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ART. I.—*Life of Joseph Brant Thayendanega: including the Border Wars of the American Revolution, and Sketches of the Indian Campaigns of Generals Harmer, St. Clair, and Wayne, and other matters connected with the Indian Relations of the United States and Great Britain, from the Peace of 1783 to the Indian Peace of 1795.* By William L. Stone. 2 vols. 8vo. Dearborn: New York. 1838. *Archibald Stevenson*

IT was a matter of surprise to us, at first, to find two ponderous volumes occupied with the life of an Indian chief; but upon perusal, we found that the hero of the history takes up a small space in the body of the work. He is, it is true, a prominent actor in the transactions recorded in these volumes; but if they contained nothing more than the events in which Joseph Brant was personally concerned, they would be of small value compared with that which they intrinsically possess. The fact is, that the American public are indebted to Col. Stone, for an entirely new history of the war of the revolution. This history is not only new as being composed in a lively style, and as containing much graphic description of interesting scenes by an original writer; but by means of new sources of information, and authentic documents, not possessed by any former historian, the author has presented

ART. IV.—*Fragments from the Study of a Pastor.* By Gardiner Spring, *Pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New York.* Vol. I. New York: John S. Taylor. 1838. 12mo, pp. 160.

*J. W. Alexander*

IN taking notice of this little volume, nothing is further from our endeavour than to introduce the author to the attention of our readers; for among many able ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are few in our country more widely or more favourably known than Dr. Spring. It is his happiness to have laboured long in one city, and for one church; and this alone, in his case, and a few that are like it, affords a presumption in favour of those who have weathered the storms of the last fifteen years, which have unsettled a thousand pastors. In former times—and we make the remark of our own country—there was something so tender and binding in the pastoral tie, that it was often viewed under the figure of a marriage; and to break it was a matter for long advisement, hesitation, and tears. The aged clergyman could look from the pulpit over a whole generation of whom he had baptized almost every one; whose parents he had not merely addressed but educated, and, by a regular system of instruction that is almost precluded by our present habits, had nourished up in sound doctrine. Who can say how much more mightily the word fell from the lips of one who had walked for many years among its hearers; or how much more reverent was the regard of youth towards the man who had consigned their fathers to the grave with solemn rites; or how much more cordial the counsels to the dying from one whose smile and hand had offered the same paternal aid, for a thousand times! It was good thus to dwell among one's 'own people:' and we shall be slow to believe that any of the boasted advantages of novelty or excitement can ever indemnify for the total absence of these permanent and healthful connexions.

The work of a bishop is a good work; it is, we heartily believe, the best work on earth. No chair of science or literature however conspicuous, no brilliancy of authorship, no vigorous activity in even the best public enterprises, can for a moment be placed in competition with the office of an able minister of Jesus Christ. None are more blind than they who willingly forsake it, whether for the pursuit of

learning and fame, or for the baser covetousness of farms and merchandise. It is a good work, and best of all when it is successfully carried on for years in the same place and among the same hearers. Many a man can make a great impression in a new place, with the few picked discourses of twenty years; or excite a temporary enthusiasm as he itinerates from state to state with a series of his choicest labours. Many a flaming zealot can burn brightly for two years, or even for three, supposing an uncommon supply of oil in his vessel, but to be a burning and shining light in a high place for the best part of a life time, is so far from being an ordinary attainment, that we seriously fear some of our young probationers do not even set it before them as a definite object of pursuit. Preachers as well as people are implicated in the faults which lie at the bottom of this condition of things; but while we would not absolve either the one or the other, we do not feel called upon at this time to trace the unfortunate fact to its real causes. That it is a fact that the term of pastoral connexion is shorter than it used to be, is not, we believe, denied. That this is a great evil, it would be very easy to show. When, therefore, in looking over the churches, our eyes alight on one and another who has been able to maintain his ground, and not only so, but to gather influence every hour, we are irresistibly impelled to say Happy shepherd! happy flock! and to inquire wherein this great strength lieth. It was therefore with much pleasure that we saw this book of fragments announced, as hoping to have some of our inquiries answered.

