

[From the Watchman and Reflector.]

THE MINISTRY.

Excellencies and defects in the present modes of educating them.—PART II.

The work of the minister is pre-eminently a spiritual work. The chief sources of his power are a deep sense of his responsibilities, the grandeur of his mission, the worth of souls, the evil of sin, the danger of the sinner, the holiness of God, the spirituality and unchangeableness of the law, the sufficiency of the gospel, the character and work of Christ, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence to give success to his preaching. His soul needs to be imbued with the conviction at once of his own insufficiency, and of his entire dependence upon Divine aid for success. His aspirations, desires, and sympathies should correspond with the character of his work.

He should feel for sinners as they ought to feel for themselves; and, "knowing the terrors of the Lord" should persuade men. He will thus transfuse his views and feelings into the minds of his hearers. Very much of the success of a minister's labour depends upon the spirit and feelings under which that labour is performed. If, by communion with God, his mind becomes inspired with a solemn earnestness to benefit souls, he will not preach in vain; but if he be anxious to display his talent, show his learning, and secure admiration for his fine thoughts and finished composition, he may have his reward; but that will not consist of regenerated and saved souls. Such a minister may draw large congregations, may gratify the taste of the intellectual and the gay; but seldom will he be instrumental in converting sinners. At the same time another who has less refinement, less intellect, less finish, less of the scholar, having the spirit of his work, his soul baptized with holy and ardent emotions, may and will, notwithstanding these imperfections, be the means of saving souls from death. It is not the exhibition of learning in a sermon, but the spirit of Christ that is effectual to save. A finished discourse without spirituality of mind and earnestness of manner is but an inaccurate picture.—The secret of a minister's power, lies in the spirituality of his mind,—not in the extent or strength of his intellect, the most giant intellect is utter weakness here without the spirit of God. "It is not by might nor power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." In the education of ministers, is this fact sufficiently kept in view? Is it made prominent in all the student's exercises? Are the teachers of our young men more anxious to discover this element in all their performances of their pupils than the mere exhibitions of scholarship? It is natural that instructors should aim to make their pupils critical, elegant, profound; in a word, learned men. Their credit as well as the credit of the College or Seminary to which they belong, is involved in this; and it is natural that students should be influenced by the same desire, should participate in the same feeling, should be more solicitous to have their compositions conform to the rules of the schools than that they should manifest the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem, or of him who had continual sorrow of heart for the sake of his brethren according to the flesh.—Do we not often see our young ministers sacrifice the simplicity and pugnancy of the gospel truth, to classical taste and rhetorical refinement? Are scripture doctrines, and Divine appeals made to give place to learned criticisms or pretty moral essays? When this is the case the generality of hearers are not interested. Simple minded Christians are dissatisfied, nearly all are disappointed, and the conviction is begotten, and strengthened that whatever good education may do for men of other professions, it has only injured the preacher. In general, when men go to the house of God they wish to be taught the will of God, they wish to feel the force of truth.—To succeed in this the preacher must address them in language which they can understand, illustrate that truth by allusions within their comprehension, and address them as a messenger commissioned of heaven, and with a depth of feeling that will convince them that he is treating of momentous subjects and feels that they must be influenced by them. In the presentation of eternal truth, if he should sometimes in his earnestness for his hearers' salvation, violate a rule of grammar, distort a figure or make a clumsy sentence, what would be the importance compared with the sacrifice of earnestness?

The great defect of preachers, who have just graduated, is, that they lose the spirit of

their work in their anxiety for the letter, and this is to be attributed, in a great measure, to the character of their education. They begin to exhort and teach, when first thinking of the ministry, in the spirit and with much feeling; education shows them their literary defects, and makes them so anxious to correct these, that they fear to give way to their feelings and become earnest lest they should be guilty of some rhetorical error. The question is, how is this to be remedied? It is worthy of the most serious enquiry, whether this evil can be prevented, but by so modifying the course of their education as to allow them to be frequently engaged in the work of preaching, by convincing them that the object of their education is not to shine as great scholars, but to stand forth as able ministers, by urging them to make everything subservient to the work of the ministry, and never to sacrifice the spirit and power of the gospel to a mere form of words, by impressing their minds with the solemn obligation they are under, in every sermon to preach to save, rather than to please. These instructions must constantly be communicated, and these impressions made by those who have charge of their education.—This is of vital importance to the student; a wrong impression on this point will be fatal to his usefulness. It is of great importance that the minister have large and correct views of things, that he be something more than a mere exhorter, that he be an instructor, able to teach, to feed his people with knowledge and understanding. Earnestness of manner or depth of feeling will not long supply the lack of a sound mind. But while this is true, still, it is undeniable that spirituality of mind and earnestness of manner are indispensable, that without them the most elaborate discourses will generally be powerless. Hence, the necessity of ever keeping before the mind of the student its importance, and making those exercises, that are calculated to promote it, a part of his education.

