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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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MINISTERIAL SUPPORT.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE WESTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION CONVENED AT CLEMENTSVILLE, ANNAPOLIS CO., SEPT. 24TH, TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,—

We feel the necessity of presenting for your consideration the subject of ministerial support, as one of the most efficient means that God has ordained for the diffusion of the gospel. It originated with the Levitical priesthood, who were supported by the free will offerings of the Israelites according to the law. Ministerial support is not, therefore, of human origin or modern invention, as some suppose; being taught and sanctioned by the law of God in all ages of the church. It is evidently an essential part of the great plan that God has put in operation to raise the fallen world. The same principle was re-echoed and enforced by Christ and his Apostles; which the following quotations will show:—"The Lord has ordained that they who preach the gospel, shall live of the gospel"; "Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" "Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things, live of the things of the Temple?" It is evident from these, and other similar passages, that ministerial support is a Divine Institution; and as such should be cheerfully carried out by the people, (1 Cor. ix. 7-15.) We have been frequently surprised that there should be any diversity of opinion as to the necessity and propriety of supporting the minister of Christ in the discharge of his responsible and onerous duties, when all other officials are paid by those who employ them. It is a necessity that arises out of the very nature of his office? How is it possible for any man to give his whole attention, energy, and devotion to any specific calling, unless the awards of that calling sustain him? Can you employ a lawyer, a physician, a school-master, or men in any calling of life, without an equivalent for their time spent in your service? Certainly not. The very existence of all societies largely depends on the operation of this principle. Let the salaries of officials be suspended, and you dissolve by one stroke the tie that binds society together. Ministerial support is an indispensable principle interwoven through the whole scheme of human redemption. If, therefore, the existence and operations of all societies largely depend upon just and fair compensation, as a necessary condition to their successful operation, how can christian churches dispense with it? How can any body of men employ the time and talent of a minister without awarding him a suitable support? It would be injustice to expect it, and unchristian to evade it.

Is there any office-holder or agent in all the different callings of life that holds such a high, noble, responsible position as the minister of Christ? "As the heavens are high above the earth," so is the work and calling of God's servants far exalted above all human employments, offices, and agents. He stands between God and dying men, holding in his hand the everlasting gospel which is to raise a fallen world from the depths of endless ruin. He is the messenger of peace, presenting the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. The messengers of Christ have penetrated the combined ranks of the enemies of the Cross, snatching the prey from the mighty, and planting the standard of the Cross in the face of the most formidable enemies of God. What class of men, I ask, should receive more liberal support than those who are raising a fallen world from cruel, endless bondage, misery, sorrow, and despair, to joy, peace, and endless glory? The works of earthly princes and men shall perish like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor; the works of God's servants shall endure forever. It shall stand in the beauty and loveliness of God's glory, when all human magnificence and grandeur shall vanish.

In what way could any man's means be better employed than in sustaining the chosen vessel of the Lord for the noble embassy of peace in which he is engaged? It has been admitted by some of the most noted infidels that no class of men have done so much for the moral elevation of our race as the messengers of the Cross. They have accomplished through God the abolition of idolatry throughout large portions of the world, although it had been patronized by wealth and influence for ages. We are now reaping benefits from the labors of men of God, who traversed the wild shores of Nova Scotia on their snow-shoes, when the solitary woods re-echoed the praises of God through their spiritual toils. The Hardings, Mannings, Dimocks and others we might name of the noble band, stemmed the cold north winds to tell the glad tidings of life to the perishing.

But, alas! how often has the minister of Christ to go into secret places and mourn over the meagre support he receives for his labors, obliged by the pinching wants of his family to fly to the plough, or some other secular occupation. The amount of time that any minister is obliged to devote to a farm, or any other calling aside from the ministry, is a loss to the world and the church. All a minister's time should be devoted to his calling. Any worldly embarrassment

will disqualify him for his heavenly work. Numbers of our ministering brethren who spend a portion of time on their farms would rather spend it in the cultivation of their churches, but they find by sad experience that their limited support would not justify them in giving their whole time to this object. This is a blighting evil, gathering strength from the influence and example of many that have means to sustain the gospel, but have no heart to give. Such men either do not believe the words of Christ, or do not want to know them, where he says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "He that giveth sparingly shall reap sparingly." "The liberal soul shall be made fat."

