

# PEOPLE AND PASTOR.

DUTIES INVOLVED

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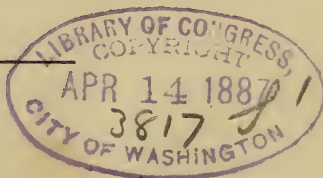
IMPORTANT RELATION.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS MURPHY, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "PASTORAL THEOLOGY," "DUTIES OF CHURCH-  
MEMBERS," ETC.

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## PREFACE.

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THE articles in this little work were first published in the columns of *The Presbyterian*, and in that form they found their way into the hands of many and widely-separated ministers and others. They seem to have met a want, for the author has received letters from North, South, East and West urging that they be collected into a small volume which could be conveniently distributed in churches. With the consent of *The Presbyterian*, he has complied with that request, and now sends them out anew to the people of the churches.

The special objects contemplated in their

preparation were to awaken attention to certain duties of the people to their pastors which are too much overlooked ; to suggest remedies for many evils prevailing in our church-life at the present time ; to say to the churches some things which it is embarrassing for the pastor to say for himself ; to help in making the pastoral relation more efficient in the important field of usefulness it occupies ; and to put all in a form so brief and inexpensive that it may reach the body of church-members. This aim will not be attained unless there is a notice of matters much more minute than ordinarily find their way into writings on Christian work. On subjects so vastly important as these, whatever may have been learned by much experience or from observation should be earnestly pressed home upon the hearts of all who love the cause of Christ and souls. In carrying out

the purpose before the author's mind it has not come in his way, in any instance, to touch on points which separate the various denominations, and, consequently, in the whole unpretending volume there is no word which is not equally applicable to all. If anything has been written the tendency of which is to correct evils that have crept into our church-work and render the relations of people and pastor more happy and more efficient in the accomplishment of that for which such relations were ordained, then the ever-present desire of the author has been fulfilled.

PHILADELPHIA, 1887.

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# PEOPLE AND PASTOR.

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## ARTICLE I.

### IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP.

THERE are duties of a very intimate, binding and solemn character which the people of every church owe to their pastor; among these are the obligations to pray for him, to aid him, to stand by him, and many others. These are claimed for him, not because, as an individual, we would exalt him above others or ask for him special honor or centre on him peculiar privileges; we do not ask for him, as a man, any more than we ask for other men. But he is not a private person: he is engaged in a work which has been given him by the great Head of the Church, and the results of which extend to the whole circle of society in which he moves. He stud-



ies and preaches and prays and visits from house to house in order that he may save souls and disseminate truth and righteousness and establish the principles of heavenly virtue and build up believers in holiness and comfort, and through all honor the name of the Son of God. His constant aim is to promote peace and prosperity in families, to inculcate principles that will make the community happy and render the country safe and the government stable. Such is the work to which he is called, and which he accomplishes in proportion as he is faithful.

The man who holds such a position as this is surely worthy of the sympathy and should receive the support of the whole congregation to which he ministers; he may well call upon his people to render him all the aid that is in their power. When they pray for him, they pray for their children, their friends, their neighbors; when they help him, they are helping the cause on which depend the highest interests of mankind. We should consider the solemn issues which will follow his ministry. He probably never preaches

a sermon but it is to some soul the "savor of life unto life or of death unto death." His position becomes awful when he stands by a death-bed, where within a few hours his instructions and his prayers may be instrumental in helping a soul to glory or in letting it sink into despair. Under his ministry there is a large community the youth of which receive their chief religious training and moral bent from his preaching. No sermon is preached by him but thoughts are aroused and impulses given that must do much in forming the character of both old and young. These solemn facts are not incidental or casual things: they are the very essence of his work.

It will thus be seen that the interests of people and of pastor are identical, and that what aids him in his work is of lasting benefit to them also. Hence, to strengthen and encourage him in his momentous calling is to send a healthful spiritual tone into every household. It is to produce a purer and warmer piety throughout the whole church. It is to make the church more consistent,

more benevolent, more aggressive on the kingdom of Satan and more honored among men. It is to throw around the young strong safeguards by which they may be saved from a thousand dangers. It is to make the aged more happy and to render more undaunted their approach to the solemn close. Not only do all these things result from the nature of the case, but they are purposely and successfully aimed at when in ways they may easily learn the people uphold the hands of the pastor.

As a matter of experience, it is found that the spiritual states of people and of pastor wax or wane together; there may be exceptions, as there are to all rules and results, but as a general fact they are found to go together. When the pastor's piety is warm and loving and zealous, then the people are found to be devoted to the heavenly service; when he is full of the spirit of missions, they are liberal in their contributions and ardent in their prayers and hopes; when he has his heart set upon revivals and prays and preaches for them, then are the people seen longing and striving for times of refreshing. On the other

hand, when the pastor is cold and heartless and formal in his work, there is ordinarily but little life among the people; when he is worldly, frivolous and carried away by prevailing fashions, then will you find a people who care far more for the things of time than for those of eternity. Hardly any fact in the practical work of the gospel is more invariable than this. A godly pastor will have a godly people; a zealous pastor, a zealous people; and an inconsistent pastor, an inconsistent people. There are reasons why it can hardly be otherwise. The state of a pastor's heart must almost necessarily be reflected from the people; it will give tone to his preaching, and that, again, will imprint itself on the hearts and the lives of his hearers. It cannot but be that a sympathy will go out from him which will influence those with whom he holds such intimate relations. More potent than even his words from the sacred desk will be his example, which will be followed by the people whether they so intend or not.

This is a most appropriate and most beau-

tiful appointment amid the various arrangements for the practical work of the kingdom. It makes men who have experienced the power of divine grace to be the agents for establishing that grace in the souls of their fellow-men. It makes men, and not angels, to be the greatest benefactors to those who are the blessed recipients of redemption. It ordains human influence to be one of the grandest agencies for blessing the world. This fact is distinctly recognized in Scripture, and charges are given accordingly, such as, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Very emphatic is this made by the honor which is put on pastors in the names which our Lord himself gives them, such as his "ambassadors," "stewards of the mysteries of God" and "stars in the right hand of the Son of man."

Need another word be added to show the importance of all God's people helping their pastors by their influence, sympathy, co-opera-

tion, and especially by their prayers? It is of surpassing moment that this great duty should be deeply studied, that even the little things which it involves should be considered, and that many things contained in it which have generally been overlooked should be seriously pondered.

## ARTICLE II.

### ELECTING A PASTOR.

ALL ministers are not equally adapted to a given church, even when their general qualifications are equally good. When, therefore, the connection is first to be formed, it will be seen that a wise choice is of the highest moment; the future comfort, prosperity and increase in grace of both people and pastor depend on it.

While the church is vacant and the congregation is endeavoring to secure a pastor, it is undoubtedly a period of difficulty and danger with any people. Churches are sometimes almost wrecked by strifes at such times. Parties may be formed. The many minds which form a congregation cannot be brought to see alike. Prejudices are likely to be excited, and to become very strong. There is hardly anything which strains the harmony of a congregation

as does this. Alienations are sometimes engendered which are as far as can be from the spirit of Christ. Against the pastor who is ultimately chosen prejudices are often awakened which for a long time to come impair his usefulness. Our aim is to throw out suggestions which may tend to avert such sad results.

Congregations in choosing a pastor sometimes make most unwise selection. The uppermost questions are, "Will this man attract the young?" "Will he fill the pews, and so increase the revenues of the church?" and not, "Is he truly a man of God?" "Will he be zealous for souls?" "Is the glory of God the first interest with him?" Influenced by such motives as these, they select a man who startles by his cheap caricatures of God's word, by his eccentricities, and, alas! even by his buffoonery. They fill their pulpit, it may be, with an adventurer who has forsaken his mother-Church to find a better settlement in another denomination, an odd weakling who could find no home in his own connection or a money-lover who forsakes his fathers' Church in order to make a



better living in another denomination that is more popular. No matter though the people have sad examples before them of such men disgracing their profession and bringing shame upon the denomination in which they were not nurtured, churches will ruin themselves and dishonor their name by selecting such men, rejecting, at the same time, some of the most excellent of the earth. "Attract to the sanctuary in any way, and afterward give those so attracted the truth," is the fallacious motto with some churches. Such an adventurer will come to a vacant church, preach one or two of his striking popular sermons, ingratiate himself with the more susceptible of the people, receive a call, accept it—and the church is blighted for many a year to come. We could give instances not a few of this kind. A saintly and very eminent pastor of Philadelphia, now in glory, many a time poured out the deep grief of his soul to the writer that so many of our churches were in this way almost making shipwreck of their hopes. Who can help weeping as he sees an old church, founded by godly men and with

a blessed record, thus humiliated and blasted by the antics of an ecclesiastical clown? Cannot churches be persuaded to exercise common sense and a sanctified judgment in this matter, on which so much depends for them, their children and the world? We speak so strongly on this subject because the course we condemn is at the present time sadly lowering the dignity and usefulness of the pulpit.

In view of such dangers, the first thing for a church, when seeking for a pastor, is to make it a matter of earnest prayer. After all care has been taken, serious mistakes are sometimes made. So much is at stake in the future usefulness, comfort, prosperity, and even existence, of the church that this should be most prominent—should be the only satisfactory reliance. Such prayer should be sincere and honest, not merely for confirmation of the choice already determined on, but for divine guidance in making the choice. It should be offered in public and social worship, in the family and in secret devotions. It would be well to set apart a whole day to be observed as a season of special prayer and fasting. Then it should be engaged

in with the mind open for direction and with the determination to follow the pointing of God's finger. There is special encouragement for the offering of such prayer in that our Lord directed, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." The matter is so connected with God's glory that it may be regarded as in accordance with his will, and so an answer certainly be looked for. How easy it would be for him, in the arrangements of his providence, to guide to the right choice! When such prayer is offered honestly and earnestly, the answer will most assuredly be vouchsafed. Then how safe and blessed and prosperous in the end, when the pastor is chosen according to the mind of our all-wise Father!

The next step for the congregation should be to investigate, carefully yet justly, the antecedents of any candidate whom it may be determined to bring before the people for their election. This is probably the best merely human test that can be applied. Moreover, it is perfectly fair; for in a matter involving the highest interests of the church the people have

a right to know all that is in their reach concerning the man for whom they are to vote. Besides, as he properly seeks to know all that he can know of them, so should they also desire a full knowledge of him. This, however, is a matter that is surrounded with difficulties and needs to be conducted with delicacy. It is at once the people's duty and their interest to obtain as full information as they can concerning the past history of the proposed pastor, especially if he has already held other charge or charges. The ordinary sources from which this record can be gathered are the professors under whom he has studied, officers or others connected with his former charges, members of the presbytery or other ecclesiastical bodies with which he has previously been connected and individuals who have long been acquainted with him. Others who may have had opportunities of witnessing his work and standing may also be consulted. If only his special friends are interrogated, their partiality may keep them from rendering a full account of what he has been.

Those who are thus applied to for informa-

tion should give a full account of what he is and has done, without partiality, and, of course, under implied assurance of inviolable confidence. They are providentially called upon to do that which may be of vital consequence to that portion of God's kingdom, and may not decline. They are called upon not merely to laud the man as their feelings might prompt, but to give a fair statement of what he is. Those who had the privilege of being acquainted with that greatest of men in Christian wisdom, Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, know how promptly and judiciously he would respond to every application for such information concerning the young men who had been under his care. They know how certainly he would respond, how kindly he would speak of them, but how faithfully he would tell all, how discriminating would be his knowledge, and how tenderly he would mention any defects, lovingly expressing the hope that time would cure them.

The points concerning which information should be sought regarding the candidate are such as the nature of his preparation for the

ministry, the number of charges he may have held, the measure of his prevailing zeal for the salvation of souls, the character of his preaching, his success in gathering men into the kingdom, his influence in the community—above all, the fervor of his piety.

It is marvelous how careless churches about to elect a pastor are concerning these matters, which should be uppermost. They first allow their feelings to be enlisted for or against the man, and then no amount or quality of testimony can have any influence on their acts. Many a pastor have we known to be called whom the slightest inquiry would have shown to be utterly unfitted for that charge. Many another have we seen rejected and wronged—and the church wronged with him—whose record would have shown him to be one of the noblest of ministers in heart, head, culture and all other qualities that go to make a polished shaft in the hand of Christ.

