

STEALING PREACHING.

BY REV. DR. HUMPHREY.

If this is not a crime "to be punished by earthly judges," those who are guilty of it ought well to consider, how they can answer for it before "the Judge of all." But who steals preaching? Not the poor members of a congregation, who have nothing to pay.—"To the poor the gospel is preached without money and without price." There is, there certainly ought to be, no house of worship but that is open to the poor, as well as the rich. No church of any denomination, could by vote, or any equivalent action, shut them out, and not be held up to public reproach. I know they are *virtually* shut out from some aristocratic congregations, and I may, perhaps, have a few words to say about it another time.

Stealing preaching may seem a harsh epithet when applied to any body. It is not one of my own coining, and I am sorry there should ever have been any foundation, in this Christian land, for such a charge. In common parlance, those are chargeable with stealing preaching, who ordinarily attend public worship with the denomination to which they profess to belong, and though quite able to contribute their just proportion for the support of the gospel, refuse to pay any thing. Some such there are, and they are of two classes.—A few, in some denominations, take the ground, that the gospel ought to be preached without pecuniary charge to any body. With them, preachers who receive salaries, are "hirelings," "dumb dogs that cannot bark" without being paid for it. This class, I believe, is smaller than it was thirty years ago, and is still on the decrease. The other class admit that ministers have a just claim to a comfortable support, but refuse to contribute any thing on various accounts.

One man withdraws his support, because in settling the minister, he was not consulted as he thinks he ought to have been, or because he preferred somebody else. Another, because the pastor to whom he was once attached, has somehow offended him. Another, because the new church was set a few rods from where the old one stood. Another, because the minister of his choice has been dismissed without any good reason. Get who they will, he is determined never to pay any thing more, although if he withdraws himself, his family continue to attend, as before. Another, because somebody in the congregation has, as he alleges, cheated or injured him in some other way—and so on.

They do not *certify* to another sect.—They continue to attend public worship, as if nothing had happened, or if not, as I said just now, their families do, but they pay nothing, or next to nothing for the support of the minister. This, many of their neighbors, who are obliged to bear all the burden, will insist upon it, is *stealing preaching*, and I hardly know how to rebuke them.

Now I confess, it seems to me, that whether the epithet is too harsh or not, it is *dishonest*, (or if anybody likes the term better,) it is *sponging* money out of the society to receive the benefit and refuse to pay any thing for it. If a man changes his religious opinions, and in a regular way joins another sect, there is nothing to be said. "To his own master he standeth or falleth." But I cannot for the life of me see how it is honest, as between man and man, for one who is able to do his share, and still continues to "sit under the droppings of the sanctuary," and pay nothing.

This is the more grievous and reprehensible, when members of the church set such an example, as they sometimes do, to the great scandal of religion, as well as to their own spiritual detriment. I cannot see how they can expect to enjoy communion with God and "grow in grace," while they refuse to do any thing for the support of that gospel, in which all their hopes of heaven center. What if they have some reason to complain of the congregation, or of the church? It must be a very great injury to justify them in withholding their money for the support of the preacher, while they continue to sit under his ministrations.

Some churches have an article in their covenant, by which they mutually engage to contribute according to their ability for the support of public worship, so that if any one refuses, he breaks his covenant and falls under church censure. I can see no valid objection to inserting such an article in every covenant, and whether inserted or not, it is clear to me, that in the nature of the case, re-

fusing to help and support the gospel should be regarded and treated as a disciplinable offence.—*Evan.*

Ministerial Support.

THE MORNING STAR, an excellent paper sustained by the Free-Will Baptists of the States, has published an excellent article on the preventives which deter intelligent young men from entering the ministry. From it we select the following judicious remarks:

"It is the duty of every young man, in connection with other things, to consider whether the profession or employment in which he purposes to engage bids fair to support a family. Some Christians doubt if ministers ought to have families; but whatever sacrifice a young man may be disposed voluntarily to make for the cause's sake, it is certain that no church has a right to do what would be tantamount to forbidding to marry. In fact, in this day, when there is so much wealth in the churches, if they do not think enough of their religion to induce them to support a man and his family, we think they ought to suffer a famine,—not a lack of bread nor of water,—but of hearing the word of the Lord." Some churches, it must be allowed, are unable to give a support even to a single man, and many of such churches ought never to have been organized. Some of these feeble churches have, however, been the means of ordaining half a dozen ministers, and have sent them out into the world to starve or to do as they could, while the church itself does not support a single one of them. But were these feeble churches, like the Jews, disposed to give the tenth of their income, they would not find it so difficult to support ministers. Amongst the Jews ten men could enable a priest to live as well as themselves. Now, we know there are young men among us, who would be willing to make any reasonable sacrifice for the cause of Christ, even to the giving up of life itself, who do not feel that God calls them to preach to a Christian church, unless they can live as well as the average membership of that church.—But some of us *old ones* exclaim, "What impiety!" "We never thought about living when God called us to preach!" Very well; we have not lived very luxuriously, and, perhaps, if we had thought a little more, it would have been better for us. One thing, however, is certain: we now live in an age when thoughts bubble up in the minds of young men at a serious rate. The mistakes of the past have afforded them a lesson from which they will profit. No power in the universe can prevent it. The great question must speedily be settled, either in the affirmative or in the negative: *is a Christian ministry to be respected and supported in a professedly Christian land and by a Christian church*, or are the Lord's ministers to be beggars, and live on charity, while the Lord's churches enjoy the fat of the land? Intelligent, enterprising and pious young men will be governed, in relation to entering the ministry, by the practical settlement of this question.