Inattention to the minister's salary by our churches, must of necessity have a blighting effect on the minister's mind, disqualifying him for the discharge of his duties. He feels that an essential part of his creed is honesty. But if deprived of a competent salary, he must either deny himself of many of the necessities of life, or descend into debt. Either of the two cases will injure the usefulness of the minister.

To remedy many of the existing evils in ministerial support, an improved system of raising the salaries might be introduced in our churches. It is well known that in numerous places in the United States they have regular monthly payments, which come much easier to the subscribers, and is of greater advantage to the pastor. Where such a system can be introduced we would heartily recommend our churches to adopt it. Some may reject it in consequence of its novelty. Still we are bound as christians to adopt any plan that may remove existing evils, or advance the Redeemer's kingdom, provided they do not interfere with any of our adopted principles. It must be confessed that some other christian bodies are in advance of us, in the systematic, efficient means in which they raise ministerial support. They are thereby enabled to place ministerial laborers where required, and to fill vacancies that we are utterly unable to accomplish in consequence of our defective modes of raising funds. It is well for us to observe and imitate whatever is good and praiseworthy, so that we may steadily advance and occupy new fields of labor. To accomplish this effectively we must organize and carry out a better system of raising funds. Having the opportunity of adopting a more efficient system, it is certainly the duty of every christian and every church to do so, and by that means of raising larger sums for a wider and more general diffusion of the gospel. The duty is enjoined not by man, but by Him from whom all our blessings flow. Let our motto be "Onward." There is no standing still in the works of God; all is in motion, moving to the accomplishment of a noble end. The gospel is the greatest of all God's works. Its motto is "Onward." You, brethren, are the chosen instruments to bear it forward, by the use of the talents and means that God has committed to you. See that you faithfully discharge the duty of stewards of God's treasury, so that when you shall be called to give in your account, you may not be placed on the left hand for wasting your Lord's money, or appropriating it to selfish ends. For God holds every man accountable, whether he be a professor or not, as to how he uses the means committed to his care.

I think we may conclude that a man's religion will be estimated according to the interest he manifests in giving towards its support. He that has no heart to give to save lost souls cannot reasonably expect to enter into the kingdom of God, for the Saviour says to those on his left, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of my brethren, ye did it not unto me." One of the very reasons the Saviour brings against the wicked on his left hand, was their lack of interest in supplying the wants of the children of God.

A knowledge of the wealth and condition of many of our churches, and of the expense and toil of many of our pastors in supplying their wants, we believe will shew that their salaries, generally speaking, are too small. The salary of the minister should be sufficient to free him from embarrassment, and supply him with all necessary material for his work. It is the duty of every minister to supply his library with improved modern works, so that he may store his mind with appropriate information for the further usefulness of himself and people. This he cannot do without means. The smallness of his salary forbids the thought of laying it out in books. Yet this very fact is a great deprivation to the church as well as to himself. Another standing evil in many of our churches is the want of promptitude in paying the minister's salary when it becomes due. The pastor is looking forward to the time when he shall be able to meet his engagements with those to whom he is indebted. When the period arrives for payment he finds perhaps there is not more than one third of it collected. This is the most effectual way to ruin a minister, and to destroy his usefulness. Every church should guard against this blighting evil, by a regular system of collecting his salary, and handing it over to him when due.