After these essential preliminary steps, the next, ordinarily, will be to *hear* the candidate whose name may have been presented to the congregation. This is a matter for the people

which is generally surrounded with very serious difficulties, and in which calm judgment and forbearance are much needed. Only a very inadequate opinion can be formed by the hearing of one or two discourses. On the one hand, the one or two sermons which are heard may be much above the average capacity of the speaker, who is naturally desirous of making as good an impression as he can ; on the other hand, if he is a man of much sensitiveness, the peculiar circumstances are likely to confuse and embarrass him, so that he will fail of doing full justice to himself. These and other like difficulties impose a very serious responsibility upon the session or other church authority in introducing a candidate to a congregation. Never should they admit to their pulpit any man from whose previous record they are not assured that, if elected, he would be suited to the field. Most resolutely should they exclude every man whose antecedents make it doubtful whether he has that exalted character which his office demands. They should not allow their own preferences to lead them, but should

let their judgment, as formed by what they have learned of him, be their guide. By wisely conducting this matter of introducing candidates to the congregation, the elders can exert a very potent influence upon the final choice. When a candidate with an exalted record has been introduced to the church, he should have a full and fair opportunity of knowing and of being known by the people. One day in the pulpit is not, ordinarily, enough ; time should be fully given for considering the momentous union that is contemplated. Better perhaps, however, that he should not mingle extensively with the congregation, and so give rise to the charge of electioneering. When such candidate has preached to the edification of the church, there should then be a vote of the people *on his case alone* ; on no account should the vote be divided between two or more candidates. Such a course is humiliating to the candidates and most dangerous to the harmony of the people. No man should be voted upon until he is fairly known to the people, and then his case should be decided by itself alone.



A fair subject of inquiry among people, when about to make choice of a pastor, concerns the *qualifications* which should be expected and which should determine the final choice. What should such qualifications be? We would enumerate the essential ones, and in the order of their importance as they lie before us. 1. At the very head of the list, and beyond the reach of comparison, would we place sincere, ardent, single-eyed *piety*; 2. Next would we name good, sanctified *common sense*, without which no element of pastoral work can properly be performed; 3. Then that *learning* which is indispensable in interpreting the word of God, in bringing it home to the head and the heart of the people and in conducting the momentous affairs of Zion; 4. We would also suggest as things which should be inquired after with great delicacy, yet with fidelity, *his habits of study, of visiting and of preaching*. In making such inquiries as these concerning the proposed pastor there is nothing improperly inquisitorial. The contemplated union is so vastly important and lasting that they are proper.

One point in this matter needs special caution—namely, that there should be the greatest care not to be unduly attracted by the fame of some *genius*, some eccentric character, who is drawing crowded houses. There are few things more sad and humiliating in churches at the present time than is the propensity to run after preaching that is sensational and odd and frivolous. Ministers who condemn it are in danger of being stigmatized as narrow or “old-fogy.” But can there be anything more offensive in the sight of God and more hateful to fine Christian feeling than the practice of caricaturing the sacred word and presenting the awful mysteries connected with the death of our Lord in words and figures which are low, coarse, vulgar, ridiculous, and which cause the hearers to stare and to giggle? In the name of all that is high and holy, why *will* God’s true people countenance such profanity? Why do not redeemed men and women rise up in righteous wrath against such shameful prostitution of our holy religion? Avoid all such so-called geniuses. They might fill the

church for a time, but oh the lowering of the holy standard, the shame that would follow, and the injury to the blessed Name before which every knee is to bow in adoring reverence !

On the other hand, while all care is to be exercised, it should ever be borne in mind that a pastor perfect in every respect is not to be found ; that is not to be expected in this present imperfect state. No more can be done than diligently to use the providential opportunities that are given for inquiry, and then to leave all the results with the Church's adorable Head.

A special perplexity with churches seeking to settle a pastor pertains to *young men* just entering the ministry ; at some times and in some places there is almost a mania for them, as if only young men have the vigor and the attractiveness that would fill the church. This impression is plausible, and yet there are two sides to it. It is true that young men will more likely attract the young ; but if a member of your family were sinking under a fatal disease, would you send for a physician just graduated, or for one who has expe-

rience? Would you prefer an inexperienced lawyer to conduct a suit in which your whole property was involved? Then are not the soul's interests more important than those of body or estate? There is not on earth a more solemn position than is that of a pastor when called upon to direct a soul lingering on the brink of the eternal world; the ripest and fullest experience is needed then. Then, too, how much is dependent on the pastor's message from the sacred desk! One word may give some anxious soul an impulse upward toward glory or hasten its descent toward the habitations of woe. When, therefore, only young men will be listened to, it is forgotten that many years of precious experience are ignored.

But is there no place for young men? Are they never to have a beginning to their ministry? Are the fervor and the freshness of their years to be passed by as of no account? That too would be a serious mistake. Each age has its advantages—the young from their vivacity and attractiveness, and the experienced from their knowledge of the heart, of the wants of the soul and of the

modes of applying the truth. The vivacity of youth, its energy, its proper ambition and its prospects of longer years of service, are undoubtedly qualifications which should be considered. On the other hand, the experience, the accumulated knowledge of the human heart and of the divine word, and the facility reached in every department of the ministerial work,—these give to years a very great value. Between the advantages claimed on either side it would not be easy to decide. It is a case in which the special guidance of Providence should be implored. Such guidance will not be sought in vain.

In most cases it probably is the best course, when practicable, to entrust the choice of a pastor to a committee of the wisest and the most devoted in the church, to let them visit the proposed pastor at his home, to hear him preach in his ordinary ministrations, and then to present their report for the ratification of the congregation. We cannot recall an instance when this plan did not work satisfactorily. Far better commit the matter to a few of the wise and the good than to have it

agitated by the multitude, with their discordant views, their prejudices, and possibly their whims. The two or three or four selected for this responsible task should be persons of piety, experience and good judgment. The commission might consist of one from the elders, one from the trustees and one from the private members, or of two from each. The consciousness of the solemn trust committed to them would make them the more careful as to the action they would recommend. As already intimated, when practicable, this commission should hear the candidate in his own pulpit, where his preaching will be less restrained and more like that of his ordinary ministrations. Their choice would, of course, be made subject to the ratification of the whole church—at least, in all ordinary cases.

One solemn conviction should pervade every vacant church when the critical duty of electing a pastor is entered upon—namely, that it is to be the establishing of a relationship almost as near and as tender as that of the family, one which should not be broken ex-

cept by death. To any people in such a case it may be said, "Here is a servant of God who is to bear a most intimate relation to you. It is a relation which should continue for life. This pastor whom you are to elect will influence your whole being and that of your children. His intercourse with you will have a bearing upon the whole destiny of yourself and your family both for time and for eternity."

It should also be a purpose with you that, so far as in you lies, this pastoral relation now to be established shall be a permanent one. When the new pastor has entered upon a relationship which he believes is to last for life, he will be careful to lay broad and deep foundations, especially in the religious training of the young. Blessed is that church the great body of whose members never saw a change in the pastorate which they hold so dear! Blessed, thrice blessed, is that pastor whose church is composed of members whom he has himself gathered into the fold, and whom he has seen growing up around him throughout his whole ministerial life!

## ARTICLE III.

### LOVE YOUR OWN CHURCH.

ONE who is conversant with the life of churches must see that there are serious evils—common to many of them—resulting rather from thoughtlessness than intention. One of these evils is the habit of members decrying everything pertaining to their own church, while they laud the excellences of others. Every custom, every act and characteristic, of the church with which they are connected is mismanaged or wrong, whilst every church of every other denomination is well conducted and attractive.

This habit is often indulged to such a degree as seriously to injure the cause of religion. Such persons give you no credit—at least, avowedly—for anything you may accomplish. Take encouragement as you may from the progress of your church, or congratu-



late yourself upon the increasing sociability of your people, or rejoice in their improvement in benevolence, or express your gratification at the larger numbers that are uniting with your communion, or speak of the additional families that are coming to you from the world,—all will be in vain : that neighboring church is advancing far more rapidly, or in that other there is a friendly spirit more attractive, or in another the contributions to the cause of Christ greatly exceed yours, or in that one far greater numbers are coming out from the world, or in another, again, there is an active progress which leaves you far behind. You may struggle hard to find *something* to the honor of your church, but all will be in vain. All is wrong with yours; all is right with others.

It is manifest that the indulgence of such a spirit discourages the pastor, sours the minds of those indulging it, injures their children, and, above all, wounds our blessed Lord.

First, it sorely discourages the pastor. To disparage all that he does is to rob him of all satisfaction, to deprive him of some of his highest motives, to cut off the very springs of

his activity, to cripple him in his zeal and to paralyze him in his strength. Imagine its influence on him. He has labored to his utmost to establish a strong, efficient and beautiful church. He is rejoicing in the blessing with which God has crowned him and his people, when, lo! with a word you pull down all and leave him disheartened and discouraged. The prosperity of his church is his life, his work, his pride, but you overthrow all by the weight of your influence just as far as it will go. Take care! The pastor is not a private person. What discourages and injures him injures the cause. Dampen his spirit, and the effect will be seen in sermons, pastoral visits, and every other duty to which he is called. Many a time his heart is made sad by the slighting words that are uttered regarding his efforts to build up the kingdom.

The pastor is not the only sufferer from this habit: it has also a most injurious influence upon the children and others in the family where it prevails. Hours which might profitably be employed in teaching them concerning the kingdom are filled with the rehearsals of

deficiencies in the officers and members and services of the church. What must be the impressions made upon the minds of such children? What must be their recollections of such a church? Must they not very soon come to look upon all other churches as better than their own? Is it to be wondered at should they seek a spiritual home somewhere else or become so disgusted as to ignore all sanctuaries? Many a time a word lightly spoken or a suspicion casually uttered will enter a child's mind and lodge there, and spring up, perchance many years afterward, in a harvest of bitter fruit.

Another disastrous result of this habit is its evil influence upon the world outside of the Church. Charges against the cause are not so hurtful in their results while kept within the Christian family; but when they go abroad, who shall limit their injurious effects? They have come from members of Christ's household; they spread far and near; on they go unchecked. Their evil influence is simply illimitable. How the ungodly world gloats over them and makes them the occa-

sion for shooting deadly shafts against the cause of our Lord!

Moreover, *it is not true* that your own church is all wrong and others all right; that charge is unjust, cruel, sinful. Those other churches whose excellences you exalt are not the perfection you depict. Would to God they were! Either you are misinformed or you exaggerate rumors which have reached you. There are defects in them of which you have not a word to say. Could you look inside of them, you would probably find at least as much cause for complaint as you do in your own church. On the other hand, it is a slander to charge such grave defects against everything in your own church. It has blemishes and shortcomings, it is true, as everything earthly has; but why dwell on these so constantly, and exaggerate them, and refuse to consider their palliations? Besides, your own church, just as it is, is the best *for you*. You are identified with it, and you can do more good in it than in any other connection.

Then let it never be forgotten that one of your first duties is *love your own church*, and

to aid it and its work with all the weight of your example and influence. There is a power in the united and hearty sympathy and love of its members which makes any church irresistible. The opposite feeling is its weakness. Love, therefore, your own church, where God, in his providence, has placed you, where you have received so many personal blessings, and where you can do more for the cause of Christ than anywhere else. Love its history and its plans of working for the beloved Lord. Love its communion seasons, its Sabbath-school, its meetings for prayer, its Sabbath services. Love its officers and love its members, whom Jesus loves, and whom he will at last take to be with himself in the Church above. Find out its bright side. Give it credit for whatever it is or has done in evidence that it is a branch of the blood-washed host of Christ. Imitate the example of the holy man who says, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

It will be neither uncharitable toward others nor bigoted to give to your church the warmest affections of your heart.

Love the church, and, instead of complaining, cover its faults. That in it there are inconsistencies and faults cannot be denied. The pastor knows this, feels it, and mourns over it as scarcely any private member can. When there shall be no imperfections in the Church, then shall she be taken home and presented to her Lord "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." But meantime why make her wounds bleed afresh by tearing them open? Why make the sores worse by exposing them? Rather hide them from an unfriendly world, and tell them only to Him who can cure. Cover them up with the mantle of charity, and, unless the interests of truth and righteousness require, let them be forgotten. With all the affection of loving children vindicate the Church's good name and stand by her through evil report and through good report.

Then determine to find the great pleasure of your life in the church and the sacred services of her sanctuary. This is a possible

attainment. Was it not so with the inspired singer when he uttered the glorious words, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord"? or when, in another place, it is sung, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness"? Depend upon it, one of the greatest enjoyments of the soul is missed when this pleasure is not realized. Determine that in connection with your church you will find your holiest and happiest hours. Delight in her Sabbaths, enjoy her sacred feasts and find holy pleasure in all her services. Go to the house of God that there you may meet your best friends on earth, that you may rejoice in your Lord, and that you may receive a foretaste of the pleasures immortal which are at God's right hand. Let nothing stand between your soul and this spiritual pleasure, and then you will have neither occasion nor disposition to complain of those best of friends who with you behold the beauty of their Lord.