The work of a minister is a practical work and his education should tend to make him a practical man. The end of all this is to change the heart and reform the life that men may be saved. To accomplish this, he must be intimately acquainted with men, their habits, modes of thought, compass of intellect, strength of prejudice, &c. To acquire this knowledge, he must freely associate with them, study them and learn of them that he may adapt himself and his instructions to their peculiarities. He must, if he would be useful, learn to distinguish between what in their habits is sinful, and what is merely circumstantial; so that he may, as far as he can, conform to the non-essential for the purpose of more effectually reforming the sinful. But it is well known that very little of such knowledge can be acquired at the schools. Young men often leave their studies and enter the pastoral relation destitute of this essential branch of information; in such instances they appear to the people stiff and pedantic. There is in their preaching and conversation, but little with which the people can sympathize, and that they can understand but little that reaches the heart and of which they can see the practical bearing; and this arises from ministers not seeming or aiming at a direct practical effect. They have learned from books; in their style they conform to the books; the generality of their hearers are not familiar to such trains of thought, and the preacher has not acquired the art of giving such turns to his, as to connect them with theirs, and show them what he would have them believe and do, nor will he be able to do this until he has learned how. Many young men for want of this knowledge have been unsuccessful, have been compelled to remove from place to place, have become discouraged and felt that they had better give up the ministry. In their management of church affairs, for want of practical skill, they have been, if possible, more unsuccessful than in preaching, have involved themselves and the churches in inextricable difficulties, have disgusted the people, mortified themselves and have left in despair, or what is worse, have been compelled to give the management of the church into the hands of some leading member, and instead of being the guide of the people, have become mere cyphers, while their deacons were the commanding figure and they used only to give value to their acts. All this needs to be remedied. There are but two or three ways in which it can be done. It needs to be remedied, for besides the evil it brings upon the churches and the misery in which it involves young ministers, it leads good brethren to suspect the utility of educating ministers, to conclude that it does them more harm

than good, while the fault is not with the knowledge they have obtained, but it is for want of more—that is for want of knowing how to give their present attainments a practical direction. But how is this to be remedied? Teachers must constantly show students the relation between their studies, and the work they have to perform; they must instruct them how to turn all their knowledge to a practical account—and to this end the teachers must be practical men, or students must be allowed more time to preach and mingle with the people that they may learn of them. I have thought that it would be of immense service if the course of ministerial education should be so modified especially the theological, that provision should be made to place every student four months in the year with some able pastor in addition to his studies in the seminary. Here he might preach part of the time and avail himself of the suggestions and criticisms of his senior, both as to the matter and manner of his discourses. Here he might see the practical workings of a pastor's life, learn much of the government and discipline of the church by attending church meetings and by conversation with the pastor. Here he might become better acquainted with men and the best modes of intercourse with them by accompanying the pastor in his visits among his people. It would be well if some of our able churches would make provision that would enable their pastors to take each a young man into his family for three or four months in the year, and by employing him during that time, in preaching sometimes for him while he instructed the student, the advantage might be mutual; at any rate it would be of inestimable benefit to the student. If, neither of the above methods of making students more practical are available, then there seems but one more, that is to take two or three years after he graduates before he settles over a church to become a common sense man.

[From the Puritan Recorder.]

Dr. Bellamy on Creeds.

Messrs. Editors:—Among the many valuable manuscripts left by the celebrated Dr. Bellamy is the following article on creeds. It was written to a friend, whose name does not appear, in reply to his inquiry, as given in the beginning of the letter. It is truth in a nutshell, and not without interest and value in these days, when not unfrequently the importance of anything like creeds is denied and ridiculed.

