

THE
CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

Being a continuation of the Presbyterian Magazine.

CONDUCTED BY

ASHBEL GREEN, D. D.

VOL. I.

FOR THE YEAR 1823.

— By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.—2 Cor. iv. 2.

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INTRODUCTION.

Two years have elapsed, since the commencement of the Presbyterian Magazine. Its patronage has not been very extensive; and yet it has, perhaps, been greater than it was reasonable to expect, for a miscellany whose contents were to be furnished almost wholly by the voluntary and gratuitous contributions of busy men, burdened already with professional and laborious occupations. The patronage, in a word, has been such, as to inspire a pretty confident hope, that if a competent editor could be engaged to devote to its improvement and support the greater part of his time and efforts, it might become widely useful as a vehicle of religious instruction and intelligence, and might not only afford a pecuniary indemnification for the labour and expense of its publication, but add eventually a handsome sum to the charities of the church in which its circulation must principally be expected. Under the influence of this hope its conductors, after some delay and discouragement, have succeeded in engaging an Editor, to whom they can yield their entire confidence; and to whom they have committed the whole concern of providing and deciding on the various articles of which the publication shall consist.

It has been thought advisable to change the name of this miscellany—Not because it is intended materially to change its character; but principally to prevent an injurious misapprehension, which, to a certain extent, there is reason to believe has actually taken place. We usually form some judgment of a publication from its title; and indeed it is for this very purpose that a title is given. Now, on hearing of a *Presbyterian* magazine, some, it appears, have set it down at once as a sectarian work; of which the main and ultimate design would be to diffuse and defend the doctrines and opinions which are *peculiar* to Presbyterians; and on this account they have resolved to give it no encouragement. That such an estimate and resolution have proceeded from an utter misconception, for which nothing in the magazine, except its title, has ever furnished any ground, is known

to all who have made themselves acquainted with its contents: nor was it by any means intended, by those who adopted the title, that it should ever receive such a construction.

This miscellany has indeed been employed, and it is intended that it shall always be employed, to vindicate and explain, in a seasonable, temperate and candid manner, the Presbyterian system, both as to doctrine and church government. Fairness to all concerned requires this distinct avowal. It is, nevertheless, equally true, that more than nine-tenths of its pages ever have been, and it is designed that they ever shall be occupied, with discussions, information and intelligence, in no respect sectarian; but in which *all who hold the great doctrines of the Protestant reformation* may, alike, find their favourite sentiments supported, and their minds interested and gratified. It is regarded as a happy and honourable distinction of the Presbyterian system, that it does not unchurch other communions. The Presbyterian Church, while she maintains with decision and firmness what she considers as "the faith once delivered to the saints," and gives an unequivocal preference to that form of government and discipline which she adopts as the most scriptural, holds, notwithstanding, no *exclusive* sentiments, in regard to other orthodox Protestant churches; but can cherish toward them all a true and sisterly affection. She, in short, never doubts or abates her claim to be *a* church, and never speaks of herself, in the language of exclusion, as *the* church. Accordingly we find that, in laying down the preliminary principles of a form of government, the framers of that form for "the Presbyterian Church in the United States," after some previous explanation of their views, say in the fifth section— "That while under the conviction of the above principles, they think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, they also believe that there are truths and forms, with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these, they think it the duty, both of private Christians and societies, to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other." With a view, then, to prevent a misapprehension, unfavourable to the extensive circulation of this publication, and also to make it known by an appellation more truly indicative of its design than that which it has hitherto borne, it has been determined that its title shall hereafter be, **THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE—**

a title which, while it is significative, is not known to have been, till now, appropriated.

“Names are things,” was a maxim of a shrewd observer of popular opinions and popular publications. Yet the reasons for changing the title of this miscellany should not have been given at so much length, if, in alleging them, it had not been found convenient to state what is intended to be the general scope and true spirit of the work. The change, it is hoped, after the foregoing explanation, will disoblige none of its present patrons, and it may considerably increase their number.

No editor, whatever may be his talents and his industry, can long furnish, in a satisfactory manner, by his unaided efforts, that variety of matter which is necessary in a monthly publication of forty-eight closely printed pages, the greater part of which is to be filled with original composition. The success and permanency of the *Christian Advocate*, therefore, must ultimately depend on the contributions of literary labour, which it shall receive from the friends of evangelical piety and sound learning.

