church, and making them the direct objects of church censure, is transcending quite the authority of the church, and if seriously persisted in must be followed by the most disastrous consequences.

Baptized children have never placed *themselves* under the discipline of the church; nor have their parents placed them there. They have entered into covenant with God, and with their brethren, that *they* would be faithful to their children; but they have never put their government out of their own hands, or placed

them directly under the watch and discipline of the church.

I make these remarks for the purpose of showing that baptized children are not properly members of the church. They sustain a near and covenant relation to the church, but this relation does not amount to membership. This is not the term by which, as it seems to me, the relation should be expressed.

I have said that baptized children sustain a *covenant* relation to the church. The covenant of the church has respect, not only to those who personally enter into it, and become proper members, but *to their children*. Its requisitions relate to such children, its promises reach and bless them. When the believing parent presents his child for baptism, he virtually says to his covenant God, "I here publicly consecrate this child to thee; and I solemnly promise to train it up for thee." And his covenant God condescends to respond, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee. Fulfil your engagements respecting this child, and I will be its God." A covenant connection is thus established between God and the parent, *respecting the child*; and this covenant is *sealed* in baptism. In this view, the baptism of a child is a very solemn, significant rite; and the relation constituted between the child and the church, though not amounting to proper membership, is one of a very important nature. This child is now, as I said, *a child of the church*. It is folded in the arms of the church covenant. It belongs to the church by *promise*. If its life is spared, and the covenant which has been ratified respecting it is not violated, it *will* become a member of the church, and be entitled, as such, to all church privileges. Even now it sustains

an important relation to the church, out of which grow important duties.

In the first place, baptized children will be, both to the pastor and the church, objects of *deep solicitude*. They constitute, in fact, the hope of the church. They are those from whom, in the ordinary course of things, the future members and pillars of the church must come; through whom the church itself is to be perpetuated. Others *may* be brought into it, but these (if their right training and education can be secured, and the covenant entered into respecting them be fulfilled), it may be expected *will* be. No wonder, then, that by the pastor and members of the church, baptized children are regarded with much solicitude. No wonder that the deepest anxiety is felt that they may receive that wise government, that faithful discipline, that Christian instruction and restraint which, by the blessing of God, shall result in their speedy conversion, and bring them early and truly into the fold of Christ.

Again, baptized children should be made the subjects of *special prayer*, both in public and private. The anxiety which is felt for them will lead the Christian parent to bring the case of his children continually before the throne of grace, in secret. He will implore forgiveness for past deficiencies, and grace to strengthen him in time to come. He will plead the covenant into which he has entered, and pray that, out of respect to it, (though it has been violated) God would be pleased to bless his children, and make them the objects of his mercy.

Nor will the case of baptized children be remembered only in the *private* devotions of parents. They will be carried into the social circle, the church meeting, the

great congregation. There may be meetings appointed for this special purpose, *to pray for the children of the church*. And these children may be occasionally present at such meetings, that they may see how deep an interest is felt for them, and may hear and unite in the prayers which are offered on their behalf.

I remark further, that baptized children should be made the objects of special *instruction* as well as prayer. This instruction will be imparted in familiar conversation, at the pastoral visit. It will be imparted also from the pulpit, and in meetings of the church.

The meetings above referred to, in which prayer is to be offered up specially for the children of the church, may be made to answer several important purposes. Here Christian parents may discuss the best modes of training and educating their children, the duties which they should be taught to practice, and the courses from which they should be restrained; and may strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts one of another in this arduous work. To these meetings children also, as I said, may be occasionally brought to be, not only prayed for, but instructed. They may be taught here the peculiar relation subsisting between them, and God, and his professing people. They may be reminded of their solemn consecration to God, and of the holy covenant entered into and sealed respecting them, in virtue of which they have been brought into so near a relation to the church. They may be told of the deep interest which is felt for them by the people of God; of the peculiar privileges with which they are favored; of the high expectations which are indulged respecting them; and of their own special, indispensable obligations early and entirely to consecrate *themselves* to the service of God and the Redeemer.

In short, baptized children should be so taught as to make the impression that infant baptism is not a burthen to be borne, or a mere ceremony to be performed, but a rite of much solemn meaning and interest, — a subject of great practical importance. Baptized children may be so treated, and should be, as to make the impression that it is a great privilege to any child to be one of their number; and that those parents who refuse or neglect, first to devote themselves to the Lord, and then to bring their children to his altar, are depriving them of an important benefit.

But all the children of a parish do not sustain that peculiar relation to the church which has been described. Many of them are not the children of professedly Christian parents; and some Christian parents do not think it their duty to consecrate their children to the God of Abraham in baptism. Still, the pastor has duties to perform for *them*, which must not be forgotten or neglected.

In the first place, let him deeply feel the relative *importance* of children in society. This many persons do not seem to feel. Because children are young, and have no part, as yet, in the important business of life, they are regarded as little more than ciphers in the world — as beings of but little consequence. But let such persons consider how long it is since we were all children. How long is it since a former generation looked down upon us, as we now do upon the little prattlers around us? And how long will it be before the same rapid wheels which have rolled our fathers off the stage will roll us away after them, and will roll forward these little ones into our places?

The children of any country are in some respects the

most important personages in it. The characters of others may be already formed; but those of children are still forming. The spheres of life in which others are to move, and beyond which they can never pass, are in most instances settled; but in respect to children, all questions of this nature remain still to be decided. It is with them the *spring-time* of life, — the *forming period*, when the twig is being bent and the seed sown; and according to the character of what is sown, so, inevitably, will be the harvest.

With views such as these as to the importance of the *youth* of his charge, let every pastor be careful to fill his mind and impress his heart. He should look upon them as those who (if his pastoral relation is to be continued) are soon to be his principal supporters and friends, — the earthly props on which he is to lean, — the Aarons and Hurs who are to encourage his heart and stay up his hands amid the trials and labors of his future days.

Under impressions such as these, the pastor will make himself *acquainted* with the children of his parish. He will enter into their feelings, interest himself in their pursuits, and thus engage their affections and win their hearts. It is possible for a minister so to demean himself towards children as to become the object of their aversion and dread. They will fear him, and flee from him; or, if compelled to remain where he is, his presence will impose a severe and unnatural restraint. On the other hand, he may treat the children of his parish in such a way as to be ever regarded and welcomed by them as one of their dearest friends. They herald his approach with congratulations, and fly to meet him as they would a parent or a brother. Of

Felix Neff it is said, that "when his arrival was expected in certain hamlets, it was beautiful to see the cottages send forth their inhabitants to watch the coming of the beloved minister ; and when the seniors asked for his blessing, and *the children took hold of his hands or his knees*, he felt all the fatigue of his long journeys pass away, and became recruited with new strength." So Goldsmith, in his "Country Clergyman," says :

"The service past, around the pious man,  
With ready zeal, each honest rustic ran;  
*Even children followed, with endearing smile,*  
*And plucked his gown to share the good man's smile."*

Now this is the feeling which the affectionate pastor will wish to cultivate, and the kind of intercourse which he will choose should subsist between himself and the children of his flock. He will choose it for several reasons. In the first place, the good-will of the children will be his surest passport to the affection and confidence of their parents. Parents, it may be calculated, always love their children, and think favorably of them; and they will love the man who regards them as they do. They will welcome him to their houses, and receive him to their hearts.

Then, when the hearts of children are once gained, it will be easy for the pastor to secure their attention, and to pour the light of truth into their opening minds. They will listen to what he says to them on the subject of religion, will think upon it, and be likely to remember it. He will be in the best situation possible to feed them with knowledge and understanding, and to do them good.

In many places it is expected of the pastor that he will visit *the schools* in his parish. And this practice,

though it may consume some portion of his time, is often worth to him more than it costs. He has thus a favorable opportunity of becoming acquainted with the children, of testing their proficiency and affording them encouragement in useful knowledge, and of imparting to them unitedly that instruction and counsel which they need.

But the great means of religious instruction to the children and youth of a society is the *Sabbath-school*; and with this every faithful pastor will hold an intimate connection. He will see to it, first of all, that there *is* a Sabbath-school in his parish, and that the children and youth are collected into it. Perhaps he will think it necessary to institute more than one. Towards the gathering of children into the Sabbath-school, the pastor will be able to contribute much, in the course of his visits, and in his other various modes of intercourse and acquaintance both with parents and children.

In some cases, the pastor has undertaken to *superintend* the Sabbath-school; but this, I think, is, if possible, to be avoided. It will make the labors of the Sabbath too great for him to bear. Besides, he will be under the necessity of being occasionally absent; in which case, if he is superintendent, the school will be hardly able to proceed.

But though the pastor should not himself be superintendent, he will maintain a general charge and oversight of the school. He will see to it that a suitable presiding officer is appointed; and when appointed, he will confer with him and counsel him, will watch and direct his movements. He will furnish him with the best means of instruction as to the important duties of his office; aid him in the work of securing and preparing teachers;



and in every way encourage him to persevere and be faithful.

If the pastor is not able to be regularly in the school (as ordinarily he cannot be) he will visit it, address it, and pray with it as often as possible. In this way he will manifest his interest in the school, and his deep sense of its importance. His presence will also tend to promote order, and be an encouragement to the teachers; while by his prayers and addresses he may deepen the impression of the lesson, and promote the important objects for which the school exists.

The pastor will wish, if practicable, to meet the teachers of the Sabbath-school during the week, and explain to them the lesson. He may think best, perhaps, to make this something more than a mere teacher's meeting. It may be a Bible class, which others besides the teachers are expected to attend. Or it may assume the form of an expository lecture, and may take the place of one of his regular weekly meetings. By this means, parents, as well as teachers, may receive instruction in the lesson for the day, and may be the better able to assist their children in coming to a knowledge of it. If this whole work is entered upon in the proper spirit, the lesson for the Sabbath will be a matter of inquiry and conversation throughout the parish, during much of the preceding and following week.

There are other ways, besides those that have been mentioned, in which the faithful, watchful pastor may promote the interests of the Sabbath-school. He may converse frequently with parents and children in regard to it, making inquiries as to the understanding and proficiency of children, and directing parents as to their duties and responsibilities in the case. He may preach

occasionally on the subject of Sabbath-schools, setting forth their importance, and endeavoring to awaken a general interest in their favor. The Sabbath-school will also have a place in the devotions of the sanctuary, when the whole church and congregation will have an opportunity to unite in supplicating for it the blessings of Heaven. In all these ways, and in every other he can think of, the faithful pastor will labor to make an impression as to the *importance* of the Sabbath-school, and encourage those who are engaged in it to persevere in their labors.

They will stand in need of all this encouragement, and *more*; for after all that can be done for them, they will meet with many discouragements. There will be ignorance, dulness, apathy, indifference. There will be the inconstancy of friends, and occasional frowardness and ingratitude on the part of pupils. There will be excuses, objections, and sometimes open opposition; though the time for opposition seems to have nearly passed by. The truth is, the Sabbath-school is too good a thing to grow spontaneously in the soil of this depraved world. Evil things will spring up here without any effort. They require much effort to restrain their growth. But institutions like the Sabbath-school, the object of which is to promote true religion, must be nourished and cherished with assiduous care, or they will die.

I conclude what I have to offer on the general subject of this Lecture with one additional remark. A former method of imparting religious instruction to the young, in which the pastor was expected to take the lead, was that of *catechising*. The children of a society were expected to commit to memory some doctrinal catechism,

— more commonly that of the Westminster Assembly — and on a set day the pastor was to meet them, hear their recitations, and offer such instructions and explanations as seemed to him proper. I must say that I think this an excellent practice, and one which I hope to see revived. If it cannot be revived in the precise shape as formerly, may it not be in some other and perhaps better shape? May not the study of the catechism be so far introduced into the Sabbath-schools, that all the children, as they come to years of understanding, shall be expected to learn it? And may not the pastor meet such children, at least once in a year, and have an old-fashioned *catechising*?

I know it will be said that children had better study the Bible than the catechism; better go to the fountain-head of religious knowledge than turn away from it and sip at the streams. But this argument, if it proves anything, proves vastly too much. Why should we read any other religious books, except the Bible? Why should we hear preaching, or attend to any religious instruction, except the bare reading of the Sacred Word? And suppose the same kind of reasoning were applied to the sciences that is here used in application to religion: with the same propriety it might be said to the student in astronomy, “Better go abroad, in the still, dark night, and gaze upon the starry heavens, than to pore over your musty text-book;” or to the student in botany or mineralogy, “Better throw away your books, and go out amid the rocks and daisies of the field.” The truth is, in all the sciences we need to have the great and fundamental principles drawn out, laid down, and illustrated for us. We need this in theology, as well as in any other science. How much

astronomy would a student of ordinary capacity acquire by merely looking at the stars? And how much *connected, digested theology* will our Sabbath-school children acquire by the mere promiscuous study of the Bible?

I would not have the Bible removed from the Sabbath-school — *not by any means*: let it be kept there, and diligently studied there; but let the catechism be kept there also. A judicious, well-directed, doctrinal catechism, like that of the venerable Westminster divines, is a book of *first principles*, — of *great and fundamental principles*, — with which our youth cannot be too thoroughly acquainted. The carefully drawn *definitions* contained in the Westminster Catechism, were these its only recommendation, are enough to entitle it to the diligent study of our children and youth. “What is God?” “What are the decrees of God?” “What is the work of creation?” “What is prayer?” Who would not like to have appropriate answers to these and many similar questions, at his tongue’s end, to be revolved and repeated as occasion may require? And if it be said that some of these answers are so intricate as to surpass the comprehension of young persons, my reply is, Let them be stored up in the memory, and carefully pondered until they can be understood. If the benefit of committing them is not fully realized at once, it will be realized in after life. By the help of them, the Bible itself, and other religious means, can be enjoyed to much better advantage, and with better results.

## LECTURE XVII.

### CHARITABLE OBJECTS.

THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE PASTORAL WORK — PASTORS SHOULD KEEP UP AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH THESE OBJECTS, FEEL AN INTEREST IN THEM, AND MANIFEST THIS INTEREST IN ALL SUITABLE WAYS — NECESSITY OF AGENTS, AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF PASTORS.

THE pastors of the present period, and those who are about to assume the pastoral office, are brought into the field under peculiar circumstances. Many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased. The light is conflicting with the darkness as it never did before since the first promulgation of Christianity. An effort is being made for the conversion of the nations, and a variety of charitable institutions have come into existence — the most of which were unknown to our fathers — designed to further and accomplish this important object.

These charitable institutions date back (some a little earlier and some later) to about the commencement of the present century. It was then that the eyes of Christians began to be opened to the great subject of the world's conversion. They began to read the command of their Saviour, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," as they had never done before. They began to *feel* their obligations in regard to this mighty subject, and to act in view of them.

The institutions to which I refer, having more direct reference to the extension of Christ's kingdom, are the Education, the Missionary, the Bible, and the Tract Societies. The first designed to afford assistance in training up pious young men for the gospel ministry; the second, to send forth and support missionaries in our own country and in foreign lands; and the third and fourth, to furnish Bibles, tracts, and other religious books to be circulated over the earth. If I were to add to these another class of societies, it would be those for the establishment of Sabbath-schools, designed to promote the religious education and early conversion of the young.

There are other societies, indeed, all looking at the same great object, but more remotely connected with it, intended for the suppression of vice and crime, and for the removing of hinderances out of the way; that so the gospel may have free course, run, and be glorified. These will not be lost sight of or neglected by the faithful pastor; though he will naturally feel that they are less connected with his appropriate work, and come less directly under his influence, than the class of societies first named. It is to this first class of societies, and their connection with the pastoral work, that attention will now be particularly directed.

It is obvious at a glance that the connection of these societies with the pastoral work is intimate, and that the support of pastors is essential to their prosperity. If pastors all over the land will countenance them and exert an influence in their favor, the societies will live, and the great object at which they aim will be accomplished; but if pastors frown upon them and withhold their coöperation, the fate of the societies is sealed.

Against such an influence no power on earth can long sustain them.

But what are some of the more obvious duties of pastors with regard to the societies that have been named ?

Their first duty will be to make, and to keep themselves *acquainted* with these societies and their operations. And this will require no little study and labor. If the societies proceed as they have done during the last forty years, extending their efforts, and advancing towards their final consummation, — and their progress, it may be hoped, will be *accelerated* and not retarded, — it will be no easy matter to keep pace with them, and with their onward history ; and yet the pastor will find it necessary to do this. He must do it for *his own sake*. If he does not keep pace with the religious world ; if he falls in its rear, and suffers it to outstrip him, he will soon find that he is not respected : he is behind his age, is becoming rusty and obsolete, and must ere long give place to some newer and brighter man.

Then how is he to form a judgment respecting the character and proceedings of these societies, so as to be able wisely to counsel and direct his people, if he does not keep up an acquaintance with their history ? His people naturally look to him for advice in regard to their charitable efforts and gifts ; and how is he to satisfy them in this respect, or satisfy his own conscience, if he neglect to inform himself as to what is doing in the religious world, and as to the claims of the different charitable objects ? The *first* duty of the pastor in regard to the religious enterprises of the day is manifestly this : to *know* what they are, and to keep himself adequately informed respecting them.

And he must not only know what these enterprises are, but he must feel (what, if he is a pious man, he can hardly help feeling) a deep and absorbing *interest* in them. They must not only occupy his thoughts, but enlist his affections. He must love them as his own; and to watch over them and provide for them should be regarded as an important part of his business for life. If a pastor, at this day, is cold and indifferent in regard to the great enterprises of the church, his people in all probability will be indifferent also; or, if any of them are not indifferent, they will assuredly be — as they ought to be — dissatisfied with him. They will call in question his usefulness, — perhaps his piety, — and will seek his removal from a situation the purposes of which he does so little to promote.

Feeling deeply interested in the religious enterprises of the day, the faithful pastor will *manifest* this interest in all suitable ways. He will make these various enterprises the subject of much reading, reflection, and conversation among his people. And he will not only read himself, but stir up others to read; putting suitable books and papers into their hands, and taking pains to circulate missionary intelligence and useful publications. He will devote *time* to this and kindred objects, and set an example before his people of liberality in his contributions.

The faithful pastor will endeavor to give to the charities of his people as much of *system* as possible, keeping every object in its place, and aiding it in due proportion. He will teach them to be liberal from *principle*, and not from impulse; and to *persevere* in well-doing, knowing that in due time they shall reap if they faint not. He will urge upon them the duty of



*self-denial* in the cause of Christ ; referring them often to the example of Him “ who, when he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.”

It has been made a question whether the great charitable enterprises to which I refer should depend on pastors alone for their support, or whether *agents* should be employed to coöperate with them and assist them in this difficult undertaking. After all that can be said as to the duties and responsibilities of pastors, — and it will be seen that I am disposed to lay upon them no light burthen, — I am persuaded that, in the present state of things, the services of agents are indispensable.

It is objected to agents, that they sometimes encroach upon the rights of pastors, and interfere with their plans and labors. It is further objected that they are unnecessary, and that the expense of them may well be saved.

It cannot be denied that, in connection with some of the societies, more especially those of a reformatory character, agents have been unduly multiplied ; and agents of an indiscreet and improper character have, in some instances, been employed. As might be expected, such men have not hesitated to encroach on the rights of pastors, insisting on having their own way, and denouncing those who did not submit to them, as being hostile to the objects which they had in view. It is in consequence of misdemeanors such as these, that objections have been urged against the whole system of agencies, and attempts have been made to overthrow it. But surely it is no valid argument against a system, that it has been perverted and abused. The best things have sometimes been abused. Care should be taken

that agents for benevolent objects should not be unduly multiplied, and that none but discreet and faithful men — men of influence and character — should be employed as agents. Agents have a laborious and difficult task to perform, — one requiring much prudence and discretion, much zeal and tact and perseverance ; and excitable, headstrong, clamorous, inexperienced men, are least of all fitted to undertake it.

It gives me great pleasure to say, in this connection, that the agents of our religious charitable societies have, in nearly every case, been men of the right stamp. And such, I trust, they may always be ; — men who, instead of troubling ministers, will be a comfort to them ; who, instead of hindering, will help them ; and whom ministers, instead of trying to thrust aside, shall welcome to their bosom as brethren beloved. Let those only of the right character be employed as agents, and only in such numbers as the public good requires, and there will be no more complaint (at least from good and reasonable men) as to the obtrusiveness of agents and their interference with the pastoral work. Good pastors will feel as much interest in them, and be as glad to see them, as any persons in the world.

As to the *expensiveness* of agents, I have also a word to say. Agents have sometimes been employed for mere local purposes, — objects in which the community felt but little interest, and where the compensation of the agent swallowed up the greater part of all that was collected. Now it is not for such agencies that I would be understood to plead. No one can repudiate them with more earnestness than I do. I regard them as an imposition upon the good feelings of Christians, and as calculated to bring all charitable enterprises into con-

tempt. But the agencies employed in support of our great religious societies are not of this character. The objects of these societies are of high and *general* importance, in which the public do (or ought to) feel a deep interest; and although the salaries of the agents constitute an item of expense which ought to be taken into the account, yet the question arises, and it is the proper question: *Can the labors of these men be safely dispensed with? Are they not worth more, much more, to the church and to the cause of Christ, than the expense of sustaining them?*

I know it sounds well to hear of pastors becoming agents, each in his own parish,—taking charge of all charitable objects, and thus saving the labor and expense of other agencies; but things sometimes sound much better than they operate. They look better on paper than they work in practice; and I greatly mistake if the project before us is not one of this description. We occasionally find a pastor who can be his own agent, and who will take efficient care of all charitable objects among his people. Perhaps it would be well if all pastors were of this description, and if all churches were so enlightened and holy as to need no instruction, no urging in the work of doing good. But it cannot be disguised that this is not the fact; nor is it likely to be so very soon. Some pastors are not fitted, *adapted* to do the work of agents. They could not well do it, even if they were called to engage in it as an employment. Others who could do it are exceedingly averse to it, especially among their own people. They prefer that some one should come and plead the cause of benevolence rather than undertake the work themselves. Even in the primitive churches the pastors needed some one

to jog and assist them, in the matter of collecting their charitable contributions, and the Apostle Paul and his corps of evangelists were not unwilling to be employed occasionally, as *agents* for this important purpose (2 Cor. viii., ix.).

In all practical matters experience is our best teacher; and, if I mistake not, experience has fully shown that there is no great enterprise now before the church which can be efficiently sustained and carried forward without agents. Just as soon as agents are withdrawn the cause languishes, and a resort to them becomes necessary, unless the object is to be abandoned.

I have sometimes thought that our towns and parishes might as well dispense with collectors, as our charitable societies with agents. When the taxes are assessed, it would be well if the people would come forward of their own accord, and pay them into the hands of the treasurer, and thus save the trouble and expense of collecting. Perhaps the time may come when they will do this; but will they do it now? Will the taxes be paid in this way? And if the people of any town should undertake to dispense with the office of collector, would they not soon find it necessary to revert to their former practice? And just so in regard to agents. Experience has shown that agents are necessary; that, in the present state of things, their services cannot be dispensed with, unless we are willing to abandon the important objects for which they plead.

It has been said that, in the *commencement* of our religious charitable operations, when it was required that information should be diffused and an interest awakened in regard to them, agents were needed, and were, with great propriety, employed; but now that

this preparatory work has been accomplished, and the church has been fully aroused to the subject, the services of agents may be dispensed with. But has this preparatory work even now been accomplished? Have the churches been fully aroused? I should be glad to feel assured that this was true, or that it was half true. The most popular of all our charitable enterprises is that of foreign missions; and yet it was proved only a few years ago (and probably the case is no better now) that from nearly half of the churches which would be likely to communicate with the American Board, not a farthing had ever been received for this noble object. So long as facts like this remain to be stated, it is quite premature to say or to think that the churches of this land have been awakened to their duty in regard to the general diffusion of the gospel. It is too soon to affirm that the labors of agents are no longer needed, and that the entire responsibility of awakening interest and collecting funds for the support of our religious charitable operations may be devolved upon the pastors.

The agents employed should be, as I said, able, discreet, and faithful men; men of learning, character, experience, and tact; men well acquainted with the difficulties of their work, and who know how to meet them with prudence, energy, and zeal. The numbers employed, too, should be rather below than above the actual necessities of the case, that so their labors may be the more sought and the better appreciated.

Of such agents pastors have no occasion to be distrustful or afraid. Why fear them? They come not to do hurt, but good; not to urge their own claims unduly, and to the detriment of others, but to state and explain them; to make the question of duty plain, and

then to let individuals act as they think will be most pleasing to the Saviour.

It is unjust to such agents and to the objects they present for pastors to receive them coldly, deny them their coöperation, and leave them to do what they can alone. They ought rather to welcome them with a joyful greeting, as servants and messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ; as laborers in another department of the same important cause with themselves; as helpers in the vineyard of a common Master; and should afford them every facility and encouragement for prosecuting their work in the most successful manner.

The pastor is entitled always to be consulted by agents before bringing any object of charity before his people; and no agent should think of gaining access to a people but through the medium of its pastor. If, when the agent arrives, the pastor thinks it best, for any cause, that the presentation of his object should be deferred, he ought freely to say so, and to state his reasons; and the agent ought to be satisfied, and pass on his way. But when the object is confessedly one of importance, and circumstances do not forbid the presentation of it, then let the pastor enter heartily into it, and further it to the utmost of his power.