Dr. Spring has not given many printed sermons to the world, and what he has here offered has nothing of the pulpit about it: but seems, as he says, to be literally small detached portions collected by an occasional employment of those leisure hours and fragments of time which have remained after the more serious duties of the week have been discharged. In surveying the Table of Contents we were at once arrested by the fourth title, namely, the Letter to a Young Clergyman; and it has not disappointed our expectations. It is such a letter as every young clergyman might rejoice to receive at the outset of his race: happy would it have been for many of us if we had adopted its principles in years long past! It is the scope of this Letter to set the preaching of the gospel in its true light; to magnify the preacher's office, and to rescue it from the degradation into which some have in late years sought to sink it, as compared with certain other

ministerial functions. "I know not," says the author, "how you can more magnify the pastoral office, than by exalting, and performing acceptably and profitably, *the appropriate services of the sacred desk*. By far the most important part of your labours will be found in the duties which devolve upon you as a *public teacher*." This, with the argument that follows, commands our assent; and we are glad to see it thus boldly declared from a source which no man can undervalue as incompetent or inexperienced. There is nothing in these sixteen pages which we would not here joyfully insert, but that we respect Mr. Taylor's copyright. Dr. Spring goes on to point out the ordinance of preaching as one of the great peculiarities of Christianity, unknown among the heathen priests and philosophers, and affording to true religion its self-perpetuating power; the heritage of the poor, and the light of the world. What is next said about the indisposition of people to read the best of books is all too true; though it seems not to be sufficiently considered even by our most benevolent and philanthropic book-makers and tract-distributers. There is no sufficient provision made to generate a taste for reading, without which millions of books, however duly scattered, will be but as loaded tables spread before a loathing multitude: on the other hand, there is, and under the Christian dispensation always will be, a taste for hearing. "Even the most intelligent portion of the reading community derive their religious instructions from the sacred desk. Few, very few of them are readers of religious books. Other streams there are; but a well furnished pulpit is the fountain of religious knowledge. I have no doubt that the public instructions of the sanctuary mould the moral intellect and character of men more than any other, and all other causes combined."

"Can this be doubted, if we look at the real state of the case? Think of such men as Edwards, or Witherspoon, or Davies, or Chalmers, having access to some five hundred, or two thousand minds, two or three times in each week;—minds that are broad awake, and perhaps intensely interested! Such a preacher puts a volume of well digested instruction upon subjects the most deeply interesting and important that can be conceived, not into the hands of a solitary individual, or of a family, but simultaneously into the hands of hundreds. He does this one hundred and fifty times a year. Who does not see that if his own mind be taught of God, and laboriously disciplined, and liberally furnished, and if he is faith-

ful to his trust, an immense amount of truth must thus be poured upon the benighted intellect of men, even within the short compass of a very few years? Let such a ministry be widely and densely scattered throughout the land, delivering the truth, *not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*; and how soon would it bloom like Eden and become as the garden of the Lord! Not to a village, a city, or an extended district, would such a ministry confine its influence; but, like the sun, its going forth would be from the end of the heaven, and its circuit would be unto the ends of it; and nothing would be hid from the heat thereof."

There are perhaps some of our readers who will be at once disposed to exclaim, that in all this there is nothing new, and that they have always conceded to the preaching of the gospel this importance. But these very persons, will possibly find, on a more careful reconsideration of the subject and of themselves, that they have been accustomed to set other ministerial performances higher than that of preaching; and, if they happen to have any personal concern in clerical employments, that they have allotted a meager portion of their time to direct preparation for the pulpit. To all such we address the words of our experienced author, believing that, with the discriminations which he premises, they are precisely what are needed by our young preachers.

