

Sunday Reading.

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Dangers and Temptations of the Ministry.

BY REV. C. GOODSPEED.

There is no higher office, and there is no grander work, than that of a Christian Minister. Solemn and awful responsibilities are committed to his charge. Issues as tremendous as heaven and hell depend upon his action. The man who assumes such an office, and undertakes such a work with its vast obligations and interests, is pressed by supreme motives to be firm, and strong, and true.

But the very fact that a man attempts to do duties which might well tax the moral and spiritual energies of an archangel, exposes him to peculiar temptations and dangers. Just as the tree which shoots up towards heaven, and overtops his fellows, is more exposed to the fury of the gale, and is more liable to be rent or broken, or even torn up by the roots, so is the man who seeks to attain the stature demanded for such exalted duties, more exposed to the marring of moral nature, or even overthrow. As the tree which rises highest can only be secure through a firmly knit trunk, and a strength proportioned to its loftiness, so the man who stretches to such heights of position and labor, can only be assured by the cultivation of a character which is full of the toughest moral fibre, and which is true to the very core. The fact, however, that interests so great and sacred are committed to him, and that the responsibilities which they impose are liable to be wrecked by any wrecking of the most genuine genuineness, or of the most stable stability of character and spiritual life, will nerve the true minister to battle with all his might for that state of mind and heart as shall best conserve what has been entrusted to him by the pierced hands of his Lord. I know, therefore, that, in calling the attention of my brother ministers to the dangers and temptations which beset us, I shall claim their best attention, and, if I shall be able to suggest new views of danger, or new ways to meet it, I shall have their gratitude. If, also, I refer them to the more subtle forms of temptation, they will know that I do this because these forms are more generally dangerous than the more gross.

Let me call your attention, first, to the temptations which beset us.

1. To loss of interest in the truth we preach, and in the work we are called upon to do.

Is it not too common that the joy once had in the Bible lessens; truths which once thrilled us with strange power, lose their influence? Our souls do not respond as they once did to the doctrines of God's word. Thoughts of heaven and hell, of eternity and of the soul's worth and destiny, of God and his greatness, and even of our Lord and his love, do not stir our natures to their depths. Have we not, all of us, during periods of our lives, observed our feelings with an increasing alarm, as truth that was once fresh was becoming stale, and labor which was once a delight was degenerating into a lifeless, soulless, duty? As a man whose appetite was failing, and whose pulse was throbbing more faintly every day, have we not watched this ebbing away of interest, and motive power, and wondered what the end would be? Have we not, at seasons, had the direst alarm lest we should be reduced to the dilemma of either ceasing to preach, or of merely mouthing solemn words which had lost to us all corresponding conscious meaning? And, as we felt shorn of our strength, and as we saw the people sleep, and men die, has it not been the question of all questions with us, Is there any remedy? Is there any way by which truth can preserve its freshness, and its consequent power to impress?—by which work for souls can maintain its interest, or be redeemed from a heartless task?

The remedy of everything which is an effect must be sought in the removal of the cause. The remedy for everything which is through a violation of natural law, must be sought in a re-observance of this law, or by resort to the working of some other law of restora-