As the pastor is in circumstances to assist the agent, so the agent will be able to assist the pastor. He may communicate new and important information. He may present his object in new lights, and enforce it by considerations which had not before been thought of. He may say things to the people which the pastor could not say, and leave behind him good impressions which could have been made in no other way.

The labors of an agent at best are arduous and self-

denying. His path is a rugged one, beset with discouragements and difficulties to be surmounted only by persevering labor. To promote an important object connected with Christ's kingdom, he foregoes the privileges and comforts of home, and casts himself out upon the world. Next to the presence of his Saviour, he needs the warm friendship and hearty coöperation of *pastors*; and if he is what he should be, most certainly he is entitled to receive *them*. To deny him these would be not only cruelty to him, but an offence to that Master on whose errand he comes.

Some ministers are afraid that their people will be so impoverished by giving to benevolent objects that they will not be able to support them. But this is a grovelling, groundless fear. In all my intercourse with pastors and parishes, I never saw it realized in a single instance. On the contrary it is a fact, and one of common observation, that the more a people become interested in objects of religious charity, and the more they contribute for their advancement, the more ready and willing are they to support the gospel among themselves. And this is precisely what might be expected. Why is it that the gospel is not better supported in most of our churches and societies? Not that the people are too poor to support it, but that they are not *sufficiently interested*. They can expend ten times as much as they are willing to give for the support of the gospel to secure some favorite object of worldly comfort or convenience, and think nothing of it. This being the case, whatever tends the more deeply to interest a people in the subject of religion, and give them new impressions of its importance, — and such obviously *is* the tendency of bringing frequently before them the exist-

ing objects of religious charity, — will open and warm their hearts, quicken their affections, enlarge their views, and lead them with greater cheerfulness and liberality to provide for the support of religious institutions among themselves. They will feel more than ever the value of these institutions; that they cannot under any circumstances do without them; and will cheerfully contribute whatever is necessary for their continuance.

But ministers have other duties to perform with regard to the religious enterprises of the day, besides those which occur in the midst of their own people. There will be a necessity for *anniversary-meetings*, *large public assemblies*; and these must not be forgotten or neglected. As pastors are, by their office, standard-bearers in the church of Christ, it is to be expected, of course, that *they* will be present at such meetings, and take a prominent part in them. And this will involve no little sacrifice of time, of labor, and expense. Private members of the church have no conception of the burthen which in this way is often thrown upon their pastors. But as it is a burthen which the peculiar circumstances of the age impose, — a sacrifice demanded in promoting the precious interests of their Master's kingdom, — it will be submissively and cheerfully borne.

Nor are sacrifices of this kind without their peculiar *privileges* and *advantages*. These large public meetings bring pastors and Christians more frequently together, promote their acquaintance one with another, and increase their interest in the cause and kingdom of Christ. They render ministers, if not more profound scholars, at least more prompt and active laborers, more



fluent and acceptable speakers, and more efficient in the discharge of their various public duties. They have also the satisfaction of knowing that the sacrifices which they are called to make are not in vain; that through their humble instrumentality the cause of truth and righteousness is advanced, and the predicted triumphs of Christ's kingdom in the earth are hastened.

Every other duty of the pastor in connection with the charitable enterprises of the church should of course be accompanied with *fervent prayer*. Feeling that the object to be attained is not only important, but vast,—transcending all human power,—and that there are obstacles in the way of it such as naught but Omnipotence can overcome, the devout pastor will attempt nothing in his own strength. His whole trust will be in the power and the promise of God, and the cause for which he labors he will carry continually to God in earnest and effectual prayer. In the daily devotions of the family and closet, he will never forget to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and for the full success of all those efforts whose object it is to advance it in the earth. The same object will be carried into the social prayer-meeting. The monthly concerts of prayer, and especially that for the conversion of the world, will be an occasion of great interest to the pastor, and he will endeavor that it shall be one of equal interest to all the members of his flock. By appropriate and instructive remarks, by collecting and imparting religious intelligence, and by the prayers and praises which are offered up, he will labor to interest every Christian mind, and engage the feelings of every pious heart, in the services of the monthly concert of prayer. Nor will these objects be forgotten in the great congre-

gation. They will not only be carried occasionally into the sermon, but more frequently will have a place in the devotions of the sanctuary, when the whole assembly will have the opportunity of sending up their prayers together, and of saying, as with one voice, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

In short, the faithful pastor will feel habitually that he is no longer his own, but Christ's; that his interests are all identified with those of his Master's kingdom; and that whatever he can do to promote that kingdom, whether at home or abroad, among his own people or elsewhere, — whether by his preaching, his personal influence, or worldly substance, — all is justly required of him, and should be cheerfully rendered. He keeps nothing back. He holds nothing, and will hold nothing, which is too dear to be given up at the call of Christ, and which he has not consecrated to the purposes of His holy kingdom. He rejoices when this kingdom prospers, more than when corn and wine increase. He mourns over its declensions and desolations as one who is in bitterness for his first-born. He says, with the Psalmist, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

"For thee my tears shall fall;  
For thee my prayers ascend;  
To thee my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end."

## LECTURE XVIII.

### INDUCTION OF OTHERS INTO THE MINISTRY.

EXAMINATION FOR LICENSE — ORDINATION THE WORK OF MINISTERS — A RESPONSIBLE WORK — WHO ARE TO BE ORDAINED.

AN important part of the work of the ministry consists in the induction of others into the sacred office. To effect this according to Congregational usage, two distinct steps require to be taken; the first preparatory, the other the induction itself. In the first instance, a *license* to preach is granted; in the second, *ordination* is conferred. Both of these are highly responsible acts; and in a course of lectures on the duties of ministers, both should receive a due share of attention.

Among some classes of Christians, candidates for the ministry are licensed by the *churches* to which they belong; but against such a practice there seem to me to be the most substantial reasons. The great body of our churches, composed, as they are, of private, unlettered Christians, are not competent judges as to the qualifications of those who aspire to the ministry. They may judge of their piety, and of their natural capacities or gifts; but as to their acquirements, their education, their intellectual furniture and discipline, their ability to explain and enforce the truth, and stand up for the defence of the gospel, — of these things they must be in great measure ignorant. And what they pretend to

know, they must take chiefly upon trust. The consequence is, that in communities where churches take it upon them to bestow licenses, not a few pass the ordeal who are wholly unqualified for the work to which they are recommended ; and this in the judgment, not merely of other denominations, but of the best and ablest men among themselves. Particular churches give licenses which other churches do not respect. They send out candidates for the ministry, which some of those with whom they are connected can hardly receive or acknowledge in that character. In this way, not only are unqualified persons thrust into the ministry much to their own detriment and the injury of the whole church, but occasion is furnished for hard feelings and hard speeches, for alienation among brethren, and in some instances for palpable breaches of fellowship.

Much more reasonable is it, and safer for all concerned, that the responsible work of granting licenses should be committed (as it is among ourselves) to *associated bodies of ministers*. These are more competent than private church members can be supposed to be to form a correct judgment in the case ; and besides, it is reasonable, since ministers are, and were designed to be, a distinct order of men, that they should themselves be judges as to the qualifications of those who are to come into their order. To give power to the churches to put men into the ministry without the consent and independent action of ministers, would be scarcely more reasonable than to give power to the congregations to put members into the churches without their action or consent.

The granting of a license, to be sure, does not make one a minister ; but it is taking a first and most im-

portant step towards it, — a step which in ordinary cases cannot honorably be retraced ; and this step, like the subsequent decisive one, should not be taken, but with the expressed approbation of ministers themselves.

In examining young men with a view to license, regard should be had to each of the several qualifications for the ministry ; but more especially to the four following ; namely, *piety, natural endowments, education, and orthodoxy*. An unconverted ministry ; a weak, stupid, uninteresting ministry ; an ignorant ministry ; an heretical ministry ; — all or either of these is a curse to the church ; and it belongs to those on whom rests the responsibility of inducting others into the ministry, to see to it that the curse is not inflicted, — that unsuitable, disqualified candidates for the sacred office are kept out of it.

In conducting examinations for license, there are the extremes of *scrupulosity* and of *laxity* ; though the latter, it is to be feared, is much the more common, and of the most injurious influence. Still, it is possible, and with the best intentions, to verge to the other extreme ; and a word of caution in regard to it may not be unnecessary. Ministers should examine carefully and faithfully into the evidences of *piety* exhibited by candidates for license ; but then they should judge charitably of these evidences, and not stop a young man in his endeavors to do good, because his piety is not precisely after their own model ; or because he has been brought into the kingdom of Christ in a manner different from themselves. They should require evidence of competent natural abilities, and of general and professional education ; but they are not to insist upon the highest degree of talent as indispensable, or that every student, what-

ever his age and other circumstances, must have pursued precisely the same course of study, or acquired the same amount of preparatory learning. Substantial orthodoxy, or soundness in the faith, should never be lost sight of, or passed slightly over; and yet *some* difference of opinion, some diversity of statement and explanation, is to be expected and tolerated among orthodox men. To refuse a license to a young man, in other respects qualified, because he has his own way of stating and explaining certain doctrines, or may differ from his examiners on some minor, unessential points, would certainly betray a want of liberality.

Still, the danger of the times in which we live can hardly be said to lie in this direction. Ministers have more temptations to be over lax in their examinations than to be over scrupulous, and are in much greater danger of recommending to the churches unworthy candidates for the sacred office than they are of excluding the worthy and the promising. Let the watchmen of Israel be fully sensible of their danger in this respect, and of the high obligations which rest upon them to be faithful. If incompetent, unprincipled, unworthy men gain admittance into the holy ministry, through their carelessness or neglect, the evils resulting — and these will be neither few nor small — must lie at their own doors.

But there is another step to be taken in the process we are considering besides the granting of a license. It is that of *ordination*. Ordination, by the imposition of hands and prayer, is the divinely appointed mode of investing a man with office in the church of Christ; more especially with the office of a *minister*. A license to preach does not make a man a minister. He is still

but a candidate for the gospel ministry. Nor does the *call of a church*, though essential to his holding office in that particular church, constitute him a minister. He is but a candidate for the ministry until he is ordained.

A person may be a minister *in* the church, without being an officer of any particular church. This is the case with dismissed ministers, missionaries, and evangelists. Such are ministers of Christ, but not pastors. They are authorized to labor in the work of the ministry, and to perform all ministerial acts, but have no *official* connection with any particular church; or, in other words, have no pastoral charge.

In discussing the subject of ordination, I shall not go largely into a consideration of the theories which are held respecting it by some denominations of Christians. The Episcopalian insists that there are three distinct orders of gospel ministers, and that only those of the highest order, the *bishops*, have a right to ordain. But as we reject the three orders of ministers, holding properly to but one order, and regarding all in this order as officially equal, of course we reject the Episcopal theory of ordination.

High-church Episcopalians also tell us that there is an invisible *grace* imparted by the laying on of Episcopal hands; a something which, without respect to the character of the giver or receiver, has flowed down in long succession from the apostles; a something which can be obtained in no other way, and without which no one can possibly be a minister of Christ; a something which imparts a most wonderful efficacy to ministerial acts, and without which such acts, however pious may be the giver or receiver, are altogether invalid and

unfaithful. Such is the account given us of that wonderful, invisible *grace* which is said to be communicated in Episcopal ordination. But when we inquire more specifically what this grace is, or where it resides, or what evidence there is of its existence, aside from the declaration of those who claim to impart it, or to have received it, we can get no answer. Assuredly, there is no proof of its existence in the Scriptures; or in reason; or in the characters of those who pretend to impart or to have received the gift; or in the apparent efficacy of the word or the sacraments by them administered; or, so far as we can see, anywhere else. We are warranted, therefore, in maintaining that it has no existence out of the fancies of the theorists who lay claim to it. It is a hurtful product of superstition; or at best a mere figment of the imagination.

To the question *to whom does the right of ordination belong?* the three following answers have been returned by Congregationalists:

1. Some have said that this right belongs to *the church*, and must be exercised by a committee of the church, or by such as the church shall have called together expressly for the purpose. This was the doctrine of the early fathers of New England, as expressed in the Cambridge Platform, chap. ix.

2. Others have admitted that the right of ordination belongs properly to *ministers*; but that ministers have no authority to exercise the right, except by the consent of an ecclesiastical council, or when called to it by the churches in some other way. This theory differs from the preceding, in that it denies the propriety of lay ordinations.

3. Others still have insisted, that the work of ordina-



tion belongs properly to ministers, and may be exercised by them *at discretion*; subject only to such directions and restrictions as Christ has imposed on them in the gospel.

It will be perceived that in the last two of these theories, ordination is regarded as properly the work of ministers. Still, the advocates of neither would hold it so strictly as to deny that in cases of *necessity*, lay ordinations may be valid. Hence, it is not incumbent on our ministers, in establishing the validity of their own ordinations, to be able to prove an uninterrupted succession of clerical ordinations between themselves and the apostles. If there has been such a succession, then ordinations are doubtless valid. Or if the succession has been broken, they are to presume there has been some *necessity* for it; in which case their ordinations are equally valid. If there has been no other necessity, there is now the necessity of an *invincible ignorance* in regard to the matter of such succession,—an ignorance in which all classes of ministers, high church and low, are alike involved,—which of itself may be sufficient to clear the consciences of all good and faithful ministers, with regard to the validity of their own ordinations.

With these preliminary observations, we come back to the question, *To whom does the right of ordination belong?* And in considering it, it is important that we go first of all to the New Testament. What saith the Spirit in reference to this matter? What say the teaching and example of the apostles?

The first ordination of which we have any account under the gospel, was that of the seven deacons, recorded in Acts vi. 6. This certainly was performed by ministers.

The next ordination (if it be proper to call it such) was that of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch (Acts xiii. 3). This, again, was performed by ministers.

The third ordination, or rather series of ordinations, which have come to our knowledge, were performed by Paul and Barnabas (both of them ministers) during their first missionary tour among the heathen. "And when *they had ordained them elders in every church*, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed" (Acts xiv. 23).

Timothy was ordained by a *presbytery*, or body of *presbyters*, among whom was the Apostle Paul (Compare 1 Tim. iv. 14, and 2 Tim. i. 6).

These are all the instances of ordination mentioned in the New Testament, in every one of which the service was performed by ministers. It should be further added, that the *directions* which were given from time to time relative to ordinations were uniformly given to ministers. Thus to Timothy, an ordained minister, Paul says, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." And again, "The things that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same *commit thou* to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Titus, an ordained minister, was left in Crete that he might "set in order the things that were wanting, and *ordain elders* in every city." The directions given to Timothy and Titus relative to the *qualifications* of church officers imply, that to them, and to others like them; that is, to *ministers*, was committed the responsible work of ordination. Indeed, I can find no trace or vestige of lay ordination in the New Testament. I can find no hint or allusion by which to justify the practice. The testimony of Scripture is entirely uniform in regard to

this matter, and places it beyond a doubt that ordination is the appropriate work of ministers.

It may be further remarked, that this conclusion is fully sustained by the voice of Christian antiquity. I can recollect no instance of lay ordination occurring in the ancient church; though possibly there may have been some of such *extreme necessity* as placed them beyond the operation of general law.

The testimony of Scripture in regard to this point is moreover in accordance with that of reason. Gospel ministers are a distinct class or order of men. They were intended to be so by the great Head of the church. And, as was remarked when on the subject of conferring license, it is reasonable that they should themselves be judges as to the qualifications of those who are to be admitted to their number. It is reasonable that the inducting, consecrating act should be performed by themselves.

Having thus ascertained what is the testimony of reason, of Christian antiquity, and more especially of Scripture, in regard to the question under consideration, we come back to the theories of Congregationalists on the subject. And from what has been said it is manifest that the first of the theories mentioned is without foundation. The right of ordination is with *ministers*, and not with the church. Lay ordinations have nothing to support them, either in reason or the Word of God. And it is evidence of the wisdom of our forefathers, that though they retained the theory of lay ordination in their platform, they early banished the practice of it from their churches. Probably not an instance of lay ordination has occurred among the Congregationalists of New England during the last hundred and fifty years.

As to the two remaining theories of Congregationalists, the difference between them is probably greater in appearance than in reality. Both may be right a certain way; and neither of them right to the full extent of the language in which they are respectively set forth. In certain cases, ministers have no right to confer ordination except by the consent of an ecclesiastical council, or when called to it by the churches in some other way. In other circumstances they may have this right, and it may be expedient that they should exercise it.

When a *pastor* is to be ordained, he should in all cases be first elected by the church; and those who are to ordain him should be called together by the church. For ministers to ordain a pastor over a church without its consent, and without being called together for the purpose, would be a gross violation of the rights of the church, and a wide departure from the line of Christian duty.

In case of the settlement of a pastor, who is expected to enjoy the fellowship of neighboring ministers and churches, there is another reason why a council should be called together. The event is one of great and common concern, — one in which neighboring churches are deeply interested; and it is no more than reasonable that they should be consulted in regard to it. They should be called together by their pastors and delegates, to see that the candidate is duly qualified for office, that the proceedings are orderly and proper, and that everything is transacted in a way to meet their approbation. This is one mode of church fellowship, which should never be abandoned.

And when an individual is ordained *without a pasto-*

*ral charge*, it is advisable that neighboring churches should be consulted, and a council assembled, whenever it can be done with convenience. In a matter of so much importance it is right that all due deference should be shown to the churches; and it is always pleasant that their voice should be heard whenever it can be with propriety.

Instances will occur, however, as they often have done, in which the cause of truth demands that a missionary, an evangelist, should be ordained, where no council can be assembled, and no previous action of the churches can conveniently be had. A case like this may occur, perhaps, at some missionary station on the other side of the globe, or in the remoter settlements of our own country. In such cases I hold it to be the right and the duty of ministers to proceed and perform the work to which God in his providence manifestly calls them. So, I am persuaded, the apostles and their ministerial "yoke-fellows" would have done in like circumstances. So, I have no doubt, they often did. The same thing has been done frequently by Congregational ministers in this country and in England during the last two hundred years; and I know of no objection to it growing out of the rights of our churches or any of the principles of Congregationalism.

It is, indeed, a principle of Congregationalism that all proper ecclesiastical power is vested in the church. But it does not follow from this that ministers can do nothing which churches may not do, or that they can do nothing which they are not expressly authorized to do by vote of the churches. Ministers have authority to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, which churches have not; and they are often called to

the performance of these duties without obtaining or asking the consent of any church. So ministers have authority to confer ordination, which churches have not; and in cases like those contemplated above, they may rightfully confer it without subjecting themselves or others to the great inconvenience of calling together an ecclesiastical council, or asking permission of the churches in any other way; and the churches, so far from having any reason to complain when evangelists are ordained under the circumstances supposed, would have reason to complain if they were not ordained; because the general interests of Christ's kingdom would in that case suffer, and each particular branch of his kingdom would suffer with it.

Without dwelling longer on the question as to whom the right of ordination belongs, we proceed to inquire more particularly than we have yet done, *Who are to be ordained?* On whom may the ambassadors of Christ lawfully impose hands, and set them apart to the sacred work of the ministry?

The Scriptures plainly teach us that this is a question of very great importance, requiring, on the part of those who are to decide it, much deliberation, careful scrutiny, and earnest prayer. "Lay hands suddenly on no man." "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful men*, who shall be able to teach others also." So impressed was the Apostle Paul with the importance of this subject, that he proceeds to detail, at considerable length, the qualifications of those who might lawfully be ordained. "A bishop 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; 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."

In his Epistle to Titus, the apostle repeats some of the same things, with others equally characteristic and important: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city; if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly (for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God); not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

I have before touched on this important subject when speaking of examination for license. I have only to add to what I then said, that the examinations for ordination should be even more deliberate and faithful than those for license; inasmuch as the step to be now taken is more momentous and decisive. A frail mortal is to be invested with the holiest office on earth! He is to become an accredited ambassador of the King of kings! He is to be placed in a situation where, if competent and faithful, he may be an inestimable blessing to the church and world; but where, if incompetent, disqualified, unfaithful, the evils he may occasion, the

injuries he may inflict, are numerous and great beyond all computation. And the question as to his being placed in this responsible situation, invested with this high and holy office, is to be decided by frail mortals like himself. How much, then, do these mortals need direction from above! With what caution and prayerfulness should they deliberate and act!

The consequences to *themselves* of the decision to which they come, are clearly indicated in a passage of Scripture already quoted, — “Lay hands suddenly on no man; *neither be partaker of other men’s sins. Keep thyself pure.*” As much as to say: “If ordination shall be conferred hastily, carelessly, and thereby an unworthy individual shall be introduced into the sacred office, and great evils shall result, then those who have ordained him become *partakers of his sins*. They are themselves accessory to his corruptions.

Let all Christ’s ministers, as they regard their own safety and that of the church, bear continually in mind these apostolic canons and cautions, and be sure that they commit the sacred trust of the gospel to “*faithful men*, who shall be able to teach others also.”



## LECTURE XIX.

### MINISTERIAL INTERCOURSE.

INTERCOURSE OF A PASTOR WITH OTHER CHURCHES AND MINISTERS OF HIS OWN DENOMINATION — PRIVATE INTERCOURSE OF MINISTERS — EXCHANGES — ADVICES RESPECTING THEM — INTERCOURSE OF MINISTERS ON PUBLIC OCCASIONS.

EVERY pastor sustains important relations, not only to his own church, but to other churches and their ministers. Some of these are of his own denomination, and others of different denominations. In the present Lecture I propose to consider the duties of a pastor to other churches and ministers of *his own denomination*.

Our churches are fitly denominated *independent*, or *congregational*. They are independent of each other, so far as jurisdiction and authority are concerned. No one church or body of churches has a right to dictate to a Congregational church or to interfere in the management of its own proper internal affairs. Still, it does not follow that there is no bond of union between Congregational churches, or that they sustain no important relations to each other. They are bound one to another (or should be) by the cords of love. They are united in a holy Christian fellowship, and should maintain a mutual intercourse and communion in a variety of ways. Their pastors also have duties to perform not only to the particular churches over which

they are placed, but to all the churches with which they are connected.

The devoted pastor will make the churches of his own denomination, and especially those in his more immediate vicinity, the object of much careful *thought*. He will inquire into the state of their affairs, and sympathize with them in their sorrows and their joys. If they are divided, corrupted, bereaved, diminished, or in any way afflicted, he will remember them, pray for them, and be ready by all methods to promote their good. Or if they are enjoying unusual prosperity, — enlarged, edified, strengthened, comforted, — he will not permit them to rejoice alone: he will devoutly and thankfully mingle with their joy. If they need his advice or assistance, it will be cheerfully rendered; and no kind office will be withheld which he can in faithfulness bestow.

There is this, however, to be borne in mind: If sister churches have pastors, they should be approached with kind offices only *through their pastors*. They can be approached with propriety in no other way. Were a neighboring minister to thrust in his advice, or proffer his assistance, irrespective of the pastor, without his knowledge or consent, he might justly be charged with an unwarrantable interference, and his efforts would be likely to result in more evil than good.

Churches destitute of pastors are objects of special solicitude to surrounding ministers, and often require no small share of their attention. The requisite attention and care will be cheerfully bestowed so long as they are received with interest, and with the prospect of usefulness. Ministers, to be sure, should not be officious or obtrusive under such circumstances; but

their feelings will prompt them to watch over the destitute churches in their vicinity, to keep up an acquaintance with their affairs, to visit them in affliction, to counsel them in difficulty, to preach to them as opportunity shall present, to administer to them divine ordinances, and to assist them in their endeavors to establish or reestablish the gospel ministry among themselves. As much as this every faithful pastor will feel that he owes to the destitute churches around him ; and nothing but ingratitude on their part, and a wicked perversion and abuse of his kindness, will discourage him in his efforts to do them good.

But pastors sustain relations not only to sister churches, but more especially to neighboring brethren in the ministry. We can hardly conceive of ties more sacred and binding than those which unite together an association, a brotherhood, of ministers. Called alike to sustain a most sacred and responsible office, and to perform the most solemn duties and rites ; embarked in the same holy cause ; exposed to the same anxieties, trials, labors, and cares ; serving the same Master, and expecting the same reward ; — surely ministers of the gospel hold important relations one to another, and are bound to be faithful in the discharge of reciprocal duties. They should think one of another, feel one for another, and pray one for another. They should be ready to give and receive advice ; to afford mutual assistance when required, and to administer (if called to it) faithful warning and reproof. They should strive by all means to encourage each other's hearts, and strengthen each other's hands ; to defend the reputation one of another ; and to increase, and not diminish, the

amount of good influence which each and all may be able to exert.

The duties of ministers to each other may be classed under three heads: those which they owe one to another in their more *private* social intercourse; those connected with *the exchange* of pulpit-labors; and those devolving upon them in their *public meetings*, or when brought together on great public occasions.