The union of literature with genuine Christianity, at all times important, is peculiarly so at this time, and in this country. The enemies of the truth as it is in Jesus, are using all their endeavours to maintain their cause and extend their influence, by the powerful auxiliaries of erudition and taste; and if the truth be left naked, or appear only in a careless or slovenly garb, it will not be likely to attract the attention and win the hearts of that large and important portion of the community which consists of the young, the cultivated and the aspiring. We know, indeed, that success in inculcating evangelical truth must come from God, and that nothing but his grace will ever change a single human heart. Still we are not to expect miracles—we are only to expect the smiles of Providence, and the influence of Divine grace, in the use of vigorous exertions, and of means naturally adapted to the effects intended to be produced. When the enemies of vital godliness assail it with learning, and wit, and taste, they must be combatted with the legitimate use of the arms which they abuse. In this service the *Christian Advocate* aspires to take a part; sensible, indeed, that it must be an humble part. It aspires to be somewhat instrumental in preventing the evil effects of literature misapplied, in cultivating and diffusing sound biblical criticism, in exposing misrepresen-

tation and sophistry, in clothing the pure doctrines of the gospel in that chaste and attractive dress which may give full effect to their native charms, in endeavouring to cherish the love of learning and a just taste among the younger clergy, and to promote, generally, among orthodox Christians; that tone and aspect of true evangelical piety, which shall demonstrate that it is not hostile but highly favourable to "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report." If, under the Divine blessing, it shall be found that these results, to any considerable extent, have been produced by this publication, it will have rendered a service in which all who shall have given it their aid will have reason forever to rejoice.

Account or apologize for it as we may, it is still a fact deeply to be regretted, that in our country literary labour has hitherto received no adequate remuneration. This is the *real* cause that so few books of solid value, of whatever description, have been written and published in the United States: and it is the *acknowledged* cause that periodical publications have so often been deficient in merit and short in duration. As a matter of justice, then, and believing that in this, as in every other concern, equity and true policy are inseparable, it has been determined that for every composition inserted in the *Christian Advocate*, the author, unless he voluntarily decline it, shall receive a pecuniary compensation, to the full extent as liberal as the avails of the work will permit.

It must be remembered that the Editor will consider himself as possessing the right to make such corrections as he may judge indispensable, in any paper sent for publication, unless expressly prohibited by the writer. At the same time, it will be distinctly understood that nothing will appear which needs to be materially amended, either in language or sentiment. The new casting of careless composition, is a labour which the Editor cannot undertake, and it is not intended that this miscellany shall be a receptacle for crudities.

It is promised that all communications, suitable for this work, shall be thankfully received, and carefully and candidly inspected; but correspondents will recollect, that the decision on what is really suitable, must remain exclusively with the Editor. It is so manifestly his own interest not to reject any thing which, in his best judgment, he believes might properly be admitted, that it can scarcely be imagined that exclusion should ever be

adjudged from improper motives. Doubtless he may err; but an error which is not the offspring of carelessness or prejudice ought to be without offence. Delay in the publication of a paper must often take place, where rejection is not intended. Variety, in every number of a miscellany, must always be consulted in making up its contents.

Those who projected, and who have hitherto conducted this work, have always intended that it should ultimately contribute to the charities of the Presbyterian Church. Such contribution it has already made, in full proportion to the profits which have remained, after defraying the actual expense of paper, printing, and distribution. In future, it is intended that it shall contribute *a definite sum*, proportioned to whatever may be the profits, more or less, of the publication. It is here explicitly stated, that this work shall henceforth be *tithed*, for the aid of Christian charities—every tenth dollar of clear income, shall go into the treasury of the Lord—it shall help to form a fund, to be appropriated annually, by some members of the Presbyterian church, clergy and laity, impartially selected. And if the work shall merit and receive a patronage which shall only approximate that which some such works are now actually receiving, it will, in addition to its main design of promulgating evangelical truth and intelligence, serve the same sacred cause, by very considerably augmenting the funds destined to that object.

The kinds of matter which this publication will contain, it is not thought necessary to specify in detail. The Editor will have constantly before him the best religious miscellanies, which are published both in Europe and the United States, and will endeavour, as far as possible, to model and improve his own work, by all the aids which he can derive from these sources. It is only thought necessary to mention particularly, that an attempt will be made to give a condensed and comprehensive view of religious intelligence; that the readers of the Christian Advocate may know the existing state of Bible societies, missions, and revivals of religion, without being at the expense and trouble, which many cannot afford, of purchasing and reading the numerous publications, to which these interesting and important objects have recently given occasion.