## ARTICLE IV.

### HEARING AND CRITICISING THE SERMON.

**I**F it be the pastor's most important duty to preach the word, then it is the people's corresponding duty to listen to him. Why shall the pastor preach if he is not heard? Why shall he carefully prepare to preach if there be not attentive hearers? The appointment of preaching supposes the appointment of hearing also. When God laid the charge upon his ministerial servants, "Preach the word," he also gave the charge, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

This matter of attending to the word of God as it is proclaimed from the sacred desk is a duty which has not been made sufficiently prominent. For obvious reasons it is one which it is delicate and difficult for the pastor himself to press home. It is not easy for him to urge the people to give heed to his own



preaching. There is great difference in hearers, some finding it natural and easy to listen to every word, others being almost unable to give continued attention. To be a good hearer is an important attainment. It is, moreover, a habit that can be cultivated and in which there may be great improvement. No one should rest until he shall find joy of heart in listening to the words of life from the lips of the messenger of God.

We may see the injustice which is often done to the message from God delivered in the pulpit if we consider the way in which it is received, compared with the attention which is given to some public speech or lecture. Some such lecture is announced, on science, art, politics, travel, history, or some other secular subject. The community is aroused and eager to attend it, and pay cheerfully for the privilege of attending. People will listen, strive to understand and talk about it with interest. It will be remembered afterward, its principles studied and its counsels applied. Why are *sermons* so differently treated? Why are they so rarely conversed about and carried out

into practical life? "It is true that the frequency of their delivery and the sometimes unattractive manner of the preacher will explain this in part, but only in part. Are not their subjects of ten thousand times more moment—of a moment that should far more than compensate for the other lack of attractiveness? We cannot fully explain this, but we point to the sad fact as a warning to shun an inattention so deplorable in its results.

Properly to receive the message which God sends through his servants is a solemn and responsible duty. Though the pastor claims no priestly authority, yet he does speak by God's command, and may therefore claim attention. In a very important sense God speaks through him. The preacher is God's ambassador—his ambassador bearing tidings of peace. To be inattentive is to insult that ambassador, and so to insult the heavenly King who sent him. To close his ear against that message or to give no heed is to say that the terms of reconciliation will not be heeded, the blessing will not be accepted. Will the most high God tolerate such neglect of himself?

In their treatment of the sermons which they hear there is a fault with many professed Christians that cannot be rebuked with too much severity. It is the habit of criticising the preacher, of searching for defects in either the matter of his discourses or in the manner of their delivery, as if his preaching were a mere literary performance and had to do only with the intellect. As soon as the sermon is delivered it is attacked with the most searching severity. Its imperfections are sought out, exaggerated and paraded without mercy. The sermon lacks animation, it is dull, it is too long, it is full of repetition, it is an old one new-modeled, it is too doctrinal or it is full of errors and mistakes. The criticisms are often of the most trivial character, condemning some mistake of grammar, some mispronounced word or some lapse in a statement of fact—so trivial as to be absolutely contemptible. This attack is often begun at the door of the church; nothing else is heard on the way home, and it forms the staple of conversation at the dinner-table. No matter though there are present some

who are unfriendly to religion : the wounds are torn open all the same. The presence of children is no restraint. Though every word is calculated to estrange them from pastor and from church, the merciless criticism goes on.

This practice is thoughtless and cold-hearted ; it is destructive of all the purposes for which sermons were ordained. It is not wrong to see any defects which may be in a sermon : it is inevitable ; but the proper course is to go to the preacher himself and tell him of these things with kindness and with care.

The ordinary mode of faultfinding is an unmitigated evil. It is a wrong done the *pastor*. He is himself perfectly aware that his sermons are not perfect ; none could find defects in them so well as he himself. Perhaps the discourse so much condemned had to be studied out under a pressure of other indispensable duties, or was interrupted while being prepared, or was composed while bodily ailments almost incapacitated its author for mental exertion. Besides, his prime object is

not literary perfection, but to bring souls to Christ. No preacher is always at his best in his discourses; the most popular will sometimes come far short of his ordinary abilities. Then, too, he flattered himself that his own people, who knew him so well, would judge charitably of defects in a sermon which he was compelled to prepare hastily. Such criticism is cruel; it is cruelty to apply the line of absolute faultlessness to every word and sentence he may utter. His appeal to the uncompromising critic would be, "Surely you did not consider the injustice, the injury, you inflicted when you paraded some mistake in fact, in grammar or in the pronounciation of a word in a discourse which was composed while racing with the minutes allowed me?"

Again, this practice is a great wrong to the *critic himself*. He is cultivating a habit that will not only deprive him of much comfort, but will also bring after it many an hour of wretchedness. What course could be indulged that would so effectually keep the truths or the comforting doctrines of the gospel from reaching the heart and conscience?

It is acquiescing in the plan of Satan by which he strives to nullify the effects of preaching. For their own sakes, therefore, would we plead with hearers to banish this critical spirit, to say to it, as to its author, "Get thee hence, Satan!" to close every avenue of the mind against it and to open all to the sanctifying influence of the truth. With all their defects—even if the criticism were just—the sermons have much that would instruct, elevate and sanctify.

Look also at the deplorable wrong which the indulgence of this spirit of criticism does to the *children*, to the *impenitent* and to those who are *unfriendly* and *skeptical*. We could easily give instances of injuries done to such persons. It would seem incredible that any true Christian would speak disparagingly of preachers and sermons before children and others who could but be prejudiced thereby. Alas! alas! we know, however, that it is done. We know of children whose prospects for the life eternal have thus been blasted. No subsequent influences have succeeded in effacing the wrong impressions made in this

thoughtless manner by sincere followers of Christ. Is it any wonder that children receive no benefit from that preaching which is always received by censorious ears? What can be expected but that such children will come to lose interest in the condemned sermons, begin to criticise, to pick flaws, and finally to ridicule?

To assail even faulty sermons in the presence of the ungodly or of those who have been awakened to concern about the interests of their souls is simply horrible. Mr. C—— was not a professed member of the church, but he was a very dear friend of his pastor. For many years that pastor had striven to bring him to an honest confession of the name of Christ. He had almost succeeded, and expected that at the next communion season he would take his stand with the followers of Jesus. On the Sabbath previous to that communion the pastor preached a sermon on the subject of the Lord's Supper with this friend's case in view. Mr. C——'s heart was touched; the tear trembled in his eye; his purpose was all but formed. To a prominent

officer of the church, at the close of the service, he spoke with delight of the sermon. The officer replied with a criticism of the discourse. It was like a death-stab to that heart trembling on the brink of decision. The man's soul was chilled ; he was irritated ; he turned away from his purpose. Mr. C—— never professed Christ before men. Not many months afterward he went into the presence of his Maker. The earnest efforts of the pastor, the pleading appeals he had made, the letters he had written at the midnight hour, were all blighted in a moment ; the hopes of many anxious friends were crushed ; the benefit to the Church of the example of that influential man was lost ; and all from the thoughtless criticism of that church-officer. He did not intend it ; he never knew the harm he had done. The knowledge of it would have embittered the rest of his days. This case may serve as a warning to all. Oh, why will any professed child of God continue a habit so useless, so reckless, so cruel and so full of danger ?

To all those whom our words can influence



we appeal to consider what a very solemn thing it is to receive a message from the great God delivered in his own appointed way. No sermon did you ever hear which did not contain some important truth ; it should not have been condemned because of some fancied or real defect. Any sermon that you shall ever hear may contain the very truth of which your soul is most in need : then why not look for that truth, and not for faults ? God is watching the effect of his word upon your heart ; angels are watching ; your eternal interests are concerned. However weak the instrument by which that word is conveyed, why will you disappoint all by merely fixing upon some defect in the delivery of the message ?

Then, too, let it never be lost sight of that the sermon which you criticise may be the last you will ever hear. If you knew you would never hear another, would you then trifle about little mistakes that could not possibly do any lasting harm ? Take care how you treat the message from God, or the messenger, or the adorable King who sent the messenger.

## ARTICLE V.

### RECEIVING THE PASTOR'S VISITS.

THE greeting with which the pastor is frequently received as he calls upon families that are very dear to him is, "What a stranger you are!" and this too from sincere friends who would not dream of using such words if they reflected for a moment on the pain they inflict. The pastor's heart sinks at the very moment he would have it overflowing with kindness. The words may be intended to convey a cordial welcome; but when they are followed by reproaches, he feels them deeply. Such complaint will often destroy for him the whole comfort of the visit, and consequently its pleasure and profit to the family. When he is received with reproaches, either plainly expressed or insinuated, he will find it the more easy to postpone the next visit. Not only in the beginning, but also throughout

the whole visit, too often the time is taken up with faultfinding about a neglect that was never intended. Sometimes such complaining is the very bane of a pastor's life. As he goes from house to house his heart grows sore and his energies are weakened.

There is a practical evil here among Christian people which they would shun if they considered the feelings of him whose desire is to benefit their souls. Many pastors have their lives in this way embittered, especially when they are peculiarly sensitive. They are conscious of honestly planning to fill up their hours to the best advantage, but are met only by whisperings and censures. It is scarcely to be wondered at that in this way many a faithful minister has his usefulness almost destroyed. He is human and has human feelings—feelings rendered finer and more acute by the Christian culture which his profession requires.

The people do not reflect upon the many other duties of an indispensable character which press upon their pastor, rendering it impossible for him to bestow on them that

attention which his feelings would prompt. He must prepare sermons, deliver lectures, attend funerals and marriages, visit the sorrowing, the sick and the dying, read and answer letters, counsel with the troubled, entertain strangers, use his influence in aiding the poor, and perform innumerable other duties. Sometimes for weeks at a time he will be so taken up with aged and dying people as they hover on the brink of the grave that he will have no time whatever to bestow upon the ordinary visiting of families. In planning out his work he has perhaps for weeks before arranged to visit you on a certain day. It comes—the very hour comes—when he is summoned and must go to a funeral, or to some other equally imperative duty. This occurs time after time—perhaps for weeks—and you think he is neglecting your family, whereas his disappointment is greater than yours. In fact—especially if his congregation is large—he often cannot do as he purposes. You would not censure him if you knew all; you wrong him simply because you do not see the multitude and the urgency of his duties.

Congregations, too, ought to consider that if most of their pastor's time is spent in visiting from house to house his sermons must suffer. It is not simply the number of hours that are thus taken from the preparation for the pulpit, but the mental energy and vigor also that are thus spent. Preaching is the minister's highest calling, and that upon which the most important interests are suspended. No persons but those who experience it know how great is the mental strain required to prepare to deliver the mind of God to the same audience two or three times a week, and that week after week, month after month, perchance year after year, and so as to keep up that variety that will properly interest, profit and do any justice to the sacred Book from which all the matter must be drawn. The sermon must be ready; no matter what else may call away, that cannot be put off. The divine appointment, "Preach the word," must be heeded above all else. If there be remissness here, the sad consequences will soon be seen. On careful preparation for the pulpit depend the conversion of souls, the edification of

believers, the retention of strangers, the interesting of the young, and, in general, the whole prosperity of the church. If either the visiting or the preaching must suffer in the pastoral work of a large congregation, should it be that on which are suspended such momentous interests?

Another important consideration is that in ordinary circumstances, where there is neither sickness nor sorrow in a family, a visit from the pastor is scarcely needed. The visit, though pleasant to both parties, has not an object sufficiently important that for it other weighty duties should be omitted. The people see him on the Sabbath; they may meet him at the weekly lecture; they have interviews with him at funerals, weddings, social gatherings, and various other times in the ordinary intercourse of life. His interest in them and theirs in him may be kept up in this and similar ways.

It should also be understood that the advantage of a pastor's visit depends much upon the state of the family. If there be any special spiritual wants in any members of the house-

hold, they should be communicated to him with as little delay and with as much freedom as possible. He is anxious to promote your spiritual welfare; of that you are sure, and therefore, also, sure that nothing will be so welcome to him as to have any wants of the soul imparted to him. Diffidence may hold him back until you open your heart. A thousandfold more agreeable will that be to him than the idle gossip that is afloat through the congregation. State, then, at once, your doubts, your fears, your perplexities, your anxieties, your desires for higher attainments in the divine life, or anything else in which his counsel may be of use to you. Tell him, also, of anything special in the spiritual state of the members of your household—whether they are indifferent or worldly, or anxious about their souls' salvation. If they are not present, it will guide him in his future intercourse with them. Nothing will interest him in your family so much as this; nothing will attract him so surely to your home as your making him to feel that you look to him as your spiritual adviser.