Neighboring ministers have opportunity of much intercourse in *private*,—meeting often at each other's houses, or in the families of mutual friends, or when otherwise brought together in the providence of God; and this intercourse should all be of the most improving and edifying character. It should in the first place be *instructive*. These more private interviews should be improved to suggest new thoughts; to impart interesting intelligence; to devise new plans and methods of doing good; to discuss important questions; to open and enforce the Scriptures; to suggest topics for sermons, and hints as to the best modes of constructing them;—in short, to improve and furnish one another's minds as much as possible.

Nor in seeking the improvement of each other's minds must the deeper region of the *heart* be neglected. It should be the object of the pastor in his more private interviews with his brethren, to make them not only wiser, but better men;—more spiritual, more devout, more entirely consecrated to the service of their Master, more thoroughly furnished to every good word and work; and the same important benefits he should above all things seek in return from them.

I would not say that ministers, in their more private social intercourse, should never unbend—never relax

from the severer exercises of the Christian life ; but I must say that I think too much time is often spent in anecdote and jest, — in conversation upon which they cannot look back in their more serious moments but with regret, — in a manner but little calculated to improve either their hearts or lives. Ministers should consider, under such circumstances (and I deeply feel that not one of my brethren has more occasion for this remark than myself), that they have a great work on their hands, and but little time in which to perform it, and that every moment should be improved to qualify them, in the best manner, for the discharge of their momentous and responsible duties.

I hardly need say that ministers should associate, in their more private interviews (as indeed everywhere else), on terms of perfect reciprocity and equality ; no one claiming to know more than his brethren, or to be greater or better than they. We read of a dispute among the first ministers of Christ, “ which of them should be the greatest ; ” and though this dispute may not often have been renewed in words, there is reason to fear that it has sometimes entered into the hearts of those who minister at the altar of God. It certainly is a most disgraceful dispute, in what way soever it may have been entertained ; and that minister most deeply disgraces himself who manifests most clearly that he is under its influence. And so he is regarded uniformly by his brethren. Right or wrong, there is nothing which ministers will not more readily tolerate, more patiently bear, than to see one of their number attempting to exalt himself above them. And there is no denomination of Christians in which such attempts are more inexcusable than among Congregationalists, where

all Christ's ministers are brought together on the broad platform of professional equality.

The more private intercourse of ministers, I remark again, should be *affectionate* and *confiding*, — of a character to inspire and deserve confidence. There should be no hurtful insinuations, or malicious whispers; no talebearing or evil-speaking; nothing to interrupt friendship, or diminish confidence, or damp the ardor of Christian love. In a word, this intercourse should be, so far as the conditions of humanity will allow it, like the fellowship of *angels* — like the intercourse of *heaven*. And if properly conducted, it may approach as near to heaven in its nature and results as anything that is witnessed in this lower world.

I come now to speak of the duties of ministers in reference to what are technically called their *exchanges*. It can hardly be questioned, as it hardly *is* at the present day, that between ministers of the same faith and order there should be an occasional interchange of pulpit labors. Such exchanges have a tendency to promote ministerial fellowship. They also tend more closely to unite the churches, by making them acquainted with each other's ministers. They afford to the different congregations the benefit of a diversity of gifts, — one minister supplying the defects of another, and saying what the other omits. They impart an agreeable variety to the services of the sanctuary, without which there might be a sameness that would be wearisome, at least to some hearers. Besides, they afford a relief to ministers, and more especially to young ministers, in the laborious task of preparing sermons. It is proper, therefore, that there should be exchanges.

The question as to their frequency must be deter-

mined 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.

The question has been asked, *With whom are evangelical Congregational ministers to exchange?* Are they to exchange with all who call themselves Congregationalists? or are their exchanges to be limited to those who are substantially of the same faith with themselves?

These questions do not require a long discussion. They may be answered in comparatively a few words. A minister may not require, as the condition of an exchange, that his brother shall agree with him in all the minutiae of Christian doctrine. This would be restricting his fellowship within quite too narrow limits. Neither is he to exchange with every one claiming to be a Christian minister, or a Congregational minister, whatever his principles may be. The gospel embodies a series of connected truths, the more important of which are *essential* to the system itself. They are *so* essential,

that when removed the system is fatally marred, if not wholly subverted. Such are the trinity, the atonement, the entire depravity of the natural man, regeneration by the special operation of the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, and eternal punishment. Churches holding these doctrines, and living according to them, are to be regarded as churches of Christ, and their pastors as ministers of Christ; while bodies rejecting these doctrines, or a considerable part of them, are not Christian churches, nor are their pastors Christian ministers. Such churches and pastors may be truly said to "have made shipwreck of the faith." They hold and teach another gospel. They prescribe another mode of getting from earth to heaven. To a religious teacher of this stamp, by whatever name he may choose to call himself, the faithful pastor cannot open his pulpit. To such an one he dare not say, "Godspeed: for he who biddeth him godspeed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

When a pastor exchanges pulpits with a neighboring minister, he virtually says to his flock, "Receive this man as a faithful brother in the Lord. Listen to him, as one who teaches the way of God in truth." But he surely cannot make this declaration respecting one who does not teach the way of God in truth, — whom he regards as having abandoned the more essential doctrines of the gospel. Of course he cannot receive him to his pulpit.

I hardly need add, that, in order to be entitled to an exchange, a minister must sustain an unblemished moral and Christian character. In short, he must be regarded, not as a heretic or an apostate, or a wolf in sheep's clothing; but as a brother beloved — a minister of Jesus — one who holds and teaches the great



doctrines of the gospel, and exemplifies them in his conversation and life.

In concluding the general topic of exchanges, the following directions or advices may not be out of place :

1. In effecting an exchange with a neighboring minister, never go among his people with a view to undermine him, or outshine him, or steal away the hearts of his people from him ; but go to help him, and honor him before his people. Go to strengthen his hands, to increase the measure of his influence, and aid him in the great work of feeding the sheep and lambs of his flock, and preparing them for the fold of his Divine Master in heaven.

2. When you exchange with a brother minister, never go with the intention to *contradict* him before his people. Though agreeing in the essential doctrines of the gospel, you may have *your* peculiarities of statement and explanation, and he may have *his*. But neither should go to the pulpit of the other with the design to insist on his own peculiarities, and controvert those of his brother, in presence of his people. Such a course must, of necessity, interrupt ministerial fellowship and brotherly affection. It must also distract the minds of hearers, and tend to provoke disputes, and awaken prejudices, rather than minister to godly edifying.

3. Let not one minister go into the pulpit of another with a view to preach *pointedly, personally*, and promote an object there which should be reached (if reached at all) by the pastor himself. This rule has been often violated, but never, so far as I know, with good results. If a pointed personal discourse is required to be preached, — if any prevalent vice is to be attacked, or bad practice corrected, or sin reproved, or vain amuse-

ment checked, — it belongs to the pastor to attend to such matters himself. He has no right to *request* a stranger to come and publicly rebuke his people; and certainly no stranger ought to think of doing it without his knowledge and request.

4. Let no minister, and especially no young minister, venture into his brother's pulpit with a view to publish any *novel* or *strange* doctrines. Such a course might be very disagreeable to the brother with whom the exchange was made. It might be the same as to contradict him in presence of his own flock. It might awaken controversies, and lead to divisions among his people. At any rate, it would betray a want of discretion, of good judgment, in him who should venture upon so questionable a practice.

Will it be asked, then, What *shall* a minister preach when he goes upon an exchange? I answer, in one word, Let him preach *the gospel*, — the great, substantial, fundamental, unchangeable truths of the gospel. Let him feed the flock of his brother, not with vagaries, or novelties, or matters of doubtful disputation, but with "the sincere milk of the word." This will always be well received. It will always be safe and profitable for those who hear it. It may be important to a minister going on an exchange to know something of the state of the people whom he is to address. He will thus be enabled to *adapt* his discourses, so far as he may without becoming personal, to their peculiar circumstances and wants. But let him urge nothing upon them but the great truths and duties and motives of the gospel. If other instrumentalities require to be employed, by all means leave them to the pastor.

Before dismissing the subject of exchanges, it may be

expected that I should say something as to the *time of travel* in accomplishing them. Shall ministers go to their exchanges on Saturday and return on Monday, or shall they pass back and forth on the morning and evening of the Sabbath? After all that I have heard and read on this subject, it seems to me that the question — so far as it can be a question with those who love and honor the Sabbath — is rather one of *distance*, or of *circumstances*, than of principle. The question is not whether the Sabbath is to be violated, but *how far* may a minister travel to the house of God — the place of worship where he is in duty bound to appear — without subjecting himself to the charge of profaning the Lord's Day? I know of no evangelical minister who would not think it right to travel two or three miles. Many think it right to travel five or six miles. Almost none (unless it be under very peculiar circumstances) would think it right to travel nine or ten miles. My own opinion is, that ministers are subject to the same law in this respect as other people. As the object of their travel is not secular, but *sacred*, — to go to the house of God, to attend public worship, and to attend *where their duty calls them*, — I see no reason why they may not rightfully go as far as it would be proper for other people to go for the same purpose. Nor do I see any reason why they may lawfully go further. Good people often go from three to six or seven miles to attend public worship; and are not censured, but commended, for so doing. And why should ministers be censured for doing the same thing? It should be added, however, that every good minister will have some regard to the state of feeling prevailing among his people with regard to the subject here considered. He will choose to err

(if he must err at all) on the side of strictness, rather than of laxness. He will prefer to subject himself to some inconvenience, rather than grieve the hearts of any of God's children, or do aught to encourage the wicked in their abuse of holy time.

I pass to the third and last general topic before us, — the duties of ministers to each other in their *public meetings*, and when brought together on *great public occasions*. The meetings to which I refer are of different kinds; as ministerial associations, church conferences, charitable societies, ecclesiastical councils, etc. They are more frequent now than they were in the days of our fathers, and bring the clergy of a city, a county, a state, and in some cases from several states, often together. The duties of ministers to each other on such occasions are in many respects the same as in their more private intercourse. They are to be kind, courteous, modest, retiring, — loving their brethren with pure hearts fervently; disposed to respect their rights, to be tender of their feelings, to be charitable in their judgments one of another, and to yield to every one his due measure of fraternal regard.

Ministers, on such occasions, are not to be officious, obtrusive, and forward; neither are they to be shrinkingly, childishly timid. They are not to force their sentiments upon a public meeting in place of the maturer judgments of older and wiser men; neither are they to see the right way forsaken, and the truth trampled on, without an honest, earnest effort to arrest the evil.

I have spoken already of the evils of pride and ambition among ministers; some affecting to be greater than others, and to know more. If this disposition is disgusting and afflictive in the private intercourse of ministers,

it is doubly so in their more public meetings. Two or three individuals of this stamp are enough, often, to spoil a public meeting, while they are sure to draw on themselves (as they ought to) the marked disapprobation of all around them.

In the discussions which take place at public meetings, while every one has a right to declare his sentiments freely, and to differ from any or all of his brethren, yet he should guard against manifesting or cherishing a contentious, disputatious spirit. He may differ from his brethren, and may say that he does, and may assign his reasons for so doing; but let it be manifest to all that he differs not from a desire of controversy, or to secure an opportunity for display, but that he is sincere and honest in the views he entertains, and that he proposes and urges them under solemn convictions of duty.

As ministers have a right to differ honestly one from another, and to express their differences, so it is one of their most important as well as difficult duties to bear contradiction with patience, and to reply to it (if a reply is demanded) with kindness and candor. For one to become excited in the progress of discussion, and lose his temper, and speak unadvisedly with his lips, is not only to disgrace himself and the ministry, but to make all around him unhappy. Ministers of an excitable temper, and who are fond of debate, have reason to be guarded in this respect, and to set a prayerful watch over their own spirits.

The public meetings of ministers, when characterized, as they should be, by intelligence, kindness, courtesy, benevolence, — free from disturbing, distracting influences; every one standing in his lot and doing his

duty, — are occasions not only of much interest, but happiness. They are occasions when the great concerns of Christ's kingdom are considered, and measures are adopted with a view to their advancement. They are occasions over which the Holy Spirit presides, with which the blessed angels mingle, and on which the Saviour himself looks down from heaven with complacent love.

I only add, in conclusion, that the intercourse of students, in a course of preparation for the gospel ministry, should be, in most respects, like that of ministers; and the duties they owe one to another are in general the same that have been considered. Professed brethren in Christ, they are looking forward together to a most sacred and responsible office, and are united in their endeavors to qualify themselves for the discharge of its solemn duties. Certainly they should be to each other the objects of much interest, of sincere affection, and of earnest prayer. They should be ready to give and receive advice; to afford mutual assistance when required; to watch over one another in love; and to administer (if need be) faithful admonition or reproof. They should bear one another's burthens, be mutual helpers under trials, and participate alike in each other's sorrows and joys.

The members of a theological seminary are a community by themselves. They are, or should be, a holy community. There should be among them no "envyings, strifes, backbitings, whisperings;" no suspicions and jealousies, none of the workings of ambition and pride; but the Holy Spirit of God should rest down upon them, and the mild, gentle, peaceful, heavenly spirit of the gospel should fill all their hearts. With a

state of feeling such as this pervading the entire community, how happy a seminary-life must be! and the more happy, the more nearly it resembles this. It being the business of each day to study God's blessed Word, to investigate his truth and will, and seek a preparation for the holy duties of the ministry, the inmates of a theological seminary have peculiar *advantages* for high attainments in the spiritual life. They are under special obligations to *make* such attainments. The church expects this of them. Their God and Saviour expects the same. May these reasonable expectations, my young brethren, all be realized in you. And may this sacred seminary become and remain that holy, spiritual, happy place which has been described.

## LECTURE XX.

### DUTIES OF THE PASTOR TOWARDS OTHER DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS.

THE EVANGELICAL AND UNEVANGELICAL — BENEFITS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND INTERCOURSE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE AGREED IN ESSENTIAL TRUTH — OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

PERHAPS there never was an age or a country in which were so many different sects of professing Christians as may be found in our own country at the present time. The origin of these sects may be traced to different causes; some to fanaticism, some to the worldly interest or ambition of their leaders, but more to different modes and habits of thought, and to that unrestricted liberty of opinion and expression which is here enjoyed.

The existence of so many different sects is doubtless in itself an evil. It would be better if on the great subject of religion we could all be united, “in the same mind and the same judgment.” The *results* of our divisions, too, are frequently unhappy. A bitter, selfish, sectarian spirit is engendered; and people are necessitated often to sustain two or three separate places and forms of worship, when otherwise they might be as well accommodated with one.

But great as these evils may be, they are more tolerable than some of the remedies for sectarianism which



in other ages, and in some other parts of the world, have been applied. They are more tolerable than such a degree of mental indolence and ignorance as should put an end to inquiry and consequent diversity of opinion; just as all colors are found to agree in the dark. They are more tolerable than the inquisition, the star-chamber, the faggot, and the rack, with which sectarianism has been so often punished, and attempted to be subdued.

Whatever may be thought as to the origin and influence of our different sects and denominations in religion, it is a *fact* that they exist; and their existence is an important item in that train of circumstances which go to modify the duties of the minister of Christ. He has duties to perform in regard not only to neighboring churches and ministers of his own denomination, but to those of *other* denominations. This latter class of duties it is proposed now to consider.

The denominations of Christians among us may be divided into two classes, — the evangelical and the unevangelical; or those who hold the essential, fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and those who do not. I referred to the distinction between essential and unessential doctrines in my last Lecture. There obviously is such a distinction; and so the matter is understood by perhaps all who bear the Christian name. Some make a longer list of essential doctrines than others; but all agree that there are *some* points which must be considered as vital to the gospel; so much so, that, where these are rejected, Christianity is virtually rejected with them.

Among the doctrines considered as essential by evangelical Christians, are the trinity, the divinity and

atonement of Christ, the entire depravity of the unrenewed man, regeneration by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, a general judgment, and a state of endless rewards and punishments. Those persons who receive or reject one of these doctrines, more commonly receive or reject them all; and those who reject all, or a considerable part of them, must certainly be regarded as rejecting the gospel. Remove these doctrines from the Bible, and there is no more gospel there. Remove them from the mind and heart of the student of the Bible, and there is no gospel left to him. Remove them from the creed of a church, and it is no longer a Christian church. Remove them from the creed of a minister, and he may call himself by what name he pleases: he is no longer a minister of Christ.

And yet there are professed ministers of Christ in whose creed these great and essential doctrines find no place. They disbelieve them, reject them, argue against them, and endeavor to prevent their reception by others. How shall such ministers be regarded and treated by the faithful evangelical pastor?

He will of course treat them civilly, kindly, courteously, as *men*. He will not provoke controversy with them, or speak evil of them, or give them any just occasion to speak evil of him. He will be ready to perform kind offices for them, and to accept kind offices in return. In all his intercourse with them, and demeanor towards them, he will study to acquit himself as a good neighbor, citizen, and friend.

But in this direction he can go no further. Here he must stop. As he does not regard them as *ministers of Christ*, of course he can do nothing which shall be un-

derstood as recognizing or acknowledging them in this character. He cannot exchange pulpits with them ; or invite them to his pulpit ; or go to their communion ; or, give letters of dismissal and recommendation to their churches, or receive and act upon such letters in return ; or acknowledge the validity of their baptisms ; or, in short, do anything which, as I said before, shall be understood as recognizing and admitting their proper *ministerial character*. He may not judge them, or persecute them, or interfere in any way with their liberty of thought, speech, or action, provided they demean themselves as good citizens, and do nothing to disturb the peace of society. He may not encroach upon their personal or official rights, or quietly see any such encroachment made upon them by others. He is to indulge no feelings towards them but those of kindness and benevolence, wishing them well, and seeking by all methods to promote their spiritual and eternal good. He is to pity them, and pray for them, and wait and hope for their conversion. But in their present state of mind and character, in the relations in which they now stand, he cannot bid them godspeed, as *ministers of Christ*, or acknowledge them by word or deed, as fellow-laborers in his Master's vineyard.

Thus far the duty of a minister is clear, — too clear to stand in need of illustration or argument. But there are other questions relating to the subject the solution of which is not so obvious.

1. May the evangelical minister, if invited, go into the pulpit of the Unitarian or Universalist and preach to his people ? I answer, Yes ; if it be understood that the invitation is not to be reciprocated on his part. Why may he not preach, if the way is open, to a con-

gregation of Universalists? He is bound by his commission, so far as he has opportunity, to preach the gospel to every creature.

2. May the evangelical minister unite with those whom he regards as heretics, in attending funerals, literary societies, temperance meetings, etc? I answer, Yes; so far as he can without recognizing them as ministers of Christ. But when requested to do or to suffer what would clearly imply such a recognition (and he must judge as to this in view of circumstances) he is bound in all consistency and conscience to stop. Nor is he to be reproached or blamed for so doing. So far from this, he is to be respected. And he *will* be respected, by men of all persuasions who are capable of understanding his position, and of appreciating the obligations which necessarily grow out of it.

3. May an evangelical minister be partner in a house of worship with those whom he regards as heretics? To this I answer, that such partnerships are not in themselves desirable; nor have they in general been found to be profitable. And yet I see no inconsistency in them, provided the arrangement is a settled one, and is well understood. I am pastor of a congregation which owns half a meeting-house; the other half being owned by Universalists. By a settled contract, well understood, I am to preach in the house one Sabbath, and the Universalist minister the next. I see not that such an arrangement implies any Christian fellowship with the Universalist more than if we occupied separate houses. The place of worship is mine one Sabbath; it is his the next. I have no responsibility in regard to it on his day, nor he on mine.

In each of the cases that have been considered, the

heresy involved is supposed to be clear and unquestionable. There are other cases where this is doubtful. The individual in question is not full and decided in his reception of evangelical truth ; nor is he full and decided in the rejection of it. His position, his creed, his ministerial character and claims, are all doubtful.

With respect to cases of this description, no certain decisive rules can be given. They are *doubtful* cases, and of course do not fall under the province of rules. The principles laid down may help to a solution of them ; but they must be determined on the spot, in view of circumstances.

But there are sects of professing Christians who agree in holding what may be regarded as the essential doctrines of the gospel. They differ about rites and forms, government and discipline, and about some of the minor doctrines of religion ; and so widely differ as to render it expedient that they should belong to separate organizations. Yet they unite in holding *the Head*. They agree in the essentials of Christian doctrine and experience, and regard each other as brethren in the Lord. How shall the faithful Congregational pastor treat brethren and ministers such as these ?

Some things in regard to his mode of treating them are very obvious. He is not to hate them, oppose them, or speak evil of them. He is not to despise or disregard them, or by insidious methods to endeavor to undermine them ; and draw away their people from them. He is not to interfere with *their* proper concerns, or suffer them (if he can prevent it) to interfere with his. He is to know his own business, and do it ; and leave them to attend to theirs.

At the same time, he is not to stand entirely aloof

from them, and feel and manifest no interest in them. He *ought* to feel an interest in them. They are his fellow-creatures, under the government of the same God, and bound with him to the same judgment. They are *more* than his fellow-creatures: they are, he has reason to hope, his *brethren in Christ*. He *ought*, then, to love them, to notice them, and to seek their good. He ought to respect their persons and their rights, and to do unto them, in all things, as he would that they should do to him.

In his regard for them, however, he is not to seek or urge a union with them, any further than this can be effected *consistently* and *cordially*. Some ministers, in their zeal for union, have defeated their own object, and injured themselves. They have caused their motives to be suspected; or have had recourse to measures which the wise and good of neither party could approve. Union among Christians is indeed desirable, — a thing to be earnestly sought and prayed for. “That they all may be *one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one in us*; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” But there are some things even more desirable than union; and union may be honestly sought, and often has been, in ways which tended only to division. Principle is to be valued above union, always. Hence, in our endeavors for union we are not to sacrifice important principles; nor are we to expect this of others. Nor is much value to be set upon an outward, formal, *paper* union; while in feeling and principle the parties disagree. Formulas of concord, comprehensions, articles of studied but ambiguous import, have often been resorted to as instruments of union; but they have generally exploded in a little

time, and in place of one rent have resulted in many. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" — agreed, not in sound only, but in sense; not in words, but in principle and spirit. If Christians are not thus agreed, the closer they are bound together the worse it will be for them. If they are not one in principle and heart, their peace and edification require that they be a little separated.

These remarks are intended to show that though the Christian pastor is to love his brethren of other denominations, and feel interested in them, and pray for them, still he is not to press the matter of union with them any further or faster than this can be brought about consistently and cordially.

Without aiming at a formal and perfect union, there are various ways in which the faithful minister may have *fellowship* with his Christian brethren of other denominations. He may regard their churches as churches of Christ; and may be ready to perform for them any kind fraternal office which propriety admits and circumstances may demand. He may commune with them at the Lord's Table, and may admit their members to his communion. He may dismiss and recommend to their fellowship those of his brethren who desire it, and may receive letters of dismissal and recommendation from them. He may unite with them in meetings for religious conference and prayer; may seek and cultivate Christian acquaintance; may endeavor, in these ways, to remove misapprehension and overcome prejudice; and may cherish and exemplify a truly liberal and catholic spirit.

The evangelical pastor should be liberal, not only in his Christian fellowship, but his *ministerial intercourse*.

He may regard and treat the ministers of other denominations who agree with him in the essentials of religion, as proper ministers of Christ. As such, he may associate with them in religious meetings; he may occasionally exchange pulpits with them; he may unite with them in various objects of public morality and religious charity; he may regard as valid their ministerial acts. In short, though disconnected to a certain extent in form as well as in fact; though maintaining for the present separate organizations; the ministers and members of evangelical churches are, in the most important particulars, *one*. They are one in the belief of essential religious truth; one in Christian experience; one in hope, in labor, in end, and aim. They serve one Master, even Christ; they travel the same road; they are expecting to meet in the same everlasting home. Let them see to it, then, that they "fall not out by the way." "Whereto they have attained, let them walk by the same rule; let them mind the same thing;" and in respect to those points about which they at present differ, God shall sooner or later "reveal even these unto them."

The *benefits* of mutual fellowship and intercourse among evangelical churches and ministers of different denominations, so far as this can be effected without abandonment of principle, are obvious and great. In this way the parties become better acquainted. They better understand how far they are agreed, and wherein they differ; and in speaking of each other's peculiarities will be less liable to the charge of perversion and misrepresentation. In this way mutual prejudices will be diminished; Christian love increased; the parties will come to feel a deeper interest in each other's welfare;



and the spirit of sectarianism — that demon of all others the most difficult to be ejected — will gradually lose its power.

In short, by such intercourse and fellowship Christians of different denominations manifest to the world their *essential unity*. They contradict the scandal so often poured upon them, that they are broken up into innumerable divisions, which do nothing but bite and devour one another. They manifest (what is true) that the differences among evangelical Christians are much less than is commonly supposed; that in the most important respects they are one; and that they can and will exert a united influence in promoting the cause of Christ, and hastening its predicted triumphs in the earth.