It has certainly been a just cause of regret, and we know that it has, by many, been greatly regretted, that although the Pres-

byterian denomination of Christians is among the most numerous of any in the United States, and certainly not prepared to admit that it embodies either less talent or less piety than other communions, yet it has, hitherto, made no combined and continued effort, to establish and maintain a religious periodical publication. It has been seen that such a publication, if ably conducted and widely circulated, would not only be highly reputable to the Presbyterian body, but directly and eminently useful, by seasonably communicating important information, by promoting harmony and combined exertion, by diffusing and increasing theological knowledge, by ministering much to Christian edification, and by helping forward, generally, the plans which have been formed, and the efforts which are now making throughout Protestant Christendom, for evangelizing the world. It has been believed that it was due from the Presbyterian Church to the common cause of Christianity, that she should maintain a publication of this character: and that such a publication the *Christian Advocate* may, and probably will become, there is no vanity in affirming, if the clergy and laity of the Presbyterian Church will cordially unite, and give it that steady patronage, in intellectual labour and pecuniary encouragement, which they can well and easily afford. That to an union and patronage so desirable there might be no hindrance, but every inducement, it has been determined to conduct the work on the liberal, and we hope unexceptionable plan and principles, which have already been stated.

Deeply sensible, after all, that no human undertaking, however wisely planned or well intended, will ever be successful, unless the Divine blessing rest upon it, the conductors of this miscellany desire, in conclusion, to implore for it fervently, the smiles and benediction of the God of providence and grace: and they earnestly ask the prayers of their fellow Christians, that it may ever be conducted in the manner best calculated to promote the glory of God, the honour of his coequal Son and Spirit, and the salvation of immortal souls.

THE
CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

JANUARY, 1823.

Religious Communications

FOR THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

THE NEW YEAR IMPROVED.

GENESIS, xlvii. 8.

"And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, how old art thou?"

This question of the Egyptian monarch was probably prompted by the striking and venerable appearance of the Hebrew patriarch. But the occurrence of a new year may, with better reason, prompt every individual to put the question to himself; and to follow it up with many other inquiries, which the lapse of time is fitted to suggest.

A birth day and a new year's day have generally been considered, by the reflecting and the pious, as calling them, in a peculiar manner, to serious consideration—to a careful review of the past, and a rational anticipation of the future. These days, indeed, are usually devoted, by the dissipated and thoughtless, to unusual hilarity and festive indulgence. But this is only one, among instances innumerable, in which "the children of this world" and they "who are not of the world," think and act in a manner exactly different. The practical Christian, if he sought only for pleasure, knows that seriousness and joy are so far from being incompatible, that the former often produces the latter—produces it in the highest degree and of the most exquisite kind. Let us then, on our arrival at another way-mark in the journey of human

life, look attentively at the inscription which it bears; consider how much of our pilgrimage is past, and how we have past it; and look forward to the prospect which we have of "entering into the rest which remaineth for the people of God."

"How old art thou?" It is all but certain that these lines will never be read by one who will be able to answer as he did to whom the interrogatory was first addressed—"the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years." By a divine appointment the usual boundary of human life is now fixed at "threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away." Extreme old age, accompanied as it usually is with enfeebled powers both of body and of mind, is certainly not in itself desirable. Yet when it is awarded by the Author and Preserver of our being, the aged should submit, not with the jocund levity which we have sometimes witnessed in old men, but say with the pious resignation of the afflicted "man of Uz"—"all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." Serious cheerfulness is, indeed, peculiarly amiable, and worthy of careful cultivation, in those who are far advanced into the vale of life. But nothing surely is more unnatural, and therefore, to a mind rightly disposed, nothing more disgusting, than senile levity and trifling; however it may assume