The importance of pastoral visiting is very great in every respect. It establishes and keeps up an acquaintanceship which makes the pastor more and more interested in his people as he discovers in them qualities that must attract. It increases the confidence which should ever exist between pastor and people, furnishes him an opportunity of knowing the spiritual wants of those to whom he ministers, of applying the truths of the gospel to each peculiarity of trial and temptation, and of selecting such subjects for his sermons as will be most beneficial to the congregation. The faithful pastor will visit from house to house as much as in his power. With all the confidence, then, which they have in him should his people rely upon it that absence from their homes is caused by the pressure of other duties which cannot be neglected.

The relations between people and pastor are so sacred that in this, as in everything else, there should be full confidence. His entrance into your house should be an occasion for consultation about the interests of the soul and the cause which is so dear to both.



Certain it is that he intends your highest welfare, and you should do what you can to help him to be useful. The interests of Christ and his cause should be uppermost in every interview. Then will each one of the pastor's visits be a happiness to him ; it will make others to be anticipated with delight by the people, and it will give an impulse to the blessed cause which is so dear to both.

## ARTICLE VI.

### BEARING EVIL REPORTS TO THE PASTOR.

**I**N many churches there are persons who make it their business to carry to the pastor reports concerning the shortcomings and faults of their fellow-members. They seldom meet him but they have complaints to make—that one violates the Lord's day by worldly visits, or that another habitually absents himself from the services of the sanctuary, or that another is faulty in the religious training of his children, or that another has been detected in the neglect of wife or parents, or that another frequents dances and other irreligious amusements, or that another is untrue, or that another furtively indulges in the intoxicating cup. And all of these accusations are accompanied with the charge of inviolable secrecy. The writer was once intimate with an eminent pastor, now in glory, whose life

was embittered by one of his members who made it his business to carry to him all such stories that he could collect. The pastor was afraid to meet that man, for well did he know that no interview would close without his being pained by some such charge. Many wretched hours do pastors of sensitive feeling have from such a practice in some of their members.

It is humiliating to reflect on what must be the motives which lead to this course. With some, no doubt, the only motive is that they may have something about which to converse pleasingly. But what a mistake to attempt to please a man of God by mean attacks upon the absent! In many cases it is mere thoughtlessness; with some it is mistaken zeal. As an old writer remarked, "detraction or slander is often applauded when it displays itself in the garb of zeal and severity. Hence, in the same manner, this vice insinuates itself also into holy people and creeps upon them unawares under the name of some virtue." Some even charge it to conscience—poor conscience! which so often is made responsible for

the indulgence of passion or prejudice. The sad truth must be confessed that in some cases this complaining to the pastor is practiced to satisfy cherished grudges. In other cases still—we blush for our Christianity—it can be explained in no other way than as coming from a wanton desire for excitement and mischief.

This habit of gossiping and talebearing is one that is evil in all cases, but worst of all is it when the reports are carried to the pastor. Then is it full of malign influence to the pastor, to the victims of the slanderous stories and to him who carries them. To the pastor it is an insult and an injury of a very grievous character. The charm of his office is love to his people and confidence in them. He must think well of his people if he would preach to them with that earnest affection that would reach their hearts and win them to the truth. Weaken his confidence in them, and you weaken the fervor of his appeals. The moment there are suspicions against them lodged in his mind, that moment he becomes trammelled in the cordiality of his visits and em-

barrassed in his presentations of truth to their minds. A wound is inflicted upon the soul of the affectionate pastor when he hears sad reports of those who are the dearest of earth to him. The constant hearing of them becomes a burden he can scarcely bear. And, far worse than the injury to him, they are a wound to the Church and to the Church's loving Lord.

Hardly need it be added that such evil reports often inflict injuries almost irreparable upon those whom they revile. Years afterward the bitter fruits may be reaped by the victims, though they were perfectly innocent of the charges. Suspicion lodged in the pastor's mind may blur the otherwise spotless forms of friends he loves most dearly. Even when they are not credited, they sometimes awaken suspicions which time can scarce efface. You would not stab a fellow-Christian with a murderous weapon; you would not set fire to his house; you would help him were he sick or in sorrow; but you bring to his pastor against that fellow-Christian a charge worse than the bodily wound or the loss

of property or than weeks of sickness by lodging against him a complaint calculated to poison the pastor's mind. A sad case of the kind is known to the writer. A valued member of a certain church was accused to his pastor of occasional indulgence in intoxicating drink. The accuser, though he made the charge verbally, most positively refused to testify to its truth, and, belonging to another denomination, he could not be forced so to do. A strict inquiry was made and the imputation found to be groundless, yet a suspicion had been awakened which fixed a stigma upon that slandered man which adheres to him still and will prevent him from ever standing before the community as he had stood all his previous life.

Nor do such bearers to their pastor of evil reports imagine the injury that they are doing to themselves. If they did, they would pause before scattering firebrands, wounds and sorrows—a harvest of woes that they will have to reap before many years. The pastor is injured, the victims of the slanderous tongue are injured, but it is questionable whether the

talebearers are not the greatest sufferers in the end.

Cannot such bearers of evil reports about their brethren see that they are taking the surest method of lowering themselves in the pastor's esteem? To one such bearer of slanderous tidings a faithful pastor made a reply so decided and so just that we will quote it. She was undertaking to apologize for what she called an unpleasant duty. "Stop!" said the pastor; "do not add sin to sin. Besides, I do not want an apology, for you have neither offended nor injured me. But I can tell you One whom you have grievously offended: that is God. And I can tell you also one whom you have greatly injured: that is yourself. Now, I should like to read to you two or three passages of Scripture which will prove to you that talebearing is a great sin in the sight of the Almighty. Reproving talebearers among the Christians of Thessalonica, the apostle writes, 'We hear that there are some among you which walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.' The same apostle also, in his Epistle to Timothy,

speaks thus of talebearing: 'And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things they ought not.' The apostle Peter also advises all Christians not to 'suffer as busybodies in other men's matters.' So malign was the habit that there was a special law against it in these words: 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.' Divine wisdom has portrayed its enormity: 'The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.' A special warning is given, to be used by the pastor: 'Speak to them that they *be not false accusers.*'" We sum up all in one beautiful description of the man of God—the man who shall at last dwell with the Most High: "He backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, *nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.*"

One of the wrongs of this habit of bearing evil reports to the pastor is that you may be mistaken; the facts may have been misrepresented to you. Misunderstandings are the



cause of most strifes and alienations. If you knew all the circumstances of him whom you accuse, you would probably praise rather than blame. Then what have you done—done to one who is praiseworthy? You have inflicted a wound which you can never heal—done a wrong for which you can never atone. Besides, even what is true is not always to be rehearsed. Why proclaim to others the failings of a brother? Why render the wounds to the cause of Christ more painful and incurable? Why exasperate the erring and render their return more hopeless? Why expose the sores the sight of which will but humiliate and degrade the sufferer? Oh, never should such exposure be made, even to the pastor, excepting when the honor of the cause of righteousness and truth requires, and when those bearing the charges to the pastor are ready to stand by them and to vindicate the good name of that Church which is so dear to our Lord.

We have met with poetic words on this subject which are so true, so appropriate and so beautiful that we shall close with them :

- “Other people have their faults,  
And so have you as well ;  
But all ye chance to see or hear  
Ye have no right to tell.
- “If ye canna speak o’ good,  
Take care and see and feel ;  
Earth has all too much o’ woe,  
And not enough o’ weal.
- “Be careful that ye make nae strife  
Wi’ meddling tongue and brain,  
For ye will find enough to do  
If ye but look at hame.
- “*If ye canna speak o’ good,*  
*Oh, dinna speak at all,*  
For there is grief and woe enough  
On this terrestrial ball.
- “If ye should feel like picking flaws,  
Ye better go, I ween,  
And read the Book that tells ye all  
About the mote and beam.
- “Dinna lend a ready ear  
To gossip or to strife,  
Or perhaps ’twill make for ye  
Nae funny thing of life.
- “Oh, dinna add to others’ woe,  
*Nor mock it with your mirth,*  
But give ye kindly sympathy  
To suffering ones of earth.”

## ARTICLE VII.

### GUARDING THE PASTOR'S TIME.

IT is true that the time of the pastor belongs to his church, but it should be borne in mind that his highest duty to his people is his preaching. Preaching is that to which he is ordained of God, with which are involved the supreme interests of his people. There are other duties devolving upon him, such as visiting the sick, comforting the troubled, directing the inquiring, and many others; but above them all, connected with and influencing them all, is the duty of preaching. He must obey his Lord and "*preach the word.*"

To discharge this great duty as effectively as possible there is need for constant study. To understand the heavenly message in all its length and breadth, to accompany it with the weighty motives which divine wisdom has provided and to adapt it to the circumstances of

the pastor's own people require the most entire application of heart and head. As in all similar cases, God has appointed the co-operation of human instrumentality. He might easily accomplish all by his own miraculous power, but his established method is to use the agency of men. He calls for their sympathy, their learning and their power of persuasion by which to bring home his messages to hearts and consciences. This is the work which Christ has laid upon the pastor, and the people can aid him in it much more than they imagine. In the matters of religion and the soul there is such an intimate relation between speaker and hearers that they act and react on each other in a most influential manner.

The people can aid the pastor in his preaching by their constant attendance upon his ministry and by giving an attentive ear to his words, by showing that the truths which he has uttered have entered into their hearts and are influencing their lives. By these and also by many other indirect ways can they stimulate and encourage him in his preaching.

The people can aid their pastor in a more di-

rect way by suggesting to him subjects for sermons, for it must excite his interest and ardor to know that he is giving instruction which is specially needed and desired. They can aid him by protecting him from unnecessary cares which would distract his mind from the great work of preparing his sermons. Chiefly can they aid him by neither breaking in upon his time of study themselves nor allowing others to do so, so far as it is in their power to prevent it. We would call particular attention to this point. In order to preach well, the pastor must be much in his study. He *must* be in it. Some pastors may be men of such powers that at first they may be able to preach a few superior sermons with but little study; yet it will be for a very short while unless there is miraculous aid given to them. The pastor who does not study will inevitably soon become "a humble imitator of himself." He will weary the hearers by his reiteration. He will fall into ruts of thought and language, and both himself and his people will so lose interest that but little good can be expected from his labors.

A very little reflection will show that this must be the case. The pastor of any ordinary church is called on to preach every week—usually twice in the week—to the same audience, on substantially the same subject, and that week after week, month after month, year after year. It is not possible to do this without constant repetition unless there is unwearied study to replenish the mind with new stores of thought, and to arrange and present the truth in such varied methods as will arrest the attention and interest it in the subject. To do this, however, requires an amount of study and research into the wonders of the inspired word of God to which there is absolutely no end. There is no patent method of reaching the boundless treasure. There is no mortal who can keep up the needed variety without the toil which is the ordained price of success here as well as in everything else. The pastor who imagines that he can is self-deceived; the people who expect it will be miserably disappointed. In order to accomplish this amount of study, there must be time—much time—given to it. When the presentation of the

truth is needed every week, there must be time devoted to the study every week, every day. It must be the great work of the pastor's life. Without it failure will be inevitable. In order to enrich the minds of his congregation with the truths of the Bible and to enamor them with its study, the pastor must himself first rise to that experience; and that he can do only by spending much time without interruption in his study. On the very surface of the sacred book lie the few simple truths that are needed for salvation, but deeper and deeper down lie countless other treasures which need to be laboriously dug for by all who would enjoy them or teach them to others. In exploring the riches of Scripture there is a peculiar charm unknown and unimagined by those who give not their time to it. Earth has no such rich and precious thoughts as reward those who give their days and nights to the search for them in God's sacred mine. Why should these for ever lie hidden from the people for the want of the needed time and toil of the pastor? Why should it not be his sacred ambition to lead his people to the bless-

ed distinction of being a people rich in scriptural knowledge? Why should not his days and his weeks be spent in imbuing their minds with the knowledge and spirit of the sacred word? Why should it not be his aim to awaken in them a holy enthusiasm concerning the wisdom contained in the Book of books? It is possible, but it can be reached only by constant study and unbroken toil.