"In the whole course of your ministrations therefore, let your mind be directed toward that department of labour to which it must always be mainly applied. Aim early, aim constantly to furnish yourself to become a preacher. Every thing you do, or leave undone, should have influence on your usefulness as a preacher. Instruction from the pulpit is to be your great business. It is a part of a minister's duty, which holds the first place, and which may never be yielded to any other. No other contributes so much to his usefulness. Other duties he has. He must visit the sick and the dying. He must bind up the broken hearted in the house of mourning. He must lift his consolatory and warning voice in the land of silence and amid the memorials of the dead. He must be watchful too, how he neglects to cultivate those social affections whose cheerful and benignant influence the piety of the gospel elevates and purifies, and which wind their way into the kindest sympathies of those he serves. But after all, he must remember that his great business is to prepare for the public service of the house of

God. In no other ought he to be, and for no other does he need to be so well furnished. Nothing may interfere with his duty of preparing for the Sabbath. Next to actual immorality and the want of personal religion, there is no such defect in a minister's character as deficiency in his public instructions. I look upon the minister who neglects the wants of the whole body of his people from a false regard to the wants of a single family, or a single individual, as criminally unfaithful to his high and holy trust. Judge ye whether it is the more profitable to discourse instructively, appropriately, tenderly, with a single family, or to discourse instructively, appropriately, tenderly, with the assembled tribes of God's Israel! I would not have you depreciate pastoral visitation. God forbid! But I would have you appreciate the paramount duties of the Sanctuary. A minister should *never* leave the place of study and prayer, except for the performance of duties which do not interfere with his preparations for the pulpit. I have known men who devoted five days in the week to pastoral visitation, and satisfied their consciences with a single day's preparation for the Sabbath. And I have heard their congregations exclaim, *My leanness! my leanness! wo unto me!* And I have seen their once verdant and prolific field of labour becoming like the heath in the desert."

This is not mere argument; it is testimony; and what our author has heard and seen, we have also heard and seen, and that in many places. No differences among congregations can be more marked than such as have this origin. The collected intellect of a whole people is under a perpetual process of elevation, and their capacity for very high attainment in theological science, as well as in spiritual religion, is constantly expanding, when they come several times a week for years together to listen to a man who is devoting his heart and powers to the acquisition of knowledge for them; who studies and thinks for them; who penetrates for them into the darkest, deepest, richest mines of the Bible, and daily brings them things new and old from pregnant veins that are all unknown alike to pastor and flocks of those who are content to nibble at the surface: and when on the other hand the preacher sees, knows, feels at every utterance of the word that he is pouring out his new and precious discoveries in bible-study into the minds of an eagerly attentive people. Such preachers, such hearers there were among one Presbyterian ancestors, as among the Calvinists of the Re-

formed churches generally. Their discourses were unwieldy and formal, often heterogeneous and uncouth; but they were full of matter, full of argument, full of the scriptures. Their gold had not passed under the hammer, their jewels, if uncut, were innumerable and sparkling. They worked for this. There was meaning in the appellation which they so often used,—they were *painful ministers*; their studies were consequently magazines of good things for their hearers, like Hezekiah's 'treasuries for silver and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of precious jewels.' And when our diminutive theologians complain of the high discourse, and, as to them it seems, overladen argumentation, and abstruse inquiry of Howe, Baxter, Bates, Owen, Flavel, and the like, let them remember that they preached to congregations who had grown up under just such discipline, who had never lived on a milk-diet since their spiritual nonage, and who felt in their masculine health that strong meat *belongeth* to them that are of full age, even those who *by reason of use* have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Such use they had, carrying their bibles to church, verifying every citation; and the pulpit-men of that day were not cautious of multiplying texts, as if these would spoil the ambitious rounding of a sentence or lest the *callida junctura* of a paragraph should be broken in upon by the words of the Spirit. These sermons were sometimes rough, but they were full; each of them was, as Hall said of Foster, 'a lumbering wagon of gold:' and they were so because the preacher *sought* to find out acceptable words, ('words of delight'), and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. They did not expect, that after a week spent in lounging, or in gay company, or in mere human science or elegant letters, or in the farm, or the nursery, or the stock-market, or the shambles, they should by special inspiration be enabled to give their people what God or they could approve. They could not in conscience rely on mouldy skeletons of ancient sermons, brought out from the charnel house of the drawer or barrel, as bones that are 'very dry;' nor yet on the extemporaneous gush of a voluble tongue pouring out thoughts which took longer to deliver than they had taken to conceive. No: their opinion was like that expressed by good old John Norton of Boston, who used to say in his diary, *Leve desiderium ad studendum; forsam peccato admisso*; or that of Charnock, who replied to the importunity of his friends, "It cost Christ his life to