worldly ambition, they are utterly careless of their souls; or, at best, they content themselves with a formal and educational respect to Christian ordinances and institutions. It is not in the power of language to describe the folly and the danger of yielding to the temptations by which this heedless throng are hurried, as by a mighty stream, toward the abyss of final ruin. Many of them will listen to no serious admonition—Those who do, generally soothe their consciences by persuading themselves that they are only deferring a serious attention to eternal concerns to a more convenient season. Dear deluded youth, that season will, in all probability, never come. All experience is hostile to your calculations. Those who have made the most accurate observations on this subject have said, that a majority—probably a large majority—of all that are ever pious, have become so between the ages of fifteen and thirty. While, therefore, the offers and the hopes of mercy are not withheld from those of any age, you perceive that, in fact, they are by far the most frequently embraced and realized by the young. To youth a special and encouraging promise is made—“They that seek me early shall find me.” Will you not avail yourselves of this promise? Will you put yourselves beyond the possibility of pleading it? You will do so, whether you live or die, if the delay for which you plead be continued a little longer. But why would you wish for any delay in this great concern? You utterly misconceive of religion, if you suppose that it will diminish your happiness. True religion will, indeed, change your pleasures, but it will also increase and exalt them. Risk not, then—as by delay you will most fearfully risk—the danger of dying in your sins—of grieving the Spirit of grace, of becoming hardened in impiety, of being even abandoned to vice, and of thus fill-

ing up the measure of your iniquity till wrath come upon you to the uttermost. Rather make this a happy new year—*happy* beyond what language can express—by commencing it with the consecration of all your youthful powers to the God who gave them, and to whom it is equally your duty, your honour, and your happiness, to devote them without reserve. MONITOR.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

THOUGHTS ON LAY-PREACHING.

The season in which frequent and extensive revivals of religion occur, is always, to the friend of the Redeemer's kingdom, on many accounts, a peculiarly interesting season. His own soul is commonly refreshed as with marrow and fatness. He rejoices to see his fellow believers equally favoured. He is glad to hail the conquest of new subjects brought under his Master's reign; and he is filled with delight to see new additions made to his Master's glory. Such a season is, to a church, or to a number of churches, analogous to that in which a gracious God lifts up the light of his countenance on an individual believer. It is a period of joy, of sanguine expectation, and sometimes of transport, so great, that, often, the unhallowed mixtures which attend it, are, for the time, in a great measure unobserved; and the unhappy consequences which follow its circumstances and appendages, are little anticipated, and therefore seldom wholly avoided.

Yet it is a fact, that while Christians are bound to rejoice in revivals, to bless God for them, and to use all proper means for promoting them, there are dangers to which the church is, at such a time, peculiarly exposed, and against which her members ought to be most vigilantly on their guard. Among these, there are few either more obvious or more serious, than the tendency of the state of things at such sea-

sons, to beget a disposition to undervalue the stated and ordinary ministrations of the gospel. The minds of Christians are warmed and elated. Young converts are in all the ardour of their first love; and the awakened and convinced are anxious to employ all the means which may promise to be connected with a blessing. Hence there is a tendency, in many cases, to multiply to an unusual, and sometimes to an excessive degree, public meetings; to have some public exercise every evening in the week, besides three or four times on the Sabbath; and to resort to various extraordinary methods of rendering these meetings and exercises externally impressive. There is also a fondness, very natural, and, in itself, not improper, for having instruction and exhortation, as well as prayer and praise, at all these meetings. And as no one pastor has time or strength enough to preach as often as the feelings of many around him will be ready to demand, the transition will be easy and direct to a desire that some of his parishioners should appear from time to time as his substitutes, and take his place in *public speaking* as well as in *prayer*.

All this is very natural; and what is more, within certain limits, very proper. That is to say, when persons of known piety, prudence, good sense, and zeal, in the absence of the pastor, step forward, and conduct the prayers and praises of the assembly; especially when the *elders* and *deacons* take the lead in these laudable services; every friend of piety will give such conduct his cordial approbation. Nay, I consider it as one of the most decisive evidences of a flourishing state of vital godliness in a church, when a considerable number of its members are ready, when called upon, to take the lead in the devotional exercises of a social meeting. Most heartily do I rejoice, that such services to the church, by its lay-men-

bers, are rendered far more frequently and freely than when I entered the ministry thirty years ago; and the beneficial effects of this improvement are, I think, by no means either few or dubious.

But it is human to err, and to pervert, or carry to extremes, some of the best things. And when the minds of any considerable number of pious people are excited and warmed, as in a season of revival, I suppose it often happens that there is a tendency to permit and encourage some who are not qualified for promoting the edification of their fellow professors, not only to take the lead in prayer, but also to undertake the office of instruction and exhortation. All experience proves, that the public speaking of unauthorized men is liable to become excessive and irregular, and that it is hard to control. When once the door is opened, who will shut it, or at what point will it be shut? More especially when, as is well known, the most vain, arrogant, enthusiastic, and superficial, are of all men most apt to imagine that they are qualified to be public instructors, and most ready to obtrude themselves into the office. In most of the great revivals of religion that I have ever read or heard of, more or less of this irregularity appeared. In the celebrated and truly glorious revivals which occurred, and which prevailed very extensively in this country, under the ministry of *Whitefield*, *Edwards*, the *Tennents*, and other distinguished ministers of Christ, from fifty to seventy years ago, irregularities as to this point were frequently complained of, and evidently, in some cases, injured the cause of religion. They are mentioned with pointed disapprobation and regret by the venerable president *Edwards*, in his "*Thoughts*" on the Revival of Religion which existed in his day in *New England*; and I suppose they seldom fail in some degree to arise, whenever a large number of persons in the.