We may also notice that the preparation of his sermons is not the pastor's only work; there are other employments for the study which the world does not see. A pastor who has been long in his charge or has a position of any eminence has to conduct a correspondence which would almost fill up the time of an ordinary man. He must be continually engaged in other lines of the study of God's word than those which pertain to the sermon immediately on hand. It is necessary for him to be a well-informed man, and this requires him to read the current news of the day and to be familiar with the leading literature of the language. Then there are popular drifts of thought, philosophical, scientific, even skept-



tical, of which it will not do for him to be ignorant. Moreover, he ought to keep himself familiar with the sacred tongues of the Bible, and he should not be willing to live without sometimes putting to the press thoughts that will go much farther than his voice can reach. Most of these things are essential to the pastor's work, and where shall be the time for them unless there shall be the most rigid economy in its use, and unless his people shall aid him in rescuing every minute from interruption and waste? Be it remembered, too, that it is not the mere quantum of time which is taken from him by unnecessary interruptions in his hours of study. That he can poorly spare, but there is a worse evil in the breaking in upon his trains of thought. Little does some thoughtless visitor know what trouble he has occasioned by even a few moments of interruption on some unimportant business. The pastor has been for hours engaged in some line of research; he has been pursuing some thought which is gradually looming up before him; his enthusiasm upon the subject has been kindled into a flame; his whole heart

and head are alive and the pen is in his hand to fix the happy inspiration, when, lo! there comes a summons to go down to a messenger on most urgent business. With a pang of pain he obeys, descends to the messenger, and with positive exasperation finds the call is to ask where a certain family resides or to buy a book he does not want. The train of thought cannot be recalled; the enthusiasm is no more; the subject is wrecked; the sermon has lost all its spirit; the day is gone! This picture is not imaginary; the scene is not rare.

There are three kinds of interruptions to the studies of the pastor which ought to be carefully noted. The first is one that is always welcome. It is when a friend calls to tell him of any soul that has been awakened to a sense of the importance of the salvation of Christ, or of any other spiritual interest in the church which demands the pastor's attention. Such visits cannot be too frequent.

The second class of interruptions is that of mere social calls prompted by courtesy or by good feeling toward the pastor. He would be unkind and ungrateful did he not appreciate

such attentions from those whom he highly regards. But even such visitors would undoubtedly select an hour when they would not break in on his studies did they but reflect on the demands of his work.

A third class of calls can hardly be condemned too severely. They are made by persons who are themselves without any business and push themselves on the pastor—as if he had nothing to do—to get his help in passing away their time. They will come in the morning, place themselves in his most comfortable corner and without thought or remorse waste his whole day. They will come an hour before the commencement of public worship to spend that hour with the poor tortured pastor. The pastor cannot offend them by requesting them to stay away, but oh the distress they occasion, the sermons which they ruin and the hours of his precious time they take from him !

What is the remedy for these drawbacks to the usefulness of the pastor? Not, assuredly, to cut off intercourse between him and his people, or to discourage their social visits to

him, or to make of himself a recluse. By no means would we have this, but on every account we would have an intercourse most constant and friendly. Yet manifestly there should be care taken that calls upon the pastor be not at hours when he is usually engaged. A little care will show what his study-hours are; there should be an understanding that these hours are sacred, while all others are open to the most cordial friendship.

One other thing only would we advise: the people should daily pray for their pastor that he may be aided in the work of preparing his sermons. Well might that be a subject for special prayer, since so much depends on every sermon a pastor delivers, and since the highest human wisdom is so poorly able to perform a work so momentous. Thus to pray for aid to the pastor in preparing his sermons will unite people and pastor in strong sympathy in that which is his greatest work, and, forming that bond of sympathy at the mercy-seat, it will unite people and pastor, and God himself, in that divine enterprise whose aim is the salvation of men and the glory of God.

## ARTICLE VIII.

### WORKING WITH THE PASTOR.

A MARVELOUSLY rich and minute passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians thus describes the growth of the church according to the will of God: "May grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." We would ask the reader to give this passage earnest thought and see how it will expand in its rich instructions. The manner in which it makes the growth of a human body to illustrate what should be the growth of the church is a most attractive study. In the matter of the people aiding the pastor we can see its teachings in the following points:

1. Each part of the entire body must work toward the development of the whole. Every individual must do a part of the work. Such is the law—"the effectual working in the measure of every part." In the body there are nerves, bones, blood-vessels, and other parts innumerable, and each of them has a work to do; the Lord of the Church has given to each of its members his own work. Every redeemed man, woman and child has his or her share of responsibility.

2. A second point taught is that each one is appointed to work in his own place and according to his own opportunities. It is not simply that each one has some work to do, but that he has a special work which he, and he only, can do. The whole body "is fitly joined together," and the growth is to be "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part." No part is expected to do the work of any other part nor what is not according to its nature, but every part has some peculiar work of its own. Each member of the church has some talent, opportunity, function, and, corresponding with these,

some special work for which he is solemnly bound.

3. A third point is that each part must work in conjunction with all the rest in order to effect the general good result. It is not enough that each part should do some work, nor even that it should do its appropriate work, but the work must all be concentrated and aimed at the same end. The whole body is "fitly joined together and compacted" in order that it may be suitably increased by "that which every joint supplieth." This brings before us a most beautiful and important rule of Christian activity—that all the branches and kinds and items of the work of all its members should have the one object of building up the Church in Christ Jesus. Then there will be no antagonisms in the various operations that are carried on; there will be no loss of influence, as there is when there is isolation in doing good; there will be no cold indifference as to other branches of the work; and there will be no crossing of interests in carrying it on. God has established his Church to gather up, economize,

concentrate and solidify all the efforts of all her members, that so nothing may be lost, but all be brought to bear upon the one glorious object of building up his kingdom.

Two other points, on which we need not now dwell, are brought to view—namely, that all the strength for this work shall come from Christ, and that love shall be the great motive stimulating and guiding it all.

In the practical work of building up the church in piety, influence and numbers it is important to understand well what instrumentalities can be used with the best prospect of success. Organizations such as Dorcas societies, young people's associations, pastor's aids, missionary bands, etc., are helpful; they concentrate effort, nourish interest and call into service the aid of individuals who would not otherwise attempt anything. No church can afford to do without such organizations. They may, however, be abused. They may keep waiting for them individuals who otherwise would have improved current opportunities, they may encourage the feeling that only great objects should be attempted, and they



may lead to serious complications with the established authorities of the church unless they are most wisely conducted.

Very emphatic would we make it that organizations should not be waited for. To those who feel the obligation to aid the pastor it may be said, "Wait for no organization, but promptly lay hold of the opportunity which presents itself at the moment. Invite to the sanctuary whatever friend or neighbor you first think of as neglecting it. Visit and aid the ignorant, the irreligious, the poor, the sick or the sorrowing whom you find at your door. The duty first offering itself is the one to which Providence calls you; there you will be most likely to be successful in aiding the cause. Take care lest while you wait for organization the opportunity may be gone. Let Providence point out what you are to undertake, and wait for nothing on earth when you have that prompting. Even if the object appear insignificant, the result may prove vastly important.

An ignorant, intemperate and brutalized man unable to utter a sentence through the

habit of stammering was met by a devoted Christian worker. A more hopeless object, apparently, there could not be, but, using all the means she could devise, that worker strove to bring him to Christ, and succeeded. The change wrought by the Holy Ghost in the brutalized man was radical and permanent. He abandoned his dissipated habits ; he learned to read the word of God ; he presented appropriate tracts to those who had been as abandoned as he had been ; he strove to rescue his former intemperate associates ; his influence broke up a den of drunkenness ; he overcame his infirmity so far as to lead in public prayer and address ; he was instrumental in plucking many as brands from the burning, some of them the most depraved and hopeless of his neighbors. All this resulted from that one faithful worker's improving an opportunity the least promising that could be imagined. If Christians generally would pursue this course, laying hold upon the first and nearest opportunity that offered, the result upon the church as well as upon the souls of individuals would prove most blessed.

## ARTICLE IX.

### AIDING THE PASTOR BY ATTENDING CHURCH.

ONE of the essential claims growing out of the work of the church is that every one of her members shall render what aid he can in the momentous task to which the pastor is called. According to divine arrangement, to the teachings of experience and to the very nature of the case, it is manifest that the pastor is to be the *leader* in the church's work, and not to undertake all that work himself. With him as leader, the whole force of all the members can be concentrated on the same great enterprise. As leader, he is not to do all the work himself, but his skill is to be made to pervade the whole body and render it effective. A rule that should be adopted by every church is that each one of its members shall systematically aid the pastor in each duty that is in his power.

The private members can aid the pastor by regular attendance upon his pulpit ministrations, and more help can thus be rendered him than may at first be imagined. The sanctuary is the gathering-place of the people of God for the promotion of the divine cause ; in the sanctuary chiefly God makes known his glory and receives the adoration of his people. If there is any place on earth where the pastor needs to have his faithful friends stand by him, it is in the house of God and in the services connected therewith.

*For his own sake* the individual believer should never needlessly be absent from the house of God. The worship of the sanctuary is one of the leading means of grace which God has appointed for the cultivation of piety in the hearts of his people. Through its influence and opportunities believers may increase in knowledge, devotion, and every Christian grace. If anywhere joy in the Holy Ghost and the peace of God which passeth all understanding may be expected, it is there. The Christian wrongs his own soul and retards the pastor's work if he does not

faithfully make use of this method of rising higher in the divine life.

Our present aim, however, is to urge church attendance as *an important method of aiding the pastor*. Do Christians consider how much they can encourage their minister by simply meeting him at all times in the house of God, and so identifying themselves with his great work there? Their very presence and assurance of sympathy aid him; they give more influence to his words by showing, among other things, that they are interested in listening to him. On the other hand, their absence chills his soul and freezes up his words. He cannot help being influenced by it even in his preaching. He anxiously looks around the gathering assembly, and how often his heart sinks as he finds absent so many to whom he looked for moral support!

For the *interest of the meeting* each member ought always to be in his seat when the congregation assembles for worship. With perfect assurance we may say to each individual that he is responsible, in his measure, for imparting life or for causing a chill to come over

any meeting. No one can stay away without being missed ; no one can be present without imparting a measure of influence toward the animation and comfort and profit of that gathering of believers. The presence of numbers is one of the essential elements in the assemblies of churches. God knoweth our frame, and he has ordained that the sympathy which is so strong an element in our nature should in this way be turned to profit. The mere gathering with those who love the Lord has an influence for good. Like the increasing flame which is produced by bringing live coals together, so the flame of love is increased by the coming together of the piety of various hearts. What life and joy are imparted when many are found gathered in the place of prayer ! What rapture in the singing as from the voices of a multitude swell up the strains of the sweet song ! How many a lifeless meeting has been made so by the absence of those whom God and the brethren and the interests of the cause had looked to for sympathy !

For the sake of *the church's own members* all should attend. Our fellow-Christians have

claims upon us in this matter. Every man has an influence upon every other man with whom he is providentially associated. To see many others alive and interested in the cause of Christ and souls cannot but awaken deep feeling in every heart. It is an animating sight when many friends in Christ come together to cheer each other on their way to Zion. How can it be made sufficiently emphatic that simply by meeting with other Christians in the house of God each is doing something to build up all in true holiness?

For *the sake of the impenitent world* the people of God should never absent themselves from the worship of his house. Men cannot be unmoved when they see those who profess the gospel so much alive to its interests that at any inconvenience, year after year, they resort to the place of service. On the other hand, they cannot but doubt the sincerity of those who care not enough about religion to attend its weekly assemblies. The stranger goes to the house of God ; he finds that many of the church's own members are not there : is it to be wondered at if he turns away chilled

from the associations of those who are so indifferent? Would that God's people could only realize that simply by going regularly to the house of God they will attract thither the impenitent, and so bring them under the sound of the gospel, which may prove the first step toward their finding the salvation of Christ! How easy it would be for them in this way to render the pastor most important aid!

Above all other considerations, the followers of Christ should always be found at the worship of his house that by their attendance *they may render him the honor which is his due*. The world despises or ignores him; it should be their aim to take this method of glorifying him before men. The gathering together in his name is a rebuke to the prevailing ungodliness. It is proclaiming to the world that we love God supremely. It is so publishing his name, his truth and his glories that men cannot ignore them. But to stay away from the place where his honor dwelleth, what a slight to his name! Does the professed believer realize how he is treating his Lord when he will not even take the trouble of



meeting with his people? It may be said that he can be worshiped at home. True; but our Lord has appointed *public* worship as a method of honoring him before the world, and to neglect it is to do so much toward defeating that object. He knew the best way of honoring his name when he appointed the services of the sanctuary, and they cannot be intentionally neglected without insulting his wisdom, his goodness and his majesty.

Oh that Christians would awake to this vitally important duty! If they would do so, if they would make it a rule never to absent themselves from the public or other services of the church, if they would so arrange their worldly engagements as to keep sacred the hours for meeting with Christ and his people,—their piety would receive new vigor and each meeting for worship be filled with life and joy, the pastor encouraged for more vigorous work, other Christians revived, the impenitent attracted to the house of God, and the adorable Lord receive from worshiping hearts that glory which is the highest and best service that can be rendered him on earth.

