

Our Contributors.

THE MINISTER AS A PASTOR.

To the minister is given a sacred trust. You may call him a prophet or forthteller, a pastor or shepherd. How sacred his office. No other calling is so sacred. No profession carries more responsibility. None is more hopeful of good results. No class of workers are more answerable; none will stand longer before the great judge. A crumbling of all philanthropic interest in the civilized world, and a lower depth for the savage, if you dispose of the Christian minister. I wish here to consider the minister as a pastor, or shepherd.

The minister as a pastor will not only come into the possession of a flock, but will plan for their best development. He will think of strength, endurance, culture, as well as other things that pertain to their advancement. His predecessor has been conscious of the lambs and sickly sheep he left among those stronger and older in Christian experience. For we all know that wise counsels are often ignored, hence sickly sheep. The lambs must not be put on their own resources too soon. Give them a good start. Parental care will do much for them. Feed well the older ones for the younger one's sake. Look ahead. Here is your future flock.

Good pasturage is necessary. Rocks, and drawbacks, are in all grazing fields. The flock will thrive if taught to surmount obstacles. Those with such difficulties are often great climbers. Sunday-schools will be excellent for close feeding; Christian Endeavor a beautiful field to enlarge muscle; while missionary interest and charity calls are excellent oases to make new rich blood. A flock will be better for a shepherd's guidance into and out of the field. Destruction will soon come to those without this care. They will be strengthened as they learn to have confidence in his leadings. *He leads, they follow.*

The minister as a shepherd will remember that unnecessary wandering is injurious to his flock. A distant pasture, where there is one nearer home, wastes time and breeds weakness. Long distance sick visiting to the exclusion of those nearer at home, is bad for both. Give this preacher a text "Charity at home."

The pastor will also remember that his flock is in the world, not out of it. The cunning fox here finds a home and often plays with the lambs who, fearful at first, but are afterwards amused and entertained. Tempted to wander they may go in forbidden paths. Let the pastor prevent this. Old sheep are very venturesome sometimes. The field is large in which they have long fed. Carelessness and recklessness lead thence to dangerous embankments and near many forests, where lie concealed hungry beasts ready to destroy. Unnecessary wandering will often destroy the sheep.

The minister as a shepherd will see many dangers. Wild beasts are roaming constantly. The more hungry they are the more they will roam. The pastor will destroy or render them harm-

less. He will warn his flock, as well as make easy their escape. He will warn them not to take any risks in the presence of the foe, bad places in pasture. "Be sure," he will say, "before you leap." In all steep places "be inclined up hill," he will say. Think, pray, trust, when conscious of danger, but better keep away. Lions may be near.

There is a danger of being lost from the flock. Tufts of sanctification and the impressiveness of the majestic touch may lose their attractiveness. But remember there are yet fertile places. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now." This will be quoted 2,000 years hence. The pastor will keep them "one." In some cases he may have to construct fences in the rear of the field, and see to it that good pasture is near the fold.

The minister, as a pastor, will keep a good lookout for breachy sheep, especially if his pasture has been rocky. He will realize that if they acquire this feat there is no certainty where it can be checked. Danger may let in, as well as trouble come to him, by loss of some of his flock.

The minister, as a pastor, will expect to see the herding resorts of the deer. These animals are somewhat like sheep. They are swifter, and scent danger more quickly. They have no particular shepherd—are wild, and are generally found in groups. Don't patronize these swift runners. Don't be hypnotized by the bright color in these places. Remember, leaves and plants develop any color, as well as furnish us with medicines, etc. Get these and pass out. Beware, lions may be near.

Keep a good guard on your staff, lest you frighten the "other sheep which are not of this fold." Unnecessary swaying of the staff may do harm to yourself also.

The worst of all dangers is a wolf in sheep's clothing. A "good pretender, he walks like a sheep, nice mellow bleating at times, at others a parental and convincing call like one experienced or old. But the pastor will warn. Beware, track him, and you will discover that the walk is not clean cut. Corner him, and you will know that he will growl.

The minister, as a pastor, will replenish his flock. Death thins out the best of folds. So the shepherd must look about for new ones. He will often find them coming from other folds. But go slow in such cases. Do not solicit such. Of course a shepherd will not steal. If sheep has been imported, ask if any more are expected. Be sure to look for his mark, and learn how old he was when he obtained it. Ask him if he made any resistance when he received it. Think of your weak ones and how he will get along near the river pasture, and how in the banquet hall. If he can stand a good storm, and is quick to acquire strength, helping others into the fold, he may be very useful to your flock. If he continuously bleats around the fold it is a good sign. Let him in, and report his acceptance to Mr. Blue.

But the pastor will not forget that the best replenishing of his flock is from the very tender lambs who, while in the care of the older sheep, only need initiating to be wholly in. "The true portrait of a Christian pastor," says Rev. Charles Bridges, "is that of a parent walking among his children, maintaining indeed the authority and reverence, but carefully securing along with it the love and confidence that belongs to his endearing relation. He is always to be found in his own house, or met with among the folds of his flock, encouraging, warning, directing, instructing,—as a counsellor, ready to advise, as a friend to aid, sympathize and console,—with the affection of a mother to lift up the weak, with the long-suffering of a father to reprove, rebuke and exhort."

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CONGREGATION BY TELEPHONE.

Edward Bellamy's dream of a Sunday sermon by telephone into the homes of subscribers, was realized not long ago in Madison, Missouri. A Presbyterian preacher, who found the roads to his evening appointment impassable, remembered that almost all of the families who attended the church had telephones in their homes, and could be reached from the central office in Madison. He saw the manager of the telephone system, who at once extended an invitation to the 326 families on his lines to join in a long-distance church service. An organ was moved into the telephone office, and the choir sang anthems and hymns, so that the entire service was conducted precisely as though in a church, while fervent "amens" were heard from half a county away. Two counties and forty-eight districts furnished the widely scattered congregation, and the innovation proved so popular that the manager of the telephone line has been urged to make it a regular feature of his business. All of this may be very interesting as a novelty, and very practical when it is the alternative to no service at all, remarks the *Lutheran Observer*, but as a regular thing it would be demoralizing to all spiritual life and activity. We need the assembling of ourselves together, the benefit of worshipping with God's people, the influence which comes from such public association, as much as we need the counsel and wisdom of the sermon. People are too ready now to make excuse for absence from the house of God, and such a scheme, were it to be put into general practice, would be such a salve to conscience as would be most baneful in its results.

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