It has been objected, that by holding fellowship with Christians of other denominations, we become the abettors of their errors. But this, I am sure, is not the case. There are two views to be taken of this matter; and two distinct manifestations to be made. In the first place, between the members and ministers of the several evangelical denominations there are *honest differences of opinion*; and this fact is to be suitably manifested. Again: they are *united* in the more essential principles of religion. Here is another important fact; and this, like the former, is to be suitably manifested. The first manifestation is truly made in their separate organizations; in their being and continuing different denominations; and in the discussions which are occasionally had of their respective points of difference. The second manifestation is truly made in their maintaining, so far as this can be done consistently and properly, Christian fellowship. Were it not for this fellowship, there would be a manifestation only of their

*differences*; which would be but a partial exhibition of the truth. So, on the other hand, were it not for their separate organizations and discussions, there would be a *covering up* of their differences which would be equally far from a full and honest manifestation of the truth. But by their continuing to worship as different denominations and yet holding fellowship one with another, so far from abetting one another's errors, they show forth to the world the entire honest truth respecting themselves. All around them see and know that they are not united in *everything*, but that they are united in *many things*; that they differ in unessential points, but are agreed in whatever is essential to piety and godliness. In this way, the real facts of the case, one way and the other, are honestly exhibited to the world.

It has sometimes been doubted whether evangelical ministers of different denominations ought publicly to discuss their several peculiarities; whether it would not be better to drop them, conceal them, and bury them forever out of sight. In reply to this I would observe that there has been enough, and more than enough, of angry discussion, of special pleading, of arguing, not for truth, but for victory. It is high time that discussions of this sort — that reproach, retort, and sectarian wrangling — were forever done away. I would also remark, that the differences among Christians should not be *disproportionately* discussed, — discussed beyond their relative importance, — to the neglect of the weightier matters of the gospel. But that these peculiarities should be kept out of sight, and no more be heard of, is not only impossible, but, as it seems to me, undesirable. How is the truth ever to be elicited, so that Christians shall see eye to eye, but by inquiry and discus-

sion? Besides, the discussion of differences, if pursued in a proper spirit, and for the right end, is not unfavorable to Christian progress, and need be no interruption of mutual love. Christians ought to be able to discuss their differences in a spirit of candor, affection and forbearance; and when they come to be examined in this way, the probability is that they will ere long terminate.

The inquiry is often suggested, whether *direct* efforts ought not to be made to put an end to all differences among evangelical Christians, and unite them under one name, and in one vast, comprehensive denomination. Much that might be said in answer to this inquiry has been already offered. A *forced* union, obviously, would be to no purpose; and neither would a *hollow, hypocritical* union. And my own opinion is, that any *direct* efforts to this end would be very likely to defeat themselves. More can be done, probably, by *indirect* efforts; — by making the denominations better acquainted; by bringing them into a closer fellowship; by removing misapprehension, disarming prejudice, and leading them to discuss their differences with more candor and kindness; by awakening a mutual interest and love. It will be the part of wise men to take the world as it is, and make it as much better as they can. And probably the more important inquiry for Christians now is, How shall we get along with our several denominations so as to have the least friction, and the most of hearty, effective coöperation? rather than this: How shall we put an end, in the shortest time, to all differences among evangelical Christians, and unite them in one general denomination? The former of these questions is one of great importance, as it stands related to the comfort and edification of Christians, and to the ad-

vancement of Christ's kingdom in the earth ; and probably the best answer to this question would be really the best answer to the other ; — the indirect method being more expeditious than the direct for bringing about a general and perfect union among the people of God.

I close with a single additional remark. The duties of pastors in regard to other denominations are comparatively easy in large cities, or in places where the population is numerous, where each has room to operate freely without crowding or jostling his neighbor. Under such circumstances the sectarian feeling scarcely shows itself, and one might almost suspect that it did not exist. It is in our country towns and smaller villages, nearly all of which are more or less divided, that the duties which have been inculcated will be found the most difficult. In such places the societies are for the most part small. Every individual is committed and counted, and is thought to be of importance somewhere. Changes cannot take place without exciting unpleasant feelings, and leading to various inquiry and conversation. Ministers, in such places, are closely watched ; and to proceed kindly and harmoniously, " giving none offence, either to Jew or Gentile, or to the church of God," is no easy matter. And yet the faithful pastor will endeavor to do his duty. He will need wisdom from above, and he will earnestly seek it. He will be more afraid of doing wrong than suffering wrong. He will spurn all seeming advantages which can be gained only by underhanded measures, and commit himself and his way to the Lord.

May the great Lord of the harvest send many such laborers into his vineyard ; and may the breaches which have so long disfigured the church of Christ be speedily and thoroughly healed !

## LECTURE XXI.

### THE PASTOR'S DUTIES TO HIMSELF.

TO THE BODY AND THE SOUL—TEMPERANCE, CARE OF HEALTH—CULTIVATION OF THE INTELLECT, THE CONSCIENCE, AND THE HEART—SELF-EXAMINATION, WATCHFULNESS, SELF-CONTROL, ETC.

EVERY person is charged with important duties not only to his Creator and his fellow-creatures, but to himself. This class of duties is binding equally upon ministers as upon others; and the consequences of neglecting them on the part of ministers are even more disastrous than in the case of any other man whatever. Accordingly, ministers are repeatedly and solemnly called to the performance of these duties in the holy Scriptures. “Take heed *unto thyself* and to thy doctrine.” “Take heed *unto yourselves*, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”

It is my purpose in this Lecture to point out some of the duties which the pastor owes to himself, and to urge the importance of a faithful discharge of them. This is the more necessary because pastors have many inducements, and some that are peculiar to themselves, to neglect the class of duties of which I here speak. Being so much occupied with the externals of religion, or with things external to themselves, they are liable to forget, or to overlook, their own deep personal interest

in the subject. Being so continually engaged in ministering to the souls of others, they are in great danger of neglecting their own. Many a minister has had occasion to lament, in bitterness of spirit, "They made me a keeper of the vineyards; but *mine own vineyard have I not kept.*"

The duties which ministers owe to themselves may be considered under two divisions, — the one relating to the body, and the other to the soul. Their duties to the body are of an important character, and are set forth with sufficient clearness in the sacred volume. They are not, like a class of religionists in past ages, to undervalue and neglect the body. They are not to regard it as the prison and corrupter of the soul, and, under this impression, to deform and macerate it, and practice upon it all kinds of austerities. Such practices, though entered upon as having great merit, are in reality *great sins*; grievous offences against both our Creator and ourselves. The body, though but the habitation of the soul, and of course inferior to it, is yet a noble structure — a wonderful structure — indispensable to our very existence in this world, and altogether worthy of its Creator.

It is not to be disguised, however, that the body, through the force of indwelling corruption, becomes often the seducer and tempter of the soul, and needs to be guarded with a sleepless vigilance. To some men, in particular, the bodily appetites, ever clamorous for indulgence, are among their most powerful temptations to sin. Even the great Apostle of the Gentiles found it necessary to "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest, having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway." The Apostle Peter also exhorts his brethren to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war

against the soul." Temperance, which is a duty insisted on in the Scriptures, and expressly enjoined on the ministers of Christ, is one which has respect primarily to the body. Those given to intemperance, whether in eating or drinking, are chargeable, in the first instance, with abusing and corrupting the body, and through it with debasing and ruining the soul.

Christians are instructed in the Scriptures to regard their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, and as such to preserve them in all purity and honor. They are to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service;" and are to "glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits, which are God's." The duties here enjoined, which are incumbent on all men, I hardly need say are specially binding upon the ministers of Christ. God "will be sanctified *in them that come near him*, and before all the people will he be glorified." It was among the canons of his ancient church, "*Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.*"

It is a duty which ministers owe to themselves, and which has respect primarily to the body, to *take care of their health*. This is partly involved in what has been already said; but the great importance of the subject requires that it be dwelt upon more specifically and fully. A feeble, sickly, run-down minister, however good may be his intentions, must necessarily be inefficient. He will be able to do but little for his people. He will find himself fettered and embarrassed in all his attempts to do them good. And it will be easy for a minister, who neglects the proper precautions, to render himself feeble and sickly. Indeed, he will speedily and inevitably do this. Nature has prescribed rules in re-

spect to this matter, — rules relating to diet, exercise, exposure, study, — which she will not allow us to violate with impunity. And he who carelessly, needlessly violates them, becomes not only a sufferer, but a sinner. He throws away that which God has intrusted to him; a gift which he is, so far as possible, to preserve, and to consecrate wholly to the service of the gospel.

It is no part of my present object to prescribe rules for the preservation of health. Indeed, it is not likely that the same rules — unless it be those of a very general character — would in all cases apply. Every man who knows enough to be a minister of Christ, will soon learn how to take care of himself; and every good man will feel under obligations to do it, not only for his own sake, but for that of the church. He will do what he can to preserve a sound mind in a sound body, that so he may, with the greater efficiency, devote himself to the service of Christ and his people.

But ministers owe something to their *minds* as well as their bodies; and it is time that we turn to this largest and most important class of their personal duties.

They are under obligations, first of all, to *cultivate* and *improve* their minds. They are to labor assiduously, by reading and reflection, by study and research, to store their minds with heavenly truth, that so they may be able to instruct and profit others. The drafts upon the resources of a minister, in the ordinary labors of the parish and pulpit, are so incessant and so great that no amount of preparatory education will suffice him but a little while. His reservoir, at the outset, may be great and full, but the streams perpetually issuing from it will soon exhaust it, unless streams of equal magni-



tude are running in. The itinerant preacher may flourish about with his little budget of sermons, and with less study ; but to the settled pastor there is no alternative. He *must* read and reflect, he must store and discipline his mind, or he must inevitably *run out* and come to nothing.

There is another reason why a minister must study closely and systematically, if he would accomplish much in the service of Christ. His intellectual machinery must be kept *bright with use*, if it is expected to run well. It must be kept *wound up* and in *order*, if it is to run at all. Let it become rusty by disuse and run down by neglect, — and it will soon fall into this state if disused and neglected, — and so far as intellectual power is concerned, the man is gone. He can do little or nothing, intellectually, to interest his people, or to advance the cause of truth. He may be a good man, and may desire to do a great deal of good in the church and world ; but this is no longer in his power. He might almost as well study without any mind, as with a mind unfurnished, undisciplined, and unfitted by neglect for continued and vigorous exertion.

In discharging his duties to himself, every minister is bound to look well to his *conscience*. This implies three things ; namely, that his conscience be duly enlightened, that it be sensitive and tender, and that it be faithfully consulted and obeyed. In the first place, let the minister see to it that his conscience is *enlightened*. It needs light. It needs the *true* light. It can no more discover moral truth in the dark, and accurately decide moral questions, than the understanding can discover intellectual truth, and decide questions in metaphysics. There can hardly be a more dangerous companion for a

minister of the gospel than a wrongly-instructed, misguided conscience. It is dangerous, because it is always with him, and because it will lead him continually and conscientiously astray. Some of the most mischievous men in the church, and the most difficult to be dealt with, are those who are conscientiously in the wrong. They *think* they are in the right, and cannot be beat out of it. They feel conscience-bound to the course they are pursuing. And yet they are all the while doing more hurt than good, and making trouble for their wiser brethren.

But the conscience of a minister should be not only enlightened, but *tender*. It should be in a situation to *feel*, and to feel strongly, the force of moral obligation. It should be in a situation to smile complacently and diffuse the peace of heaven through the soul, in the act of doing right; and when wronged and violated, to fill it with remorse and anguish. In tenderness of sensibility it should be like the delicate eyeball, on which the least mote is sufficient to inflict a pang, and draw forth a tear. A conscience thus trained and cultivated is an engine of great power. It holds its possessor firmly to the path of right, and renders him all but invincible to the shafts and seductions of the wicked one.

But conscience, however enlightened and cultivated, will be of little importance to us unless *faithfully consulted*. And here is a point where we are exceedingly liable to fail. Many fail here, because they substitute and consult something else in place of conscience. They set up their interests, their prejudices, their party feelings, their perverse wills, or something equally improper, and call it conscience, and appeal to it as the arbiter of

right and wrong. No wonder they come to strange and perverse conclusions. This seems to have been the case with Paul, while a persecutor of the church. He had taken counsel of his prejudices and party zeal in place of conscience, and so he "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

In all doubtful matters of importance we should give conscience time and opportunity to gather light, and form a decision previous to action. We should follow its dictates in the moment of action. We should candidly review the case when past, that conscience may be fully satisfied, and that its smile of approbation may be bestowed. In this way we may have peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is in this way, too, that conscience may best be preserved in a state to do its office, and to do it well.

But the point of all others the most important to be cared for by every minister of Christ, is *the heart*. For this is the great centre of motion. This, in a moral view, constitutes *the man*. "As a man thinketh *in his heart*, so is he." Let the heart, then, be kept "with all diligence, since out of it are the issues of life."

The due care and keeping of the heart involve several specific duties; and first, that of *self-examination*. This is repeatedly and earnestly enjoined upon us in the Scriptures. It is rendered necessary by the *deceitfulness* of the human heart. It often seems to its possessor to be much better than it is. It puts on appearances which are not justified by the reality.

Our moral affections are of different classes, some of which may be said to lie deeper in the soul than others. Of these, the interior are the more important; as they

constitute the secret springs of action — the hidden source from which everything of a moral nature flows. These secret sources require to be closely and prayerfully investigated. No person can be said to know himself until he has come to a knowledge of these. They often constitute a world of iniquity, of which their possessor lives and dies in ignorance.

But our hearts require scrutiny, not only from the fact that the interior affections are often concealed, but because those which are more obvious are continually assuming false appearances. Every grace of the Christian has its counterfeit, which in some points resembles it, though clearly and widely distinguishable from it. There is a selfish love, as well as a holy love; a selfish repentance, as well as a holy repentance; a selfish faith, hope and joy, as well as those which are holy and acceptable in the sight of God. This being the case, unless we practice habitual self-examination, looking closely into the heart, and into the depths of it, that we may discover what is there, and compare everything with the standard of God's truth, we are liable to be continually and fatally deceived. We shall think we are something when we are nothing, and have a name to live when we are dead.

In order that the work of self-examination may be properly performed, it is necessary that we have *seasons* for it when it may be taken up thoroughly and systematically. It is still more important that we form the habit, while occupied in the ordinary pursuits of life, of keeping the eye open upon our hearts, and noting the developments which are there exhibited. In these unguarded moments, the secrets of the heart will be more likely to show themselves, than when we sit down

in a formal manner to search for them. But it is of all things most important that we accompany all these efforts at self-examination with earnest prayer. For it is the prerogative of God, after all, to search the heart and try the reins. He only is competent to search it to the bottom, and know infallibly what is there. We owe it to ourselves, therefore, to our own personal interest and safety, to pray with the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Another duty of the minister, involved in the more general one of keeping the heart, is that of *watchfulness*. This, like the former, is an oft-enjoined duty of the Scriptures. "*Watch*, therefore, in all things." "Be ye, therefore, sober, and *watch* unto prayer." The necessity for this duty lies in the fact, that our truant hearts are continually bent on going astray, and unless closely watched, will certainly wander to our ruin. We can have no security in trusting to our own hearts. "He that trusteth his own heart, is a fool."

There is still another reason for incessant watchfulness. We have a sleepless adversary, who is ever watching us, and who, if he finds us off our guard, will make the most of his opportunity to seduce and destroy. This adversary is one of great subtilty and power; and the more to be dreaded because he is an enemy in the dark. He sees us, though we do not see him; knows all our weak sides and exposed points; and will be sure to assail us when and where he can accomplish his malicious purpose to the best advantage. In the presence of such an enemy it is madness for any Christian, and more especially for the Christian minister, to fall asleep.

Still another duty which the minister is to perform, in respect to his *heart*,—his new and holy *affections*,—is to cultivate them. All the graces of the Christian should be assiduously cultivated, that they may not only exist, but flourish in the soul; that he may grow not only in knowledge, but in grace. The heart should be cultivated, not less, certainly, than the understanding; and the means of culture, and the methods of it, are as sure in the former case as in the latter. And the consequences of neglect are unspeakably more disastrous. A man may neglect his understanding, and yet not utterly lose his soul; but if the *heart* is neglected and suffered to lie waste—if, like the field of the slothful, this is “grown all over with thorns, and covered with nettles, and the stone wall thereof is broken down”—there is then no redeeming property left. The more a man knows in this case, the worse it may be for him. The higher he is exalted, in point of intellectual cultivation and power, the greater will be his fall, and the deeper his ruin.

The cultivation and growth of holy affections on the part of a minister, will give interest to all his public performances, and render them easy to himself. His prayers will be something more than a form of words. There will be heart in them—a warm and a full heart; and they will be sure to awaken sympathy, and draw forth corresponding emotions in the hearts of others. And the same will be true of his preaching, his conversation, his daily life, his various duties in the study, in the closet, in his family, and before the world. These will all be easy to himself, because they flow forth from the abundance of the heart. At the same time, he will have the surest guaranty that they will be acceptable and profitable to the people of God.

Of the means of cultivating holy affections I need not speak at length. They are in general *the means of grace*,—those which God has appointed for this very purpose, and which he will not suffer to be faithfully used in vain. Let the minister accustom himself often to study his Bible and other religious books, not critically, but devotionally; in the same spirit let him go to the religious meeting, to the house of God, and to the Lord's Table; let his conversation with Christian friends be for the most part spiritual, devotional, experimental; above all, let him have much communion with God in secret; and his soul will become like a watered garden; his graces will spring up and flourish; he will be preparing, in the best manner possible, for the faithful and successful discharge of his duties here, and for the crown of righteousness to be bestowed hereafter.

I have dwelt the longer on those duties which have a more immediate respect to the heart, because of their paramount, indispensable importance. Unless these are performed, nothing is performed as it should be. Where these are neglected, everything else is as the sounding brass and the tinkling symbol.

Other duties which the minister of the gospel owes to himself may be classed under the general head of *self-control*. In the largest sense of the term this involves the whole range of mental and moral discipline. The man who has a perfect control of himself will be able to direct his *thoughts* very much at will; to give his attention to a subject, or to withhold it, according to his pleasure. He will be able, also, to control his feelings, and all his mental exercises and affections, according to the laws which God has given. Such a

degree of self-government, viewed both in its intellectual and moral bearings, is indeed a mighty achievement. It renders him who has attained to it but little lower than the angels.

The term self-government is often used, however, in a more restricted sense; including a due control of the appetites and passions, of the bodily faculties generally, and more especially of that little member the tongue. Of the importance of keeping our sensual appetites under a due control, I have already spoken. No one who in the matter of self-government has not proceeded as far as this,—and this, under all circumstances, is no slight attainment,—ought to consider himself as called or qualified to go into the ministry. But to be able to control our *passions* is a higher attainment. “He that is slow to anger,” says Solomon, “is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city.” And again: “He that hath *no rule over his own spirit* is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” How deplorable to see a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus in this predicament! Having no rule over his own spirit! Ready to fly in a passion at the least supposed neglect or affront, and maltreat and abuse those whom he is bound to love, and to whom he ought to be an example! Surely, such a minister hath need to learn again what be the first principles of that holy religion which he professes to teach.

Those who are not able to control their passions are generally unable to control their tongues. Inflamed passion will find vent somewhere; and it usually finds it in violent, reproachful, and bitter words. You all know how pointedly such a habit is condemned in the



Bible, and how inconsistent it is with the character of a minister of Christ. In enumerating the characteristics of a good pastor, Paul says, expressly; "Not soon angry," "not a brawler." James sets forth in the most pointed and solemn manner the evils of the un-governed tongue. "It is a fire; a world of iniquity." "It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." "It defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell." "If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and *bridleth not his tongue*, that man's religion is vain."

Self-government, in the sense in which we here use the term, is ordinarily very much the result of habit. A person whose disposition is naturally mild, by yielding to his passions and giving license to his tongue, will become in a little time fiery, wrathful, boisterous, and profane; whereas an individual of the opposite spirit, by habitual watchfulness and restraint, may conquer the infelicities of his natural temperament, and become mild, gentle, and agreeable. Each victory gained will render the next more easy, until the enemy is finally vanquished, and the prize is won. And to the minister of Christ, to the youthful candidate for the ministry, this is an inestimable prize. Without it, — admitting the possibility of his piety, and his general good intentions, — he will be likely to do more hurt than good; while the possession of it will heighten the value of all his other good qualifications, whether of mind or heart, and render them more effective in the service of his Master.

I might dwell at much greater length upon that class of duties of which I have spoken, — the duties which a minister owes to himself. Indeed, in the largest sense

of the phrase, every duty devolving on him might be brought into this class, since every duty is a personal blessing to him who performs it; while he who sins in any way, "wrongeth his own soul." The duties of which I have spoken are among the more obvious of the class to which they belong. And every one must see that they are of the highest importance; — important to the minister personally, as to any other man; but more especially important to him on account of his station, his officé, and the influence he is to exert upon the church and the world. How is it possible for a person holding such an office, and exerting such an influence, to be negligent in those duties which he owes to himself! How can he consent to exhibit such an example to the world! And how can he think, if he does exhibit it, that the world will be benefited by anything he can say or do in the cause of religion! The Lord in mercy deliver his church from such intruders into the sacred office! The Lord strengthen and assist all who sustain this office, or are aspiring to it, to be faithful in the duties which they owe *to themselves*, — to their bodies and their souls; to their understandings, their consciences, and more especially to their hearts. So shall they be good ministers of Jesus Christ, — ornaments to their profession, blessings in the world, accepted of their Divine Master here, and prepared for his presence and kingdom hereafter.

## LECTURE XXII.

### THE PASTOR'S DUTIES TO HIS FAMILY.

SHOULD HAVE A FAMILY — CHOICE OF A COMPANION — DUTIES TO CHILDREN  
— MOTIVES TO FIDELITY IN THE DISCHARGE OF PARENTAL DUTIES.

It is assumed in the discussion on which we are now to enter, that in ordinary circumstances a pastor, a minister of the gospel, *should have a family*. And this assumption, I have no doubt, is well founded. The family state is the *natural* state of man. It is that for which he was constituted and made. Accordingly, we find marriage instituted, and the family relation established, in the very morning of our existence as a race. It follows, that those who pass through the ordinary course of life without families, place themselves, or are placed by circumstances, in an unnatural position. And this accounts for it that in most instances such persons come to be distinguished by peculiarities; and by *such* peculiarities as, in a minister of Christ, would serve to render him less agreeable, and might even go to impair his usefulness.

It is obvious, too, that in order to the best effect of his labors, a minister must be — what he is expressly required to be — an *example* to his flock. He is to be an example to them in all points, so far as his circumstances and theirs are in any degree alike. He is to be an example to them, as the *head of a family*, and is to

show them not only by instruction, but by actual experiment, how a family should be regulated, and what a Christian family should be. If his example in this respect is of the right character, it will add much weight to his public instructions on the subject. He can preach on the right training and education of children, without subjecting himself to the retort: "This is a matter about which you know nothing experimentally, and respecting which you have no right to speak."

The apostles of our Saviour had not been long dead, when that predicted heresy, "forbidding to marry," began to show itself in the church. Marriage was discountenanced, and celibacy was represented as a more holy state. The result was, that great numbers of both sexes refused to marry; seclusion and other austerities were introduced; and a foundation was laid for that odious and monstrous system of monkery which has continued to our own times. It was thought specially proper that clergymen should be unmarried men; though celibacy was not rigidly enforced upon them before the tenth or eleventh century. Since that period, every clergyman in the church of Rome, from the Pope to humblest priest, has been under the necessity of remaining unmarried. And this single regulation has been a source of intolerable corruption in that church, and of untold abominations and miseries in the world. As might be expected, this odious, unnatural, and corrupting regulation is signally rebuked in the Word of God. We are there told expressly that "marriage is honorable in *all*;" and, of course, in a clergyman. We there find that Peter, the falsely-alleged founder and first bishop of Rome, and on whom most of the arrogant pretensions of modern Popery are made to rest,

was a married man. It was Peter's wife's mother whom our Lord miraculously cured of a fever (Matt. viii. 14). We find that several of the other apostles — how many we know not — were also married, and continued to live with their wives, as did Peter with his, long after they had entered on the duties of the apostleship. In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a *wife*, as well as *other apostles*, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas," or Peter?

In his Epistles both to Timothy and Titus, Paul enjoins that the bishop or pastor should "be the husband of *one wife*;" which means something more than that he should not have *more than one*; but that, in ordinary cases, he should have *one*. And subsequent events have shown that there was good reason for such an apostolical canon, and that the wanton disregarding of it, and setting it aside, has been followed by incalculable evils. It is followed with evils, I think, in nearly all cases. I have known some highly respectable ministers who passed their lives in a state of celibacy; but I can hardly think of one whose character would not have been improved and his usefulness increased if, at a suitable period, he had placed himself at the head of a family. If any exception is to be made, it is in the case of itinerant preachers, who, like Paul and Timothy, have no settled home, and are not in circumstances to take the charge of a family if they had one: such, I have thought, may well be excused for not assuming responsibilities which they are not in circumstances to fulfil.

But, in all common cases, it is a settled point with me that the minister of Christ should have a family; and that, at a suitable time, he should take the requisite

steps for the accomplishment of this important object. He is to select some one of suitable age, character, and qualifications, to whom (if her consent and that of friends can be gained) he may unite himself in the most tender and intimate relation of life.

