

Sunday Reading.

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE N. S. CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION HELD AT NORTH KINGSTON, ON THE 28TH OF JUNE TO JULY 1ST, 1884, ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCHES.

The Duties of our Churches to the Pastorate.

DEAR BRETHREN,—

We commend to your attention a brief consideration of the Duties of Church Members to their Pastors.

In the polity of the Baptist Churches, ecclesiasticism, happily, has no place. In all matters of discipline and disposition of church property the final power rests with the individual members of the individual churches. Our ministers move among us, in many respects, walking on the same plane, and performing the same functions as the ordinary lay member. They aspire to no priestly sanctity, nor priestly prerogative, but are in their every-day life subject to the same searching tests of moral uprightness as their humblest brother. They do not, as members of Council, Conference, or Synod, in any way repress the spiritual aspirations, or fetter the religious life of the laity.

From this relation of minister and people we have two good results. The lay members of our churches assuming the position and the functions that are rightfully theirs, develop into working Christians. Their voices are to be heard in our church and prayer meetings, in our Associations and Conventions, and the same degree of deference is paid to their opinions as to those in the sacred office of the Christian ministry; on our Education and Mission Boards minister and layman work side by side, and no distinction is thought of, save that of moral and mental worth. The ministry is also largely the gainer from this form of church government. Having no adventitious aids, clothed with no official power, and inheriting no supposed transmitted virtue through laying on of hands, he depends upon force of character and intellectual vigor to give him that prestige that is properly his. Our ministers thus come to the front by virtue of their moral worth and mental strength. They are, as a body, a set of men of rare excellence and devotion, ranking deservedly high in purity of life, earnestness of purpose, and general fitness for their work. And it is our duty as the lay members of these churches, to make the lives of these devoted men eminently fruitful by giving them the co-operation that they rightfully expect.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

Whenever a man with the necessary moral and mental requirements, led by a divine impulse, gives himself to the ministry of the Word, and the brethren set him apart to this work by ordination, there is an implied agreement that the church so causing him to be set apart shall charge themselves with his proper maintenance. We owe it to our ministers, as loyal subjects of Jesus Christ, that we place them in such a position that they can give their best thought and best work to advancing the Master's kingdom. This may seem to some an old and trite subject, but it has lost none of its importance by age. To our faithful pastors it is both painfully old and painfully new. The receding years in part blot out the corroding anxieties and financial strains through which many have passed, but there remains the present needs, the forebodings for the future, and the remembrance of the soul's hungering for the ripe fruits of Christian Scholarship, the best thoughts of our best writers by them unattainable. There is a sorrowful recollection of weary days and nights, of bodily and mental prostration when the whole man looked for rest and found none, and a still more sorrowful consciousness of loss of power resulting from overwork, and the lack of the proper intellectual helps.

"MAN CANNOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE."

Brethren, we should give our pastors the means of obtaining the best periodicals and the best books of the day, with all the aids to interpreting the Bible, and combating modern skepticism, that the ripest Christian scholarship affords.

The truly helpful preacher must have a manward as well as a Godward side. While he looks to the Spirit for inspiration and to the Divine Word for those unchangeable truths which should ever form the burden of his message, he needs to be in thorough sympathy with his people, thinking their thoughts, facing their problems, and feeling for their struggles a genuine human sympathy. To enable him to reach out thus widely to all conditions of life, he should be a close observer of the complex influences working on men's minds, and be able to prescribe wisely for the new mental and moral diseases engendered by unhealthy social conditions. The widest knowledge of human life and human thought is none too great for the man who would effectively aid the human soul in its efforts to escape the thrall of sin.

What we help to put into the study of the conscientious pastor will be repaid to us and to our children a hundred fold. We ask of our ministers that they shall be workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; we demand also that they shall bring forth from their treasury things new and old; and yet we withhold the intellectual nutriment necessary to keep them in sympathy with the leading thought of the age, and make them truly centres of religious and mental activity, genuine shepherds guarding their flocks from attacks without and dissensions within, and stimulating all to a healthy and intelligent development of their spiritual natures. Continuous pulpit power demands growth in intellect as well as growth in grace, and what our pastors need in this direction we must as God's stewards supply.

Further our pastors need rest. Every church that expects from its minister a uniformly high grade of pulpit effort, a constant attendance upon all the religious services, a systematic and thorough round of pastoral visitation, besides giving a large share of his strength to moral and social reforms outside of the church proper, must also expect to give him the opportunity and means for an annual rest. It is a recognized law in our social economy that persons engaged in exhaustive brain-work need periodical relaxation. What is conceded to the teacher should not be withheld from the preacher. Would we see our ministers working up to the full measure of their strength, would we see them carrying their burdens lightly and lengthening out their lives to a fruitful old age, we must make a yearly vacation a part of every minister's prerogative.

