

He Hears.

Thy thoughts are good and then art kind,
E'en when we think it not;
How many an anxious, faithless mind
Sits grieving o'er its lot,
And frets and pines by day and night,
As God has lost it out of sight,
And all its wants forgot.

Ah, no! God ne'er forgets His own,
His heart is far too true;
He ever seeks their good alone,
His love is daily new,
And though thou deem that things go ill,
Yet He is just and holy still,
And all things He can do.

The Lord is ever close and near
To those who keep His word;
When'er they cry to Him in fear
Their prayer is surely heard;
He knoweth well who love Him well;
His love shall yet their clouds dispel,
And grant the hope deferred.

—Paul Gerhardt.

"That the Ministry Be Not Blamed."

The blamelessness of the ministry is the strength of the Church. To safeguard the character and reputation of the ministry is to maintain the Church in its rightful position as the strongest moral and spiritual force in our civilization. Whatever weakens the moral quality of the ministry robs it of its true dignity, or lowers it in the regard of earnest men in the Church or out of it, does a damage to the influence of the Church, and hurts the best interests of society beyond what would be possible in any other way. This uniqueness in the character of the ministry and its relation to life makes the good name of the commonest minister a trust in the hands of all who care for the Kingdom of God.

Christian people are sometimes too thoughtless in their talk about ministers, especially before their children. Your minister may not be the most learned or the most eloquent or the most original preacher in the world; he may even be very undistinguished; but he is your minister, and your children's minister, and to them, if not to you, he represents the Master whose name he speaks and the Church whose commission he holds. You cannot speak slightly of him except to your own hurt, and your words may cause in your children's spiritual natures sore woundings whose scars will remain after many years. They were wise, those parents of the past generation, who suffered not themselves or others to speak hurtfully concerning the ministry. Not a few of the best men in the pulpit to-day were attracted to the service of the Church because from childhood they had learned to regard it as a sacred calling. It ought not to be less sacred to the children of to-day.

And a minister's reputation is peculiarly sensitive. His calling brings him into close relations with all classes. He is consulted by all sorts and conditions of men upon questions of the widest variety and highest importance. Homes are open to him as they are not to a stranger, and the secrets of the hearth are entrusted to his keeping. Damage his reputation for moral honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, and you have endangered the sacred interests in the community. And the slightest stain on his name goes deeper than the deepest wound given another man. His character must be above suspicion. He cannot defend his good name against unjust attack without losing, even should he gain. The reath of evil report can spoil his life if it bloom. His honor is in every man's keeping, and other men, to whom it is given, if the need be, to use the world's weapons in the world of men, are in honor bound to guard his name against suspicion and attack from which he cannot defend himself.

The pity of it is that ministers themselves are so careless of their own and their profession's good name. Perhaps no graver charge can be brought against the ministry than this. One of the causes of the unspirituality of long-vacant congregations is the harsh criticisms which "candidates" pass upon one another. One of the reasons why newspaper men are too often indifferent to the externals of religion is that they so often see the worst and weakest things in the ministry—the inconsistent vanity, the unbecoming desire for notoriety, the ill-founded dogmatism, but most of all the under-the-breath-uncharity for other ministers. A plain word to those who have to do with the making of opinion in the profession, and especially to the young men now entering upon their life-work in the ministry, may avail somewhat to the curing of this most hurtful habit.