tion or recuperation. So in this case, we must have a diagnosis of the disease before we can suggest a remedy. We must analyze our mental and spiritual constitution, and observe the natural laws and tendencies which underlie our states and feelings, if we would intelligently deal with this question. What then are the causes, operating along the line of the laws of our nature, which lead to this loss of interest in the truth we preach, about God and his greatness; Christ and his love; man and his salvation; eternity and its glory and despair. As we are now, and we believe, as we ever shall be, novelty is an element of interest. The second view of a landscape, or of a great painting, if you see nothing new, impresses the mind less. Joy, sorrow, awe, hope, fear, are all keener and more intense at first. This fact is so well known, and so often declared, that it has become very trite. This law which makes novelty an element of interest has a plain bearing on this grave question before us. When we first began to preach, the whole realm of truth, and the whole range of duties were new. The regenerating power of the Spirit had changed all our relations to sin and holiness, to promises and threatenings, to law and gospel, to salvation and damnation, to heaven and hell, to men and angels, to men and devils, to time and eternity, to Christ and God—all was changed. Old things had passed away. All things had become new, so truth was fresh, because new, in its new relation to us. But as the months went by we became more familiar with the truth. As we entered the ministry, we had to think about it all the time. For a season the freshness which now began to grow stale, was restored, and we felt that it was blessed to give up our lives to the study and proclamation of the gospel. But soon the truth again began to grow less interesting. For the charm of novelty was being rapidly worn away by our very activity in exploring truth. This is, or may be, our special danger. Other men, less engaged in the study of truth, are not as rapidly made familiar with it, and therefore, are not so liable to lose the keenness of their relish. But we, by the very fact that we handle it all the time, are in more danger of its growing stale. All truth is liable to become to us like an old worn out sermon.

Has not this discussion of the cause of our loss of interest suggested the remedy—a remedy which I trust we are all attempting to apply? The question of the preservation of interest reduces itself largely to that of the preservation of novelty. What does the farmer do when the surface soil of a field has been exhausted by cultivation. It is no use for him to plow over the same soil. This but increases the difficulty. He must plow up a new field, or cut down deeper in the old, so as to stir the virgin earth beneath. So when we are alarmed at our loss of interest in the truths we preach, or of their power to stir us, the trouble may be that our thought has been too narrow or too shallow. Under such circumstances, to attempt to reawaken our interest by turning the old thought over and over the more industriously, will but sap these truths the more quickly of what little power remains to move. Better than this, go off on a vacation and catch trout, or shoot partridges, and let the little cultivated garden patch of truth and thought lie fallow for a time. But best of all, and this is the only infallible and lasting remedy, let the man drive the plough-share of his thought into new fields, or let him delve down deeper into the great mine of truth in the lead already opened. And no man need fear that all truth will be exhausted, and so the element of interest in novelty be finally lost. The truths with which we have to deal are boundless and soundless. They are as high as heaven and deep as hell. They are vast as eternity and infinite as God. They are many and many sided. They stand in myriad relations, and are capable of myriad applications. Just as the letters of the alphabet, through being placed in different relations to each other, can be made to form new words innumerable, so the truths of revelation, by being placed in their varied relations to each other and to human life, are capable of new forms, and views, and changed lights untold. The man who cannot study deeply can at least study

broadly. Every man can study. Every man can broaden his range of thought, so that he be not compelled to traverse the same range with wearisome frequency. He can, where he has cleared a small field of truth, avoid settling down upon it, and cultivate its surface soil to death, because he is too indolent to take in new ground, or to summon the application needed to delve down deeper. No man need let his feet get stuck in a rut, which will prevent his roaming over the broad range of truth, and finding waters fresh and pastures new. Let us read and think. Let us place ourselves where different currents of thought will touch and stimulate us. Let us examine truth in new relations, and from different stand-points. Let us rub our minds against other minds, and gather suggestions from men and things. Above all let us do the best we can to plunge down into the depths of the sorrowless profounds of the truths about God and his nature and his grace, and man and his soul and his destiny. Thus truth will not lose its freshness, but it will, all things else being equal, move and thrill us more and more. Thus shall we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Neither let us mourn because novelty is an element of interest, because the same truth, apprehended in the same way, does not maintain its power over us. For is not this the prime motive to growth in knowledge and grace? Is it not one illustration of the law, to "him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath shall be taken away even what he hath." As all things else, it says, increase, grow, or die, thus self existence presses on to activity and shakes us out of our sleepy lethargy. Let us hear the solemn warning voice in this law of novelty necessary to interest, and apply ourselves to know more of the truth, or know it better, or lose the impression from what we have, on ourselves, and so lose the power to make it impress others.