same neighbourhood are awakened and brought to the knowledge of the truth. I suppose, too, that the season of their exhibition seldom closes without leaving all judicious and prudent people perfectly convinced that they are mischievous, and to be deplored. But in this, as well as in other important cases, those lessons which are learned by one generation, are generally forgotten before another arises. It seems to be necessary, then, for the churches, every few years, to learn by woful experience, the mischiefs of *lay-preaching*, and *lay-exhorting*, and to be delivered from them only after witnessing for themselves their unhappy effects. In the moral and religious, as well as in the physical world, there are diseases which cannot be arrested by any human remedies, but which must run a certain course, and then gradually disappear.

I propose in this paper, very briefly, to inquire what that **LAY-PREACHING** IS, which ought to be discountenanced and prohibited by all regular churches; and then point out some of the **MISCHIEFS** of this irregularity.

I. What is Lay-preaching? What is that instruction and exhortation on the part of *laymen* which is inconsistent with gospel order, and which every church which respects the will and ordinances of her Divine Head, and wishes to maintain a respectable character, ought to forbid?

It is evident from scripture, that private Christians are bound to *exhort one another daily, lest they be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. In whomsoever they observe any thing contrary to sound doctrine or practice, they are bound, if they have a suitable opportunity, to bear testimony against it. And whenever they find those who need instruction and exhortation, they undoubtedly ought to take occasion, if Providence open a door for the purpose, to address them in a rea-

sonable manner. This, however, it is apprehended, ought to be confined to the *private circle*, and by no means to encroach on that public, authoritative instruction, which ministers of the gospel are commanded to communicate, in the name of their Master.

Again: *Parents and heads of families* are certainly bound frequently to address their children and servants, and all who belong to their households, on the great interests of their souls and eternity. Every family, properly constituted and regulated, is a little church, and the heads of it, are its divinely authorized teachers and governors. Of course, it is incumbent upon them daily to discharge the duties pertaining to these relations. In this respect, as well as in relation to temporal comfort, *he that provideth not for his own, especially for those of his own household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*. The head of a family who neglects to instruct and exhort all committed to his care, more particularly on the most important of all subjects, is certainly guilty of criminal negligence. And even if some of his neighbours occasionally drop in, and unite with him and his family, in their daily worship, he ought not to prevent, but rather to encourage it. Whether three or thirty people attend on the proper exercises of domestic worship, their nature, and the duty of engaging in them, remain the same.

Further: *Schoolmasters*, and other teachers of youth, are under the most solemn obligations, frequently to address those committed to their care, on the great concerns of eternity, and to endeavour at once to inform their understandings and to impress their hearts on those momentous concerns. A diligent, enlightened, affectionate, parental discharge of this duty, can certainly never implicate its author either in the sin or censure of *lay-preaching*.

In short, laymen may, with pro-

priety, engage in all those acts of instruction and exhortation which are, properly speaking, *private* in their nature. They may teach, entreat, or exhort any individual, or company of individuals, into whose presence they may happen to come, provided they do it *as private persons*; without any thing *authoritative* either in their language or manner. But when those who have received no ordination or license, from any proper ecclesiastical authority, undertake *publicly* to address their fellow men, as those who are authorized to do so; *expecting* and *claiming* to be heard, as public teachers; and requesting an assembly to listen to them as speaking in the name of Christ;—whether they go into a *pulpit*, or not;—whether they wear a particular *dress*, or not;—whether they speak from a formal *text* or not—they certainly invade the province of ministers, and are chargeable with the disorder and sin of *lay-preaching*.

It will readily be perceived, from the foregoing remarks, that it is not an easy thing to draw the line between *public* and *private* teaching. The essential difference between them does not consist in any particular *posture* or *external form of address*; but in a variety of particulars, which are more readily perceived and estimated by a judicious observer, than described in words. But whenever we have ascertained and laid down the difference between these two modes of teaching, we are prepared to say what is irregular *lay-preaching*, and what is not.