## ARTICLE X.

### DRAWING NON-ATTENDANTS TO CHURCH.

A VERY important point has been gained when any one living without God and without hope in the world has been induced to become an attendant at the sanctuary. There is but little hope for one who is in the way of every temptation, yet does not ever go to the house of God. Our duty is to endeavor to bring such persons into the sacred place where God has his way of pardoning mercy. The pastor cannot well do it himself, as from delicacy he is hindered in inviting to the hearing of his own sermon and there would be suspicion that he had interested motives. It is a most affecting thought that in a community of Bibles and Sabbaths and preaching and sacraments there are so many who are as neglectful of all as if they were in the gloom of paganism. There is not a member of the

church but has some friend or neighbor whom he better than any other person can influence to go to the house of God. We are not to wait until men of their own accord come to the sanctuary. The law of the kingdom is that we are to go out to the highways and hedges and compel men to come in. The plain duty of every child of God is to put forth all his efforts to bring neglecters to the ordinances of God's house.

Further, no duty can more easily be understood or more easily performed than this. How many Christians say that there is nothing which they can do to help the pastor! They allege that they have no influence, no talents, no opportunities of which they can make use. How can they say that, when they never go out to hunt up a friend or a neighbor, to ask him to go with them to the house of God? They see husband or son or brother or neighbor or friend or partner in business, or others, habitually neglecting the sanctuary, and never say one word to lead him there? How can they say that they can do nothing to help the pastor while this duty

is so obvious and so easy? Ah! they could help, and they know it; but they will not take the trouble. A purchaser stood in a store waiting for the packing up of goods which he had ordered; a few words were naturally passing with the merchant who waited on him. Here was an opportunity for saying a word to a stranger. "Do you attend any place of worship on the Lord's day?" was asked by the buyer. "No," was the merchant's reply. Then, commending the preaching of his pastor and the friendliness of his fellow-members, the customer gave him a cordial invitation to attend the church of which he was a member. The invitation was accepted with gratitude.

Even a child might give this help to a pastor; in a case known to the writer a child did do so. That child in the Sabbath-school invited a child-playmate to go with him to the school. The invited little one was glad, and went. He went, and was happy in the new experience of the school for the study of the Bible. He went again and again; his heart became enlisted. He drew parents and brothers and sisters after him to the church; the family

identified itself with the congregation. The little one grew to be a man, and was brought to the salvation of Christ; he loved the church and was beloved and trusted by its members; he aided in its worship and became one of its most faithful elders, and his co-workers put him at the head of its Sabbath-school. All this was from the invitation of a child made in a most simple way. Yet there are not a few who say they can do nothing!

Another instructive fact, of a different kind, will show the vast results that would follow if church-members would only exert themselves even a little in this matter. Induced by the charge so often made that our young people are straying away, a pastor examined the roll of his members in a church which would probably be a fair representative of churches generally. He took the hundred names last added to that roll as probably a fair sample of the rest. He was perfectly familiar with the antecedents of all his members in their church relations. The surprising fact came out upon careful examination that of the *hundred* persons selected

*forty-six* of them had not been brought up in the faith of that church. *Forty-six*, or nearly half, of the members of that church were gathered in from the world. Yet there was nothing peculiar in the circumstances of the church—in its history, its location, its advantages for work. The pastor fully believed that if he and his members had been as faithful as they should have been the proportion would have been, not *forty-six*, but nearer *seventy-five*. Almost half of that church had been gathered in from the world or from those who were fast straying into the coldness and the dreariness of utter neglect of religion. Such a fact speaks volumes, and should stimulate every member of the church to do far more in gathering strangers into the house of God.

This is a method of aiding the pastor which has been sadly overlooked. It is with it as is often the case with the plainest and easiest duties. They are so plain and easy that they are scarcely thought of, while grand but vague schemes are sought after. Private members cannot preach; possibly they cannot pray in

public; it may be that they cannot give much to the cause of Christ; but here is a thing which they can do just as well as pastor or elders.

Why is it that this duty is so much neglected? Not that the members are without opportunities, or that they are without influence, or that they have no disposition to do good. The only conceivable reason for it is want of consideration. Christians do not reflect what good it is in their power to do in this way; they have a vague impression that all that can be done has already been accomplished; that minister, elders and Sabbath-school teachers will do all; that those not already in the habit of attending church cannot be brought to it; or that such an insignificant thing as bringing a neighbor to the sanctuary is not worthy of much effort. Resting on these impressions, they live on from year to year without doing, or even attempting, anything to aid the pastor in his great work.

What might well be the language of the glowing Christian heart? "Here is a method of bringing men under the sound of the gos-

pel—as clear as day, so easy that a child might work it, requiring no expenditure of money, available for every believer, requiring little sacrifice and little trouble—by which I might assist my pastor by bringing into the place of worship those to whom he might deliver the message of God’s mercy, might draw friends whom I dearly love into the path which would conduct them to endless life and glory, and by which I might be instrumental in bringing much glory to the name of my loving Lord. All this lies plainly before me, and yet I am utterly neglecting it. How can I bear the thought? How can I hereafter meet those whom I would not do even that to save? How can I face my Lord, who shed his blood for me, and confess that I would not even speak a word to an irreligious neighbor to honor him?”

This is a duty which lies before each member of the church; not one can say that he has no concern in it. When, in any church, but few persons are in the habit of attending, and pews are empty and a chill of discomfort comes over one as he enters, much of the



blame may rest upon the inefficiency of the pastor, but most emphatically do we say that much of it also rests upon the people. No one who is not striving to fill the church by gathering in others has any right to complain of it. If the members were as faithful as they easily might be, almost any church would very soon be filled. Oh that we could persuade people to make the trial! A church is well known to the writer where the people have a mind to work in this way, and the effect is that on one occasion, even when the pastor was absent for months and the preaching was of a decidedly inferior character, it was almost impossible to find an empty seat.

With all earnestness would we beg each member of the church to try this method of aiding his minister. Fix your mind upon some member of your family, some neighbor or some acquaintance, and follow him up; never rest until you succeed in drawing him to the sanctuary, and then select another and another, and so render a service that will be most blessed. The influence of your example will spread, others will take the same

course, and it will be but a little while until your heart shall leap with joy at the renewed interest in your house of worship, and your pastor will have fresh unction in delivering the message which increasing numbers flock to hear.

## ARTICLE XI.

### MINOR DUTIES.

**M**EMBERS of the church can render valuable assistance to the pastor by informing him of cases which need his attention. Far as the east is from the west is it from our thought to encourage the spirit of tattling and gossip. It will not amuse the pastor nor please him nor aid him to carry to him the stories which are current in the community. Not this do we advise, but there is information about individuals in the church which would be of much value to him, and which he is not in the way of receiving, but which his church-members may impart to him.

Tell your pastor at once of individuals whom you know to be concerned about the state of their souls. Almost always there are persons in the congregation who are anxious as to what they must do to be saved; if the

pastor knew it, he might lead them to the Saviour, and so prevent their convictions from passing away and their souls from becoming lost.

Tell him who are sick. Do not leave him to find it out by their absence from church or by an indefinite report that may possibly travel round to him, but inform him directly, and request him to visit them. There is often great injustice done to pastors in this matter. They so often hear of persons who are ailing from colds or headaches, or other slight indispositions, all of whom they cannot possibly visit, and it is so utterly impossible for them to see who are absent from their places in the sanctuary, that they must not be expected to visit the sick unless they are distinctly informed and invited to go where they are needed.

Inform the pastor of any whom you may know to be disaffected. Persons will sometimes take offence at him, and cherish that feeling for months and nurture it until it results in a serious breach, while all the time he is ignorant of the fact and of its cause, and a word of explanation might result in the healing of

all. A pastor met a much-esteemed member of his church on the street and passed him by without a word of recognition. The reason was that, being accustomed to see the man in his Sabbath attire, he did not recognize him in his work-day habiliments, besmeared with smoke and oil. The man, though very highly respected by his pastor, took offence, and, the pastor knowing nothing of it, the offence continued for months and could never be rectified. A single word of explanation through a friend would have prevented this.

Tell the pastor of persons who are falling into the habit of neglecting the sanctuary ; of new families who have just come into the neighborhood ; of individuals who have experienced afflictions or upon whom troubles have fallen ; of young people who ought to come out on the side of Christ ; or of any other cases that should receive his attention.

There is another class of little things by which the people might add much to the comfort, and through that to the efficiency, of the pastor. They are so little, and apparently so insignificant, that they are generally over-

looked. They pertain to the bearing of the church's members in the house of God. More aid can be rendered the pastor in the time of public worship than is ordinarily imagined, because so much depends on the state of his heart and feelings while conducting the services of the sanctuary. The very devoutness of his people, as depicted on their countenances and shown in their movements, cannot but influence the minister in that hour so momentous to them and to him. The cordial welcoming of strangers to the house of God, directing them to seats, handing them hymn-books, and other little attentions, will spread a feeling of kindness that must be beneficial. There is not one member but can contribute to the calmness, the solemnity and the atmosphere of devotion which make the services of God's house so blessed in their influence. The gentle subduing of the whispering of a restless boy, the opening or closing of a window that is distracting attention, the aiding a distressed mother with her crying child, the awaking in an unnoticed manner a sleeper whose habits of daily toil

make him unable to overcome the unwelcome influence, and many other such trifles, will serve to aid in overcoming distractions and producing that peaceful feeling which is appropriate to the house of God, and so aid in giving impressiveness to the service.

Among other such aids to the pastor, especially in the prayer-meeting and more social worship, is that of occupying seats that will be near to him in the room, and not back by door or wall. This is a matter the importance of which it is exceedingly difficult to get people to appreciate. They come into the meeting and take seats as far as possible from the minister. Are they afraid of him? Do they want to hide? Do they not want it to be known that they are present? It goes to the pastor's heart when he sees some loved one enter, look around as if he would lend the influence of his presence by taking a seat near to the desk, then apparently hesitating, but at length settling down in the most remote corner. It would cheer the pastor and inspirit his words if those in whom he is so much interested would always take places so near him

that their earnest faces would encourage him, where it would be seen that they were in full sympathy, and where their very nearness to the pastor and to each other would give warmth and life to the whole service. It is strange that the absolute pleading of almost all pastors, the obvious advantage of the matter and the ease with which it could be done cannot move people to give heed to a request so often made and so intimately connected with the comfort and the profit of the hours of social worship.

There are still other things which would give much aid to the pastor in the services of the sanctuary. If the members would all have Bibles in their hands to follow in the reading of the word and to examine the text in its connections and better to remember it, he would be animated by witnessing such interest, and the profit of the service would be far greater both to them and to him. The simple act of standing in public prayer would better denote their reverence for the glorious Being addressed, would increase the fervor of the minister while leading in that part of the



devotions, and would keep their own attention more keenly awake, and so add to the profit of the services.

These and other such things appear little, but they are not little either in themselves, in their aggregate importance or in their influence upon the pastor's life and work. While leading the devotions of the sanctuary—especially while preaching—he is in his momentous work, and whatever aids him there must be of importance to the church, to the pastor, and to the effort to glorify the Church's divine Head in the way that he has himself appointed.

Our closing appeal is for all the aid that each can render in the pastor's work. Remember that it is for your soul's immortal welfare. Remember that it is also for the Church, the bride of Christ. Remember, above all, that it is for your beloved Lord, for whom every power of every soul for every hour of life is not too much—nay, not enough.

## ARTICLE XII.

### SPOILING A PASTOR.

IT is proper that the writer should throw out a guard against a misconception which the drift of his remarks in these articles may possibly awaken. It might seem that he was indulging in a censorious spirit concerning the people of our churches in relation to their pastors, and so manifesting the very disposition which he condemns in others. Most emphatically would he disown any such intent. Not a thought has he of laying the things he condemns to the charge of them all, or even of a large minority of them. His aim is rather to awaken attention to certain evils in some professed Christians, often the result of inadvertency, and which they would flee from in horror if they realized the harm they are doing. Neither is it in his mind to accuse the people as specially blamable in contradistinction to

the perfection of pastors. He is not blind to the deficiencies of many ministers, nor does he intend to depict them as guiltless or to claim for them any prerogatives or professional privileges which do not necessarily spring from their office. But, being deeply impressed with the thought that the comfort and usefulness and spiritual life of the people are connected with the ministrations of the pastor, he would lend his aid in having the relations of both as free as possible from all defect. To prevent such misunderstanding, this article on the direct duties to pastors is inserted.

The relative duties of people and pastor should be better understood than they generally are. What is due to him should be made clear, and what practical mistakes arise in the relation should be indicated. Certain attentions from the people are the minister's right and are essential to the success of his work. In saying this we make no assumptions of priestly reverence for him—a corruption which has greatly injured the cause of Christ. We loathe all humiliation of the people to their spiritual head.