These things, dear Brethren, we commend to your careful and earnest attention, believing that a blessing will attend you in your occupations and engagements in this world, as you live for the good of souls and the glory of God.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

How frequently we speak of the power of prayer! But though all acknowledge the reality of that power, none knows its extent; for if it be true that "prayer moves the arm that moves the world," who shall tell what it cannot achieve through that omnipotent hand which it has

power to influence? And not only is its power acknowledged without being understood, but it is too often acknowledged without being tested. We believe the words of Jesus, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you;" but in a great measure we fail to prove them. Of what benefit can the value of prayer be to us, if we do not profit from its exercise? In vain we shall proclaim to others the bare theory, if we cannot support it by evidence gathered from our own experience. We may affirm with David, "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and belivereth them out of all their troubles;" but this nail, pointed though it be, can only be driven home by adding, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34. 4) O that all the Lord's ministers were more prayerful, then would they be more successful, for a ministry of prayer is a ministry of power. Would that every believer possessed more of the spirit of fervent supplication, that the kingdom of heaven which suffereth violence, might constantly be besieged by an army of pleaders, resolved to take it by force. Both the Church and the world are great losers by a want of prayerfulness. The Word of God assures us that we have not, either because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. The Lord Jesus by both example and precept has taught us to pray. And if we shall catch some of the fire which glowed in his heart who spent whole nights in prayer—if we shall be able to give weight to our assertions of the power of prayer by the conclusive evidence of the answers we have obtained.

Let us all seek to become more proficient in the sacred art and exercise of prayer, remembering those truthful words—

"Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designed to give;
Long as they live should Christian pray,
For only while they pray they live."

—Timothy Harley

CHRISTIAN WORK IN LONDON.

The young men constitute Rowland Hill's "Instruction Society," which is, I believe, a unique feature in London work. Its object is to reach the "lodging-houses," where beggars, tramps, costermongers, and ragamuffins of all kinds may secure a bed and the privilege of a common kitchen fire and light on the payment of one or two pence a night, and "no question asked." After a fervent prayer on their evening's labors,—sounding strangely enough in such a place as that,—the young workers were sent forth like the "seventy of old," two and two, by Mr. Goodman, their superintendent, who then accompanied us on visits of inspection to the various stations. It was an experience long to be remembered, as we stood outside and looked into the warmly-lighted kitchens, studying faces where want, sorrow, hard work, and crime had left ineffaceable traces. Men, women, and children were there congregated, many of whom never come under any other good influences. Some were mending their clothes, some cooking their suppers, some smoking their pipes, and some reading secular newspapers, or publications of a worse nature. Rags were the usual uniform; and pipes supplied a very necessary antidote to the foul air and vile odors. Into these strangely constituted congregations the two young evangelists would enter, take their stand, and commence some familiar hymn. Gradually one voice after another would take up the strain; a new expression would come over crime-hardened faces; and angelic words of praise answered St. James's question, as from "the same mouth proceeded blessing and cursing." Never before did I so fully realize the wonderful capabilities of that "everlasting gospel" which was especially sent to the "poor" and the "lost," which can transform lions into lambs, and transport beggars into Abraham's bosom. Usually the attention was good; at least there was no disturbance, though some continued their own employments; and there was a constant going out and in, in defiance of the etiquette which usually governs religious assemblies.

I was especially pleased with the manner in which Mr. Goodman addressed the various crouching figures we met outside, shivering in corners, and striving to hide their rags in the obscurity of night. Entirely void of condescension, his perfectly respectful words could not fail to minister to the self-respect of those to whom they were addressed; while in the most natural and unaffected way he never lost an opportunity of pointing sufferers here to the home where suffering shall be unknown. One example may suffice:—

"Good-evening, Mrs. Smith."

"Good-evening, Mr. Goodman: they're building us a grand new lodging-house over there."

"Not half so grand as the one that is preparing for you up above."

"But there'll be a fine room here in which to learn about that."

"Then I hope you'll always find the Lord in it."

Mr. Goodman has been eighteen years in this work: he is a cheery, pleasant-looking man of about forty-five, so so known and respected, and, above all, so confided in by the poor, that he is safe at any hour, even in the parts of London where policemen dare not venture singly.

We visited ten or twelve of these lodging-houses, and