Before I take leave of this branch of the subject, I think proper to observe, that candidates for the holy ministry, and by these I mean, such young men as have completed their academical course, and are actually engaged in the study of theology, are certainly to be considered as standing in a very different light from other laymen. For, although not yet licensed to preach, they are

in training for that purpose; and, of course, those exercises which have a tendency to cultivate and strengthen their faculties, and to prepare them to address their fellow men with ease, force and impressiveness, form a very important part of their training; and therefore ought not to be wholly prohibited. It is true, even theological students, previously to their licensure, ought to exercise their gifts only in the presence of small assemblies of people, and, for the most part, in retired situations, and even then with marked humility and modesty, and never to take on themselves, either in language or manner, that *authority* which belongs only to those whom the constituted governors of the church have regularly clothed with power. But still, I have always considered them as standing in a peculiar situation, and as entitled to take somewhat more liberty in addressing congregated bodies of people, than is proper for those who have not the ministry in view.

One grand reason, in addition to that which has been already suggested, why students of theology ought to be considered as enjoying greater privileges than other laymen, in addressing a number of persons convened for social worship, is that they are supposed to be always *under the immediate inspection of the church*. Every one of them is either under the care of some Presbytery, and, of course, constantly amenable to that body; or else studying at some Theological Seminary, or under the direction of some judicious, respectable clergyman, who may be considered as competent to advise and control him throughout his whole course of professional training. If, therefore, at any time, he be found uttering himself in a rash, unguarded or erroneous manner, the remedy is obvious and easy. Not so with many other lay-members of the church. Besides, theological students, who aspire to the office of teachers and

guides to others, are supposed, in general, to have better talents, to be better educated, and to possess more fervent enlightened piety, than the common mass of lay-members of the church; and, therefore, may be more safely trusted to participate in those public exercises, which demand a large share of wisdom, prudence, and spirituality.

Perhaps, also, in defining the limits of duty on this subject, it may not be improper further to state, that, under the old synagogue system, it was considered as orderly for the ruler of the synagogue to call out whomsoever he thought proper, to instruct and exhort the people; and that it was by no means uncommon for that officer when he saw any person in the assembly, whether minister or layman, whom he considered as capable of addressing the congregation to advantage, to request him to do so; he himself, however, sitting by all the time, ready to correct any thing that might be said or done amiss. Facts which wear this aspect may be found in *Luke* iv. 16, and *Acts* xiii. 15. I am also inclined to think that this practice was sometimes adopted in the Christian church, in the first two or three centuries: that is, that when the bishop or pastor of a church was either fatigued, or indisposed, or had any valid reason for keeping silence himself, he felt at perfect liberty to call upon a *ruling elder* or *deacon* to address the people in his stead, and in his presence: and if any thing were uttered which he did not approve, he had an opportunity of stopping or correcting the speaker, and of forbidding him again to officiate in the same manner.—And if, at the present day, a pastor were sick; or if, in a season of revival, the meetings for social worship within the bounds of his congregation were so numerous that he could not possibly attend them all, he should request an elder or a deacon, of known piety and prudence, to go and speak to the little

assemblies convened in his neighbourhood; the pastor being careful to keep every thing of this kind under his own inspection and management; I know not that he would be to blame for so doing. But, in such case, the individual so employed, ought to go forth from time to time, as one under the direction of a superior, and not take a single step without the direction, or contrary to the wishes of his pastor.

But when, disregarding all these limits, persons who have no claim whatever to the character of authorized teachers, either in possession or expectancy, undertake to usurp the office of those who are thus authorized, and to go forth, in effect preaching the gospel, without license;—when they appoint meetings, and collect the people together for the purpose of hearing *them*;—and when they rise and speak to them in the way of instruction and exhortation;—whether they speak from particular texts or not;—whether they express themselves in the usual ministerial style or not;—they are chargeable with the sin, and expose themselves to the censure of *lay-preaching*.—Let us now

II. Attend to the *evil* of this irregularity. It is probable that many serious persons, who have not attended to the subject imagine there can be very little evil in the irregularity in question. When their hearts are warmed, and their affections excited;—when they see people willing to convene for social worship, and at a loss for some one to address them;—it is probable, I say, that many serious persons, placed in these circumstances, hastily conclude, in the ardour of their feelings, that it is clearly their *duty* to step forward, and become public speakers. Nay, I have known some pronounce, in such cases, that to hesitate, is to sacrifice the spiritual interests of men to the dictates of *carnal prudence*; to prefer the trammels of cold, official formality to the salvation of immortal souls.—

It is thus that the vain, the inconsiderate, the superficial, the rash, the arrogant, (for with all these infirmities men may be truly, and even fervently pious) often rush forward, guided rather by heated feeling, or delusive imagination, than by enlightened and sanctified judgment, or the word of God. But the evils of the practice under consideration are very many, and very great; and will undoubtedly appear so when brought to the test either of scripture or of sober experience.