Another reason why we do not continue to be impressed by the truth is because we do not study it for ourselves. The whole tendency of the work of a minister is to direct all thought and effort away from himself to others. The enquiry ever is, What can I do for others? What truth will be adapted to the need of the people? How can I stir their life? How can I feed it? He has thus but little time to look in on his own soul; while, if he had time, he has found a habit which would disincorporate him thus to use it. So when he reads the Bible, it is not to feast on its fat things himself, it is not to be stimulated by its motives, it is not to be thrilled by its love, it is not to be cheered by its promises—it is to find a text—to get something to minister to others need. Thus we become mere caterers for others. We do not enjoy the truth we preach, because we do not partake of it ourselves. We are like mere cooks. We do not eat of the viands we serve to others. Thus while we are in the midst of abundance, our own souls may be starving, our own spiritual life ready to die. What makes this temptation most dangerous, is the fact that it is great in proportion to our earnestness and unselfishness. In our very absorption in our work, in our whole souled interest in others, we forget ourselves. By abstaining from the spiritual food and drink we provide for others, we lose our relish for them; and our power generally.

The remedy is plain. Let us read God's word, and let us think upon it, for ourselves as well as for others. Let us muse upon it until we fuse it into our own being, and thus know it as truth can only be really known, by making it an experience. The truth being thus fresh and felt we are able to make it known, nor merely by description of what it should be, but by a declaration of what it is. Thus it is impressed by the appropriate feelings, and has a double power. Instead of becoming a parched Sahara, because we send back all the dew and rain, we absorb the water of life, and are thus able to refresh others. The string which sends the arrow of truth is not drawn back far enough, if let go from the head. It must be drawn back to the heart, if it is to pierce other hearts. From the head may reach the head, but from the heart to reach the heart. The Christian world won-

ders at the freshness and power of Spurgeon. It was my privilege to listen to one of his lectures to his students, in which, as I conceive, he gave one of the chief reasons. He said, in his own expressive way, that he never took a text to preach from which did not hook him, lay hold of his own soul with peculiar power. He would study and pray, and make plan after plan of sermon from text after text, but unless the text thus gripped his attention and heart, so that he could not free himself from it, he cast it aside, finally, and worked and prayed, waited until one did. We cannot be Spurgeons, but we may imitate him in this, and thus increase our effectiveness as preachers. Let us remember that we cannot make truth a power to move others unless it is a power to move us, Let us realize that it cannot become a power to move us, unless we first apply it to our own souls, and absorb it into our own lives. If we but have grace to do this, the gospel will never be degraded to a dry formula, a meatless nutshell, but it will be such nourishing food as shall make it our meat and drink to do the Master's will.

Conclusion next week.

How a Revival Begins.

The first condition of a real revival of Christians is a revival of love in the heart to God and man. Love to God and man is both Christianity and morality, for as we look at these two experiences they are not separate, but only the two aspects of the one grand reality. Love is life, and revived love means revived life. It is needful therefore that before a church bereaved it must be filled with love. There is no use speaking about or praying for a revived state so long as this condition is not present. It is important therefore that the way to get the heart full of love should be known. And there is only one way this blessed state can be reached, and that is by coming to know more fully the love of God to man as seen in the gift and sacrifice of his own dear Son. A revival begins at the Cross. The Saviour of the world must be seen by the eye of faith bearing away the sins of men. There must be meditation on this stupendous revealed mystery, and as the musing goes on, the fire will burn and the life needed will be imparted. Let there, therefore, be much thought concerning the love of the Father in the gift of the Son, and there will be a stirring of the dry bones which will be like life from the dead.—*Canadian Baptist*.

Don't tell anyone that you are a member of a church "in good standing," if you stand ready to find fault with everything that the pastor says, or does, that does not agree with your ideas of orthodox propriety. That is not "good standing," but bad standing. And don't say that you are in good standing, if you stand out doors by the meeting-house on Sabbath, and talk about making money, and then go in, just as the pastor is reading God's Holy Word, or while he is offering prayer. It punctuates his reading and praying too strongly. Besides it looks bad. Don't do it.