A bare living support then, is very far from being the full measure of our duty to the pastorate. Considering the demands made upon the minister's purse by the exigencies of his social status, by hospitality often thoughtlessly given but never withheld, by the claims of our various denominational enterprises, by the cost of giving his children a liberal education—often their only capital—by the imperative claims of his library, and by the necessity of making some provision for old age, or disability, it can unhesitatingly be affirmed that the average income of the pastorate in this Association, and in this province is altogether inadequate.

Our Churches are fully able to do more in this direction than they have been doing. It is a fundamental mistake to regard the support of the ministry as a charity. It is the discharge of a just debt, and when we have contributed our utmost, but a partial discharge, when we reflect upon the nature and extent of the blessings coming to us and our families through the sacred institution of the gospel ministry.

Let us then give this subject the attention its importance demands, and ask ourselves in God's sight if we are in these things doing what we can to strengthen the Lord's ambassadors.

MORAL SUPPORT.

When we have been just or even generous to our pastors in the matter of salary, our duty to them is only in part discharged. We are called upon as good soldiers to fight shoulder to shoulder in the ranks under the direction of our chosen leaders. As well might a nation expect to win victories in war by sending out a few well equipped captains to meet the enemy's battalions, as the Churches of Christ expect to win the

world to the Saviour while the rank and file who should be in the thickest of the fray are sitting apart as spectators, commenting on the merits and demerits of the respective champions. The labors of the pastor may be immeasurably lightened, and his capacity for effective work wonderfully increased by the systematic and hearty co-operation of the church. We should supplement the pulpit by consistent living everywhere, by acknowledging God daily in our families, by an active support of the Sabbath School and prayer and conference meetings, by speaking words of warning to the impenitent, and words of cheer to the afflicted, by a wise commendation of what our pastor does well, and a judicious silence when our judgment does not approve, by a prayerful attendance upon the Sabbath Services; in a word, by a conscientious and constant watchfulness for opportunities to strengthen the hands of the pastor in his unceasing efforts to win men to holiness and heaven.

We, as a denomination, believe in the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the heart and conscience applying with irresistible power the Gospel message. We believe also in the efficacy of prayer. How can we then resist the conviction that it is of supreme importance that we should daily ask for our ministers and their ministrations the directive and effective aid of the Divine presence?

If this conviction should settle down into our churches, and become a part of our religious life, there would be developed in minister and people a capacity for aggressive work that would lift us far above our present level as laborers in the vineyard of our Lord.

The pastoral office would be made more useful, and would more certainly command the respect to which it is entitled, by associating with it a greater degree of permanence. The union between pastor and people should be entered upon with the same caution, the same regard to mutual adaptation and helpfulness and expectation of life-long partnership as characterize the marriage relation. The humiliation of the yearly "hiring" should be spared the sensitive pastor. He should be made to feel that his church is his permanent home, that a certain portion of his Lord's vineyard is his to cultivate for life, that when he sows the seed he may see trees of his own planting yielding precious fruit, that there is wisdom in his building broadly and wisely on a sure foundation, for he shall rejoice in the completed edifice.

It should be the Pastor's noble ambition to be for his whole people an inspiration, carefully studying their needs and supplying them, helping to build up character and develop true Christian manhood and womanhood, and making of his entire church a corps of devoted workers. This he cannot do in one or two years, for to really accomplish it he must live in the affections of his people, as he only can who has long been their spiritual adviser, burying their dead, uniting them in holy matrimony, introducing them into the visible church, and thus entering into and becoming a part of their best and purest and most sacred thought.

The true pastor, through the functions of his office, can thus continually strengthen his position, and gain vantage ground for more effective effort, and the faithful Church of Christ recognizing the sacredness of his calling, the difficulties in his way, and their responsibility for his success should ever aid him in his noble endeavor by their love, their sympathy, their respect, their Christian co-operation, remembering that the Master, whose they are, and whom they serve, asks this at their hands.

A devout thought, a pious desire, a holy purpose, is better than a great estate or an earthly kingdom. In eternity it will amount to more to have given a cup of cold water, with right motives, to an humble servant of God, than to have been flattered by a whole generation.—Dr. Cumming.

Christianity means to the merchant that he should be honest; to the judge it means that he should be just; to the servant that he should be faithful; to the schoolboy that he should be diligent; to the street-sweeper that he should sweep clean; to every worker that his work shall be well done.

The Veil Rent.