It is clear that the pastor should receive from his people an adequate worldly support, and that he should not be humiliated by having to urge it himself from the pulpit. Then there should be rendered to him that respect which his work and character and attainments demand. There should be respectful and earnest attention to the message he delivers in the pulpit. His personal character as a scholar, a Christian, a good citizen and as bearing an unblemished name make respectful attention only his due. It should be borne in mind, also, that practically for the sake of his sacred office he has cut himself off from the ordinary employments by which other men rise to wealth and honors. Above all, it cannot be ignored that he holds his commission from the Church's divine Head. By the orderings of Providence and grace it has come to pass that, not by man primarily, but by the Author of our salvation, he has been appointed as a human agent to seek as his special work the redemption of his fellow-men. This may not be overlooked. For these reasons, and in order that the young and strangers may be in-

duced to listen to him and live for ever, it is of transcendent moment that the pastor should receive that deference which is so necessary to the successful performance of the duties of his office. This we claim for him, but at the same time with all our heart do we deprecate that sentimental, mawkish adulation which, especially if he be a young man, is in danger of leading him to feelings of self-importance and vanity which are utterly inconsistent with the spirit of his sacred office.

This danger exists chiefly in the social life of the church, of which the pastor is necessarily a prominent element. The way in which it is done cannot well be analyzed, though there are certain leading features that can be felt. It consists of innumerable nameless, but *unnecessary*, attentions, laudations and gifts, which are heaped on him as if he were of a nature superior to other men. His sayings are repeated, his pictures are sought for, his study is filled with superfluous gifts and his social visits are courted to a degree that is contemptible. He is compared with and extolled above others. All this may be well

meant; but if he be a weak man, it spoils him; if he be a man of sterling sense, it is offensive. The tendency of such constant adulation is to lead its subject to fancy himself possessed of that superiority which others attribute to him. He loses his simplicity and becomes less humble. In his preparations for the pulpit, relying on his lauded self-sufficiency, he becomes less thorough. He grows more and more egoistical.

We would not insinuate that this is the effect in every instance or in a majority of cases, or even in a respectable minority, but we speak of it as a danger, and as a result sometimes witnessed. We are not hinting that ministers are more vulnerable in these respects than other men; we believe that the contrary is the case. Because of their piety, their mental discipline, their familiarity with doctrines which are calculated to humble human pride, ministers, as a class, resist the injurious tendency of such flattery to a degree that is surprising. But they would need to be very uncommon men not to feel its influence. Unless special grace were given them,

they would be far more elated both in feeling and in act. Still more is that grace needed in view of the fact that the feeling of self-sufficiency comes on so insidiously that the victim is not aware of its advance until he is conquered.

The injurious effects upon a pastor of such undue adulation do not terminate in his feelings regarding himself, but extend also to his treatment of others. He is in danger of becoming supercilious in carriage, dictatorial to his people, and of assuming a superiority that to sober-minded people is wellnigh unbearable. He grows intolerant of the opinions of others, as if his dicta must not be questioned. Sometimes he gives reason for the world to infer that his personal appearance is with him a primary consideration, or even leads men to despise him as a dandy. It is not to be wondered at if such a spoiled bearer of the ministerial name should sometimes endeavor to gratify his foppish taste by seeking a more congenial denominational connection. Less and less like the apostolical idea do such men become, until little more remains of it

than the mere name and tenure of the office. Self appears to have taken the place of Christ, and self-consciousness to be a feeling that is never lost and a motive to which he and all connected with him must ever yield. The thought is humiliating. We blush to pen it, and nothing but the hope that a little impulse may be given toward its prevention could induce us to do so.

We would drop the subject here were it not for the desire of making one more effort to warn the people against spoiling their pastor. It is to make it all-emphatic that such worldly, such foolish, such weak, degeneracy of a pastor is a sight at which the enemies of religion must justly sneer. They will exaggerate the real evil, they will have matter for misrepresentation, and they will bring it to bear with all its weight against religion. Besides, others than enemies will be offended. This undue adulation of a pastor must needs be offensive to other true-hearted and hard-working ministers and laborers in the kingdom. The young will receive wrong impressions of the nature of the gospel and of the



character of its teachers, and they will be repelled from the ministers who should have been patterns of Him who was meek and lowly of spirit. In a word, the example of such pastors—fortunately, very few—will cause gainsayers to look down upon religion as represented by them. Men will despise the gospel; they will withhold from pastors that respect which is their due as the ministers of Christ. As was said by an earnest brother of another denomination concerning such ministers in his own Church, “*they lower the average esteem in which all ministers of the gospel are held.*”

The safe and ever-applicable rule is to follow the pastor as he follows Christ; so to follow him for his works' sake; to follow him very closely as he shows the mind of Christ, who was “meek and lowly in heart.” While he follows the dear Lord he will—he must—manifest that humility which is one of the chief adornments of a renewed soul; while cultivating the likeness of Jesus there will be no danger of giving way to pride. Then follow the pastor in humble walking with God;

listen to his message, which he has received from the lips of the Son of man ; aid him as he strives to build up the kingdom ; admire him as he endeavors to attain to the image of Him who was "altogether lovely ;" follow him as he follows Christ. Then will you be following Him who passed through the valley on to the cross, up to the crown and up to the bosom of ineffable glory, where all will be swallowed up in Him before whom "every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," and from the mounts of whose all-comprehensive glory the ransomed shall look back and see every age of time, every movement of the kingdom, every individual and every power of mankind bending toward the supreme and eternal adoration of Him who is the embodiment of glory and honor and immortality.

## ARTICLE XIII.

### GUARDING THE PASTOR'S GOOD NAME.

**I**N claiming so much as we do for the pastor, we are justified by the fact that he holds a public and official position. We cannot reiterate this with too much stress. With perfect propriety may we charge it home upon every private church-member, "Be careful of the pastor's good name, inasmuch as he is sacredly united with your soul's dearest interests, is your leader in the work of the kingdom, and is so closely associated with you as to influence your present safety, peace, usefulness and immortal destiny, as well as to aid you in the charge of training your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Care for the pastor's reputation is a subject which calls for special attention at the present time, when the falls of ministers are alleged

to be so numerous, when they are so often exaggerated, and when they are so much used to the injury of the cause of Christ. That they are calculated to do much harm to that cause is only too evident. Certainly the enemy gloats over them, triumphs in them and uses them diligently in his malevolent work of opposing religion.

But why are the failings of ministers of the gospel so exultingly heralded? Is not this very tendency one of the highest compliments that could be paid to Christianity? When a charge against a minister which would scarcely be noticed in any other profession excites so much indignation, is it not an implied tribute to his calling?

The congregation should be very tender of the reputation of their pastor, because he has peculiar temptations and dangers—dangers which many scarcely think of. Because of his habits of study and his official position he is not guarded by ministerial counselors as private Christians are. The very confidence which is reposed in ministers may become a source of danger. The motives for

their words and acts cannot be known fully to others, and so are liable to be misunderstood and misrepresented. It cannot but be observed that ministers are targets at which the shafts of the enemy are aimed; and the more conspicuous they are, the greater is their danger. One of the easiest and most effectual ways of wounding the cause of religion is to wound its ministers.

We claim no special immunity for the minister, but we do claim that such considerations as these be taken into account by those who very justly expect that his character shall be above reproach. Not only should it be above reproach, but above the very suspicion of it. No name should be more unblemished than that of the ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. A taint or a stain thereon would be his ruin. A mere fault in him would often be a crime. Scarcely any atonement would be sufficient to be made by him who has unjustly fixed a stigma upon the reputation of one who represents the cause of Christ and of souls. His character is a sacred thing connected with which is not only his

own honor, but also that of the church and the church's God. The good name of the pastor is his strength, his ornament and, next to his divine Master, his reliance. With it are associated the highest interests of every individual and every family of the whole congregation. Ruin it or wound it, or even brand it, and all is gone.

It must be manifest that it is the duty of the people of his charge to defend the character of their pastor. He cannot do this for himself, and must look to them to do it for him. The worst assaults on him are often made when he knows it not. Many a lurking foe too cowardly to be seen in the light of day, as a thief in the night, robs the minister of his good name or wounds his character so deeply that social death must be the result.

How can the pastor defend himself from such enemies? He cannot do it, but his people can. It is sometimes the case that evil reports which have no other foundation than some misconception of his acts or words arise against him and spread and damage his usefulness; these reports might be counteracted by

a word from some true friend. As a public man he must be the subject of animadversion in the community ; his words and acts, involving public interests as they do, may be expected to meet the strictures of the public. His people must stand ready to meet these promptly. In this respect the pastor is in a different position from private Christians, and must rely upon his people to defend him and preserve his usefulness.

It is a sad fact that the higher the pastor rises in influence and in usefulness, the more bitter will be the opposition to him. Many a pastor, when an obscure worker in a humble church, had scarcely one enemy, but when he arose to a higher post of usefulness encountered opponents anxious to pull him down. His people should understand this, and should not be surprised when he is thus assailed. It is no new thing for ambassadors of Christ to be falsely accused. It was so even with their Lord himself, who was reviled as "a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

You too, private member of the church, are

in danger when the good name of your pastor is assailed. Through him you too are likely to be wounded. Your own peace and safety demand that you should stand by him. Consider it, then, as a sacred duty to guard the reputation of your pastor. It is not a matter of inclination or of taste or of feeling, but of duty, to which you are summoned by the honor of religion, the glory of God, the interests of your church, your friendship to your pastor, and even your own safety. Quick as lightning fly to the defence of his honor when it is assailed; allow no insinuations against him to be indulged; admit no charges which are not founded upon unmistakable evidence; give no ear to light accusations; consider yourself attacked when thrusts are made at him; hold the accuser of God's anointed servant to a stern and instant responsibility.



## ARTICLE XIV.

### PASTOR'S SALARY.

THE subject of supporting the minister is one which, for obvious reasons, is so delicate and difficult for the pastor to handle in the pulpit that it receives but little attention as a religious duty. At the same time, it is so closely connected with the interests of the gospel that it ought to be made prominent in the ministrations of the sanctuary. We feel, therefore, that in these articles it should receive a place as conspicuous as possible.

For the generous support of the pastor there are five reasons which are both obvious and weighty. Each of them is sufficient in itself, but together they make the duty perfectly clear.

1. The first is *the great stress which the Scriptures lay upon the duty of making liberal contributions for sustaining God's ministering servants.*

So much are the ordinances of worship dependent on this duty that our all-wise Lord has not left it to the temporary feelings or impulses of his people nor exposed it to the blight of men's never-ceasing selfishness. On the contrary, he has made his mind concerning it to be clearly seen by express and positive commands in each age and dispensation of religion. At the earliest day we get a glimpse of its law in Abraham's offering a tithe to Melchizedek, the minister of God. At the commencement of the national existence of the Jewish people, through Moses the law on this matter was made remarkably impressive. The form was different, but the principle was the same as that of to-day. One passage must serve as a specimen of the principle: "*Behold, I have given the children of Levi*" (the ministers of the day) "*all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*" Seven hundred and forty-five years after that we get a glimpse of the law again. The good Hezekiah then "commanded the people that dwelt in

Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord." Passing on to the days of our Lord, we hear from his own blessed lips on this subject: "*The workman is worthy of his meat.*" Still farther on, by an inspired pen, the gospel principle is given in full and for all future time: "*It is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen, or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that plougheth should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*"

Is not this case, then, exceedingly strong? The same principle prevailed in the time of Melchizedek, of Moses, of Hezekiah, of Christ and of Paul, and is enjoined on us—the principle that they who serve in religion should live from it. Need we anything more to impel us to the observance of the same law?

2. The second reason for the ample support of the pastor by his congregation is that *it is due to him out of ordinary justice.*

The sermon which he preaches to-day is not the work of an hour, or even of a week, but it is the attainment of the studies of all his past life. Eight or ten years are ordinarily spent before he can begin to preach. While other young men were preparing to make money he was preparing to minister to the people. Brothers and schoolmates, perhaps inferior to him in mind and energy, he now sees far above him in worldly circumstances because he devoted his early life to this sacred cause. Has he not, then, the very highest claim for support by those for whom he sacrificed all? Does not justice demand it? Do you say that he should be above such motives and serve for the Lord's sake? Can you tell me of one single obligation resting upon him to devote his all to the cause of Christ that does not rest upon you with equal weight? Why must he sacrifice all, and you nothing?