And if it is the duty of the people to speak well of their ministers for their own and their work's sake, and if it is the duty of ministers to speak well of one another, it is no less the duty of the Church, through its colleges and courts to see to it that the ministry deserves to be well-spoken of by honorable men. It is possible to lay too heavy a burden upon earnest and plain-spoken people. The ministry must approve itself to men. The

weakling, the trifler, the buffoon, the morally indirect, ought not to find a refuge behind the "Divine rights" of the ministry. It is this that gives reason to the enemy to speak reproachfully. Presbyteries and conferences and bishops may have all charity, but they must also look well to the character and conduct of the men admitted and retained, in a privileged place, "that the minister be not blamed." Unwise charity has permitted men to retain the holy office whose transgressions of the moral law, to say nothing of professional etiquette, were notorious. Charity is indeed most excellent, but it must not be made a cloak of unrighteousness. Those who are to be examples unto the flock must be above suspicion. Unsullied integrity of character, unswerving devotion to duty, unselfish interest in men, consuming love to Christ, against such there is no law, and with such characteristics dominant the ministry dare not be blamed.—The Westminster.

Wiles of the Devil.

Those who manage the affairs of wickedness in this world perform their task with consummate skill. The strategy of the most skilful general in the field, maneuvering for position, taking advantage of the geography of the country, concealing his plans, deceiving the enemy by false movements, is more than matched by the masterly schemes of the workers of iniquity. If those who stand for virtue and righteousness should bring such ability to the task in hand, the right would speedily triumph.

Nearly all modern inventions and forces of civilization have been pressed into the service of evil. The printing press, the railroad, the steamship, have been made to do work for Satan. Music, painting, and sculpture, those fine arts in which the genius of man has expressed the beauty of heaven and earth for the culture and elevation of the soul, have been dragged into the service of sin. Christmas Day, the festival of our Lord's birth; Fourth of July, the festival of patriotism; the Sabbath Day, our Lord's day, ordained in the beginning to perpetuate the memory of the Almighty in the earth, have all been perverted and made to minister to evil. The workers of iniquity have, in some cases, captured the artillery of the kingdom of God and turned it against the fortress of truth and virtue.

With what satanic skill have the snares of evil been adapted to the nature and condition of men! Why is the saloon more attractive to young men than the churches and the Young Men's Christian Association? Partly because men love darkness rather than light, and partly because "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Evil-doers study the art of finding men. They do find men. They know how to spread the net and bait the hook. They are fishers of men. They catch men. They catch the young men fresh from the country, the brilliant men who are sent to the capital of the State to make laws for the people. They catch the poor who have no place to sleep at night, and the rich who have more than heart could wish. No class escapes them. We hear much about sociology now. We have learned professors who write books on this subject. They have good theories, but the evil-doers hold the working theories. A convention of liquor dealers could teach us all more about practical sociology than we can learn from all the great books ever written on the subject. They know men. They understand the social instinct. They have the art of reaching the masses.

They are always alert. With intelligence sharpened by the touch of an evil spirit, they are quick to discover every open door through which they may introduce the engines of wickedness to curse the souls and wreck the lives of men. President Schurman, Chairman of the United States Commission to the Philippines, in a recently published article says: "I regret that the Americans allowed the saloon to get a foothold on the islands. That has hurt the Americans more than anything else, and the spectacle of the Americans drunk awakens disgust in the Filipinos. We suppressed the cockfight there, and permitted the saloon to flourish. One emphasized the Filipino frailty, and the other the American vice. I have never seen a Filipino drunkard." To read that is enough to make the blood of a Christian boil with righteous indignation. The alertness of the workers of iniquity enables them to enter every door, and to go early. The United States is a great country, but it is no match for the wiles of the devil. It were better that the beautiful flag of our country should never have been unfurled over the islands of the Pacific than that we should allow the inhabitants to be cursed with the lowest and basest of our vices, instead of being blessed with

the benefits of our Western freedom, culture, and civilization.

Satan's followers seem eager to do his bidding. The yoke he places upon them is galling and heavy, but they wear it willingly. The tax he lays on them is burdensome, but they pay it with scarce a murmur. We have known men to give all their income to vice, and leave their wives and children at home without food and clothing. Men have leaped into the sea to save a loved one from drowning, and rushed into a burning house to rescue a child from the flames, and marched to the stake in defense of the truth; but more men have leaped into the burning mouth of hell to quench a fiery appetite which sin awakened and to push on the conquests of Satan. The wiles of the devil have taken more souls than love and wisdom and righteousness and truth. "My soul, be on thy guard."—N. Y. Advocate.