But let him enter upon this delicate matter with great circumspection, and with earnest prayer; for in regard both to his reputation, his comfort, and usefulness, it is undoubtedly among the most important transactions of his life. "Who can find a virtuous woman; for her price is above rubies? The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil, all the days of his life." A good wife is an incalculable treasure to any man, but more especially to the minister of Christ. Instances are not unfrequent where a very ordinary minister is made respectable, and useful to a people, chiefly through the energy and influence of his wife. On the other hand, a minister must have more than the ordinary measure of talents and learning, piety and gifts, not to be utterly broken down and spoiled through the influence of a weak, wasteful, meddling, and imprudent companion. "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but *a prudent wife is from the Lord.*" I cannot too deeply impress upon my hearers and readers the importance of deliberation and wisdom in regard to this matter. The question should be one of judgment, more than of fancy; and should be decided, not from the impulse of a moment, but with due consideration, and in the fear of God.

The Scriptures, which on all important subjects are "a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path," have not left us in the dark in regard to this matter.

They set forth abundantly the qualifications of the good wife; and, of course, the qualifications to be chiefly prized and sought for in the choice of a wife. This Solomon has done, in repeated instances, in the Book of Proverbs. This Paul has done in several of his Epistles. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." Paul directs that the wives of deacons (and *a fortiori* those of ministers) should be "grave, not slanderers,<sup>1</sup> sober, faithful in all things." He instructs the aged women, "that they be in behavior, as becometh godliness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." The Apostle Peter exhorts Christian wives to "be in subjection to their own husbands; that if any of them obey not the word, they may be won by the conversation of their wives; while they behold their chaste conversation, coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price."

In regard to the qualifications here set forth, I have only to say that they are not of my own prescribing.

<sup>1</sup> μη διαβολους, 1 Tim. iii. 11.

They are expressly enjoined in the book of God, and are of equal authority with any other part of that blessed volume. And the more nearly any female under the gospel conforms to them, the more truly Christian does she become in her deportment and character. And the more weight the young minister (or any other man) attaches to these qualifications, in selecting for himself a companion for life, the more truly happy will he be in his choice, and the greater reason he will have to expect the blessing of God upon it.

In the passages above quoted, the inspired writers lay no stress on certain qualifications which in the estimation of some are of the greatest value ; such as beauty, wit, and brilliant personal accomplishments. They have nothing to say in favor of these things ; though, to be sure, they say nothing against them. But the chief stress is laid, both negatively and positively, on other and more important matters. The good wife, such as is suitable for a minister of Christ, must not be a slanderer, or false accuser, or contentious. She must not be given to wine, or fond of external ornament and display. But she should be grave, sober, discreet, chaste, domestic and industrious in her habits, in behavior as becometh godliness, faithful in all things. She is, of course, to be *pious*, to have a *good heart*, and to act this out consistently in all the relations of life. She is to possess the ornament, — the richest that any female on earth can possess, — “ the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” and is to consult the wishes and happiness of her husband, so far as this can be done without displeasing Christ.

But I will not dwell longer on the qualifications of the pastor's wife. I have not intended to decide any-



thing of my own mind, but rather to bring together and digest the obvious teachings of the inspired writers on the subject.

We will now suppose the young minister to have passed through all the preliminary steps; to have become, not only a husband, but a parent; and to be established at the head of a family. What are some of the more important duties which he owes to his family, and more especially to his children?

One of the first of these duties, according to my understanding of the Scriptures, is to consecrate them to God *in baptism*. This is not the place to go into a discussion of the propriety of infant baptism. Suffice it to say, that I regard the church of God as the same in every age, and baptism as holding the same relation to the church and its covenant now that circumcision did under the former dispensation. Hence I deem it as much the duty and the privilege of the Christian parent to bring his child to baptism, as it was of the Jewish parent to present his for circumcision. In this solemn rite the Christian dedicates his child to God, and promises to train it up for God; and God promises on his part to be the God both of the parent and the child. "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." Viewed in this light, infant baptism is a solemn duty, and a precious privilege; and, as I said, it is one of the first duties which the parent is able to perform for his child. In reference to his own children, the pastor should perform it promptly and early, that he may in this respect, as well as in others, be an example to his flock.

It is the duty of the minister, as of every other parent, to *provide* for his children. This obligation is imposed

by nature, and is felt, not only by every tribe of the human race, but by every species of the brute creation. Everywhere the parent is taught to love its child, to care for it, and during the period of its helplessness to make provision for its wants. And this injunction of universal nature is clearly seconded by the voice of revelation. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."<sup>1</sup>

The duty here inculcated does not imply, on the one hand, that wealth is to be lavished upon children; that their pride is to be pampered and their fancies humored, to the injury both of their bodies and souls. Neither, on the other hand, does it bind the minister, or any one else, to the performance of impossibilities. The parent is to provide for his children *if he can*. He is to do all that he can do lawfully and honestly, to make a comfortable provision for their wants. This duty is so imperative as to justify a minister in turning aside, either partially or wholly, from the calls of his profession, if provision for his family can be made in no other way. But when a minister has done all that he can do, and his household is still unprovided for, his obligation does not go beyond his ability. The work of supply now devolves upon others. His family come into the number of those whom, as our Saviour says, we "have always with us," and to whom the hand of Christian charity is to be kindly and liberally extended.

Other duties of the minister to his family are those of *instruction, warning, counsel*. These should be commenced early, — as early as the infant mind is ca-

<sup>1</sup> This injunction may have a primary respect to poor relatives and widows, but by necessary implication includes dependent children.

pable of receiving them, — and should be continued steadily, assiduously, perseveringly. “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Religious instruction should be imparted to children in a way to be agreeable to them ; or, at least, so as not to be disagreeable. It is possible to interest and please young minds with instruction of this nature. And it is possible so to present it, — in such measure and manner, — as to make it repulsive and disgusting.

It is the duty of the pastor, not only to instruct his children in the family, but to take them early to the house of God and the Sabbath-school, and place them under the appointed means of grace. This should be done, not only for the personal benefit of the children, but as an example to others. He can hardly expect other parents to discharge their duties in this respect if he lives in the neglect of his.

Another indispensable duty of the minister to his children is that of *government*. This is much insisted on in the Scriptures, the Old Testament and the New, and frequent instruction is given as to the manner in which it is to be performed. The most important characteristics of family government are, that it should be *kind*, and yet *effectual*. In the first place it should be administered with uniform *kindness*. This is implied in a direction of the Apostle Paul — a direction so important in his estimation as to be given more than once in nearly the same words : “Fathers, *provoke not your children to anger*, lest they be discouraged.” If the government of a family is kind, it may be strict, and

the respect and affection of all concerned shall not thereby be diminished, but increased. But if it lack in the attribute of kindness, neither respect nor affection will be secured.

I have said that the government of a family should be *effectual*. What I mean is, that the *end* of it — subordination, submission, obedience — must be attained. There should be, of course, no unnecessary severity, but just enough of it to secure the great end in view. Authority is indispensable in the due regulation of a family ; and yet the exercise of *naked authority* should be, I think, as sparing as possible. Let everything be done that can be, by reason, by counsel, by encouragement, by reward ; but if nothing else will answer — if the end can be attained in no other way — there must be enough of authority in reserve to secure it, and to secure it promptly. Authority can now come forth from its hiding-place and be *effectual*, and yet no impression of unkindness be made. The subject of it, no less than the dispenser of it, shall see its necessity and respect its exercise.

It is a duty which ministers, as well as other men, owe to their children to educate them for *some laudable and useful employment*. The minister need not educate all his sons, or any of them, for the sacred profession. He should not, indeed, unless nature and grace shall have combined to qualify them for such an employment. It may not be best that he should give them even a liberal education ; but it will be his duty at a proper time to select for them some profession, some useful employment, and afford them such an education as will best qualify them for the business in which they are to engage. They should by no means be suffered to grow

up in indolence. They should not be left to arrive at the stature of men with no fixed and definite plan or purpose of life before them. At a suitable age, I repeat, their tastes, their capacities, their circumstances should be consulted, and some corresponding employment should be selected,—it may be one of the learned professions; it may be that of a merchant, mechanic, or farmer; and when the plan of life is formed, the course of education should be regulated accordingly. From the want of plan in regard to this matter, much time and labor are often wasted, children become discouraged, and habits are formed of a most unfavorable, if not of a positively corrupting character.

It is an obvious duty of the minister to his children to set before them an example of *sobriety*, of *industry*, and of *consistent piety*. The force of example is in all cases very great. The example of a pious, venerated parent, is all but omnipotent. The child must be hardened beyond the ordinary lot of fallen human nature not to be influenced by it. But the greater the influence of such example, the more important is it that it all be exerted in the right direction. A principal reason why the example of ministers and of other Christian parents is not more effective of good to their children, is, that it is so imperfect, inconsistent, and often self-contradictory.

Every other duty which the minister can perform for his children should be accompanied with *earnest prayer*. The work of training them up for God so as to fulfil, in some good measure, baptismal obligations, is a great and arduous work. The more experience the Christian parent has in the matter, the more will he be sensible of this, and the more he will feel the necessity of re-

pairing often to the throne of grace for help. Abraham prayed for his first-born son, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" Job presented burnt offerings for his children day by day; for he said, "It may be they have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Samuel was the child of many prayers, both before his birth and afterwards. And in all ages pious parents have prayed much for their children; and they ever *will* pray for them. Their feelings as well as their obligations impel to this; their duty can be discharged and the blessing of God secured in no other way. And they will not only pray *for* their children, but *with* them; that their little ones may have the benefit of their example in this respect, and may be themselves witnesses of the frequency and fervor with which their case is brought before God, and his blessing is supplicated on their behalf.

The motives to induce the pastor to be faithful to his children are more and greater than I shall have time to present. I might speak of his *love* to his children, and the desire he feels to see them pious, respectable, and useful in the world. I might dwell on his solemn covenant engagements,—those which were entered into when he consecrated his children to God, and which were publicly sealed in the waters of baptism. I might urge the promises of God for his encouragement,—promises made and often repeated under both dispensations: "I know Abraham, 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." "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children. . . .

that *they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.*" "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old *he will not depart from it.*" But all these would be *common* motives ; no more applicable to the minister of Christ than to every other Christian parent. There are other inducements which are more strictly peculiar.

The minister should be specially faithful in his duties to his children, and more particularly to his sons, because he is not in the most favorable circumstances for the discharge of these duties. This is a consideration not sufficiently pondered, I fear, either by ministers or others. The farmer can take his sons with him to the field, and so, in most cases, may the mechanic to his shop, and keep them under his own eye while engaged in the daily business of life. But not so the minister of Christ. He cannot take his sons with him into the study, nor in his parochial visits from house to house. The consequence is, that they must be left at home or be kept at school ; and from the nature of the case the latter cannot be done continuously. They soon arrive at an age when the mother cannot have them perpetually under her eye, and they are left too much to themselves. They are comparatively exempt from parental inspection at a period when they require its most vigilant exercise. The bare suggestion of this difficulty, which is a *real* one, should lead all those who are interested in it, whether directly or remotely, to be on their guard, and to use their best endeavors to overcome it. It cannot, perhaps, be wholly removed, but it may be measurably overcome ; and every minister who is a parent will feel bound to exert himself to the utmost in this matter. In his zeal to do good to others

and to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom in the world, his own family must not be neglected.

Another reason for strict watchfulness and faithfulness on the part of ministers in respect to the class of duties of which I have spoken, grows out of the fact that they are *strictly watched*. As they ought to be examples to their respective flocks, so their flocks expect that they *will be* examples. They look up to them as such. They watch them as such. And if they see gross negligence on the part of their minister, and palpable improprieties on the part of his children, these are noted and talked about, and unfavorable impressions are soon made. This is the reason, no doubt, for the unfounded assertion so often uttered, that minister's children do not behave as well as other children. They are more watched than other children, and instances of misbehavior are made the subject of more severe and extended remark. The consideration here suggested should induce all ministers to be very watchful and faithful in the discharge of the duties which they owe to their children. Their palpable failures, if they have any, will be noted by many eyes, and the reputation both of themselves and their families will suffer.

Nor will they suffer only in their reputation. Their usefulness will in this way be materially diminished. Their bad examples will be followed. They will be much more likely to be followed than their good ones. As they neglect their children, others will neglect theirs; and will appeal to them in justification of their conduct. Besides, with what face can a minister preach on the faithful discharge of parental duties, when he is known to be palpably deficient in these duties himself? With what consistency can he urge others to the performance



of duties of which he is himself notoriously neglectful?

I urge but another inducement to parental fidelity on the part of ministers, and this is *the blessed results which will be likely to follow*. I would not say that God has never seen fit to try a watchful, consistent, faithful parent with ungodly children, — children who have been a disgrace both to themselves and to him; but such cases, I am persuaded, are very uncommon. They are so infrequent as not to be calculated on. God's promises in reference to this matter *mean* something. His covenant with the faithful, believing parent is a solemn reality. "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee."

Then let the parent *trust in God*. Let him commit his dear children to God in solemn covenant, and go forward in the diligent and faithful discharge of duty, believing that he shall not labor and pray in vain. His children, he may hope, will be early converted. They will be an honor and blessing to him, and blessings in the world. His own example in this case will be good, and theirs will be good. The blessed results of his labors will be felt at home and abroad. They will be felt among his people and through the whole circle of his acquaintance. They will reach through time, and into eternity; and will be gloriously realized in heaven forever. Oh what a blessedness it will be to the Christian minister, not only to have great numbers of his people around him in heaven, but to see his own dear children there! To be able to approach the eternal throne and say, "Here, Lord, am I, and the children which thou hast given me!" Shall not the prospect of such blessedness encourage every parent, and more

especially every minister who sustains this relation, to take up all necessary crosses ; to overcome all difficulties and hinderances ; and be faithful in the discharge of his duties to his children ? These he may rest assured are *paramount* duties. No degree of faithfulness or success in the discharge of other ministerial duties will avail as an excuse for the neglect of these.

## LECTURE XXIII.

### POLITICAL DUTIES OF MINISTERS.

THE QUESTION OF SUFFRAGE — OF INTRODUCING POLITICS INTO THE PULPIT —  
OF POLITICAL OFFICES AND HONORS — OF CHAPLAINCIES, ETC.

THE pastor of a church is called to sustain important civil, as well as ecclesiastical relations. He is a member not only of the church of Christ, but of the body politic. He is a citizen of the state and nation to which he belongs, and shares in all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship. He has a common interest, too, with all the citizens, in seeing the government sustained, and the laws administered. On the arm of government he depends for protection in his person, his family, his reputation, his property. To the fostering care of the government he looks for countenance and encouragement in the varied concerns and business of life.

This being the case, it follows that the pastor, like every other man, has *political duties* devolving on him; duties which he owes to the government under which he lives. These duties, though less sacred, perhaps, than those which relate more directly to God, are yet of a very important character. They are also attended often with peculiar difficulties; it being difficult, at times, to know what the duty is, or where the path of duty leads, and more difficult at other times, when the duty is dis-

covered, to go forward and meet it. It may be a painful, self-denying duty. He has many temptations to decline it; and he needs strength, courage, and principle to go forward in the discharge of it, with an unfaltering step.

It is a mistake in ministers, as in other men, to consider their political and religious duties as altogether distinct and separate. In some of their aspects, these classes of duties are separate; but viewed in other relations and lights, they run quite together. Civil government is to be regarded, not as a device or expedient of man, but as an ordinance of heaven. "The powers that be are ordained of God." In this view, subjection to civil authority, and a discharge of the various obligations which it imposes, are to be regarded as duties which we owe to God.

Then, again, the manner in which civil government is administered has an important bearing on all the great interests of Christ's kingdom in the world. A tyrannical, oppressive, persecuting government, like that of Nero or Domitian, may do much to oppose and crush the kingdom of Christ. A weak, arbitrary, fluctuating government may do much to embarrass it; while a government wisely constituted and administered may be a great blessing to it. Kings and queens may be, not only curses to the church, but its nursing fathers and nursing mothers.

It is this consideration chiefly, which in the mind of the devout Christian or Christian minister gives interest and importance to the affairs of state. It is not that this political party or that may predominate; it is not that this course of measures or that, considered merely in a political point of view, may prevail, which most

deeply engages his mind in the proceedings of government ; but he inquires how these proceedings are likely to bear upon the kingdom of Christ. Are they to promote or retard this holy kingdom ? Are they favorable or unfavorable to those precious interests which of all others lie nearest his heart ? According as these questions are decided by the Christian minister, so will his feelings of interest rise or fall ; and so, if he is faithful, he will act.

But it is time that we come more directly to a consideration of those duties which the Christian pastor owes to the government under which he lives. Some of these are too obvious to require a prolonged discussion. He is of course to submit to that government in all things lawful. He is to yield obedience to it so far as he may without contravening any of the direct commands of God. He is to bear its burthens with cheerfulness, and receive its privileges and blessings with a grateful heart. So long as a government continues to answer in any good degree its end, he is not to harbor or countenance any designs against it ; and if at any time a revolution becomes indispensable, he is to attempt it with the least hazard and disturbance possible.

I may further remark, that a Christian minister is not to become (perhaps under any circumstances — certainly not in ordinary circumstances) a heated and violent political partisan. He is not to be seen haranguing the multitude in the caucus, or on the stump. He is not to be seen electioneering for this party or for that. By such things he almost invariably promotes alienation and contention among his people. He also degrades himself and his profession, and brings both into contempt.

Thus far the course of the pastor, both as to what he is to do and what to avoid, is plain. There are other points of duty which have been thought less obvious, and which call for a more careful consideration. One of these has respect to the right of suffrage. Is it the duty of pastors to go to the polls and exercise this right?

The very terms of the question imply (what is true) that ministers of the gospel have a *right* to vote if they please. They have as good a right as any other class of citizens. They have as much interest in the choice of rulers as any persons in the community. They are as competent to judge of the qualifications of candidates as any of their fellow-men. They have as perfect a right to cast their vote as any persons whatever; and if they go to the polls and exercise this right discreetly, according to their best judgment, no one has any reason to complain.

But it has been said, that some things which are lawful are not expedient. Though ministers have a right to vote, still it may not be *best* for them under all circumstances to exercise this right; and when the casting of a vote is not expedient, it cannot be their duty.

In considering the subject thus presented, I admit that questions of duty often resolve themselves into questions of expediency. Where duty is plain we must go forward and do it, whatever objections a seeming expediency may interpose. But the question of duty sometimes is not plain. We cannot determine what our duty is. And we have no means of determining but by looking about us, weighing circumstances, and ascertaining what on the whole may be for the best. Now the question of going to the polls will often present

itself to the conscientious minister in precisely this light. He knows he has a *right* to go, but this of itself does not satisfy him that it is his *duty* to go. He has a natural right to do many things which he *ought not* to do, — the doing of which would be both foolish and wrong; and he has no means of determining what his duty in the case may be, but by resolving it into a question of expediency. “Is it *best* for me to go to the polls? Under all the circumstances, *will it be expedient?*”

As the decision of this question depends so materially on circumstances, it will be impossible to lay down any rules by which it can be in all cases determined. The more material considerations that will be likely to have weight, one way and the other, are such as the following: Private Christians have a solemn duty to perform at the polls,—a duty which they have many inducements to neglect, but which they can have no good excuse for neglecting. To encourage them in the performance of this duty they need the countenance and example of ministers. They want their pastors to go before them, and then it will be easy for them to follow. But if ministers will not go to the polls, their religious friends can hardly be expected to go; and so the election of public officers will be turned over to political partisans,—the thoughtless, the vicious, the violent, the unprincipled; bad men will be elected; and the best interests of the community, its moral and religious interests, will be left to suffer.

On the other hand, a minister will sometimes find himself between two opposing political parties. On either side are ranged, in considerable numbers, his best friends, his religious friends, members of his church and parish. He is very sure that his vote will decide noth-

ing either way, and that however he may cast it, feelings will be injured more or less; alienation will be produced; harm will be done which it may not be easy to repair. To be sure, his friends have no right to blame him, if he votes against them; but, whether right or wrong, he is very sure that they will blame him. He cannot see that any good is likely to come of his voting; he fears that much evil may result from it; and he seriously hesitates on the question of duty.

The remarks here made may be sufficient to satisfy us that this question is not so easily settled as some have supposed. It must be determined, generally, in view of circumstances; and circumstances will be often such that the conscientious pastor will find it not easy to satisfy himself in regard to his duty. As much as this should be said, however: that when his mind has become settled on the question, when the point of duty is clear, let him dare to discharge it fearlessly, independently, without being swayed by the feelings or opinions of others. When he seriously thinks it his *duty* to go to the polls, let him go noiselessly, but openly, and deposit his vote. And when he thinks it his duty to stay away, let him dare to act accordingly. Let him act independently and conscientiously in what he does, seeking rather to please God than men, and to promote the interests of Christ's kingdom, rather than those of any political party; and he will be likely to secure, not only the favor of God, but the respect and confidence of all good men.

Another question on which the minds of ministers are sometimes tried, relates to the introducing of *political subjects* into the pulpit. Is it their duty, under any circumstances, to preach what are sometimes called *political sermons*?



The proper answer to this question (like that of almost every other) depends upon the manner in which it is to be understood. How much is meant by *political subjects*, and *political sermons*? That it is the duty of ministers to explain the nature and foundations of civil government, as resting not on the mere will of the ruler, or the consent of the governed, but upon the institution of the great Creator, will not be questioned. Nor can it be questioned that the preacher may properly define the *province* of civil government; so far, at least, as to preclude it from trenching upon any of the positive commands of God, or interfering with the rights of conscience. And when a just and good government is assailed, as ours has recently been, with the intent to overthrow it, and the arm of rebellion is raised against it, it will devolve on gospel ministers to pray for it, to preach for it, and do all in their power to sustain and strengthen it. They cannot do less than this in fidelity to their country and their God.

It must also be permitted to ministers to preach upon the responsibilities of rulers, as well as of subjects; upon the duties of magistrates, as well as of citizens; and more especially upon that class of duties which have a bearing on the religion and morals of a community. Preaching of this character was much more common in the days of our fathers than it is at present; and I think with good effect. The duties of magistrates in restraining the disorderly, in checking, discountenancing, and punishing vice and crime, are often difficult, and always painful; and they need sometimes the promptings of the pulpit. They need its encouragements and counsels. Discourses of this nature should be modest, kind, persuasive, conciliatory; but when the occasion calls for

them, they should be plain and earnest. They are a part of the duty which the minister of religion owes, not only to his country, but to God.

It must be further conceded to pastors — called, as they are, to watch over the religion and morals of the community — to touch upon those *public measures* which have a direct bearing upon these vital subjects. If any measure of government is proposed, or carried, which is favorable and honorable to the morals of a community, the minister of the sanctuary may properly refer to it in language of commendation. Or if measures of an opposite character are proposed, or carried, it is equally proper that he should refer to them in language of sorrow and rebuke. I see not how he can clear his conscience, as a faithful watchman on the towers of Zion, and do less than this.

But all that has been stated comes far short of what is commonly understood by political sermons. Is it proper for the pastor of a church to stand up in his pulpit as a *political partisan*, and enforce upon his people there (many of whom think differently from himself) his own views of *party politics*? This has sometimes been done in our own country, and done within the last fifty years; but I must say that I regard it, under almost any circumstances that can be named, as decidedly improper. It is a virtual desecration of the pulpit, turning it aside from its grand and appropriate object, and converting it into an instrument for promoting secular, political ends. The minister who pursues this course is also chargeable with degrading his office and himself. He comes down from the high position of an ambassador of Christ, assumes the character of a political demagogue, and takes his stand on the arena of political

strife. By such preaching he is moreover chargeable with maltreating his people, especially that part of them who differ in politics from himself. They come to the sanctuary to hear the gospel, — to receive “the sincere milk of the word;” but he deals out to them a very different potion. He takes advantage of his station, and of an opportunity when they can make no reply, to contradict and denounce their political opinions, and enforce his own. No wonder that they feel disappointed and displeased. No wonder they turn away from such a teacher, and place themselves under one who, they hope, will not so abuse *his* station and *their* trust.

It is vain for ministers, who pursue the course here described, to plead conscience as an excuse. Their consciences, they tell us, are burdened and must be relieved. But their conscience (so far as conscience has had anything to do with the matter) must be strangely misguided, or it never could have led them to such conclusions. And they have only to recur to the great, original, universal commission which Christ has left to all his ministers: “Go ye into all the world, and preach *the gospel* to every creature,” to see that this commission has been transcended; and that they have dared to publish in the house of God, and in the name of Jesus, the maxims, the watchwords, of party strife.

It has been made a question, whether it is right for ministers, under any circumstances, to accept of political *promotion* and *office*. This ministers have sometimes done — more frequently, I think, in some other denominations than in our own. They have been senators, representatives, councillors, justices, and have had the epithets of “honorable” and “esquire,” as well as “reverend” attached to their names.