REV. SIR,—You ask me, "of what use are creeds, confessions, and catechisms among the Disciples of Christ who call no man 'master' on earth, and acknowledge no infallible standard of truth but the Bible?" I answer,

1. You will readily own, that the Disciples of Christ ought to love one another as brethren and be cordially united in promoting the religion of their master, in their several stations. And to this end,
  2. You will readily own, that like honest men and brethren, they ought to be quite ready to let their religious sentiments be known to one another, and to the world, without any disguise.
  3. And you will readily own, if there are false brethren crept into the church, who though they profess to believe the Bible to be the Word of God, yet are industriously propagating a new scheme of principles, subversive of true Christianity, in a clandestine manner,—that, in this case, a mere profession that they believe the Bible to be the Word of God, is no evidence that they do not understand it in a sense agreeable to their own new scheme.
  4. Wherefore, in such a situation of things, a church or denomination must, in some way or other, explicitly declare how they understand the Scriptures, in order to knowing each others religious sentiments, and that the true Disciples of Christ may join together in bearing testimony against errors.
  5. No true Christian, no honest man, can be unwilling to let his principles be known in the most free, full and satisfactory manner, whether by word of mouth or by writing.
  6. The grand design of creeds, confessions, and catechisms &c., is to let our sense of the Scriptures be known in writing, that all who think with us, may openly join with us to promote the same common cause.
- Objection.**—This design, however good, may easily be frustrated. Heretics may subscribe to our creeds and confessions with a design to deceive us.
- Answer.**—No doubt they many times do so, for they are commonly men of but little con-

science. Therefore we ought to be more on our guard; examine those who have given just cause of suspicion; watch over their conversation daily; and take all possible care to prevent their ill designs, instead of giving them that full latitude they desire, by our discarding creeds, and growing indifferent about the great principles of Christianity.

**Objection.**—But what if they refuse to let us know what their religious sentiments are?

**Answer.**—We ought to refuse to hold communion with them; for no one has a right to Christian communion but on a public profession of Christianity.

**Objection.**—But they do profess Christianity; for they profess to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God.

**Answer.**—They do not profess Christianity in the sense of the Scriptures, unless they profess to believe the real principles of Christianity. Some in the apostolic age said they were Jews, who were of the Synagogue of Satan. (Rev. 2. 9.) In Christ's account they lied. (3. 9.) Some among the Galatians, who professed to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, had as Paul says, gone off to another gospel, and deserved excommunication—to be cut off—(Gal. 1. 6. & 5. 12.) Their professing to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and at the same time refusing to let us know how they understand the Scriptures, gives us no rational evidence that they really believe the true principles of Christianity. Yea, their refusing to let us know their religious sentiments, gives us just grounds to fear they are not sound. It is certain they do not act an open part, as becomes the followers of Christ, but act like heretics condemned by themselves. And while they act in this manner, they ought not to be allowed communion, as not making a proper profession of Christianity.

**Objection.**—But this is persecution!

**Answer.**—What! is it persecution not to consider and treat them as sound in the faith, when they refuse to let us know what their faith is?

**Objection.**—They say they are Christians, and believe the Bible.

**Answer.**—But they refuse to let us know what they mean by Christianity, or what truths they believe to be contained in that book called the Bible.

**Objection.**—According to Scripture, no further profession is needful to an admission to church communion, than that we believe Jesus Christ to be the Messiah.

**Answer.**—No further reply is needful, than to cite the words of the apostle, "An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject;" for all heretics profess to believe Jesus to be the Messiah, and herein they differ from gross infidels, and yet they ought to be excommunicated. This seems to me the sum of the matter. Yours &c. J. BELLAMY.

**Obedience the Great Test of Piety.**  
The Bible assigns peculiar importance to the test of religious character, which is furnished in obedience. God knows the blindness of the human heart, and the strange exposure of men to self-deception. He has therefore provided that the reality of those dispositions we profess to cherish towards him, shall be evinced by corresponding conduct. Do you inquire, who are the friends of Christ? He himself replies, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Do you ask, who are those that love the Redeemer? His answer is, "He that loveth me, keepeth my commandments." Do you ask, how shall we know that we possess a saving knowledge of Him? "Hereby do we know that we know him if we 'keep his commandments.'" Would we know the evidence of hostility to Christ? "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." Would we know who are they that are deceived or deceivers? "He that saith he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Would we trace out the grand line of demarcation between saints and sinners? "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil—he that doeth not righteousness, is not of God." Would we know what will be the grand and universal rule of trial at the final day? "Without respect of persons, the father will judge every man according to his works." From beginning to end—from first to last, the great test of character is, "By their fruits shall ye know them."  
"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like His."