3. A third reason for claiming support for the pastor is that ordinarily *this is his only means of living.*

How is the man to live as his education and

standing in the community require if his people do not furnish the means? There may be one who has means of his own, or from his wife's inheritance the means may be obtained; but should he be under the necessity of relying upon these, especially on the latter? Is it not his right to rely upon his people for that support? The Bible answer is very plain. It looks as if intended to meet any possible objection: "*Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel shall live of the gospel.*" The pastor has voluntarily cut himself off from the ordinary ways of making money, or even of making a living; if, therefore, he does not receive a support from the people of his charge, his wife and his children must suffer.

4. The fourth reason is that *the minister's usefulness, comfort and self-respect require that a suitable worldly maintenance be made sure to him.*

"That he be made free from worldly cares"

is the object stated in his call to the church. Inevitably will it humiliate him in his own esteem and distract his mind from his work if he must plan and worry and suffer distress as to the means of living for his family. Take away his sense of independence and consequent self-respect, and you have made him weak. He cannot perform the duties of his office with success while he is worried about the support of his family. He cannot preach the truth as plainly as he should, nor can he administer discipline with proper fidelity, while distracted with fear of those who may or may not contribute the means of his support. Surely, the gratitude his people owe him, perhaps for their own souls' salvation or for the spiritual benefits conferred on their children, demand that his worldly wants be provided for.

5. *The spiritual interests of the people will be promoted, not only in his general ministrations among them, but chiefly in the respect for him which will thereby be increased.*

It is well known that what we do not pay for or make sacrifices for we do not highly

esteem. No people will receive the desired profiting from their pastor while they see that he is a victim of poverty. That he must struggle with want will humiliate him in the esteem of his people as well as in his own. The pastor who is cheap will render services which will be regarded as cheap. On the other hand, the respect for the pastor which a liberal support will produce will undoubtedly increase the profit from his ministrations. The very esteem in which he may know himself to be held will make him more useful. It is human nature to need and desire encouragement. The pastor's sermons and all other official duties will be the better as he knows himself to be esteemed and loved by his people through the liberality of their provision for his temporal wants.

Concerning this support there are other things that demand attention.

First, *the salary of the pastor ought to be adequate* to the wants of himself and his family. It should not be so stinted and meagre as to seem to be extorted from unwilling hands. What is an adequate amount must be deter-

mined by the circumstances of each case; certainly, it should never be less than what might be considered the average income of the families composing the church. In determining its amount it should be considered that his family has expenses beyond those of private members. There are, for instance, hospitalities incident to the pastorate of a church, and there are books which, as his tools, the pastor must have, and other such things, the cost of which is not small. Then, too, it is expected of the pastor—and his own feelings prompt to it—that he shall take a prominent part in contributing to objects of benevolence. It will thus be seen that the provision made for his salary must be liberal or his ministry will suffer.

Our second remark is that *the pastor should never be forced to importune the people for the salary*. This is often done by requiring him to publish notices from the pulpit which are repugnant to his feelings. It humiliates him in his own view; it lowers him in the estimation of the young and of others who can see nothing in it but begging for himself. It



will not do to say that "business is business:" the church is not a business concern, and will not admit of business explanations. Like many other things, this error has come in from inadvertence, but it is not an insignificant one. The sum of all is, The pastor should never be compelled to beg for his own salary even indirectly; private members of the church can do that with all appropriateness and with more success.

One more remark about the pastor's salary must be made—namely, that *it should always be paid promptly*, even to the day. Churches are sometimes thoughtless about this matter, and so cause him distress. It will not do for the pastor not to meet his financial obligations, and that on the very day when they are due. Nothing will ruin his influence more surely than delinquency here. He, of all men, must not be remiss in paying his debts. It is fatal to his standing if when the day of payment, which he had fixed in anticipation of the receiving of his salary, arrives, he is forced to come short of his obligation. In multitudes of cases does this come to pass. That

pastor is afterward distrusted. No pastor ought to be compelled to go again and again for the salary which is due him. He must have a clean record, but how can he if the church disappoints him and forces him to break his engagements?

Said the godly and eloquent Dr. Guthrie: "My ministry is wellnigh run, the voyage of my life drawing to its close. Standing, as I do, not far from the verge of another world, I feel that I must speak out fully and frankly in this matter. Doing so, I take leave to say that the salaries of the great body of our ministers are inadequate. I say more. I take leave to say that the salaries of ministers are quite inadequate to their position and their unavoidable outlays. I take leave very distinctly and very advisedly to say that. And what is, and shall be, the result of that? The greatest calamity that can befall a church—something worse than persecution, far worse than oppression."

## ARTICLE XV.

### PRAYER FOR THE PASTOR.

THE most important of all the duties which the people of any church owe to their pastor has been reserved for the closing lines of these articles. That prime duty, without any question, and without a limit to the earnestness with which we press it, is the duty of *praying for him*. This duty we have reserved for the close in order that, occupying this conspicuous place, it may be made the more emphatic. All other duties toward him need to be accompanied with fervent prayer, so that they may be performed with the greater zeal and crowned with the more success. If his people would aid him in his momentous work, if they would inform him of cases where his services were needed with inquiring souls, if they would guard his time from needless waste, if they would encourage him with

words and acts of cheer, if they would stand by him when his name and his influence are assailed, or whatever else they would do to uphold his hands and give prosperity to his work,—they would do all with far more efficacy if they would hallow all by importunate prayer on his behalf. They need, and will doubtless have, his prayers, but he also needs theirs. If they will pour out their souls in prayer on his behalf, they will have a better appreciation of the solemnity of his work; they will think more of his need of aid from all his people, and they will love him better. Their prayers for him will bind people and pastor more closely together, will cause them to realize that they are one in effort, and will lead them to a more unreserved confidence and warmer love. Hence we would make it as our last appeal that the people pray constantly and most fervently for their pastor. We would make this appeal for his sake, for their own sakes, for the Church's sake, for the world's sake, and, above all, for the sake of the Master, whose honor is intimately concerned.

One of the advantages of this duty of prayer for the pastor is that each private member of the church can engage in it, and that with as much assurance of success as the strongest, the oldest and the most learned. To the most humble Christian we may say, "It may be that you cannot exhort in public, or give much to the cause of God, or exert much influence, but you can pray for your pastor and through him bring souls to Christ, edify the people of God and awaken the whole Church to a more devoted piety. You can pray to that God who sees in secret, hears the cry of the most humble and makes his own strength perfect in the weakness of those who call upon him. By laying hold of the arm of Omnipotence you can effect that which neither learning nor influence nor zeal of mere men can accomplish. Your very weakness becomes your strength—yea, the strength of the church—when it leads you to cast your whole reliance upon Him with whom is the residue of the Spirit. You may have little influence in the church, may be so young or old and feeble, may be overlooked by your

fellow-members ; you may never have learned in a human school, or you may be an invalid unable to drag your way to the sanctuary. All this may seem to discourage you ; still, by pleading God's promises, importunately seeking for the Spirit's gracious influence and daily bowing at the throne of grace you may secure for your pastor an unction from on high, may preserve him from errors, may direct him in the duties of his solemn work, may aid him in his study and may give his words in the pulpit a power which nothing can resist. All this is possible for you by prayer, no matter how weak or obscure you may think yourself.

Then, if all the members, or most of them—or even a goodly number of them—would unite in pleading for the pastor with Him who has said, “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven,” what blessed, most blessed, results would soon follow to him, and through him to the church and to every family and individual in it! Would that

our appeal on this subject could reach and awaken the attention and purposes of our Christian people! What scenes most blessed would soon follow! Will not those who love the Lord who bought them pray for their pastor every day? Will they not pray for him that he may be directed and animated as he prepares the sermon that will be "the savor of death unto death, or of life unto life," that he may be inflamed with love divine as he enters the sacred desk and that his words may be followed by the power of the Holy Ghost as he leaves it, that he may be made wise as he directs souls about to launch into eternity and that a guidance better than that of men may direct him in the momentous duties which press upon him every day and every hour of his ministry, on which so much depends?

How much the pastor needs the aid of the Holy Spirit, which you may secure for him in answer to your prayers! Well has it been said that "the success of his ministry depends upon his people's prayers." The most eloquent are but earthen vessels. Neither he

that plants nor he that waters is anything. If any fruit appear, it is God who giveth the increase. If souls are to be converted, if the church is to be revived, it is when the "Spirit is poured out from on high." Sinners are awakened, not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. Then that blessed agent does not come unsought. His saving influences are shed abroad only in answer to prayer—the fervent, effective prayer of faith. Pray, then, for the pastor. Pray for him through the week, while he is preparing for the Sabbath, that God would fill his mouth with arguments, and that the very sermon he is studying may be owned of God. Then pray for him while he is in the pulpit. It was when the hands of Moses were stayed up by Aaron and Hur that Israel prevailed; so will it be that the sublime work of the pastor will be seen to prosper when his people are pouring out their hearts to God in prayer on his behalf.

The whole history of the Church of God is full of instances showing the power that was gained for the preacher by the prayers of the



people. Let one or two be considered as we close these articles. The most powerful sermon ever preached on this continent, doubtless, was that of President Edwards delivered at Enfield on July 8, 1741. His text was, "Their foot shall slide in due time." When he went into the church, there was sad inattention; "the people hardly conducted themselves with common decency." As he went on, however, the audience became so overwhelmed with distress and weeping that he had to ask them for silence in order that he might be heard. A minister in the pulpit became so excited that he caught the preacher by the skirt and cried, "Mr. Edwards, Mr. Edwards, is not God a God of mercy?" Some of the hearers were seen unconsciously bracing themselves against the pews, as if to keep from sliding into the bottomless pit. This was followed by one of the most powerful revivals that ever blessed our land. What was the secret? Not the great eloquence of the speaker, for he read the sermon in a tame, unexcited manner. No; but the secret was that the evening before a number of his

deeply pious people met and for a long, long time wrestled in prayer that would take no denial for the blessing of God upon the sermon that was to be delivered the next day—for the Holy Spirit to accompany the words of the preacher and carry them home in great power to the heart of every hearer. That was the secret of success: it was heartfelt and united supplication.

Another example is still more striking. Its history is found in an old work by the godly minister Robert Fleming of Rotterdam. The preacher was a Mr. Livingstone of Scotland. He was unprepared for the service, and consented to preach with much reluctance and only after much persuasion. But the whole number of a large congregation spent all the night before in prayer. The devout gathering of men and women spent hour after hour beseeching God that he would own his word that was to be preached in weakness. So the night passed, and this was the account of the result as given by Mr. Fleming. "I must also mention," he says, "that solemn communion at the kirk of Shotts, June 29, 1630,

at which there was so convincing an appearance of God and downpouring of the Spirit. By the sermon on Monday it was known (which I can speak on sure ground) that nearly five hundred had at that time a discernible change wrought in them, of which most proved lively Christians afterward. It was the sowing of seed through Clydesdale, and many of the most eminent Christians in that country date their conversion from that day."

Still another instance we may give. It was in Wales, and the preacher was John Elias. He was in attendance at a great association of the Calvinistic Methodists. The house of his sojourn was known, and multitudes gathered there that they might be present as he led at the evening devotions of the family. They and he prayed until it was late at night. Next morning he preached in the presence of many thousands. Heaven seemed to come down to earth; the atmosphere seemed filled with celestial music. At least twenty-five hundred souls were converted under that sermon, and they and their pious descendants

gave lasting evidence that it was the work of God's own Spirit. When all secrets shall be revealed, how many other cases shall appear when sermons that were mighty in results shall be known as the answers of the fervent prayers of God's people!

In view of all this, and gathering into one all the motives of all these articles on the relative duties of people and pastor, we would urge every Christian to pray for his pastor. Do pray for him! His mission is to unfold the mysteries of God's word and to save souls from death. Waving the smoking censer, he stands between the living and the dead, between hell and heaven, seeking to intercept the downward progress of sinners to the one and to allure them up to the other. Hell or heaven must be the eternal abode of his hearers. He is preaching for another world. Every sermon he delivers tells upon the changeless destiny of those who listen to him. Ears that now hear him will for ever be filled with the anthems of the redeemed or vibrate with the wail of the despairing and the lost. Eyes that gaze up into his while from the

pulpit he proclaims to them the salvation of Christ will soon see the Judge of all the earth. Who is sufficient for a work so great, for duties so holy, for responsibilities so overwhelming, save he who is filled with the Holy Ghost? What but the constant and fervent prayers of his people can qualify the pastor for it? Pray, then, for him earnestly. Pray for him, all ye who love the kingdom! Pray incessantly! What cannot be accomplished by prayer? Your prayers will encourage his heart and strengthen his hands. They will bear him on and bear him up. Then be it remembered that this praying of people for pastor and of pastor for people will tend to bind them together in the most holy, most exalting and most enduring of bonds.

**THE END.**