

## THOUGHT ON THE MINISTRY, CHURCHES, &amp;c.

The following article contains some wholesome thoughts, which we commend to the prayerful consideration of both churches and ministers. We have here, presented a glance at both sides of the question. The article is extracted from the columns of the Christian Index:

Much has been said and written of late, upon the consecration, support, &c., of the ministry, and it must be evident to every reader of the scriptures, that the ambassador of Christ, should if possible be wholly devoted to his heavenly calling. The world lies in wickedness before him, and affords an ample field for the use of all his powers. The souls of men are at stake also, involving the highest interest, and demanding the utmost wisdom and ability of the man of God. Properly speaking, he has no time to spend in mere worldly business; his work by day and by night, is to win souls to Christ! And while he is faithfully engaged in his appropriate work, it is the law of Christ, that he should receive in return, a fair and ample reward. It is a good principle, that the laborer is worthy of his hire. This we consider fairly implied,—1. That to receive wages, a man must earn his hire; for no idleness is allowed in the Kingdom of Christ. 2. That those who enjoy the benefits of a minister's labors, are required, according to their ability, to render to him an ample reward for his labors. 3. It is also fairly implied, that if those who enjoy the labors of a minister of Christ, fail or refuse to pay him according to their ability, they forfeit all claim upon his labor. We extend the implication further.—4. If a minister cannot, in any honorable, or proper way, secure a support by his ministry it becomes not only lawful, but his proper duty, to resort to some worldly avocation, in order to gain that support.

Again—It is a gospel principle that a minister may lawfully have a family. It is the duty of every man who has a family, to use all proper means to support his family decently and comfortably. And it is, for aught we can see to the contrary, as much the duty of a minister to support his family, as it is for any other man to do so whatsoever. It is exceedingly doubtful, therefore, whether a minister is allowed ordinarily, under the gospel, to bring his family to want by devoting himself exclusively to the work of the ministry. That it is his duty to preach the gospel is true; but we cannot conceive it to be paramount, to the extent of reducing his family to poverty and beggary as some do. Upon the other hand, he is not allowed to sacrifice his ministry, in devoting himself to a worldly avocation. Though much of his time may necessarily be devoted to the world; yet this must ever be subservient to his high and holy work. He must still make the winning of souls to Christ, the great business and end of his life. He must work at his trade or follow his worldly business, not to pamper his own appetites, not to gratify the pride and ambition of his family, not to minister to the lusts of the flesh; but to enable him to go forth panoplied in the gospel of Christ to reconcile men to God. But instead of seeing Zion's watchmen building their own houses, while the house of God is lying waste, how much better it would be to see them well sustained by their brethren, standing upon the walls of Zion, crying aloud, and sparing not. They have a commission from heaven's King, to go and persuade men to be reconciled to God. There is a want of fitness therefore, in seeing them spend a large portion of their time in mere worldly business. The churches of God are lying waste, the world is going on in wickedness, and the call is long and loud for Zion's watchmen to be at their posts; but they are in their farms, their offices, their stores, their school-rooms, or their workshops.

There is a radical wrong somewhere, or else we grossly mistake the case. It rests therefore, upon the churches, or the ministry, or upon both. The churches are poorly supplied by an efficient and secularized ministry; and the ministry are poorly sustained by inefficient and worldly minded churches. Several causes contribute to this state of things, among which are: 1. Too many small and inefficient churches are constituted in the country. 2. Ministers are licensed and sent forth by these churches, without proper regard being paid to their qualifications for so exalted a station.—The consequence is that many have zeal without knowledge, or knowledge without prudence; and some we have reason to fear, were never called of God to minister at his holy altar. 3. Covetousness prevails to an alarming

extent both among churches and people, and also among the ministry. 4. Mutual jealousies exist between rival churches, rival ministers, and between different churches and ministers. Confidence is thereby destroyed in a great measure, and by these means much of the beauty and sanctity of the relation between the churches and the ministry has been destroyed. But these may all be regarded only as streams flowing out from a fountain of bitter waters; for the grand source of all the evils that exist, is the deep and awful depravity of human nature. This is past remedy, except so far as God himself shall sanctify the heart, and thereby purify the fountain itself. We may, it is true, be instrumental in correcting many abuses; but to correct all, we must go back to the fountain head, and purify the source; then all the streams flowing therefrom, will be pure and delightful. While therefore we pray and labor for a reform, yet a total reform cannot be expected, until God's spirit shall sanctify the church, the ministry, and the world, and heaven in a measure be established upon the earth.

