

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger

Letters to a Young Preacher.

LETTER XVIII. SELECTION OF A FIELD OF LABOUR.

My Dear Brother,—

When a man who is entering on the work of the Christian ministry has decided to what department of it his talents are best adapted, it naturally follows that he must choose the field of his intended operations.

He who may be reasonably thought, by himself and his brethren, to possess in a good degree the mental, spiritual, and physical qualifications requisite for a foreign Mission, ought to consider seriously whether it is not his duty to devote himself to this work. No considerations of toils, hardships, privations, and dangers, shall be allowed to deter him.

If, however, a young preacher have not a drawing of mind toward the foreign field, an aptness for acquiring language, and a robust constitution—the want of this deterred the writer from offering himself for this service—our commissions present before him an extensive field for useful labor. He that regards this as his appropriate sphere, should, as far as may be, select those regions in which his efforts appear to be most needed and most likely to be beneficial.

The expediency of limiting them to certain places, or extending them to others, must, of course depend upon circumstances. In all these matters his constant aim should be, to honor God, extend the Redeemer's empire, and benefit mankind.

One that deems it his duty ultimately to take a pastoral charge, will be naturally expected to spend some time at first as an itinerant. The members of our churches usually, and very properly, desire to become acquainted with a preacher before they call him to take the oversight of them, and to labor steadily with them.

In many cases it is desirable that a young preacher should be the means of raising up a new interest, and should become the pastor of a church collected by his own labors. So Paul was desirous to preach the gospel where Christ had not been previously named, lest, says he, "I should build upon another man's foundation." (Rom. xv. 20. 2 Cor. x. 13-16.) There are instances, however, in which churches that become destitute, either through the decease or the removal of their pastors, must be supplied by men who have recently entered on the ministry. He who regards it as his duty to take this responsibility upon himself, should move forward with much caution. An imprudent step here will probably be attended with highly injurious results.

Moreover, as it is universally considered extremely base in a female to attempt to inveigle the husband of another woman, so it has long appeared to me unjustifiable in one church to call another's pastor. The pastoral relation is not indissoluble; but it is evidently one of importance, which should neither be hastily formed, nor rashly dissolved. When either of these takes place, it is highly desirable that, if possible, it should be effected with unanimity among the members of the church. Hence the necessity of the exercise of prudential endeavors to prevent everything liable to divide their minds, or draw their affections toward different ministers, in a way adapted to excite disunion.

In the selection of a field of labor a young preacher should be careful, as intimated in my last Letter, not to aspire to a situation above his abilities. Let him be careful not to preach his

best sermon first, or when on trial. He should begin as he may reasonably hope to continue.—Much caution should be exercised to guard against the indulgence of sinister motives. The prospect of an easy situation, refined and pleasant society, or a good salary, must not be suffered to influence his decision. He whom "the love of Christ constrains" to preach the gospel, may surely submit with cheerfulness to imitate his Divine Master by laboring diligently among the poor, in scattered settlements, and receiving ordinary fare. It is, indeed, needful that a minister should have such provision made for his support as may enable him to give himself wholly to his appropriate work: but he ought in all respects to refrain from "seeking great things for" himself. (Mat. x. 10. 1 Cor. ix. 14. 1 Tim. iv. 15. Jer. xlv. 5. 1 Pet. v. 2.) In settling with a church his aim should be, to locate himself where he may be most useful in advancing the cause of God, and doing good to the souls of men.

May it be your happiness, my beloved young Brother, to select a field in which you will labor with the divine approval and abundant success.

Yours in gospel bonds,
CHARLES TUPPER.

Tremont, Aylesford, Sept. 27th, 1861.

For the Christian Messenger.

To Inquirers after Salvation, Truth, and Duty.

[The writer has lately visited a few persons answering to the above description. Returning home, he has addressed them as below. He has transcribed his letter, largely modified, however, for the Messenger, thinking that its counsels may not be without their use elsewhere, especially to any placed in circumstances like those of the persons for whose benefit his epistle was originally prepared.]

DEAR BRETHREN.

Some of you profess to have been led somewhat recently to serious inquiry as to the great things of eternity. You are conscious of a change in your spiritual condition. You are concerned to know, whether this be the change which the scriptures describe as the new birth. Let me try to help you in this matter.