"Is the Church Growing Worse?"

If this question means the Church Universal, visible and invisible, it will strike the true Christian as an absurdity.

If it means the General Church, the visible, militant Church throughout the earth, our answer is, "No." The Church of Jesus Christ, considered as a general institution, has enough of the Master's spirit and purpose in it to make it the greatest and best institution on earth, the strongest bulwark against the reflux tides of barbarism, and the world's best hope in any structural form.

But if the question means simply the local church, or even whole associations of local churches, over definite areas and for periods of time shorter or longer, we are sadly compelled to recognize that tendencies backward and downward are in many localities dominant.

The church, considered as an organization, is no better than the character of its membership. If anywhere there is a growing less spiritual and more worldly, that church is certainly growing worse. Are there such churches? The Church Advocate, down in Pennsylvania, says that it is "becoming more and more confirmed in the opinion that the sins of the church have shorn it of its former great power."

That is doubtless true of a great many local churches and even groups of churches. In the language of a Methodist exchange, in such churches members indulge in Sunday excursions, or on supposed compulsion engage for money in Sunday work. They "seek for all forms of worldly amusements with as much avidity as the veriest worldling. In gambling, dancing, drinking, theater going, Sabbath desecration, money grabbing, extravagance in living, many in the church rival those who make no pretence to piety. As long as a man is a contributor to the church, especially a large contributor, no questions are asked, or, if asked, the testimony of the accused is satisfactory." It is also said that "there is little or no discipline in the churches to-day. Neither is there much preaching against the sins which stain the characters of so many church members. Ministers do not seem to have the courage to insist that church members must be honest, truthful, exemplary. They may sometimes do it in a general way in the pulpit; but direct, pointed, specific preaching on such topics is not the order of the day."

There is such a thing as an organization calling itself a church but ceasing to have vital relationship to the true Church of Jesus Christ. This has been the declaration of all the great religious reformers. It was the contention of Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, and Knox. It will never do to confound the churches with religion itself. If a church lose the true spirit and purpose of Jesus Christ, it is no longer a true church. The Christianity of men is not always identical with the Christianity of God. It has been said that the decline of the first is often for the latter a "renaissance and rejuvenation." We may be very sure that the faithfulness of the faithless will not destroy the kingdom of God. If the light of Gospel truth is extinguished in one place it will shine out in another. If the Church of Christ cannot continue in one organization or set of organizations, it will disappear from them only to take on new and better forms.

A divine law is back of this. From the unprofitable servant in the parable was taken away even that which he had. Was it destroyed? Nay. It was given to another.—Morning Star.

Cheerfulness and sweetness of disposition are often as great a force in trying situations as sheer intellectual ability. The power of restraining one's temper under provocation, of looking on the bright side of things in discouraging circumstances and of not construing a difference of opinion into a personal matter is one of those choice attainments whose winsomeness men almost universally recognize.

Love's Overflow.

God delights to bless us overflowingly. He who is Love cannot be content with giving us bread and clothes and light and air. He must put in a thousand things that are not merely necessary—the glad indulgence of His love to us. The stars must look down heaven's kindness upon us. The flowers must brighten us with their beauty, and sweeten earth with fragrance; the birds must bring their song. Our necessities, measured and exact, can never satisfy Him. He must give us music and laughter and the joys of little children and the brightness of home and friendship. Man cannot live by bread alone, either given or received. Love that reads in little common things a wealth that is more than golden, a glory that outpaces art, a meaning that is deeper than words—this is what love asks and what love gives. Look at the mother's love to her little baby. How absurd it is! How utterly unmeaning! What waste of precious time! What waste of energy to be chirping nonsense to a little child who cannot understand a word of it! But love understands it; feasts on it. Commandment, duty, necessity, service—there is room for more than all that. "She hath done what she could." She never preached; she never did any wonderful work; she never built a church or endowed a hospital or founded a mission. What then hath she done? She hath loved her Lord with a deep, tender devotion that gladdened and strengthened and comforted him. He who is Love sets most store by love. Love that delights in him; love that communes with him; love that is ever seeking to bring him its best riches; love that finds its heaven in his pleasure, its hell in his grief, its all in his service; love that blesses him with adoring joy for his great love; that rests triumphantly in his presence, and wanders restlessly if he be gone—that is to him earth's richest gift.—Mark Guy Pearce.