1. It is plainly CONTRARY TO THE WILL OF GOD. If the Christian ministry be a divine ordinance; if we find in scripture an express warrant for the setting apart of a particular set of men for the work of the sanctuary; if preaching the gospel be one of the appropriate, and also one of the most delicate, difficult, and important parts of a minister's work; if no man may take the functions of this office to himself, except he that is called to it of God; if every one who does thus take to himself these functions without authority, invades a divine ordinance, and incurs the divine displeasure; (and all these positions may be established from scripture with the utmost clearness;) then surely there is no difficulty in making out the sinfulness of lay-preaching. Some may doubt what it is that deserves to be so called; but when the character of the act is completely ascertained and admitted, methinks there can be no room for hesitation in pronouncing it a *sinful* act. Further; all those passages of scripture which strongly inculcate the necessity of peculiar qualifications in ministers of the gospel; which declare that they must be *no novices—apt to teach—prudent—wise—sober, &c. &c.* which direct that before men be permitted to rule and teach in the church, they be *tried*, and found *qualified*;—all these scriptures, and many more of analogous character, plainly imply,

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that men ought not to be permitted, at *their own pleasure*, or at the pleasure of those who are perhaps as little qualified or authorized as themselves, to perform the work which is appropriated to the ministerial character. It was the divine direction that none but the *Levites* should bear or touch the *ark of God*: and we know the fearful consequence which followed the act of one well-meaning man, who merely ventured to touch it once with his hand, and as he thought to prevent it from falling!

2. The practice of lay-preaching tends to DEGRADE THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL, which we all grant to be a divine ordinance. When persons who are not clothed with the ministerial character, are enabled to express themselves, in the warmth of their feelings, in a fluent, bold, and impressive manner; when they are observed to speak for a number of times, and perhaps for three or six months together, in a manner pertinent, and highly acceptable to a large class of hearers,—the inference is apt to be, and is often, in fact, found to be,—that there is no need of taking so much pains—incurring so much expense—and engaging in such long-continued and laborious study, in order to become qualified for the work of the ministry. “Here,” say the rash, the ignorant, and the superficial—“Here are men who never went to college—never learned Latin or Greek—never went through a regular course of Theological study in their lives; and yet we do not see but that they preach quite as well, *to say the least*, as those who have enjoyed all these advantages.” It is true, indeed, all enlightened and judicious hearers, perceive with pain, all along, the want of suitable qualifications in these self-made preachers; they perceive their want of digested knowledge, and lament the crude, uninteresting, and sometimes erroneous matter which they throw out; and even

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their greatest admirers, after a few months, begin to see that their stock is exhausted, and that they are not the great preachers which they once imagined them to be. But the discovery is made, in some respects, too late. Unspeakable mischief has been done. Impressions unfavourable to the ministry, and of course to religion, impressions perhaps of the most indelible kind, have been made on the minds of many. This is not mere imagination. It has been often exemplified by mournful facts.

Nor is it any objection to this reasoning, that we may, in some cases, find individuals, in every community, who are quite as well qualified to instruct their fellow-men in divine things, and perhaps, even better qualified, in many respects, than most ministers. What then? Suppose we were to apply the same reasoning to civil officers? Suppose we were to say, "Many of the legislators of our state are by no means so well qualified to make laws, as many of their fellow-citizens who have not been chosen to that office. Therefore some of the most wise and capable of those who have not been elected ought to intrude into their seats, and perform their duties in their stead, or in company with them." What would be thought of such reasoning; or what would be the consequence of undertaking to decide and act accordingly? Every one sees, at a glance, how absurd and monstrous it would be. But it is not at all more absurd or more monstrous than the principle and practice which it is intended to expose.