save, and what if it cost me *my* life to study for him?" Or of Thomas Shepard, another father among the pilgrims, who in still stronger terms declared: "God will curse that man's labours, that lumbers up and down the world all the week, and then upon Saturday in the afternoon, goes to his closet; when, as God knows, that time were little enough to pray in, and weep in, and get his heart into a fit frame for the duties of the approaching Sabbath." From the instructions of such men the Reformed churches gained a strength which even the palsy of our modern day has not been able wholly to destroy; and when we find young preachers summoned to something like the old preparation for conflict, by one who knows the weight of the armour, it stirs up our souls within us like the sound of the trumpet.

Dr. Spring avows the hesitation with which he enters upon the delicate task of suggesting the best methods of preparation for the pulpit. None but a very ignorant or a very self-sufficient man could dream of enjoining his own plans to every one. Indeed, as no really able preacher sermonizes exactly like any body else, so no two methods of preparation can be exactly alike, except among pitiable imitators. The individuality and subjective character of a man must let itself out, before he can ever do any thing great: he must be himself. And therefore we shall never think of wasting argument upon the race of dictators, who maintain that every sermon must be written out in full, or on the other hand that no sermon should be written out in full; until we alight on one of them who shall preach as ably and successfully as Whitefield and Hall who never wrote, or as Edwards and Davies who wrote always; and as silently shall we listen to all prescriptions that discourses should have no declared partition, or that each shall have just as many 'heads' as Cerberus. For talents differ, modes of thought, feeling and elocution differ, auditories differ, and therefore preparation will differ. But preparation of some sort, and that stated, laborious, life-long preparation, there must be; and we are grateful to Dr. Spring for the hints he gives, which are applicable in their spirit to all the diversities of preliminary labour; these hints are far too good to be omitted.

"The youthful ministry are very apt to be determined in their selection of subjects by their own resources; whereas a rigid determination, so far as is possible, to furnish *appropriate* instruction, while it would necessarily augment their resources, would commend them to every man's conscience



in the sight of God. I need not tell you that a preacher needs a *Common Place Book*, as much as an antiquary, or a statesman; and that the more it is enriched, the more certainly will he give variety and richness, as well as tenderness and power, to his illustrations of God's truth. I am confident that I have been the loser by inattention to this article until comparatively a late period in my ministry. You will of course also have your *Text Book*, where you will note down from time to time such subjects for sermons as strike you, and where you will make references to such valuable thoughts as may fall in your way in the course of your general reading and reflection. If I mistake not, you may find the following hint of some service. In your daily and careful study of the Scriptures, you will find now and then favoured hours, when light shines upon the sacred page; when your heart burns within you; when your mind is active, and almost every paragraph and clause suggest a topic and a method for a sermon. I have found it important to make the most of such seasons, even by turning aside from my projected labours and employing several hours together in sketching plans for future discourses. The fruit when ripe must not only be shaken from the tree, but stored away with care for future use, otherwise it will wither and become unsavoury. Do not trust to memory to retrace these thoughts, but commit them to writing, so that without labour you can call them up when you need them. Such skeletons will always come to good service; and when well elaborated, will rarely disappoint your first vivid impressions. I have known ministers who were perpetually complaining for want of subjects for their public discourses; but I cannot but think that you will rarely be at a loss for subjects, if you are habitually and prayerfully familiar with *the Bible*; but rather will your Text Book be always rich, and far in advance of your necessities. *We* become exhausted without much difficulty; *the Bible* never.