In answering the question here proposed, it must be borne in mind that every minister of the gospel is already *in office*, — a high, holy, spiritual office, — an office under the administration of the King of kings, — an office which should take precedence of every other, as in point of importance it transcends every other. It is clear, therefore, that he should accept of no earthly office which is incompatible with this, or which in any way interferes with the faithful discharge of it. If a minister is unable to preach the gospel; if, from age, infirmity, or any other cause, he has ceased to preach it, and no longer regards himself as an acting minister; I see no objection to his accepting office, more than to any other man's doing the same. Or if there is any office which a pastor may hold which will not take up his time, or take him away from his people, or in any way prejudice or interrupt his ministerial duties, there may be no objection to his accepting of such promotion. But to hold an office which shall take him from his study, his family, his pulpit, his people, from two to six months in a year, and shut him up in some hall of legislation, or confine him to the performance of mere secular duties, I see not how any acting pastor or minister can consent. I see not how he can reconcile such a course with his ordination vows, and with the high obligations which he is under to Christ. He may get an "honorable" prefixed to his name; but he virtually degrades that name. He sacrifices the highest and holiest office on earth to one of mere secular dignity and duty.

There are certain offices of a *partially* political character which ministers, as such, are expected to sustain, and which, when called to it, they may sustain with pro-

priety ; such as chaplaincies to courts, legislatures, and other regularly constituted political bodies. Such bodies have important duties to discharge, in which they ought to acknowledge God, and seek his direction and blessing ; and if they are disposed to ask the assistance of ministers, their assistance should be cheerfully and devoutly rendered.

There is another class of chaplaincies about which there has been some question ; I mean those connected with *naval* and *military* operations. The objection here lies against the operations themselves. It is assumed that all war, and everything preparatory or pertaining to it, is wrong ; that there should be no ships of war, soldiers, army, or militia ; and that for a minister to connect himself with a regiment of soldiers, in the capacity of chaplain, is to give countenance to the horrid custom of war, and thereby desecrate his profession. But this objection, which, only a few years ago was regarded by some men as insuperable, recent events have entirely dissipated. We have learned effectually (what we knew before) that the civil power cannot be alone relied on to sustain and enforce law, and execute its penalties ; that combinations may be formed, and often have been, with a view to trample on the laws, and set them at defiance, which no mere civil authority is able to overcome. Hence there is a necessity, if government is to be steadily and firmly administered, that a *military* power should exist somewhere, to sustain the civil and enforce its laws. There is no medium between the provisions of an adequate military power to stand behind the civil, to be resorted to in case of emergency, and the ultra doctrines of non-resistance, and the utter prostration of civil government.

A military power is also necessary for national *defence*. The law of self-protection and defence is one of the most obvious in nature. With the means of self-defence nature has herself furnished almost every animal and insect. But if the whole animate creation, from man down to the meanest insect, is so constituted and furnished as to seek to protect and defend itself, then, surely, *governments* may defend themselves; and they may lawfully provide themselves with the means of doing this.

But if a military power is indispensable to the stable and firm existence of civil authority and government, then chaplaincies in connection with it are not only admissible, but of great importance. No men more need the instructions, the restraints, and consolations of religion than soldiers. No men are more likely to profit by them. Let us be thankful that the obligation to furnish them is recognized by all Christian nations; and let nothing be said or done to interfere with so desirable an arrangement.

I conclude this discussion with suggesting two opposite cautions, both of which may, in particular cases, be needful:

1. Let the minister of Christ beware how he becomes engrossed in politics. Every day's observation teaches us that this is an exciting, engrossing subject. It is a dangerous subject for the Christian to be deeply concerned with, and more so for the Christian minister. Let him ever remember that he is called to higher and holier things; that he is engaged in a great work, from which he cannot come down to contest mere political questions, and enter the arena of political strife.

2. On the other hand, let the minister of Christ be

cautioned against undervaluing and neglecting his appropriate political duties. As I have said already, these are important duties. They are duties which cannot be safely or properly omitted. The minister should make them so much his study that he may understand them, and be prepared intelligently and faithfully to perform them ; and if, after all his study, he sometimes finds that he lacks wisdom, then “ let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.”

## LECTURE XXIV.

### RESPECT FOR THE MINISTRY.

IS IT GREATER OR LESS NOW THAN FORMERLY? — HOW RESPECT MAY BE FORFEITED, AND HOW ACQUIRED AND RETAINED.

THERE is an impression abroad that ministers are far less respected now than they were a century ago ; that both the office and those who sustain it have fallen into comparative disrepute. Whether this be true or not, I shall not now undertake to decide. Certain it is that the habit of feeling and mode of intercourse between pastor and people are materially changed. Formerly ministers were more distinguished than they now are by peculiarities of dress and of general appearance. They were less familiar and sociable with their people ; kept them at a greater distance ; and were regarded, often, with a degree of reverence bordering on fear. This kind of feeling, and the influence accompanying it, have in great measure passed away ; but they have given place to another kind of influence which may be equally strong, and which, as many think, is of greater value ; — the influence which one pious, intelligent, familiar, devoted *friend* may be supposed to possess over another. Ministers and people are accustomed to live together now on terms of intimacy and equality. They associate freely and without restraint. They confer together on topics of general interest, and, as occasion



offers, afford mutual assistance and advice. The influence of the pastor, supposing him to be what he should be, is not so much that of reverence, as that of confidence and love.

It is not to be disguised, however, that the state of the times is very different now from what it was a hundred years ago, and that influences have been long at work tending to detract from the respect which was once paid to the ministers of Christ.

The age in which we live is characterized by a good deal of self-conceit. The means of popular education have been increased, knowledge has been diffused, and not a few have come into possession of that dangerous thing, a little learning. The usual consequence of possessing but a little is, that men fancy they have a great deal, — that they know almost everything. In their own estimation, they are wiser than their religious teachers, and fail to render them that respect which the sacred office demands.

The number has also increased greatly within a hundred years who cast off fear and restrain prayer; who practically disregard religion; who reject and impugn its essential doctrines, and have fallen into a state of virtual infidelity. They may not think or call themselves infidels; but they are infidels so far as this, that the holy Scriptures are held loosely, indefinitely; the truths of religion have passed out of their minds; and the motives, the obligations resulting from these truths, no longer bind them. Now it is not to be expected that such men will respect ministers or religious institutions. In their hearts they despise both; and their influence, so far as it goes, will be to bring both into contempt.

Then a spirit of subversive *radicalism* has been

awakened in some parts of our country, which, under the imposing name of reform, is assailing everything sacred and holy with the intent to crush it. It is honorable to Christian ministers that they have breasted and resisted this storm, and that so much of its fury has been spent upon them; and yet the stand they have taken has been with many (aside from the fanatics) an occasion of reproach.

The multiplication of sects, within the last hundred years, has also had an effect, in more ways than one, to diminish the respect which was formerly accorded to the sacred office. With some of these sects, learning forms no part of the necessary qualifications of the minister of Christ. The less learning the better, if a man can speak so as to be understood; since the less he has learned in the ordinary way, the greater evidence he is supposed to furnish of being miraculously assisted by the Holy Ghost. As a natural consequence of such opinions, many ignorant men have been sent forth and received as ministers; men who, however worthy on other accounts, could have no particular claim to respect as teachers, and whose influence has tended in some quarters to bring the ministry into contempt. The multiplication of sects has also led to frequent altercations and controversies among ministers, all which has tended in the estimation of some to lower the credit of the ministerial order.

But although there are circumstances connected with the times which must be regarded as unfavorable to ministers, there are others of an opposite character. There never was a time since the settlement of this country when faithful ministers had more to do, or when their services were more necessary to those for

whom they labor. Perhaps there never was a time when their labors were more highly appreciated. By serious people, almost without an exception, the ministry is regarded as an institution of God, and as indispensable to the best interests of man, both as it respects this life and that which is to come. Christians feel, everywhere, that the gospel of Christ, with its holy ordinances and sanctifying influences, its instructions, warnings, and restraints, is of great value to them, and that to be without it would be a grievous deprivation.

It may be added, too, that the labors of pious, devoted ministers were probably never more *efficacious* than they have been during the last fifty years. Whether it be that they are more wise to win souls than the generations that have gone before them, or that the set time to favor Zion has more nearly come, or that both these suppositions are true, I will not decide; but thus much it is my privilege to say, — that never since the age of the apostles has the gospel been preached with greater power and with more signal success than by the evangelical ministers of this country during the last half century. Revivals of great interest and power have been of almost continual occurrence; converts have been multiplied by hundreds and thousands; new churches have sprung up, and old ones have been increased and strengthened; the word of the Lord has been magnified, and his name glorified. These things are matter of common notoriety, and should be matter of grateful acknowledgment. They are honorable, not only to the Divine Word and Spirit, but to the *Christian ministry*, through the instrumentality of which they have, in great measure, been accomplished.

It appears, on the whole, that notwithstanding any

seeming infelicities of the times, ministers have still much encouragement to labor, and may hope, if they are discreet and faithful, to enjoy all that respect, confidence, and influence which they could reasonably desire. Like other men in this free republican country, they must be, under God, the makers of their own fortunes. Others cannot give them respect, if their own conduct does not entitle them to it; but if their characters and works are such as to command respect, others cannot permanently take it from them.

It will be my object in what follows to point out some of the ways in which ministers of the gospel may *discredit* and *injure* themselves, and justly *forfeit* that respect which their office and work ought ever to inspire. This being done, it will be easy to see how respect and confidence are to be acquired; and when acquired, how they may be retained.

I hardly need remark that respect may be forfeited, and certainly *will* be and *ought* to be, by open *immoralities*. This is true of all men, whatever their calling and condition in life. But it is especially true of one who undertakes to be a religious teacher. Religion is a solemn, sacred subject, and the common sense of all men requires that its professors, and much more its teachers, should be holy and blameless in their lives. It is an honor to us in this country that this demand is here more imperative and unyielding than perhaps in any other part of the world. An immoral minister cannot be respected anywhere; but here he cannot be endured or tolerated. Whatever his other qualifications may be, whatever his rank or influence in society, the moment the taint of immorality fastens on him, his character and standing as a minister

are gone. The church loathes him, and spues him out of her mouth. At least, this is true in each of the great *evangelical* denominations. Nor is it easy for such a minister, however humble he may be, however thoroughly penitent and reformed, ever to be restored to his former standing. He may recover his standing as a member of the church, but to come back again into the ministry, and be received as he was before, is perhaps impossible. "A bishop must be blameless," "of good behavior," having "a good report of them that are without." These canons of the apostle are of great value. They seem to modify somewhat the general injunction that we are to forgive a fallen brother as oft as he repents. We are, indeed, to forgive and restore him as a Christian; but suppose he is a teacher, an officer in the church: are we to reinstate him in his forfeited office? Are we to constitute him a teacher again, and restore him to that degree of respect and influence which by transgression he had lost? This does not seem to me to be either scriptural or possible. I would not say that no minister who had forfeited his office by immoralities should ever be permitted to preach again. But he must come to the work, if he come at all, under peculiar disadvantages. He must pursue it under disadvantages. His previous conduct cannot pass from his own memory. It cannot pass from the memory of others. If his Christian brethren restore him, the world will not; nor can he expect to have that influence with them which he might have had if he had not sinned. I say these things because they are true, and because they are truths of great importance to be poured into the ears of gospel ministers, and of those who are aspiring to the sacred office. Let

them be, my young friends, for your instruction and warning. Let the effect of them be to induce great and continual circumspection. If you yield to temptation and fall into scandalous sin, your prospects in regard to the ministry are not only clouded, but in all probability are gone forever.

Nor is respect for the ministry forfeited merely by great and open immoralities. The same thing may be done, and *will* be, by smaller delinquencies, — *indiscretions*. And ministers, like other men of sober life, are more in danger under this head than under the former. They are less likely to fall into open, scandalous vice than they are to wander slightly from the path of duty, this way or that, and glide into the indulgence of what are commonly called indiscretions. But let every minister know that these slighter aberrations, as he may be inclined to think them, are not concealed. He is surrounded by many watchful eyes which will assuredly mark his indiscretions, and the effect of them will be to wear upon his reputation, and weaken that respect and confidence which otherwise he might receive. It is these little foxes that spoil the vines. Dead flies are little creatures, and of little consequence in themselves; but when buried in a pot of precious ointment, they are enough to taint and destroy its fragrance. For example: let a minister of the gospel give an undue license to his tongue, indulging himself in frequent jesting, talebearing, evil-speaking; let him exhibit a prying, meddlesome spirit, becoming what the Apostle Peter calls a “busybody in other men’s matters;” let him be ambitious, aspiring, striving for honors which he cannot reach, and vexed that he does not receive that attention from others to which he thinks

himself entitled; let him appear envious of his superiors, and supercilious and overbearing towards those whom he thinks beneath him; let him be fiery, untractable, his zeal out of all proportion to his knowledge, especially in matters pertaining to his own sect or party; let him fail of the requisite wisdom in the management of his worldly concerns, being either too tight or too lax, either parsimonious and niggardly, or prodigal and wasteful; let him affect singularities of speech and behavior, determined, if he can attract notice in no other way, that he will do it by these; more than all, let him indulge in too great liberties with the other sex, so that respectable females shall shun him and others shall laugh at him;—I say, let a minister fall into all, or any, of these indiscretions (if this be not too soft a name for them), and he need not proceed to open immoralities in order to blacken his reputation, and destroy all respect for his character. The injury will be done before he is aware of it; and when done it can never be retrieved. Ministers and candidates for the holy ministry cannot be too watchful in regard to this matter. If they would enjoy that respect and confidence which are necessary to their highest usefulness, they must not only be free from open vice, but be uniformly discreet and blameless.

Ministers may forfeit the respect of the religious community by *frequent changes of religious principles*, and *the adoption of heretical views*. Religious truth, like all other truth, is unchangeable, and in its great, essential features, it is clearly enough revealed in the Bible. With these revelations the Christian minister is supposed to be acquainted. He is supposed to be rooted and grounded in the faith. If, then, we see him con-

stantly fluctuating in his religious opinions; now here and now there; "blown about by every wind of doctrine," so that no one can conjecture where he will be found next; this certainly is a disgrace to him, and a disgrace to his profession. He may boast of his liberty, and his liberality; but there is certainly a defect in his understanding, his education, or his heart, or more probably in them all.

I do not say that the views of ministers on religious subjects are to undergo no modification. As they grow in knowledge, they will, of course, become better acquainted with the truth, and better know how to state and defend it. Nor do I say that individuals, who go into the ministry with mistaken and heretical views, should not renounce them, and embrace the truth. This many excellent men have done, very much to their credit, and the increase of their usefulness. But it is the fickle, unstable man, who knows nothing certainly and nothing permanently to whom I object. It is those especially who, having once "known the way of righteousness, turn from the holy commandment," and become the ministers of error and sin, who bring disgrace upon their profession, and involve themselves, it may be feared, in eternal ruin.

Another way in which ministers may forfeit respect, is by a *palpable neglect of professional duties*. These duties are solemnly binding upon them. They are what they have contracted and covenanted to perform. If, then, they are not performed — if they are either wholly neglected or coldly and carelessly passed over — a minister cannot expect to retain the respect and confidence of his people. He certainly ought not to retain them. I need not here go into an enumeration of the profes-



sional duties of a pastor. These have been sufficiently explained and insisted on in the previous Lectures. But let a minister neglect to make himself acquainted with his people, with even the poorest and feeblest of them; let him neglect to visit them at their houses in seasons of affliction, and at other times; let him so immerse himself in other pursuits that he cannot attend the customary religious meetings with them; let him decline taking the lead in their works of charity, and neglect the religious instruction of the young; — in short, let him make the impression that *his* interests are quite separate from those of his people, and superior to them, and that parochial duties are trifling things, and can such a minister be long respected by his people? Ought he to be? He may complain that the house of God is deserted, and that the ministry has fallen into contempt; but he has himself contributed to bring it there.

The ministry suffers in the estimation of the public, when those connected with it desert it without any obvious necessity, and are too easily seduced into other employments. The Christian ministry is, in some of its aspects, the noblest employment on the earth. In its bearings on the eternal destinies of men it is the most responsible employment. And so those profess to regard it who enter upon it voluntarily, and are publicly and solemnly consecrated to it. But if, after having taken these vows, they are seen to trifle with them; if they appear to think lightly of the ministry, are unsatisfied in it, and ready to embrace the first opportunity to desert it — choosing rather to become politicians, jurists, popular lecturers, literary adventurers, anything that promises a better living and more fame; obviously, they cast reproach upon the sacred office, and contribute

their share to bring it into contempt. Their actions say, — and actions always speak louder than words, — that it is not the noblest and best employment, but one of an inferior and secondary character.

I do not say that when a person has once entered the ministry he must never leave it; but he should not leave it without an obvious *providential* necessity. He should not leave it until it is clear to himself, and to all around him, that his path is hedged up, and that the same God who called him into the ministerial vineyard is now calling him to some other department of labor.

I shall mention but another way in which ministers may forfeit the respect of their people; and that is by *mental indolence*, and consequent ignorance and incompetency. Let a minister of the gospel neglect his study, neglect to discipline and furnish, to enrich and improve his mind, so that his sermons become insipid and stale, behind his age, and scarcely worthy the attention of the more intelligent of his hearers, and he need not complain if he is not respected. How can he be respected? He may be *endured*, as a matter of policy or necessity; but respect, interest, confidence, love — these are manifestly out of the question.

But I will not pursue this train of remark further. If we have discovered some of the principal ways in which ministers of the gospel may forfeit respect, it will be easy to see how they may acquire it and retain it. They have but to avoid the downward courses which have been pointed out, and steadily and resolutely pursue the opposite ones. Let their moral and Christian characters be, not only without reproach, but above suspicion, — clear alike of immoralities and indiscretions, of flagrant breaches of the rule of life, and of

all those lesser imperfections which so often stain and ruin reputation; let them be sound and steadfast in the faith, and diligent in the performance of every incumbent professional duty; let them love their work and pursue it, preferring it above every other, and being determined that nothing shall divert them from it; let them show all diligence in their studies and in their parochial labors, proving themselves to be workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and bringing continually out of their treasure things new and old;—let ministers of the gospel be such as these, and they need have no fear or anxiety as to the measure of respect which shall be meted to them. They *will* be respected. They *must* be. The church honors them; God will honor them; and even the world cannot withhold its tribute of respect. The seeds of truth which they scatter and watch over will spring up. Under their fostering care and culture the tender plants of grace will flourish. The fruits of righteousness will in due time appear, thirty, sixty, an hundred-fold, to the honor, not only of the great Lord of the harvest, but of those faithful laborers by whose cares and toils these precious fruits have been reared and gathered.

## LECTURE XXV.

### FREQUENT DISMISSIONS.

THEIR CAUSES AND REMEDIES — CAUSED OFTEN BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE; OR BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND ACTS OF MINISTERS; OR BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND DOINGS OF THE PEOPLE FOR WHOM THEY LABOR.

IN a previous Lecture, I remarked that settlements in the ministry should always be made with a view to *permanency*. I spoke of the change which has taken place in New England in relation to this matter within the last fifty or sixty years; dismissions having become much more frequent than formerly, and the pastoral relation more precarious and fluctuating. The evil (for such the innovation is believed to be) has arrested the attention of some of the ablest and best friends of our churches, and led them to inquire, with deep and anxious interest, how the progress of it may be checked, and the ancient order of things in some measure restored. To this general subject I propose to invite attention in the remarks which follow; and in prosecuting it, I shall first notice the causes which have rendered dismissions among us of late more frequent than formerly; and, secondly, offer a few suggestions as to the remedies to be applied.

The causes of frequent dismissions may be ranked under three divisions; arising (as they generally do)

either from the circumstances of the times in which we live ; or from the peculiar circumstances, habits, or acts of ministers ; or from the circumstances and doings of the people for whom they labor. Let us proceed to a consideration of these causes, in the order here suggested.

It is obvious, in the first place, that there is much more of division, of sectarianism, in our times, than there was formerly. The greater part of New England was originally settled by Calvinistic Congregationalists ; and for the first century and a half after the settlement commenced, there were comparatively few dissenters from this form of faith and church order. The dissenters were so few that most of the towns and parishes could all pleasantly unite in the settlement and support of ministers. I need not say that the case is very different now. The most of our towns and local parishes are divided into sects ; and so divided, it may be, that each of the societies is left small and feeble. A minister settled over one of these feeble societies must necessarily feel that his situation is somewhat precarious, — much more so, certainly, than though the divisions did not exist, and he was quietly settled, as ministers were formerly, over the whole parish or town.

In the second place, there is a peculiarity as to the present mode of supporting ministers, growing in part out of our divisions, which renders their situation less permanent than formerly. When nearly all the inhabitants of a state were of one mind on the subject of religion, it was thought to be no hardship to enact laws for the support of the gospel, connecting all the citizens with the religious societies where they lived, and oblig-

ing them (unless exempted by certificate) <sup>1</sup> to pay a tax for the maintenance of the minister. This gave to our ecclesiastical constitution somewhat the form of a legal establishment. It was a sort of union between church and state. In the progress of our divisions, this order of things has necessarily passed away. Whether we would or not, we are now shut up to the necessity of supporting religious institutions, not by legal and compulsory methods, but on the voluntary principle. I am far from regretting, on the whole, that the change from the compulsory to the voluntary has taken place. The latter method, I am persuaded, is more favorable than the other to the spirituality and efficiency of the ministry and the purity of the church; and yet, to the permanency of the pastoral relation, it may in some cases be less favorable. A dull, formal, worldly, uninteresting preacher would be more likely to retain his place, under the former mode of supporting the gospel, than under the present.

Another change has taken place in *the mode of settling ministers*, which has a bearing on the question before us, and which, I think, is to be regretted. Formerly, as I have before hinted, ministers were settled with a view to permanency. They were settled for life. The ministerial contract was regarded as, next to the marriage contract, inviolable. There was nothing in the terms of settlement which looked to the possibility of the connection's being dissolved, but everything looked the other way. I hardly need say that settlements are now effected in many instances differently. The possibility of a dissolution is contemplated; and stipulations are entered into as to the manner in which it

<sup>1</sup> A certificate that they belonged to some other denomination.

shall be brought about. There can be no doubt that the change here referred to has had a disastrous effect upon the permanency of the pastoral relation.

There are other aspects of the times in which we live which must not be passed over in this connection. They are times of great restlessness, — uneasiness of the public mind. This is true with respect to other things, as well as religion. Men have lost in great measure the staid, stable, contented, conservative character of their ancestors. If they travel, their speed must be five times as great as that of any former generation. If they engage in business, their gains, in order to be satisfactory, must be four or five times as large. If a congregation is to be built up, the work must be done rapidly, or the minister is not the man for it, and must be dismissed. Men seem to have forgotten the important scriptural duty of waiting upon God. Everything must be done for effect — immediate effect ; and if important results are not immediately visible, the labor is regarded as thrown away. Every observer of the times must admit that the account here given is substantially true ; and if true, it furnishes another reason for the present unsettled state of the ministerial relation.

The present, also, are times when more is expected of ministers than was the case formerly ; more study, more general knowledge, more public speaking, more labor of every kind. This increased demand often exceeds the ability of ministers, — either physical or mental, or both. The individual breaks down under the labor imposed upon him. He could have borne the labor of a previous age ; but the demands of the present exceed his strength. His health and courage fail him, and he is obliged to retire.

There is still another feature of the times in which we live to which, in this connection, I must advert. Ministers have more frequent calls to leave their parishes than they formerly had. The bad practice of calling a minister from one church to another has rather increased upon us than diminished. Besides, the increased number of colleges, the theological seminaries, the religious charitable societies, together with the periodical religious press, have created a variety of offices unknown to our fathers, the most of which are expected to be filled by ministers. And they must in general be filled not by men who are at liberty, floating about in quest of parishes, but by men who already have parishes, or might have them; men whose services are in demand, and who are themselves distinguished for their learning, their talents, their weight of character, and general influence. There can be no doubt that the cause here referred to has unsettled some of our best ministers, and has contributed not a little to bring about that state of things of which we speak.

Other causes which have operated to detract from the permanency of the pastoral relation must be attributed, in great measure, to ministers themselves.

Some few have been dismissed on account of the forfeiture of Christian character; or if not through a total loss of character, yet because of their criminal indiscretions. But the number of such cases I do not think has been greater in our own times than in the ages preceding. Indeed, I am inclined to hope that it has been less. Nor is there a country in the world, perhaps, in which cases of this kind are of less frequent occurrence than in Puritan New England.

Ministers sometimes pave the way for an early dismis-



sion by the indiscreet management of their *worldly affairs*. They are careless, wasteful, and extravagant in their expenses. They are fond of display; and to gratify themselves in this respect, contract debts which they are not able to pay. Their people may assist them once or twice, but will soon grow tired of it, preferring rather to let them go than to be annoyed by continual applications of this nature.

Ministers are dismissed more frequently now than formerly through the failure of *health*. The principal cause of this has been already suggested: the increased demand which is made upon ministers — the amount of labor which is imposed upon them. They bear it for a while, but at length sink under it, being constrained to seek a livelihood in some more easy and quiet pursuit.