3. The practice of *lay-preaching* tends to INTRODUCE INCALCULABLE DISORDER AND CONFUSION INTO THE CHURCH.—If we were sure that none but those who have good sense, fervent piety, competent knowledge, aptness to teach, and exemplary prudence, would ever step forward, or be encouraged to come forward as public speakers in the church, there would be much less reason

than there is to apprehend danger. But the fact is, as the history of the church, in all ages, has shown, that the modest, the humble, the well informed, and the judicious, are most apt to decline this task, and those of a contrary character to rush forward uncalled, and unsent, to the performance of it. I will venture to say, that where lay-preaching is practised, for one old, experienced, truly enlightened, and prudent Christian who engages in it, there may be produced ten mere novices, scarcely fledged sciolists, who have not for twelve months, perhaps not for six, cherished the hope that they have been brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel! And yet they are already thrusting themselves into the chair of instruction, when they have scarcely any acquaintance with their own hearts;—when they can do little more than *see men as trees walking*;—and when they are hardly qualified to state the most simple and elementary doctrines, in their connexions, and with those distinctions and guards, which are indispensable in order to the *rightly dividing* of almost any portion of divine truth.—Now if the door be open to let all such persons come forward at their own pleasure, or at the suggestion of some partial and sanguine friend, to be teachers of others—what confusion and disorder must ensue, may readily be imagined. Personal vanity and arrogance will be cherished; crude or erroneous notions of gospel truth will be propagated; congregations will be divided and distracted; the enlightened and sober minded will be grieved or disgusted, and religion brought into contempt with the people of the world. Often, very often, have the ultimate effects of the disorder of which I am speaking been more mischievous in those neighbourhoods in which they have been exhibited, than their authors could afterwards repair by long lives of sorrow and shame, and of

active endeavours to remedy the evil.

These remarks, Mr. Editor, may not, and, I am persuaded, do not, apply to every part of our country. But I could easily tell you of places in which it were well for the cause of Christ, and for the edification of his people, if correct principles and practices on this subject were more prevalent than they are. If any of your readers should be ready to feel, when they peruse these pages, as if they would rather be willing to *excite* some of their lay-brethren to greater activity, than to *keep them back* from any efforts which they are disposed to use; let them rest assured, that there are districts in which there is as much call for the *rein*, as there may be in theirs for the *spur*: that mischief has been done, and that more, to all appearance, may be anticipated in this matter. And as revivals of religion are becoming, blessed be God! more common in our country; perhaps the inhabitants of no neighbourhood can be certain that, in process of time, the foregoing observations may not be found applicable to themselves. In the mean while, if Presbyteries be vigilant and faithful in regard to this subject; and if those who conduct our Theological Seminary, and other similar institutions, be careful to inculcate correct sentiments, and to countenance a proper practice, with respect to this important concern, we may hope that mischief will be averted, and that revivals, if graciously vouchsafed, will not be, as they have sometimes apparently been, blasted by the unhallowed tempers, and irregular conduct of those who professed to be their ardent friends.

A PRESBYTERIAN.

EXTRACT FROM "LUTHER'S COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS." *The Translation from which this Extract*

is taken was made A. D. 1575, and recommended by the then Bishop of London.

GAL. i. 3.

"Grace be with you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ."

"*Christ is God by Name.*"

"The other thing that Paul teacheth here, is a confirmation of our faith, *that Christ is very God*. And such like sentences as this is, concerning the Godhead of Christ, are to be gathered together, and marked diligently, not only against the Arians and other hereticks, which either have been, or shall be hereafter, but also *for the confirmation of our own faith*. For Satan will not fail to impugn in us all the articles of our faith, ere we die. He is a most deadly enemy to faith, because he knoweth that it is the victory which overcometh the world (1 John v. 4). Wherefore it standeth us in hand to labour that our faith may be certain, and may increase and be strengthened, by diligent and continual exercise of the word and fervent prayer, that we may be able to withstand Satan.

"Now that *Christ is very God*, it is manifestly declared, in that Paul attributeth the same things equally unto him, which he doth unto the Father, namely, *Divine power*, as the *giving of grace*, the *forgiveness of sins*, *peace of conscience*, *life*, *victory over sin*, *death*, the *devil and hell*. This were by no means lawful for him to do, nay, it were sacrilege this to do, except *he were very God*, according to that saying: *I will not give my glory unto another* (Isa. xlii. 8). Again: No man giveth that to others, which he himself hath not. But seeing Christ giveth grace, peace, and the Holy Ghost; delivereth from the power of the devil, from sin and death, it is certain, *that he hath an infinite and divine power, equal in all points to the power of the Father.*