Is there anything more than an accidental connection between the death of Christ and the rending of the veil? This veil was the inner of the two curtains which screened the temple from intrusive gaze—that which hung between its two chambers, through which one man alone, the high-priest of the generation, was suffered to penetrate with minutely prescribed ceremonies. The people used to watch anxiously and almost nervously for the exit of the high-priest, as if from an enterprise full of peril to himself. This dividing curtain is the text to a great section of the Epistle to the Hebrews, of which you will best remember the verse: 'The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.' It was the design of God, in ordering the construction of the tabernacle in the days of spiritual immaturity, to typify the barrier which sin had erected between man and Himself. At the moment of the expiring cry of Jesus it pleased God, who had taught by emblem, by miracle, to rend that curtain, thus exposing for a moment to view the mysterious holiest of all, to the alarm and consternation of priests officiating, it may be, at the altar of incense in the outer chamber; 'the Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all' was now 'made manifest.'

Scripture does not bid us comprehend these things, but it bids us make room in our hearts for what we comprehend not. God did find it necessary to interfere by a Mediator, that there should be an incarnation in order that there might be a dying and a rising again for us; that one from and through that incorporation with the sinful should become the author of eternal salvation to all them that believe. Life is short and eternity long. Habits grow upon us—habits of mind and of action. Some questions will not wait for their solution, and must be settled practically and experimentally on the instant. This is one of these: What are we to think of Christ? Had His death anything to do with our relation to God? The solution of this lies out of the region of logic or science. It can only be gained by experiment, by seeing whether it will work in the heart and conduct—in the elevation of the thoughts, in the sanctifying of the affections, and in the fertilizing of the life. We have the experiences of several centuries, of a variety of races. We have the writings of many persons and our own observation of many who have confessedly found the veil rent for them by the death of Christ. They have been attracted, influenced, changed by that death, as a matter of history, out of degradation into elevation, enemies being the judges. I was going to say out of death into life, only in the last step we cannot accompany them, but we can faintly catch the echo of the everlasting song which welcomes them into the city which has foundations.—The Rev. Dr. Vaughan.

A Century of Prayer.

It was in June, 1784, that the Nottingham (Eng.) Baptist Association adopted and recommended a monthly meeting for prayer, for the extension of Christ's Kingdom in the world. This 'monthly concert of prayer' became the visible bond of union among evangelical Christians in Great Britain and America, and as the flame of missionary devotion spread around the world, the monthly union in prayer and supplication has been established in every land. There are many yet living who remember it as an appointment for the first Monday in every month. The increasing difficulty of securing a general attendance on a week-day evening led to the change, nearly half a century ago, from Monday to Sunday evening. With this change has come the expectation of an audience, as well as of the coming of Christians to pray; and the imparting of missionary intelligence, and speaking in behalf of the cause, has tended to absorb much of the evening, making the devotional element of the meeting secondary. Perhaps there has been a little too much of this. Yet as a compensation, and more than a compensation, has there come to be an habitual recognition of the claims of missions to our thought and prayers, not as a

specialty of a monthly meeting, but as something at no time to be forgotten. This is undoubtedly a development of the 'monthly concert' itself. The spirit of prayer is the life of missions, at home or abroad, and that it now abounds in our churches is due largely to such special appointments for united supplication.

The monthly missionary concert in June therefore marks the centenary of the observance, and it will be made, both in England and in this country, an occasion to be celebrated by special services and special contributions. A general celebration is to be desired, and is entirely practicable, because no elaborately prepared exercises are needful. All that is needed is to recall the wonders God has wrought within the century while He has been inquired of by His people to do these things, and to give ourselves to a more earnest devotion for His cause in the time to come,—not forgetting to let our gifts also testify to our gratitude and our devout purposes.

The sufficient Grace of God.

Always there are these two kinds of men. The picture that was seen ages ago in the Valley of Elah, and which is written in the second book of Samuel, is always finding its repetition in the world. David and Goliath are perpetual; proud, self-reliant, self-sufficient strength, the big, hard muscles, the tremendous bulk, the gigantic armor of the Philistine on one side; and on the other, the slight, weak Judean youth; with nothing but a sling and stone, with his memories of struggles in which he has had no strength but the strength of God, and has conquered; with no boast, with nothing but a prayer on his lips.

These two figures, I say, are everywhere; they are confronting each other in every Valley of Elah all over the world; the power of confident strength and the power of weakness reliant upon God. Goliath may thank his gods for his great muscles; it is a strength that has been handed over to him by them; but it is a strength that has been so completely handed over to him that he now thinks of it, boasts of it, uses it, as his. David's strength lies back of him in God and only flows down from God through him as his hand needs it for the twisting of the sling that is to hurl the stone.