Ministers are often dismissed because they neglect their studies, and fail to instruct and interest their people. Ministers have many temptations to neglect their studies, under the power of which they too often fall. Some are negligent in this respect, from sheer mental indolence. They can ride about, and visit places of public resort, or chat with friends, or amuse themselves with light reading; but to confine themselves to *study*, — *hard study* — for even a reasonable amount of time, they have no heart. Others neglect their appropriate studies, — either from necessity or choice, — that they may engage in other pursuits. They have a school to teach, or a farm to cultivate, or some mere literary labor to perform; and the study of the Bible, and of theology, and the making of sermons, are neglected. But from whatever cause settled ministers are induced to neglect their studies, their people will assuredly

find it out, and their reputation will suffer by it. In the weekly discharge of their duties, the drafts upon their resources are very great. If by reading and reflection these are not continually supplied, if the reservoir is not replenished as fast as diminished, it will of necessity run low, and at length run out. Their preaching will be commonplace and uninteresting, — the same round of ideas presented in somewhat different forms; their people will grow tired of it; and if they can remedy the evil in no other way, will seek a dissolution of the pastoral relation. Dismissions not a few, occurring among young ministers, and ministers in middle life, have been brought about by the operation of this single cause. They might have been prevented if habits of study had been early formed, and resolutely continued, and the mind had been properly disciplined and furnished; but for the want of this their own minds have been first starved, and then they have starved the minds of others, till the evil could no longer be endured, and could be remedied only by a dismissal.

The same cause has sometimes effected the dismissal of ministers, in the decline of life, much sooner than might otherwise have been necessary. If a person has tolerable health and vigor, there is no reason why he may not be a better minister, more useful and more acceptable, between the ages of fifty and seventy, than between those of thirty and fifty. He has had a longer time for study; he has had more experience; he ought to possess more grace and wisdom, and to be more thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. But if ministers at the age of fifty-five to sixty are disposed to neglect study, to preach over their old sermons, to lay themselves up, and live at ease, they will soon be-

come rusty and inefficient ; habits of indolence will be formed which can never again be overcome ; the world will go ahead of them, and they of course will fall behind it in point of knowledge, interest, and power ; their people will grow tired of their stale, old-fashioned services, and will begin to talk of a dismissal, or a colleague. Now it is vain for a minister in such circumstances to find fault with the times, or with his people. The fault is primarily with himself. He should have continued vigorously his habits of study ; continued to improve his mind and his heart ; continued to keep up with the world, to keep *before* it, and interest his people with new, striking, and appropriate exhibitions of thought ; and so far from wanting a change or a colleague, they would have wanted the old minister to live always, and to be their teacher to the end of time. I make these remarks for the benefit not only of those who, like myself, have passed the meridian of life, but also of young ministers and those who are about to enter the ministry, who, if their lives are spared, will soon be old, and who need to be reminded in season of some of the dangers which will then beset them.

Ministers are often dismissed before they should be, because they are too hasty in asking a dismissal. Some little disturbance takes place among a people, or some slight uneasiness exists, such as may be expected occasionally in all societies ; and instead of quietly waiting for the breeze to blow over and the elements to become calm again, the minister's feelings are excited, his spirit is up, and he applies at once for a dismissal. Cases of this description have not unfrequently fallen under my own observation. Dismissions have been brought about hastily and without due consideration, which, by all concerned, have afterwards been regretted.

In some instances ministers have provoked a dismissal by mingling too deeply in political agitations. Ministers, like other men, have political rights which they should be at liberty to exercise without offence. Still, their very office seems to forbid that they should become *heated political partisans*, and especially that they take advantage of their stations to enforce their opinions from the pulpit. I have known this done by some good ministers of the gospel ; but I never knew any good to come of it. On the contrary, such preaching has been followed invariably, so far as my observation has extended, with alienation and contention, with the weakening and sometimes breaking up of religious societies, and not unfrequently with the dismissal of ministers.

Dismissions sometimes occur from the fact that ministers get settled out of their proper places. Particular circumstances have either raised them to stations which they cannot fill, or depressed them in point of place below their proper level in society. Cases like these are not unfrequent among ministers ; but in the present trying, fluctuating state of the community they are not likely to be permanent. Occasions are continually occurring to test the strength of ministers as well as of other men ; to try their capacities and powers ; and in the perpetual shuffle of human affairs, changes will take place one way and the other, and each will be likely, at length, to find his level. This will be more sure to take place in our own country, than in any other ; seeing that men are not much elevated or depressed here by birth or rank, but rise or fall, generally, according to their own merits.

I add, once more : dismissions not unfrequently take

place because ministers *think* they are out of their places, whether it really be so or not. Every man is naturally a lover of himself, and is prone to think of himself more highly than others think of him. From this infirmity ministers of the gospel, and even good ministers, are not wholly exempt. They are not satisfied with the places which Providence has assigned to them; they think they are entitled to more elevated stations; and so, that there may be no obstacle in the way of their rising to what they think their proper level, they rudely sunder existing relations, and tear themselves away from those committed to their charge. An experiment or two of this kind is usually enough to humble a vain young man, and lead him to think of himself more soberly, as he ought to think.

I have spoken of the times in which we live, and of the circumstances, characters, and acts of ministers, as furnishing the grounds of frequent dismissions: a third class of causes operating to produce the same results, is to be ascribed to the people for whom they labor.

The first of these causes to which I shall advert, and one which unsettles a great many ministers, is the want of adequate support. The salary, it may be, was originally insufficient, and is no sooner tried than it is found to be so. And yet there is a difficulty in raising it. Men are always fond of abiding by a contract when it is in their own favor. And so the minister is left to suffer for a while, or to involve himself in embarrassments, and is then dismissed.

In cases where the salary is nominally sufficient, support often fails, because the contract is not fulfilled. The people may be culpably negligent in this matter; or they may have become unexpectedly impoverished,

so that they are not able to fulfil their engagements. Individuals have been removed ; times are changed and fortunes are lost ; the ability of the society is diminished ; and the support of the ministry is found to be impracticable.

Removals, however, are not so frequent from societies becoming unexpectedly poor, as from their not growing rich so fast as they hoped. It is not uncommon for a society to settle a minister, and to offer him a salary which they know they are not able in present circumstances to pay. But they expect their minister to do a great deal for them in a temporal as well as spiritual point of view. They expect he will rapidly build them up. They expect to increase under his influence in numbers and in wealth. They have no doubt that they shall be able to pay the salary, and to increase it if necessary ; though they are few and feeble at present. But at the end of two or three years they find that their expectations have not been realized. They have increased moderately, but not so rapidly as they hoped. They are in arrears to their minister. He wants his salary, and they are not able to pay it, and when the matter comes to be canvassed, they think him quite as much in fault as themselves. If they have not fulfilled his expectations, he has not fulfilled theirs ; he has not strengthened and builded them up as they anticipated ; and now there come to be hard feelings and hard speeches, and a dissolution of the existing relation is the necessary result.

But dismissions are often to be ascribed to a people when the question of support is not directly involved. The members of a society, or a considerable portion of them, are fond of change. They have what the apostle

calls "itching ears." Like the Athenians of old, they are continually craving some new thing. In regard to persons such as these, I have only to say that they ought not to be Congregationalists. They have naught in their composition of the good old staid Congregational character. Let them find or form a denomination like themselves, that shall be supplied chiefly by itinerants and evangelists, and let them dwell among their own people.

The grounds of dissatisfaction with ministers in these days are various, and some of them to the last degree unreasonable. It is not enough with many in our societies that their minister is learned, pious, sound, faithful, unexceptionable in character, and amiable in disposition and deportment. Some do not quite like his manner in the pulpit. He is not sufficiently captivating and popular; not eloquent enough; not great enough for so great a people as they fancy themselves to be. Some think that he does not visit enough, and others that he does not study enough. Some think his services too long; others, too short. Some object that he is not a revival preacher, and that his ministrations are not followed with immediate success. Some find fault with his discipline as being too strict; while others would like to have the lines drawn closer than he deems it proper to draw them.

I have not here adverted to the objections of vain, thoughtless, pleasure-loving men, who hate the doctrines of their minister, and esteem him their enemy because he tells them the truth; but only to such as are frequently in the mouths of professing Christians, members of the church. While so many and opposite grounds of dissatisfaction are taken in the community,

and in the church, it cannot be thought surprising that the pastoral relation has become precarious and fluctuating, and that it is in such frequent instances dissolved.

- In regard to most of these causes of dissatisfaction, it ought, however, to be said, that the difficulty, ordinarily, does not arise from the whole church or the whole society, but from only a part of it, and sometimes a very inconsiderable part. Certain individuals become dissatisfied, on one ground or another, and determine, if possible, to effect a change. And so they continue to agitate the question, to promote alienation and stir up strife, and increase by all means the number of the disaffected, till the party becomes troublesome, if not formidable; and then the cry is raised that the minister's usefulness is over, and that, right or wrong, he had better be dismissed. Or they threaten, in case he is not removed, to leave the society, and thereby weaken it to such a degree that his support will be impracticable.

But I have dwelt long enough on the *causes* of the frequent dismissal of ministers. It remains that a few words be added, as to the proper *remedies* to be applied; and after what has been said, the discovery of remedies will be comparatively easy. To remove the *causes* of the evil in question, so far as these are capable of being removed, and to set at work opposite and counteracting influences, will be to apply all the remedy which the nature of the case admits.

But some of the causes of which I have spoken do not admit of being removed. They are among the unalterable characteristics of the times, which no power but that of God can change. Nor is it likely that God



will exert his power for such a purpose. Other causes mentioned are more within the control of moral means ; and on them every kind and persuasive influence should be made to bear, for their removal. Especially does it become the existing ministry to look well to those causes of frequent dismissions which have their origin with them. Let them be watchful and prayerful against hurtful peculiarities, indiscretions, defects in point of moral and Christian character, that there may be no more dismissions on these accounts. Let them guard against such a degree of labor and exposure as will be almost certain to injure health, and lead to a dismission on that account. Every minister should make it a part of his religious duty to preserve, so far as possible, “ a sound mind in a sound body.”

Let ministers form, and maintain to the end of their public life, habits of diligent and faithful study, that so they may be able to instruct and interest their people ; to feed them with knowledge and understanding ; and thus prevent all reasonable complaint as to the dulness and unprofitableness of their sermons. Let them ascertain, as they easily may, the peculiar tastes, habits, and wishes of their people ; and endeavor (so far as they can with a good conscience) to gratify them in these respects. By a prudent attention to this matter — becoming in the sense of Paul “ all things to all men ” — much dissatisfaction might be anticipated, and unhappy removals might often be prevented.

Ministers should also be careful to avoid all such political excitements and worldly entanglements as will be likely to prejudice and embarrass them, and injure if not destroy their usefulness. In a word, let ministers deeply feel that the pastoral relation is a very

solemn matter ; one not to be hastily entered into, nor hastily broken up ; one to be formed always with a view to permanency, and with the expectation, on both sides, that it is to continue to the end of life, unless God, in his providence, shall interpose to dissolve it. Under this impression, let them not be discontented in the situations assigned them, nor be found watching, contriving, inquiring, with a view to places which they may think more eligible. By too hastily sundering the pastoral relation, ministers have done much to unsettle the previous habits of New England with regard to this matter. If they would see these good old habits restored, they must themselves be more wise.

But churches and societies, as well as ministers, have a lesson to learn, in regard to the important subject before us. It is for their interest, not less than for that of their pastors, that the early habits of New England, in the respect referred to, should not be forgotten. And that they may not be, let them be careful to remove, on their part, all cause of too frequent dismissions.

Let time be given for acquaintance and satisfaction, before the pastoral relation is formed. And in the forming of it, let no stipulation or thought be entertained which looks towards its early or easy dissolution. Let adequate provision be made for the *support* of ministers ; and in doing this, let no engagements go into the contract which cannot be promptly and faithfully fulfilled. Let individuals repress in themselves, and discountenance in others, the habit of fickleness, the love of change ; choosing rather to be instructed by a tried and faithful friend, than to receive their spiritual meat at the hand of strangers. Especially,

let churches be unwilling, under almost any circumstances, to entice away the pastor of a sister church. This has been done occasionally, though not frequently, from the days of the Pilgrims to the present time. But the practice is directly calculated to sunder the bonds of fellowship between churches, and render the pastoral relation precarious and unsatisfactory.

Churches and societies should learn not to expect too much of their pastors, and to be dissatisfied or disappointed if they discover imperfections in them. A minister of the gospel may not be so highly gifted as some of his brethren. He may not be so eloquent and popular a speaker. He may not be so frequent or agreeable in his pastoral visits, as might be desired. Still, if he is learned, devoted, pious, faithful; if he preaches the gospel with earnestness and force, and exemplifies it in his daily deportment and conversation; such an one is a rich treasure to any people, and they are bound to "esteem him very highly in love, for his work's sake." Instead of repining that he does not embody *every* desirable ministerial qualification, they should rejoice and be thankful that he possesses so many; and instead of troubling and disheartening him with their complaints, they should sustain and assist him by their faithful coöperation and their fervent prayers.

In short, let the causes of the so frequent dismissions in our churches be diligently searched out, and so far as possible removed; let past mistakes and errors be avoided, and suitable precautions be taken for the future; and we may yet hope to see the stability and regularity of former times restored. We may hope to see, all over our land, pastors and people living, grow-

ing, ripening, and dying together. We may see them lying, side by side, in the same dust, prepared to rise and appear together before the judgment-seat of Christ, and enter together on the rewards of eternity.

## LECTURE XXVI.

### WITHDRAWING FROM THE MINISTRY.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE MINISTRY, PARTIALLY OR WHOLLY — CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THIS MAY AND MAY NOT BE DONE.

BY the rite of ordination, men are inducted into the sacred ministry. They are invested with a most responsible office, — that of ministering at the altar of God, and of negotiating between him and his apostate creatures here on the earth. The rite is, therefore, one of solemn import, bringing the subjects of it into new relations, and laying them under new obligations, both to God and man. They are henceforth *consecrated* in a more important sense than ever before, — *set apart* to a high and holy calling, which they are not at liberty, but for the most substantial reasons, to relinquish. So the first preachers of the gospel understood the matter; and when they were in danger of being drawn aside from their appropriate work by the pressure of secular cares, they proposed that deacons should be appointed to relieve them of this burthen. “But *we*,” say they, “will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts vi. 4). So Paul understood the subject; for he charges Timothy: “Meditate upon these things; give thyself *wholly* to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all” (1 Tim. iv. 15). It is the duty of all ministers, so long as God in his prov-

idence affords them strength and opportunity, to give themselves *wholly* to their Master's work, and not be turned aside from it by the cares and temptations of the world.

But how much is implied in a minister's giving himself *wholly* to his work? Does it imply that he is literally to think of nothing else, and do nothing else? — that every hour of his life, except those demanded for meals and sleep, is to be occupied in the discharge of ministerial duties? Some men seem to have understood the precept in a sense like this; for we find them declining all secular cares and labors, refusing so much as to “harness their horse, or feed their cattle, or bring in their wood,” or do anything of a worldly nature. But this, I think, is pushing the matter quite to an extreme. It is urging it beyond the example even of the apostles. In the interval between the resurrection and ascension, we find them engaged in their customary employment of fishing (John xxi. 3). We find Paul, also, laboring occasionally with his own hands, and supporting himself by such labor.

Are ministers entitled, then, to go to their shops, their farms, their merchandise, during the week, and perform ministerial duties only on the Sabbath? Many practise after this manner; but is this conformable to apostolical precept or example? Can this be giving themselves wholly to their work as ministers? Certainly not. No one in his sober senses can think so. And this is a far more common and dangerous error than the other. But few, comparatively, abstract themselves too entirely from the world; while hundreds and thousands plunge themselves too deeply into it.

The injunction of Paul to Timothy, and through him

to succeeding ministers, seems to me to imply that they are no longer to be men of the world, or to be occupied with the ordinary cares and business of the world; that they are to be intent upon their appropriate work; that their hearts are to be in it; that its studies are to occupy their minds, and its labors their hands, till they are released from all earthly cares and labors, and go to their eternal rest. Not that they are to have no seasons of relaxation or repose. Not that, in the intervals of study and parochial labor, they may not exercise themselves in such a way as to be useful to themselves and families. Not that they are to be so entirely abstracted as to become helpless, and require a servant to wait upon them, and perform for them the most necessary acts. But they are to feel, as I said, that they are no longer *men of this world*. They are no longer to covet its riches, or seek its honors, or pursue its pleasures. They are no longer to gain a livelihood by devoting themselves to its business concerns. They have a higher employment than this world can give,—one more than sufficient to task all their energies and engross their powers. They are to preach the gospel, and live of the gospel. They are to be instant in season, and out of season; giving themselves to reading and meditation; warning every man, and teaching every man; and looking to their great Master, and to the people whom they serve, for the supply of those necessities which they have in common with others. Ministers who live and labor after this manner seem to me to copy the example and obey the injunction of the great apostle. They give themselves wholly to their Master's work, and may pray and hope for his blessing in it.

But it will be asked, Are there no circumstances in

which a minister may swerve from the course of life here pointed out? in which he may relinquish the ministry altogether; or in which, rather than relinquish the ministry, or abandon some promising field of usefulness, he may, like Paul, support himself in part by the labor of his hands?

These are deeply interesting questions—*painfully* so, often, to the ministers of Christ. What I have aimed at in the foregoing remarks is to lay down the law *in the general*; to describe the course of life to be *aimed at* by every minister of Jesus. The circumstances under which it is right to swerve from this course—to turn aside from the labors of the ministry, either partially or wholly—remain to be pointed out.

And, first, let us inquire after the circumstances which may justify an individual in relinquishing *partially* the labors of the ministry, or combining them to some extent with secular pursuits.

This should not be done, in the first place, through *indolence*. Of mankind in general, one of the most easily besetting sins is *indolence*. One minister of my acquaintance, when asked for a definition of original sin, called it *laziness*. And there are in this world more lazy *minds* than bodies. There are not a few who can well bear, and even enjoy, the labors of the shop or the field, to whom the labors of the study are exceedingly irksome.

Indolence, like every other sin, grows strong by *indulgence*, and leads many a minister to neglect, more or less, the duties of his high vocation. Instead of toiling in the study, in the pulpit, in the conference-room, and from house to house, doing with his might what his hands find to do; those who have the means



of such indulgence are pursuing journeys and visiting friends; while others are filling up the time with light reading, gardening, household-choring, or easy literary pursuits. Now I hardly need say that such a course of life is altogether unjustifiable. No minister who has any conscience, or any just sense of what his obligations impose upon him, can be satisfied in pursuing it.

Nor should ministers turn aside from their professional duties for the purpose of *acquiring wealth*. In too many instances this has been done. In the hearts of some ministers the love of money has not been subdued. It still lives, and struggles for dominion; and under the influence of it they are led away from their appropriate employments to participate, more or less, in the cares and business of the world. They do not indeed relinquish the ministry, or think of resigning their charges as pastors, but contrive to unite with their parochial duties a variety of other things. They become farmers, teachers, authors, tradesmen, and in some instances speculators,—almost anything that is decent in a way of business, with a view to increase their worldly gains. And all this, not because it is a matter of stern necessity, but because they love the world, and cannot secure so much of it as they desire in any other way.

It is remarkable that there is, perhaps, no course of life so strongly rebuked, and against which ministers of the gospel are so solemnly warned in the New Testament, as that which I have here described. “Demas hath forsaken me, *having loved this present world.*” It is of the riches of the world that the apostle speaks when he breaks forth to Timothy in the following impassioned exclamation: “But thou, O man of God, *flee these*

*things*; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, charity." Among the good qualities of a bishop, Paul is careful to mention more than once that he must not be "greedy of filthy lucre." It is remarkable that this phrase, "filthy lucre," is never used in the New Testament to set forth any species of gain but that which is made or procured by the covetousness of *ministers*; and never, surely, does a thirst for gain appear more sordid and out of place than in persons of that sacred profession.

I remark again, that ministers of the gospel have no right to turn aside more or less from the appropriate duties of their office because they feel a disrelish for these duties, and a greater love for other employments. There is reason to fear that this is sometimes done. The piety of ministers (if they have any) declines; their zeal abates; their love grows cold. The world allures them; they become fascinated with it, and gradually lose their relish for those holy, spiritual duties to which they had consecrated their lives. Of course these duties are more or less neglected, and other employments are sought and pursued. But surely no minister can feel justified in turning aside from his appropriate work for such a cause as this. No minister who has a spark of grace remaining in his soul can be satisfied to persist in such a miserable course of life. He must arise and fan the expiring flame. He must strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die. He must implore forgiveness for past unfaithfulness, return to his first love, and begin to perform his first works. He must begin his ministerial life, as it were, *anew*, and consecrate himself afresh and wholly to its sacred employments.

I remark once more, that ministers have no right to turn aside from the duties of their calling, and engage in other pursuits to humor the parsimony of their people, — a degree of parsimony which ought rather to be rebuked and overcome. Here, we will suppose, is a pastor in charge of a people who are not too poor to sustain him comfortably ; but they are exceedingly parsimonious. They have not been accustomed to pay much for the support of the gospel ; and what they do pay comes slowly and in stinted measure. The minister, of course, is straitened ; he has not the means of living ; and now what shall he do ? I should have no hesitation in telling such a minister what I would not do. I would not do *my people's* business and neglect *my own*. I would not turn farmer, or teacher, or trader, or author, with a view to obtain the means of living, — a living which, by the supposition, my people were bound to furnish, — and neglect those holy, spiritual duties which I had covenanted with my Master and with them to perform. I would not do this for several reasons. In the first place, by so doing I should injure my people. I should humor their selfishness and parsimony, and confirm them in a pernicious habit, which required not to be strengthened, but subdued. Then I should essentially injure myself. Professional improvement, in such circumstances, would be out of the question. Instead of growing in knowledge, it would be well if I did not lose the knowledge which I had already gained. Habits of study would be broken up, mental discipline lost, and the intellect and heart would be likely to go to waste together. And while this deteriorating process was going on, my prospects of usefulness must be continually diminishing. My sermons

must be hastily, imperfectly prepared. They must have less of point, of interest, and power than they formerly had ; and there would be less and less prospect that they would be blessed to the salvation of souls. Besides, I should feel all the while that I was trifling with my ministerial engagements, departing from the spirit and letter of my ordination vows, and thereby sinning against Christ ; so that I could, with no face or confidence, look up to him and implore his blessing.

If a minister under the circumstances here supposed is willing to go into secular labors, and half support himself, his inconsiderately selfish people will be sure to let him. They will like to have it so ; at least they will like it for a time, till his sermons become so dull and bad that they can no longer endure them ; and then they will turn him away, and act over the same experiment with some other man.

The best way — the only consistent way — for a minister to get along with such a people, is to let the world entirely alone. Let him give himself entirely to his appropriate work. He must let them understand from the first that their business is to give him a support, and his business is to labor for the salvation of their souls ; and that he will not, cannot turn aside from his momentous, all-important work to do theirs. Let him be so diligent and faithful in his ministerial duties that they shall begin to feel the value of him ; and begin to realize that it is better for them to have and to support a whole minister than half a one. I believe that such an impression may in most instances be made ; and that where there is an ability to support the gospel, this ability may, ordinarily, be drawn out. If, however, after a fair trial, it cannot be, then let the

minister turn his back on such a people, and shake off the dust of his feet for a testimony against them. But if their selfishness can be subdued, their parsimony overcome, and they be brought to feel the value of the gospel and to support it, how much better it will be for all concerned than to fall into and pursue the halting, half-way, ruinous policy which has been described!

After what has been said, it will not be difficult to state the circumstances in which a minister may properly turn aside from his sacred duties and engage to some extent in the business of the world. They must be circumstances of strong necessity — a necessity so strong as to cut off all freedom of choice in the matter, except that of choosing between two evils. To turn aside at all from the duties of the ministry is a great evil, in itself. There may be, however, and there sometimes is, a greater evil which may justify an individual in making choice of the less.

The Apostle Paul went forth on his mission with no missionary-board or society at home to sustain him; and though he often received contributions from the churches he had gathered, yet these resources sometimes failed him, and he had no alternative but to work with his own hands. In these circumstances I suppose it was right for Paul to work, keeping his heart intent all the while upon his great commission, and devoting himself to it to the utmost of his power. I suppose it was right for Cary and Thomas, the first Baptist missionaries to India, to support themselves for a time by the labor of their hands. They had no alternative but to do this, or to quit the field. Ministers of the gospel in our own country are often placed in circumstances where it is right for them to labor, more or less, for a support.

They occupy stations which they cannot think it their duty to leave, and in which they cannot be adequately sustained; so that a necessity is laid upon them to procure a livelihood in part by their own exertions. Such ministers ought to feel, however, that they are placed in circumstances of peculiar danger, and that they have need to watch their deceitful hearts with all diligence. They are in danger of being secularized in their feelings and habits, and of becoming little more than mere men of the world. They are in danger of falling into such a state, that the course of life which was entered upon as a matter of necessity shall be continued as a matter of choice. They may acquire property and make themselves and their families comfortable. They will be quite as likely to do this as those ministers who have more salaries and who have less to do with the world. Their danger is all in the other direction: that while they are surrounding themselves with secular comforts, their minds and hearts are running to waste; they are losing their character and influence as ministers; and are becoming, as I said, little more than mere men of business in the world.