“ If you *write* your sermons, which I strongly recommend, never allow yourself to prepare more than one written discourse a week. One sermon a week, well planned, well digested, carefully written, and faithfully applied, is labour enough for any man who allows himself any time for intellectual improvement. One such sermon a week will enable you to draw upon your Text Book for two or three others without much preparation. In your most laboured discourses, let the force of your mind and the ardour of your heart be

laid out in the application of your subject. Ministers often fail in this, and it is a sad failure. In a word, make every discourse as good as you can make it. Sure I am, my dear brother, that if you are like the writer of this letter, you will find defects enough in your best performances to fill you with discouragement."

On one of these sentences it would be easy, as it might be useful, to say more; it is a golden aphorism: WE *become exhausted*—the BIBLE, *never*. Here we have indicated the genuine source not only of richness but of variety. We may pardon and pity the preachers of a soulless "creed outworn," whose ministers are flying from preaching to politics, and whose whole system is a grand negation of fundamental truth, when they tell us, as does the Rev. Orville Dewey, that the pulpit wants variety, and that "it is made dull by the restriction and reiteration of its topics."\* We do not think any orthodox Bible-student will ask a wider range of subjects than the scriptural body of evangelical doctrine. Our most lively, interesting, and never-tiring sermonizers are those whose discourses are most biblical; while the most jejune and self-repeating are such as fly from the investigation of the sacred text, in its trains of argument, and infinite flow of history. Instead of a Common Place Book of Heads in Theology, we would open before every man the Bible as his Common Place Book: his series will then be large enough. "He who preaches upon *subjects in divinity* (we now quote Bishop M'Ilvaine), instead of passages of Scripture, fitting a text to his theme, instead of extracting his theme from his text, will soon find that, in the ordinary frequency of parochial ministrations, he has gone the round, and traced all the great highways of his field, and what to do next, without repeating his course, or changing his whole mode of proceeding, he will be at a great loss to discover. Distinct *objects* in the preacher's message, like the letters in his alphabet, are few—few when it is considered that his life is to be occupied in exhibiting them. But their combinations, like those of the letters of the alphabet, are innumerable. Few are the distinct classes of objects which make up the beautiful landscapes under the light and shadows of a summer's day. The naturalist, who describes by *genera* and *species*, may soon enumerate them. But boundless is the variety of aspects in which they appear under all their diversities of shape, co-

\* Moral Views of Commerce, &c. By Orville Dewey. Preface.

lour, relation, magnitude, as the observer changes place, and sun and cloud change the light. The painter must paint for ever to exhibit all. So as to the great truths to which the preacher must give himself for life. Their variety of combinations, as exhibited in the Bible, is endless. He who treats them with strict reference to all the diversities of shape, proportion, incident, relation, circumstance, under which the pen of inspiration has left them, changing his point of observation with the changing positions and wants of his hearers, allowing the lights and shadows of Providence to lend their rightful influence in varying the aspect and applications of the truth—such a preacher, if his heart be fully in his work, can never lack variety, so far as it is proper for one who is to ‘know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified.’ He will constantly feel as if he had only begun the work given him to do—furnished only a few specimens out of a rich and inexhaustible cabinet of gems.”

This is an admirable illustration of the truth which we have quoted from the work before us; a suggestion, we may observe as we pass, strikingly exemplified in the discourses of Melvill, recently presented to the American public by Bishop M’Ilvaine, whose further remarks we shall here subjoin :

“Melvill is strictly a preacher upon *texts*, instead of *subjects*; upon truths, as expressed and connected in the Bible, instead of topics, as insulated or classified, according to the ways of man’s wisdom. This is precisely as it should be. The preacher is not called to deliver *dissertations* upon questions of theology, or *orations* upon specific themes of duty and spiritual interest, but expositions of divine truth as that is presented in the infinitely diversified combinations, and incidental allocations of the Scriptures. His work is simply that of making, through the blessing of God, the Holy Scriptures ‘profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.’ This he is to seek by endeavouring ‘rightly to *divide* the word of truth.’ Too much, by far, has the preaching of these days departed from this expository character. The praise of *invention* is too much coveted. The simplicity of interpretation and application is too much undervalued. We must be content to take the bread as the Lord has created it, and perform the humble office of *distribution*, going round amidst the multitude, and giving to all as each may need, believing that he who provided it will see that there be enough and to spare, instead of

desiring to stand in the place of the Master, and improve by our wisdom the simple elements, 'the five barley loaves,' which he alone can make sufficient 'among so many.'"