Victories of Prayer.

Oh, the victories of prayer! They are the mountain-tops of the Bible. They take us back to the plain of Mamre, to the fords of Peniel, to the prison of Joseph, to the triumphs of Moses, to the transcendent victories of Joshua, to the deliverances of David, to the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, to the whole story of the Master's life, to the secret of Pentecost, to the key note of Paul's unparalleled ministry, to the lives of saints and the deaths of martyrs, to all that is most sacred and sweet in the history of the church and the experience of the children of God. And when, for us, the last conflict shall have passed, and the footstool of prayers shall have given place to the harp of praise, the spots of time that shall be gilded with the most celestial and eternal radiance shall be those, often linked with deepest sorrow and darkest night, over which we have the inscription, "Jehovah-Shammah—the Lord was there!"—Bishop Simpson.

Hands Up, and Hands Down.

Many more are ever ready to throw up their hands in favor of a good cause than are willing to put their hands down, take hold of, and actually do the work needed to make the cause prosper. It is said that years ago, while in Detroit, Mr. Moody, having told about his work of sending religious literature to prisoners, suddenly asked: "How many of you believe in this work? Hold up your hands." Up went a forest of hands. "That's right; that's good. Now put them down into your pockets, quick." Herein is indicated one of the secrets of Mr. Moody's great success—his readiness to back up proper approval with appropriate action. How true it is that, to say well is well, but to do well is divine.—Telescop.

Do Something.

BY H. C. SPURGEON.

Each member of a Christian church should be a worker for Christ. Our Lord has never granted a dispensation to a single one of us; would any of us desire that He should? His vows are upon us all, without exception. Are we each obedient to His word, "Occupy till I come"? Are we putting out our talents to interest? If we are not doing so, we can never enter into rest. Rest implies previous labor. We are bidden by the Holy Spirit to labor to enter into the rest of God; it is the way thereto. Idlers are unrestful, fidgety, worried and worrying, fretful and fanciful, troubled and troublesome. They are happiest who are most completely consecrated to the service of God, and most fully absorbed in obedience to His will.

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Have Not Seen the Plans.

A gentleman who was walking near an unoccupied building one day saw a stonecutter chiseling patiently at a block of stone in front of him. The gentleman went up to him. "Still chiseling?" he remarked, pleasantly. "Yes, still chiseling," replied the workman, going on with his work. "In what part of the building does this stone belong?" asked the gentleman. "I don't know," replied the stonecutter, "I haven't seen the plans." Then he went on chiseling, chiseling. Now, that is what we should do. We have not seen the great plans of the Master Architect, but each of us has his work to do, and we should chisel away until it is done.—Michigan Advocate.

The best reforms of this earth come up through waste and storm and doubt and suspicion; the sun itself when it rises on each day wastes the radiance of the moon and blots the starlight from the skies, but only to unlock the earth from the clasp of night and plant the stars anew in the opening flowers. Behind that sun, as behind this movement, we may be sure there stands the Lord God Almighty, Master and Maker of the universe, from whose hand the spheres are rolled to their orbits, and whose voice has been the harmony of this world since the morning stars sang together.—Henry W. Grady.

To be content to remain ignorant of what God has not thought proper to reveal, forms no inconsiderable part of Christian learning.

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