I conceive that nothing but necessity, in the sense explained, can justify a minister in turning aside, even partially, from the duties of his office; and the diversion should continue no longer than the necessity. As soon as Providence opens the way for it, let him joyfully renounce his worldly cares, and return, with renewed diligence and consecration, to the discharge of those holy, spiritual duties which should have constituted the business of his life.

I have spoken at length of the circumstances under which a minister may, and may not, relinquish in part

the duties of his profession. Before closing, I must add a few words in regard to the circumstances under which he may be justified in turning from them altogether.

And here I would say, as before, let no man abandon the ministry through indolence. Though he may have the means of living in affluence and comfort, aside from his profession, he may not, for this reason, conclude to relinquish it, and live at ease. This, certainly, is a most unworthy and insufficient excuse — such as his Lord and Master cannot approve.

Nor can a man be justified in retiring from the ministry because he does not love its duties; or loves other employments better; or, in other words, because he does not think himself morally, *spiritually* fit for it. It better becomes him to *seek* that fitness which he feels that he needs; seek it earnestly; seek it till he finds it, than rashly to break his ordination vows, and give himself up to the pursuits and pleasures of the world.

As nothing but *necessity* can justify a minister in turning aside but partially from the duties of his profession, so nothing short of an urgent necessity can justify him in relinquishing them altogether. When he was solemnly inducted into the ministry, by the imposition of hands and prayer, he was regarded as devoting himself to it for life. He accepted an office which he was never lightly or unnecessarily to lay down. He entered into covenant with Christ and his church that he would work in the gospel vineyard so long as the ability and opportunity remained. Now such engagements, surely, are not to be trifled with. They are not for slight seasons to be broken up. I suppose that God in his providence may create a necessity, that shall compel his ministering servants to retire from

their work ; but until such necessity is created, and made clear, let them not dare turn aside from their holy profession.

God may, and sometimes does, deprive his ministers of *health*, and in this way disqualify them for the duties of their office. They have no longer *the ability* to discharge these duties, and of course God does not require it of them.

God often spares his ministering servants till they are disqualified for public service by the infirmities of age. In these circumstances, the same voice which once called them to labor now kindly excuses them from it.

Ministers sometimes find their way entirely hedged up. *As ministers* they cannot go forward or backward. They cannot turn to the right hand or the left. Of course the providence of God calls on such men to stop. They *must* stop. They ought to stop. Until God opens a door for them to labor as ministers, they are fully justified in serving him in some other way.

I have said that *moral* disqualifications are not always a sufficient excuse for retiring from the ministry ; because these may be of a nature to be overcome. They ought to be overcome. The cold heart should become warm. The hard heart should be melted. The uninterested, unfruitful minister should become a faithful minister ; should become a faithful servant of the Lord. I would not be understood to say, however, that *no* moral disqualifications can ever excuse a man from further service *as a minister of Christ*. A minister may fall so foully into sin, may make such utter shipwreck of character, that he can never be restored to his former place. He may repent and be forgiven,



as a brother in Christ ; he may have a regular standing in the church ; but he can do no more good, as a public teacher of religion. He has disqualified himself for such a service. If he is a wise, a modest, a humble man, he will not aspire to it, or desire it.

I remark once more : There are disqualifications for the ministry which are not of a moral or spiritual nature. They belong not so much to the heart as the head ; and are such as the subject of them has no power to overcome. Cases of this nature occasionally show themselves among the professed ambassadors of Jesus. Individuals get into the ministry who have manifestly mistaken their calling. They can serve Christ in other capacities, but never to much purpose as public teachers of religion. The providence of God will soon make it plain to such persons that they are out of their place, and will furnish them with a sufficient excuse for laying down a profession which ought never to have been taken up.

The course of remark in this Lecture is fitted and intended to make the impression that the act of receiving ordination, and becoming an accredited ambassador of Jesus, is a very solemn act. The individual who takes this step is to be understood as having committed himself for life. He has put his hand to the gospel plough, and must not look back. He has relinquished the ordinary pursuits of men, and consecrated himself to the duties of religion. And he is now to give himself *wholly* to these things. He is not to abandon them, or turn from them, either partially or entirely, but under the influence of a necessity which he cannot surmount.

The Lord enlighten all his ministering servants, and

all who are looking forward to the sacred office, that they may rightly understand this solemn subject, and may so discharge the duties devolving on them, that they may stand accepted in the day of the Lord Jesus.

## LECTURE XXVII.

### RESULTS OF FAITHFUL PASTORAL LABOR.

WHAT THE PERMANENTLY SETTLED PASTOR MAY AND MAY NOT EXPECT, FOR HIMSELF AND FOR OTHERS, IN THIS LIFE AND THE FUTURE, AS THE FRUIT OF HIS EXERTIONS.

IN a series of Lectures I have considered the necessary qualifications of pastors: their ordination and settlement in the ministry; their relations after settlement; and the various duties resulting from these relations. I have taken the opportunity, also, of discussing several important *collateral* questions, being more or less connected with the general subject.

In my Lecture on a settlement in the ministry, I remarked that settlements should always be formed with a view to permanency, and should actually be made as permanent as possible. Unless where the providence of God interposes very specially and intelligibly to dissolve them, they should be continued to the end of life.

We will suppose now that a pastor is permanently and usefully settled over an affectionate people, and that his life and health are continued to the common age of man. *What are to be the results of his labors?* Are these results worth living for? And in prospect of them, may an intelligent, pious, conscientious young man be justified in choosing the ministry as his profession, and devoting his life to its sacred duties? These are very

serious questions,—well worth the consideration of every pastor, and of all who are anticipating the pastoral work.

In the circumstances supposed, a pastor may not expect *riches*, at least as the fruit of his ministerial labors; but he may expect for himself and family the *comforts and conveniences of life*. Ministers are sometimes charged with preaching for money, and with fattening, growing rich, upon the earnings of their people. But this charge, I hardly need say, is as unfounded and foolish as it is malicious. I have been extensively acquainted with pastors and ministers for a long course of years, and I never yet saw a minister, or heard of one, who became rich on his salary. I have known a few rich ministers; but their riches have been acquired, uniformly, in some other way. It is on this ground that I feel authorized to say, confidently: The settled pastor has no right to expect riches, at least as the result of his ministerial labors.

But though he may not expect wealth,—unless he inherit it, or acquire it in some way aside from his ministry,—he may expect, he has a right to expect, his share of the comforts and conveniences of life. If he faithfully and devotedly preaches the gospel, he may reasonably expect that he shall live of the gospel. If he ministers to his people in spiritual things, he has a right to partake of their carnal things. If he devotes himself to his appropriate work, they will not let him suffer. Much less will his Divine Master permit him to suffer. Accordingly (although, as I said, evangelical ministers have little wealth) there is probably less suffering among them from palpable poverty than in the same number of any other class or profession. What the

Psalmist said in his day may in general be said of good ministers now: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Again: faithful pastors have no reason to expect much worldly honor; but they may expect honors and influence of a vastly higher and more desirable character. Worldly honors they are not to expect, because, in the first place, they are not worldly men. They are not in the path of promotion; not in the way to secure honors of this nature. Or if they were, and were devotedly pious and faithful as Christians, it is not at all likely that the world would honor them. If a holy angel was to become incarnate, and appear as a man among men on the earth, he would not be likely to be promoted to seats of worldly honor and power. He would not seek such promotion, nor would he be enough a favorite with worldly men to induce them to bestow it. Said our Saviour to his disciples: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

But it is of little account to the faithful minister of Christ that the honors of the world are not before him. He has higher honors in prospect, — those which come not from man, but from God only. The honor of being an accredited servant of the Lord Jesus Christ; an ambassador of the King of kings; of acting under a commission from him, and of gathering souls into his kingdom; — these are honors in his estimation vastly beyond any that this world can bestow. Then if he is faithful, he may expect a degree of influence — Christian influence — among men, as great as he could, on the

whole, desire. His learning, his wisdom, his holy character, his consistent example, his sacred office, his kindness to all men whether friends or enemies, his unwearied efforts to do good,—these all combine to give him an *influence*—an influence of the best and most salutary kind; as strong as any good man will ever covet; as strong as can be safely trusted to his hands.

I remark again: mere *worldly pleasures* the faithful pastor does not expect. He has no heart for them. He would not descend to them even if they were placed within his reach. But to pleasures of a holier, purer character, he is not a stranger. The pleasures of Christian society and intercourse; the pleasures of a good conscience; the pleasure of frequent communion with God; the pleasure of so serving the Lord Jesus Christ as to enjoy his conscious approbation; the pleasure of seeing the work of the Lord promoted, and souls saved through his own instrumentality;—these are pleasures to which the devoted pastor may confidently look forward, and of which he is in present possession. And with enjoyments such as these in possession and prospect, he may well forego the low pleasures of earth. He may well respond to all their blandishments, “I send the joys of earth away.”

Thus far I have had in view the results of pastoral labor to the *individual personally*,—what he may and may not expect as *the present fruit of his labor to himself*: it is time that we inquire as to results, which he may hope to witness around him. These are such as the following:

1. A population distinguished for *intelligence, morality, and thrift*. “Godliness is profitable unto all things; having the promise of the life that *now is*, and of that which is to come.” The stated preaching of the gospel

by an intelligent, faithful pastor tends in many ways to promote the *temporal* advantage of those who enjoy it. It does this by promoting order, civilization, and refinement; by forming a correct public sentiment; by discountenancing every species of vice and crime; by elevating and sustaining the standard of morals. In this way there soon comes to be a correct *public conscience*. Whatever is palpably sinful becomes disreputable; while the things that are true and honest and just and pure and lovely and of good report are held in honor.

At the same time that the gospel is producing these effects upon the morals of a community, it is tending, also, to *inform* and *enlighten* it. The devoted pastor is, of course, the friend and patron of general education. He encourages reading, and introduces good books; he strives to elevate the character of public schools; he circulates intelligence upon all useful subjects. Under the steady, strong influence of causes such as these, his people become intelligent and virtuous; and, as a natural consequence, are thrifty and prosperous. The maxim of Solomon, that "righteousness exalteth a nation," is as true on a small as on a large scale. It is as true of a parish as it is of a kingdom. I once knew a man, who had travelled extensively through New England, who said that it was easy to discover where good ministers were settled by the appearance of the *farms* and *fences*. Now all this may have been true. Not that good ministers have much to say about farms and fences; but an influence goes out from the pulpit which reaches to the whole business of life; prompting that every secular, as well as spiritual duty, whether in the house or in the field, in the shop of the mechanic or the warehouse of the merchant, be done promptly, faithfully, and well.

People sometimes think that they are too poor to support the stated ministrations of the gospel. The probability is that they are too poor to do without them. The gospel would be worth more to them than the expense of it, even in a secular point of view. It is the sins and vices of men, and not their religious institutions, which make them poor. It costs as much, often, to support one vice as a dozen preachers. If, therefore, by supporting the gospel, they can discountenance and suppress vice, the saving will be great every way. There will be a saving of time, of property, of character, of everything which ought to have weight with a rational mind.

But I find that I am wandering from the point in hand. What I wish to show is,—and the remarks already made are more than sufficient to show it,—that the intelligent, faithful pastor, in prosecuting his labors among a people from year to year, may expect to benefit them both spiritually and *temporally*. He may expect to see intelligence and virtue promoted, and vice and folly checked. He may expect to see them becoming, under his influence, a wise, sober, industrious, moral, and consequently a prosperous and happy people.

2. He may expect, secondly, to witness continual tokens of *the Spirit's presence and power* among his people, in revivals of religion, in the edification and growth of Christians, and in the conviction and conversion of sinners. Christ's ministers are encouraged by express promises that if they persevere and are faithful in their work, they "shall both save themselves, and them that hear them;" that if they "go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, they shall come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them." In a greater or less degree these promises have been verified to Christ's



faithful ambassadors in all ages. They have been specially so in our own age, — an age distinguished by revivals of religion, and by the rapid advancement of Christ's kingdom in the earth. The pastor in these days, who stands in his lot, and is diligent and faithful in the discharge of his duties, preaching the word, being instant in season and out of season, warning and teaching every man, will not be suffered to spend his strength for naught. He will have the satisfaction of knowing that he is a "worker together with God." He will witness the tokens of the Spirit's presence with him; he will feel them often in his own heart. As he mingles with the pious of his flock, he will see that they are growing in knowledge and in grace; that they are becoming more intelligent, consistent, established, faithful; more instant in prayer, and more ready to every good word and work. As he converses with his impenitent hearers, he will perceive that the word dispensed is taking effect upon their hearts. One and another are inquiring; some are distressed; and here and there is an individual coming forth from the blindness and darkness of nature into the light of spiritual day. Now these are cheering, encouraging fruits of pastoral effort. But occasionally, and perhaps not unfrequently, he has the privilege of witnessing greater things than these. The Spirit is poured out in rich effusion, and converts are multiplied as the drops of the dew. Professors of religion are humbled and engaged; the doubting and trembling are comforted; the wandering are reclaimed; and sinners in great numbers — the hardened, the vicious, the careless, the worldly, the aged, the middle-aged, and the young — are brought to rejoice together in the hopes and consolations of the gospel. Such scenes it is the

privilege of the devoted pastor not unfrequently to witness. And more than this, he may *rejoice* in them as the results, in great measure, under God, of his own humble instrumentality. In this view, who would not desire to be a pastor? Who, that is in any good measure prepared for it, in mind and heart, but would prefer to labor in this blessed employment, rather than in any other, in which it is possible for a mortal to engage?

3. As a further result of his faithful labors, the pastor may expect to see his *church* continually strengthened and increased. A variety of causes are constantly operating to weaken and diminish a church. Its aged members and others, its pillars and ornaments, are frequently taken away by death. Some change their residence, and are removed to other parts of the vineyard; while some make shipwreck of their profession and hopes, and are excluded. But notwithstanding the steady operation of these causes, the faithful pastor has the privilege in almost all cases of seeing his church, not only sustained and perpetuated, but enlarged. In *ordinary times*, individuals are coming in, one after another, to take the places of those that are removed; while in the great harvest seasons of which I have spoken, converts are seen flocking to the standard of Christ like flying clouds and doves to their windows. In these ways the breaches that are made upon the church, by instances of mortality and other causes, are more than made up, and the body is continually increased and strengthened. This is another of the pastor's comforts, as he advances in years, and the fathers and mothers in his Israel are removed, to see the children coming forward and taking their places, and the church by their means perpetuated and increased.

4. It should be noticed among the happy results of the pastor's labors, that he is permitted to see the power of religion continually exemplified, in the *consistent lives* and *happy deaths* of individuals among his people. To be sure, he is sometimes constrained to witness developments of a very different character,—departures from the faith, unchristian deportment, hardness and bitterness among brethren, and coldness and formality in the service of Christ. But these things do not surprise him, though they deeply pain him. They are the very things of which he is forewarned in the Scriptures, and which have been witnessed by apostles and holy men in every period of the church. Nor do they prevent the satisfaction with which he contemplates *the ripened fruits of the Spirit*, presenting themselves in clusters all around him. In his preaching he is accustomed to speak of the good influences of religion, leading to propriety and consistency of deportment, to holiness of heart and life. He is accustomed to speak, also, of the *power* of religion to sustain the soul in the most trying circumstances; to comfort it under the greatest afflictions; to give it the victory even over the king of terrors. It is with peculiar satisfaction, therefore, that he witnesses, and has the privilege of pointing out to others, *just those results* in actual development which he had before so often described. The doctrine and the experiment in this case agree, and by the latter the former is illustrated, confirmed, and settled. Nothing is more honorable to religion, or more calculated to recommend and enforce it, than to see it *exemplified* in the manner here pointed out. And this the good pastor will be likely to see continually. He may see it more and more the longer he lives and the further his opportunities of observation extend.

5. It should be further remarked that the good results of the faithful pastor's labors extend beyond the limits of his own parish. We have seen, in the course of these Lectures, that the pastor has important duties to discharge, not only to his own church and people, but to other churches and other ministers, and even to churches and ministers of other denominations. In a lower sense than the great apostle of the Gentiles, but yet in *some* sense he may truly say: "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise." He has duties to perform for the church *in general*, and even for the *whole world*. If he is diligent and faithful in the performance of these duties, he will not be left here, more than among his own people, to labor in vain. The fruits of his labor will appear; and as he advances in years and in usefulness, they will be palpable both to himself and others. The late President Edwards and John Newton and Thomas Scott and Andrew Fuller and Doctors Bellamy, Hopkins, and Emmons, were all of them pastors whose efforts were blessed among their own people; and yet we should have but a very limited view of the results of their labors, were we to confine them to their own people. A good influence went forth from their studies, their labors, which has extended all over Protestant Christendom, and which will extend to generations yet unborn. And although every good pastor may not be able to spread his influence so widely, yet he can hardly fail to spread it more or less, and to witness the results of it, beyond the limits of his own charge.

6. The permanently settled pastor (and it is the case of such that I now contemplate) may expect to die peacefully in the midst of a kind, affectionate people,

and that his dust will quietly sleep with theirs. And there is something exceedingly pleasant in this idea; that the individual who has long watched for the souls of a people, — has been their instructor, their example, their guide, their friend, and to whom many among them look up as to their spiritual father, — that when his strength is gone, and his days are ended, he should die in the midst of those whom he has so faithfully served. By precept and example he has taught them how to live; it is meet that in his own person he should teach them how to die. It is meet, too, that his dust should repose with theirs; that with theirs it may rise in the resurrection at the last day. I have said that there is something exceedingly pleasant in this whole idea. By the fathers of New England it was so regarded, both theoretically and practically. Go into the principal graveyards in almost any of the older towns and parishes of New England, and you will find a vast congregation of all ages and of both sexes quietly resting in their graves together; and in the midst of them you will find the tombs of their successive pastors. Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in death they were not divided. In the slumbers of the tomb they are united; and all those who embraced that gospel which their faithful pastors once proclaimed, shall be united in heaven forever. But this leads me to remark:

7. That the results of faithful pastoral labor are not confined to the present world. They reach far away into eternity, and will be realized and rejoiced in, in heavenly places forever. When the pastor's work is over, and he is permitted to appear in other worlds, he may expect to meet a large number, more or less, who, through his instrumentality, have been saved from sin

and death, and who will be his joy and crown of rejoicing through eternal ages. And oh, what a consolation is this! What a *result* is this to flow from the toils of a few years on the earth! What other labor in the world can compare, in this respect, with that of the devoted minister of Christ? Worldly men by their efforts and wealth often produce great present results. They build pyramids and monuments; they lay the foundation of states and empires; they make important discoveries in science and art. But all these things, from their very nature, and from their connection with this fleeting, changing world, are temporary. They cannot endure. In a little time they will be as though they had never been. Where now are some of the proudest monuments of the ancient world, — the high walls of Ninevah, the towers of Babylon, the ships of Tarshish and of Tyre, the palaces and temples of lofty Troy? And where will be all the monuments of earth, and with them the vast globe itself, when it shall have wheeled its circuits a few more years? God in his Word has told us where: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; *the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up* (2 Pet. iii. 10). Such is the speedy termination of all things merely earthly. But the results of the devoted pastor’s toils will endure forever. He rears a monument which the current of years cannot undermine; which the tooth of time will never be able to deface. The fruits of his labors, conflicts, and prayers he will behold around him in the high places of heaven; they will constitute his joy and his crown for ever and ever.

8. I mention but another result of the pastor's faithful labors on earth; and this is the richest of them all: He shall be accepted at last of the Lord Jesus Christ; shall be welcomed home to the resting-place prepared for him; shall be received to the distinguished rewards of those who have turned many to righteousness, and shine as a star in the firmament of heaven forever. Not the smallest service done for Christ in this world shall ever lose its reward. The giving of a cup of cold water to a suffering disciple, because he is a disciple of Christ, will be remembered and rewarded in the final day. Much more shall the labors of the faithful, devoted minister of Christ, — one who has toiled long in the vineyard, and borne the burthen and heat of the day, — who has endured, and had patience, and for his sake has labored, and not fainted; — much more shall such an one be welcomed at the last, and receive a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away.

The glories of the blessed in heaven seem to be proportioned to the conflicts through which they have passed, and the sufferings they have endured in the service of their Master. "One of the elders said unto me, Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they that have come out of *great tribulation*, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here, certainly, is strong encouragement, not only for confessors and martyrs, but for *tried, troubled, careworn, afflicted pastors*. Toil on, then, brethren, but a little further; be faithful to accomplish, as the hireling, your day; and you serve a Master who will not forget you. He holds out to you already crowns

of righteousness which shall soon be placed upon your now aching heads. And let each one see to it that his is a crown of *many stars*; that he is entitled to the distinguished rewards of those who have turned many to righteousness.

In stating the results of faithful pastoral labor, I have not disguised that the ministry has its trials — often sore trials. I have not said that in no cases is it followed by results of an unpleasant character. On the contrary, it is implied in much that has been said that this is even so. But then it should be remembered that these are but the trials of the way. They are all temporary. If met in the right spirit and manner, they cannot injure us. So far from this, they are sure to work for our good, and for the general good. Paul had many trials in accomplishing his ministry, but he learned to rejoice in them; for they were always salutary to him personally, and they often turned, as he tells us, to the furtherance of the gospel.

On the whole, then, I appeal to those who hear me, and to all who read these pages, whether it is not a great privilege to be a gospel minister; whether “he who desires the office of a bishop does not desire a good work.” In respect to the dignity and glory of the Master we serve; in respect to the holy, spiritual, elevated nature of the employment in which we engage; as to the richness and ever-during permanency of the results produced; as to the value of the reward promised, and soon to be bestowed; what other work on earth can compare with this? What other office so responsible and glorious? It was an object with Paul to *magnify his office*; not only by thinking and speaking highly of it, but by honoring it in his daily deportment, and by



faithfully discharging its appropriate duties. By the same methods may all the members of this beloved Seminary learn to magnify that holy office to which they aspire, that so they may prove themselves the genuine successors of the apostles and primitive ministers of Jesus, and be admitted, at last, to share with them the honors of their Master's kingdom.

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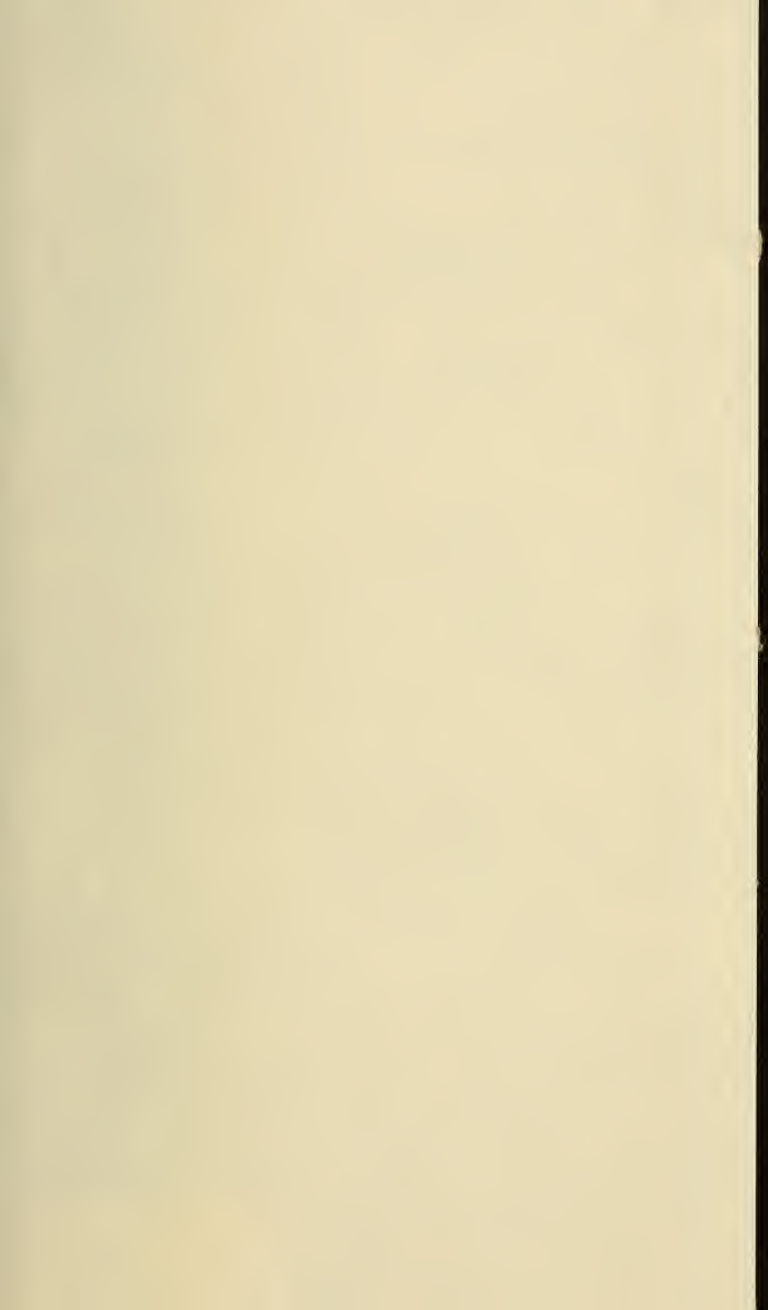
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