O, how the multitude stand waiting round every Valley of Elah where David and Goliath meet! How the Philistines shout for the battle as they see their champion step forth! How the Israelites tremble and their hearts sink when they see how weak their shepherd-boy looks! How the Philistines turn and flee when they see the giant fall! How the Israelites first gaze astonished and then surround him with shoutings, as David comes back with the head of the Philistine in his hands! And yet how the same scene is repeated over and over again forever; the arrogance of the Philistines and the timidity of the Israelites whenever a new power, confident in self, meets weakness, reliant upon God.—Rev. Phillips Brooks.

The Ingrafted Word.

I think I cannot better convey the idea to you than by stating it in a way that will be interesting to the young people. A gardener who wants to grow nothing but the best of apples would first make a proper selection of the seed; and the man who manages the nursery does not leave the seeds to manage themselves. The seed of the apple is carefully put into the ground, and is the beginning of a young tree. The seed, if let alone after it comes above the ground, will bear an inferior, sour, bitter, and natural kind of fruit. In order to bring forth good fruit, when the young tree has reached a certain stage, its top is cut off, and a tender sprig is selected with great care from a well-known good apple-tree, and is fastened to the stock, it being joined with such care that complete adhesion is the result. Now the stock grows down into the ground, and the sprig that is ingrafted grows up and is the tree. It is a wonderful fact bearing upon the course of nature that only trees of the same kind can be grafted in this way. Now what follows all this process of ingrafting? The stock has its natural

qualities, but the blossom and fruit is of the same kind as the sire from which the graft was taken.

Something like this occurs to the believer. There is our ordinary nature, dead in trespasses and in sin. We have many good natural virtues because they come to us naturally. We possess many of the casual features of Him in whose likeness we are made. But it is by nature a fallen likeness. Therefore let us cut the top off and take a bud of the right kind, graft it upon the top or join it into us; make it a dominant part of our existence to bring forth blossoms; and in order that we may do so, let us receive with meekness the ingrafted Word which is able to save the soul. The old Adam will still link us to the earth, but the new Adam that is ingrafted into us will link us to heaven. He who does that is consciously and deliberately the subject of the ingrafting process. When a truth is sown into the spirit, the spirit reaps life everlasting.—Dr. John Hall.

Christian Culture.

THE STORMY WIND.

Stormy wind fulfilling his word.—Psalm cxlviii: 8.

It is often a 'word' of judgment, when it sweeps down on the plain and up the valley, carrying death and desolation in its track, and when it lashes old ocean into fury and carries down the ship and all on board into its angry bosom. But it is oftener a 'word' of mercy, a strain of celestial music, played on nature's grand organ, in concert with 'fire and hail, snow and vapors, mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars,' 'praising the name of the Lord.' 'What is there so grand as to stand upon the rugged coast on some wild day and watch the great crested breakers driven on before the storm; to see them dashed upon the rocks with thunder, flinging the showers of spray far up the cliffs, while the angry blast roars out its triumph? Then the fierce winds go sweeping up the rocky heights, and on across the plain. They roar and rattle round the sleeping city, moaning here and there at door and window; then, all furious again, they fly roaring up the bleak hill-side.' And is not this the fulfilling his word? To stir the soul to its depths; to impress it with awe; to break up stagnation when the soul has settled on its lees, and to sweep away long-gathering impurities? The voice of the 'stormy wind' is majestic, grandeur, sublimity. And there are voices in us which answer to the call and cries of nature without. 'Deep calleth unto deep!' These awful voices and tumults and catastrophes of nature reveal to us depths and capacities and possibilities in our own being which we had not dreamed of before.—Hæmætic Monthly.

Controversy.

Great controversialists by whose labors the reformations that have blessed the church and the world have been brought about, were men to whom controversy was unpleasant and distasteful. Their sensitive natures shrank from the frowns of their fellow-men. The hostility called forth by their efforts, the breaking up of pleasant relations and their subjection to reproach and contempt, were trials to them at least as severe as to ordinary men. This is apparent as well in the dispositions and character of the reforming controversialists of modern times as in those of Scripture eminence. The necessity for controversy is always a sad one, and he who does not realize this feature of it is not in sympathy with him who is the Prince of Peace.

WHAT CANNOT BE.—There is no favorite child of nature who may hold the fire-ball in the hollow of his hand and trifle with it and not be burnt. There is no selected child of grace who can live an irregular life without unrest; or be proud, and at the same time have peace; or indolent, and receive fresh inspiration; remain unloving and cold, and yet see, hear and feel the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

A man who has never had religion before, no more grows religious when he is sick, than a man who has never learned figures can count when he has need of calculation.—Samuel Johnson.