Don't tell anybody that the reason you haven't been to church recently is because you had a lame back, or corns, or had taken physic; for, if you do, somebody besides the pastor, will notice how such things will affect you on week days. It is dangerous to make such excuses, for they look suspicious. Don't do it. C. H. WETHERESE.

A baptismal service of special interest was held at Wednesday on Sunday evening, Nov. 20, owing to Rev. J. J. Parker being one of the candidates. The service was conducted by Rev. J. E. Barton (pastor), who took for his text the words, "Whatever he saith unto you, do it." At the close of the sermon the Rev. J. J. Parker was called upon, and spoke in explanation of his position, for twenty minutes, with great clearness and force. Mr. Parker has been for fifteen years a Primitive Methodist Minister, and is widely known as a man of exceptional attainments as a student and unusual power as a preacher.

Rev. T. Spurgeon, son of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, has accepted the pastorate of a church at Auckland in New Zealand.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Discussion of Christian Baptism at North Sydney, C. B.

II.

The second evening Mr. McDonald challenged the Dr. to produce a single Greek Lexicon of standard authority, that would give sprinkle as a primary meaning of baptizo. This challenge was repeated, over and over again, until the discussion closed on this proposition. He did not, and could not, produce a single Lexicon with sprinkle as a meaning of baptizo. The Dr. was hard pressed on the Lexicon question, and driven to great extremities. He finally said if the Lexicons do not give sprinkle, as a meaning of baptizo, they ought to. Was not this a noble utterance for Dr. Murray, a man who boasts of his scholarship, his dignity, and his standing? It puts me in mind of the utterance of an ignorant man who said if infant baptism is not taught in the Bible, it is right, and it ought to be.

This is precisely the way with the Dr., the Lexicons ought to give sprinkle as a meaning of baptizo, and the Bible ought to teach that sprinkling is baptism, but they do not. He needs Lexicons and a Bible made for his special use, as he does not find what he wants in those he has.

The Dr. had stated when here in the summer that, neither Robinson, in his Lexicon of New Testament Greek, nor Cremer's Biblico Theological Lexicon of N. T. Greek, gave any authority for immersion as a N. T. meaning of baptizo. Every one acquainted with these Lexicons knows that this is a most glaring false statement. He had both of these Lexicons before him, when he made this statement. He had the presumption in the discussion to make the same statement, in respect to Cremer, in a slightly different form.

He denied that immersion was a N. T. meaning of baptizo, and appealed to Cremer in support of his view. Mr. McDonald had not a copy of Cremer with him, but he had the whole of Cremer's definitions of the word baptizo, given in the "Act of Baptism." Cremer's definition is to "immerse, submerge" and he adds, "The peculiar New Testament and Christian use for the designation of immersion, is submersion for a religious purpose." The Dr. tried to make his audience believe that the definition given by Mr. McDonald was not in the Lexicon itself, and went so far, as to offer to let any one in the audience examine the Lexicon. Mr. McDonald asked the Dr. if he would let him read from it the next evening, and he reluctantly assented; but afterwards wanted to withdraw the offer, on the ground that he would not put weapons in Mr. McDonald's hands to use against him. The Dr. had made the promise publicly, and as Mr. McDonald insisted, the Lexicon was placed in his hands the next evening. He read the same definition from it, that he had given the evening before.

Now Mr. Editor, what must be thought of the Dr.'s honor, when with that meaning under his eye he told his audience last summer, that Cremer gave no authority for immersion as a N. T. meaning of baptizo. Think of the Dr.'s presumption, in appealing to Cremer, during the discussion to prove the same statement. He evidently thought, because Mr. McDonald had not Cremer to refer to, he could impose upon his audience, and lead them to believe, that the definition of baptizo given by Mr. McDonald was not to be found in Cremer. He failed most ingloriously in this attempt to deceive his audience, and was condemned by his own Lexicon in the hands of Mr. McDonald. How sad, that a minister of the Gospel, a Doctor of Divinity, should stoop to such contemptible dishonesty.