Again many have entered the ministry in the country; and doubtless there are many who have entered it, that God never called.—Still through the instrumentality of the ministry, the gospel is proclaimed through all the length and breadth of the land. There are undoubtedly more ministers than would be needed to supply the whole country with preaching, provided every one was fully devoted to his work. Hence, there must, in the present circumstances, be a division of labor. Besides, to support all who now preach, would put a burden upon the churches, too great for them to bear; and would also be supporting many an inefficient drone. Hence, to gain a support for themselves and their families, many must of necessity resort to worldly avocations. How far it is the duty of ministers to go forth into the field; and how far the churches are bound to sustain them in it, we will not attempt to decide. But one thing is evident, that is, that in many parts of our extensive country, much destitution prevails, which sends up continually, a Maccabean cry, for help, and thus many of our ministers have an ample field before them, and our churches a loud call for true gospel liberality. The destitution we apprehend might all be supplied in a few years, if all our ministry were fully devoted to their work, and all our churches were fully enlisted in the enterprise.

## Talking about Heaven

IS NOT GOING THERE.

The religion of some people consists merely in talking about it. I know one whose religion was of this character. She talked more about the church, the pastors and deacons, the sermons and the prayer meetings, the perils and prospects before us, than any other person. And yet she had, perhaps, less of that religion in heart, than the least of all saints. If a member was taken sick, all the well ones received a visit from this dear sister, who came to tell them how the pastor was neglecting the poor and feeble members of the flock. It would seem that the whole weight of the church's cares rested upon her shoulders. And I have generally found that those people who are the most garrulous in the church, are wanting in depth of piety and long-lived devotion. It is very easy to talk about the interests of Zion, without having a heartfelt personal concern for the beloved city. It is not for one poor sinner to judge another's heart, or decide upon his real prospects for eternity. Yet it is very certain, and why should we attempt to disguise the fact, there is a great difference between simply talking about religion, and enjoying it; talking about heaven, and travelling towards it. Even ministers whose sole work is to direct others to Jesus, may themselves be destitute of the true grace. The good Richard Baxter says, that none are in more danger of the snare, than those that are employed in leading others—ministers of the gospel. O, how easily may such be deceived, while they do nothing so much as read and study heaven; preach and pray and talk of heaven. Some might regard this as the heavenly life itself. But, alas! it is only the theory of that life, the collecting of materials for the heavenly building, not erecting the building itself; gathering the manna for others, and not eating it ourselves. A man may sit at home, and draw exact maps of countries, and yet never see them, nor travel towards them. So may a man describe the joys and riches of heaven to others, and yet

never come near them in his own heart. A blind man, by learning, may talk about light and colors; so may a man morally blind, set forth to others the heavenly light which never illumined his own soul, nor warmed his cold heart. What heavenly passages had Balaam in his prophecies, yet how little of it in his spirit.

Let not a man think when he has gathered the stones and sticks together, that he has laid the foundation; nor when his foundation is laid, that his building is complete. The preparations for a work, and the doing it, are essentially different. The Jewish priests talked as much about heaven, religion, and Jesus of Nazareth, as the disciples themselves; but that was different from following Christ, and associating with Peter and Paul and John, in the love and faith, and labors of the Gospel!

Bread on the table will not nourish the body unless it be eaten. Water in the spring will not refresh the thirsty, unless with labour it be dipped out, and, with an effort, brought to the lips. Gold in the mines will not enrich us, unless dug out by patient toil, and persevering labor. Religion in the soul, gives neither peace nor joy, nor precious hope, unless brightened by the polish of daily prayer and ungrudging benevolence, with continual watching thereunto, and a waiting for the glorious adoption of the children of God. And Heaven's goodly inheritance will not be the nearer, for our much talking and prating about it, unless we view it as a prize, to be conferred at the end of a successful race; a victory, gained by a life-long battle; an inheritance, into which we enter at the close of a faithful minority;—a crown, as the reward of fidelity to the end; and a home for him who has been a pilgrim and a stranger in a strange land, having washed his robes and come up out of great tribulation.

Men may talk about stars, and not be astronomers; about money and not be rich; about heaven and not be going there. "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of the Father, who is in heaven," his shall be the prize, the victory, the inheritance, the crown and the rest forever.

## Expository Preaching.

It cannot be denied that many advantages are peculiar to the expository mode of preaching. This was certainly the most ancient, and it is, probably, the most effectual method of imparting religious instruction. Wherever a passage of Scripture is simply explained, and practically applied, it never fails to create a deep interest in those who hear. It encourages our people to search the Scriptures for themselves. It shows them how the Scriptures are to be read profitably. It gives a more enlarged view of Divine truth. And, in addition to this, it brings out from time to time, in an easy and natural manner, many minute, but important matters, both of faith, and practice, which might long, under another mode of preaching, have been left untouched.—[Rev. Charles Overton.]