The question here relates, not so much to processes as to results. It is not, *How* have you been brought into the new world of grace? nor, *how* is any one brought there? But, *Are* you there?—are you "born again?" Here, then, it may be well to ask yourselves,—Do we love those who love Christ? Do we, for the salvation of our souls, cast our whole weight and hope upon Christ, and him alone? Do we renounce the world, with all its snares and lusts? Do we trace within ourselves the signs of a spiritual contest, to which hitherto we have been strangers? Is it the prevailing desire of our hearts to become like our Lord? And does it make us sad and ashamed to see how short we fall of that desire? Have we learnt, moreover, and do we daily learn, that apart from the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit, we are strangers to the Divine life, while growth in that life is altogether hopeless? Turn here to the following passages, embodying the thoughts suggested in the foregoing questions:—1 John iii. 14, 21-24. ii. 15-17. v. 1-5. Rom. vii. 18-25. Phil. iii. 12-14. John iii. 8-7. xv. 5. Phil. i. 6. Do not misunderstand me, however, in regard to these references. The question here is not, Do you fully enter into the experience which they indicate—the experience, for instance, of such a one as the apostle Paul? But, Can you discern within, the germs, the principles, the beginnings of such an experience? Can you, at least, honestly say with Peter, "Lord! thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee!" Then, no doubt, you are "passed from death unto life." This grand point is settled. It may come up again. It ought to do so. The most established Christian will still acknowledge the force of that precept. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith." But for the present the matter is at rest. You may well hope, though humbly wishal, that you are indeed "born again."

But now you are asking, what next? Since we have attained thus far, how shall we pursue our course? "Lord! what wouldst thou now say us to do?" I will endeavour to supply some answer to these inquiries.

1. Do not undervalue the means of grace. In grace, as in providence, God has bound up means and ends together. Compare here Gen. viii. 22 with Eccles. xi. 6. Turn also to Acts xxvii. and compare v. 24 with v. 31. Notice in these passages the connection between ends and means in God's providential dispensations, both ordinary and extraordinary. So is it with us and the Divine promise of revelation to "every one

that believeth." It is God's own word, and cannot fail. Yet, as in the cases cited above, it will not be effected without the putting forth of human agency. Hence the exhortation of Peter to the new converts on the day of Pentecost,—*"Save yourselves from this untoward generation."* Thus, in grace no less than in providence, we neglect means at our peril. No promise then can save us. Let me rehearse to you here another passage:—*"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* Accept the precept, brethren, relying upon the assurance, and life eternal is yours.

2. Make the best use you can of your means. (1.) There is the reading of Scripture with secret prayer. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom." One great Gospel text received into the heart, and wrought out into a spiritual life, is enough for salvation. And yet this is not enough for all the purposes of salvation. "Grow in grace," says Peter, "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." If we would not be always "children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," we must lay in a goodly freight of Scripture truth, and learn to set and trim our sails to the breezes that shall waft us to our heavenly port. And if we would be useful to others, we must not be ignorant of the contents of Scripture. How can we "minister grace" to others without some acquaintance with the Word of grace? The steady and useful Christian must be a Bible-reading Christian. He must also resort conscientiously and habitually to the "throne of grace." It is thus that we get at the treasures of grace stored up for us by our heavenly Father. The direction is, "Ask—seek—knock." And for the encouragements here, let me refer you to the great charter of prayer conveyed in Luke xi. 5-13. If we want to bring leanness into our souls and doubt upon our profession, and unfruitfulness upon our lives, we have but to neglect the closet. Defections and backslidings generally begin there; while he that keeps near to God in secret, will find a God that keeps near to him.

(2.) There is family religion, and especially the family altar. Where family prayer has not been instituted among you, let me urge you to set it up without delay. Turn here to the following passages:—Jer. xxxi. 1. Ps. lxxxvii. 2. Gen. xviii. 19. 2 Sam. vi. 11. 1 Pet. iii. 7.—Prov. xxii. 6. Eph. vi. 4. Mark x. 13, 14. In these passages we are taught, more or less directly, to know God as the God of the families of his people—to wait upon him and to work for him in that capacity, while we are led to hope for a blessing in adopting such a course. And is not the blessing bestowed? Whence mainly comes the succession in our churches, but from the families connected with those churches?—There are many who can tell of households of saints—whole families incorporated with the family of God. And where we see contrary results, may it not be suspected, and has it not often appeared, that their family prayer has been neglected, and a pious family government been too much unknown? What do we gather from Mal. iv. 6?—"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Why this,—that there is a close connection between family religion and public revivals of religion. And I have long thought that the glories of the millennial period will be both ushered in and maintained by means of family religion. Think of these things, dear friends, and erect your family altars and keep them in constant use and repair.