Dr. Murray quoted from Dr. Kendrick, and made him ridicule immersion. He used this clause of a sentence as if it was complete in itself, "Baptism is no mere senseless dipping." Had he given the whole sentence it would have been apparent, that Dr. Kendrick was expressing the true sentiments of Baptists. The remainder of the sentence shows that it is a most beautiful, significant ordinance, full of meaning. Mr. McDonald had the original, and made the Dr. appear very small, when he

read what Kendrick did say. When convicted of making false statements, or misrepresenting authors, Dr. Murray passed them by without a word. The Dr. was continually bringing side issues into the discussion, and tried in this way to work upon the prejudices of the people.

Mr. McDonald wished to have the time prolonged for the discussion, and called the committees of arrangements together, to see if the time for debate could not be extended. It was evident Dr. Murray did not wish an extension of time, neither were his committee willing to have the discussion prolonged.

Mr. McDonald appealed to a member of the Presbyterian committee to know what his mind was: His answer was significant, "We have been afflicted long enough with this discussion." "Straws show which way the wind blows." Comment is unnecessary.

Mr. McDonald challenged the Dr., again, and again, to give him a single passage of Scripture that commanded to sprinkle water for baptism, or to give a clear example of baptism ever having been performed by sprinkling. He could find neither the one nor the other in the Bible. Mr. McDonald quoted from Dr. Murray's work on Baptism; "Baptism is a positive command." He quoted passages of Scripture, but every one of them were irrelevant, and would not bear the test of a critical examination. At first the Dr. was unwilling to confine himself to the Bible; but when he found that Commentators of the highest authority and standard historians, were being marshalled against him in one solid phalanx, he wanted to return to the Scriptures. Mr. McDonald declined to accommodate the Dr.; but offered, after they had finished their discussion on their present basis, to spend three evenings in a strictly Biblical discussion of the subject. The Dr. did not accept the offer. When Philip Schaff was quoted against the Dr. as to the meaning of baptizo, and to show that the primitive practice of the church was immersion, he said, "I don't care for Philip Schaff." It was exceedingly amusing, to see the air of self-importance the Dr. would put on, when testimony was produced from the highest authorities against him, which he knew he could not meet.

Historians, like Lexicographers sought to have agreed with Dr. Murray, but alas! they did not, and all he could do was to pit himself against them. A rather ludicrous position in which to place himself.

Mr. McDonald challenged the Dr. to produce a single standard historian who would affirm that sprinkling or pouring was the primitive act of baptism. He could not produce one. All the authors quoted against the Dr. were Pedobaptists. Mr. McDonald challenged the Dr. to produce a single instance of sprinkling or pouring being used for baptism before the case of Novatian, A. D. 251.

The Dr. knew he could not, and he did not make the attempt. Lightfoot's Journal of the Westminster Assembly was produced, and it was stated to the audience, that I was correct in the date I gave in the discussion last summer, 1643, not 1644 being the date when the Assembly discussed the subject of baptism. My quotation from Lightfoot was correct, and the positions I took on that question will never be overthrown while that record is in existence.

The Dr. had made it appear when here in the summer, that Baptist authors contradicted one another; but he failed to produce a single contradiction during the whole discussion. Those who heard the Dr. in the summer, and then heard him in debate, could not fail to notice that he was scarce like the same man, when face to face with an opponent. He did however make some very reckless statements. He said "Those who reject sprinkling hate the atonement." He knew he was uttering a base falsehood when he made this statement. The discussion on the first proposition lasted four evenings. The audiences were very large, and from the beginning to the end the discussion was a grand triumph for Baptist principles.

J. W. BANCROFT.
North Sydney, Jan. 12th, 1882.

Rev. E. P. Hammond has gone to Nashville, Tenn., to hold a series of revival meetings in that city.