In these few sentences there is much important truth. Beyond controversy, by far the most instructive, and therefore the most edifying and important mode of public tuition, is that which is based on the Scriptures. It was the maxim of Leighton himself, the very prince of commentators, as his exposition of the Epistle of Peter demonstrates, that long texts and short sermons were best. Bishop Burnet was of the same opinion, and so was the immortal Martin Luther himself. Such was the importance he attached to this exercise, that he expounded to his flock the Epistle of Galatians three several times. His luminous writings are largely expository, and three-fourths of the mighty mass which bears the honored name of Calvin is of the same description. Our Puritan fathers, though somewhat too wire-drawn, occasionally excelled in this exercise; and this has unquestionably conducted more than anything to originate Scotch acquaintance with the Word of God, and Scotch attachment to it. To a large extent still the practice of what is called "Lecturing" obtains in Scotland; multitudes of ministers expound every Lord's-day morning, and I would hold themselves guilty of a dereliction of duty if they did not. As it is often managed it is rather a dull process; but, notwithstanding, it is an instructive one, and it might be rendered lively, affectionate and impressive. As managed by the late Dr. Thompson, of Edinburgh, it had much of the power of the topical sermon. Always important, this exercise becomes now more so than ever, from the Po-

pish spirit which is getting among us. The extent of Biblical knowledge among Christian families will always depend more or less on the cast of the teaching to which they are accustomed.—*British Banner.*

## Piety must be Uniform.

Men have better views of Christianity than to suppose that it is good for every-day use; and when they see it only once in seven days, and that too, in the merely external form, they legitimately conclude that its professors do not possess it, as a great reality of life. Every one knows that religion is a new life, that it affords principles, motives and comforts for every day; that a Christian on Sunday, and no Christian during the week, is a contradiction. It is equally well-known that a real character is seen in little things; that the controlling principle shows itself in the minor duties; that the real interest which a man feels, manifests itself in the eye, the face, in conversation, in the social and private intercourse of life. There is really more true evidence of piety in a faithfulness to the minor duties of religion, than in an attention to those which are public, and excite the notice and applause of men. Nathaniel, bowing alone, beneath the shade of the fig-tree, evinces more piety than the Pharisee, who proclaims his devotion in the corner of the streets. Yonder temple is thronged with worshippers, who pour their golden offerings into the treasury.

"Amid that pompous crowd  
Of rich admirers, came a humble form—  
A widow, meek as poverty could make  
Her children. With a look of sad content,  
Her mite into the treasure-heap she cast;  
Then, timidly as bashful twilight, stole  
From out the temple. But her lonely gift  
Was witnessed by an eye, whose mercy views  
In motive, all that consecrates a deed  
To goodness. So he blessed the widow's mite  
Beyond the gift, abounding wealth bestowed."  
*Selected.*

## I Love the Bible.

*For its Divinity.*—It is the only book in the world that has God for its author. Its thoughts and words are all divine, all inspired by God's Spirit, and all penned by His finger. It comes with authority. It is a letter from heaven bearing the seal of God; a Father's letter to his children, breathing the tenderest love, and filled with messages of mercy. It has been assailed; but the more the infidel has assailed it as merely human, the more he has proved it to be entirely divine. The learning, the arguments, the art employed to overthrow it, have only inscribed its own title the more indelibly upon it,—"the word of God."

*For its Veracity.*—It contains the truth and nothing but the truth. Not a solitary falsehood or fable stains its pages. It is infallible in its very statements. Ministers may err, churches may err, but the Bible can never err nor deceive. He that appeals to it shall never be put to shame.

*For its Purity.*—It breathes the spirit of perfect holiness. It is unstained by a single blot. Alike in its origin, in its manner, and its design, it is absolutely pure. Neither in word nor thought has it the least shade of defilement.

## Keep the Heart Alive.

These words of Bernard Barton are good. Often good and wise men in other things have rendered their old age cheerless and unlovely, from a want of attention to them.

"The longer I live, the more expedient I find it to endeavour more and more to extend my sympathies and affections. The natural tendency of advancing years, is to narrow and contract these feelings. I do not mean that I wish to form a new and sworn friendship every day, to increase my circles of intimates; these are very different affairs. But I find it conduces to my mental health and happiness, to find out all I can which is amiable and loveable in those I come in contact with, and to make the most of it. It may fall very far short of what I was once wont to dream of; it may not supply the place of what I have known, felt, and tasted; but it is better than nothing; it seems to keep the feelings and affections in exercise; it keeps the heart alive in its humanity; and till we shall be all spiritual, this is alike our duty and our interest."

God has given us two hints what heaven is to be:—First, we are to see Christ; and, secondly, we are to be like him.