Such concurrence of writers and preachers in different branches of the church, as it regards both principle and practice, augurs well, and gives promise of returning vitality in American sermons. It is but a few years since we were in all the din and consternation of the new-measures; during this the pulpit was neglected, except when in the so-called "protracted-meeting" it was employed, not to instruct but to electrify, and when the serious exposition of scripture was sacrificed to a strain of scriptural objurgation and ill-bred menace, which was called pungent, close, and to the conscience. During this agitation, the regular stated instructions of God's house, such we mean as admit of being kept up with a healthful glow for years, and the deliberate education of the church in the full course of biblical knowledge which is the true end of the pastoral office, and which can be secured only by men mighty in the scriptures, and meditating in them day and night, were undervalued and set aside, in favour of a kind of harangue which needed no preparation, and which aimed at 'breaking down' the sinner as it was significantly termed. This whole bubble has burst. The leaders in this mighty revolution have slunk into corners, and those good and unstable or ambitious and mistaking men, whether preachers or professors or presidents, who were high in the praise of the Reverend Professor Finney or the Reverend President Mahan, are too happy to have the whole thing forgotten, and to have no inquiry made respecting the time and place at which they sorrowfully turned back from that hurried multitude which has since gone on to Perfection. This inundation has passed and receded, we hope for ever, but it has left its slime; and not only some of its canting phrases, but some of its opinions abide, and must be purged away. Do we not still hear many speak of *pastoral labour* as if the only proper labour of the pastor were his dealing with individuals or with families? Is there not still a craving for those paroxysms which to both preacher and people were an excuse for retiring from calm and spiritual labouring in God's holy truth? Is there not a readiness in many to believe that the old way of Christianity is an obsolete way, and that the spirit of the age requires high stimulation instead of never-ending instruction? Where these things may be affirmed with truth, there is much to be unlearned. We must honour

God's institution, and especially abide by his word, or we shall be liable, at the very next rise of the tide, to be swept away.

Let us say distinctly, we set a high value upon parochial visitation, and upon all proper instruction and advice to individuals. But by this we mean veritable religious visits by the pastor or elders of the church; such visits as Kidderminster received from Richard Baxter; but not the hasty calls of a clergyman, to gossip, hat in hand, on the weather and the news, or the more serious and protracted interviews of the clerical tradesman or politician in which hours are sacrificed to party or to avarice. And even of visits strictly religious, we are persuaded the demand of large congregations can never be satisfied; and the attempt to satisfy them is a yoke and a snare to many a conscientious servant of Christ. The shepherd should know his flock; he should be familiarly acquainted, if possible, with every individual of his hearers: but if he were to act out some of the principles which we have seen laid down by imprudent men, he would never have an hour with his books, and after all would fail to go through his routine to the satisfaction of himself or the parish. Those who complain most of the want of attention from their pastor, are often the very persons who are most disconcerted when he comes, and to whom pointed religious conversation is least welcome. No congregation should therefore complain of their minister, when they know him to be studying the Scriptures for their sakes, and when they are assured that his absence from their homes is not occasioned by any secular labours or amusements.

We have left ourselves no more space for the other articles of this volume, than to say, that they are remarkable for the characteristic traits of the author, seriousness, good sense, tenderness, and polish. The *Church in the Wilderness* is a felicitous apologue; and the smaller papers are attractive and edifying. As this is marked as the first of a series, we hope to greet similar productions again and again.