(3.) There is the public preaching of the Word. You may not have access to that kind of ministry in which you would take most delight, and yet may have preaching not wholly unprofitable within your reach. Attend upon it. Make the most of it. Overlook what seem to you to be its errors. Ask God's blessing upon it, you will find your account in so doing. That must indeed be a poor ministry from which no good can be derived; and we should anxiously avoid whatever might but appear to pour contempt upon the public announcements of "the common salvation." Here too is a field for the cultivation of your Christian charity, "See that ye abound in this grace also."

3. It may be well for you to originate and sustain some new means of grace. In case you have in your neighbourhood at present no social meetings for religious purposes, there lies before you here a field all your own. Or if the case be otherwise, still it may be desirable for you to establish a social service for your own special edification. Such services have their peculiar recommendations. Signal promises are made to them; as in Mal. iii. 16. Mat. xviii. 20. As Baptists, or in sympathy with them, you have

your own religious views. In such meetings you would be able to bring them out, and avail yourselves of their practical power. And if any should come among you who dissent from our peculiarities as Baptists, you need not conceal them. It would scarcely be expected. Who can tell what good might flow from your meetings? Your own gifts would there be called out and exercised, and strengthened. You would help one another in the good ways of the Lord. You might examine together into the ground of our distinctive views, and learn their strength. Perhaps you might thus lay the foundation, in due season, for the forming of a Baptist church in your vicinity. But whether this result should arise, or not, you might thus prove to be in the path of duty, and might fitly look for a blessing. How often have great things sprung from small beginnings, and some such may be in store for you in connection with such a course of procedure as is here suggested.

And now a word to those among you who have not yet been baptized. You and I do not regard the ordinance of baptism, as in any way essential to our salvation. God be thanked, we "have not so learned Christ." And yet how can any of Christ's appointments be unimportant? No! there is a great duty before you, and a great privilege. Study the duty, and make the privilege your own. Trace out this matter thoroughly in the New Testament, where alone it is to be traced. Keep alive the sense and power of religion in your hearts, and then, at some fitting opportunity, you will gladly obey the exhortation, "Arise, and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord!"—And oh! that you, and I, and all of us, may be baptized into the spirit of Christ! Then, baptized in water, or un-baptized—favoured with the signs of heavenly things, or otherwise, we shall have the things signified, and one day be baptized into the heavenly glory. Then—then "Shall we bathe our weary souls
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across our peaceful breast."

One thing more—be on your guard, all of you, against the seductions of an outward, nominal, unfelt and unsanctifying style of Christianity. Here our Baptist, that is our New Testament, views come to your aid; just because, from first to last, they recognize the importance and the power of a personal, vital, practical Christianity. Make it the business of your lives to attain to this—to surpass others herein—to surpass yourselves. Here is solid comfort; and here only. Here too is our only hope as Baptists. We are not a popular sect. Rather, as were the Christians of the days of Paul, we are a "sect everywhere spoken against." Let us accept the reproach as an honour, and strive to deserve it. No matter if men do "speak against" us, if God do but smile. "Let him frown, and what to us were all the aids of wealth, of patronage, of public countenance? But let him smile, and we can well dispense with them all. Oh! that this were but understood among us as it ought to be and must be ere we arrive at that future of usefulness and true spiritual prosperity, which lies before us. Let me affectionately press upon you this consideration. It is for your life as Christians—your all, under God, as useful Christians. Yea, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, who is in heaven."

I am, your servant and
Brother in the gospel,
J. DAVIS.

Charlottetown, Sept., 1861.

For the Christian Messenger.

Ordination.

Br. Charles H. Corey, a native of the Province of New Brunswick, and a recent graduate of the Theological Seminary, Newton Ms., after preaching for a while in Seabrook, N. H., received a unanimous call to the Pastorate of the Baptist Church.

After mature deliberation, he decided to accept the call.

In response to Letters Missive, an ecclesiastical Council convened at the Meeting-house, on Thursday Sept. 17th, 2 o'clock P. M., when Br. Corey gave a relation of his christian experience, call to the ministry, views of doctrine and Church Policy.

The Council, being unanimous in an expression of entire satisfaction with the relation, voted to proceed to Ordination on the following day, at 11 o'clock, A. M., and assigned the several parts.

In accordance with this arrangement, the usual services of Ordination occurred on the 18th. The day was fine, the audience respectable and the services of an interesting character. May this union prove a mutual blessing!