Style in Public Speaking.

The pithy writer who calls himself "Old Gilbert," in an essay on the subject of speech-making and preaching, gives some of his views in the following paragraph:

We confess our likes for effective pulpit style. A minister is not a pulpit essayist. A minister is not a philosophical lecturer. A fine book is not a fine pulpit style. The heart is the minister of the desk. The best style is that which brings the intellect down through the heart, and melts all its precious metals in that hot furnace. If you want a specimen, take good old South—what edge is in all he said. Playful but not light; sharp but not sour—imaginative but not dramatic—using common words with uncommon power—speaking to you, as if he expected to convince you—full of earnestness—decided without dogmatism—witty but not vulgar. All his words strike you like the explosion of torpedoes.

Others are real artillery men—thundering and blazing. No objection to artillery men, if they will only throw balls; but it is rather funny to fire loud guns, and have very small shot.

Let every man keep his own natural style. All preachers can't preach alike. Personal taste should be rectified and then become personal law. How would Milton's old Gothic architectural style suit the simple-hearted Cowper? How would Charles Lamb look in Coleridge's Germanic idioms? How would Hall look in Chalmers' garb? How would

Wesley appear in Harvey's gaudy robes?—Let every man be natural. Nature is a very indefinite word now-a-days. If you have the volume of water of Niagara, then you may become a cataract, but a bucketful won't answer. If you have electricity, you may afford to thunder, but not without.

The Living Sacrifice.

The race of sacrificing saints has not yet departed from the face of the earth. Abraham was not the last believer who at God's command laid a beloved child on God's altar. Such deeds of love are yet enacted.

We have in our recollection at this moment one, who, like Anna of old "served God with fastings and with prayer night and day." To her, as unto Elkanah's praying wife, a son was given, the son of many hopes. He was the subject of baptismal vows and consecrating prayers. As he grows up to man's estate, the parent's eye beholds with joy the rising staff and stay on which her old age is to lean when "desire shall fail, and the grasshopper becomes a burden."

But at length a voice comes from heathen lands—the voice of perishing humanity—the death-cry of dying souls; and with it comes the command of God unto her, as she "waits for the redemption of Israel." "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and send him to the place of which I shall tell thee; the Lord hath need of him." These seem at first, to be stunning words. The struggle is a struggle of life and death; but the answer of faith is, "Here he is; do with him, Lord, as seemeth thee good." The sacrifice has been made. The parting word has been spoken amid heart-wrung tears and sobbings, and he has gone "bound in spirit" to heathen shores.

When many weary months and years have rolled on, the tidings come to that mother's ears from those distant lands, that God has owned the labors of that son by a copious return of blessings. Benighted souls have been enlightened; the dead have been restored to life; the darkened idolator has become a worshipper of Abraham's God; broken-hearted penitents have been guided by the widow's son to the Saviour—his mother's Saviour. That stripling, whom her faith laid on the missionary altar, has become the spiritual father of many souls, and in "her seed" a whole heathen people may yet be "blessed." "Merciful God!" she exclaims, with streaming eyes, and her "poor old heart" breaking with joy, "it is enough! it is enough! let now thine hand-maid depart in peace, for mine eyes have witnessed thy salvation!"

I will bless Them that bless Thee.

God has always shaped the destinies of nations to suit the prosperity of his Church; turning the hearts of kings, princes and people, to favor Zion as her need requires, or blotting out of existence the nation that should dare to raise its hand against the Lord's anointed ones. It is awfully grand to contemplate the exactitude with which this declaration has been verified, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." And it is a remarkable fact, that no people or nation, since the call of Abraham, have lifted their hand to oppress or maltreat the true Church, and not, in their turn, fallen under the ban of the divine displeasure. Did Luban prosper after he defrauded Jacob of his wages? Did the Egyptians prosper after they began to afflict the people of God? Was it well with the Moabites, who refused to let Israel pass, or to relieve their necessities with bread and water? Where now are those mighty empires that once presumed to raise the arm of oppression against Israel? Egypt, Moab, Ammon, the nations of Palestine, proud Babylon, imperial Rome? So shall it be with the King's enemies? Has Spain ever prospered since she drew the sword of persecution against the seed of Jacob? Has the white flag of peace since waved a truce to heaven's indignation? Where are those kingdoms that, during the bloody reign of the Beast, devoured fifty millions of the saints of the Most High—burning, torturing, impaling, butchering, without mercy, the unoffending children of God? On the other hand, how was it with Abimelech, who proffered his generous hospitality to the patriarch Abraham? How with the Egyptians, while they favored the heirs of promise? And how went the world with Obed-edom while the ark of the Lord found a resting place in his house?—*Read's Hand of God in History.*

Covenant with the Eyes.

The following remarks from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Cummings, on this subject, we commend to the attention of our young readers, with the hope that they may derive profitable instruction from them: for in the moral culture of youth, at the present day, more than ever, there is need of "line upon line and precept upon precept."

"The eye is a most beautiful and exquisitely constructed organ—the inlet of all our perceptions of beauty, color, symmetry, and many others, to which we owe pleasing sensations. It is the avenue, by which enters most of our knowledge of external things, and a great portion of our enjoyment. Who that has looked at 'the heavens, the work of God's hand, the moon and stars which He has ordained,' and experienced the emotions which these shining, moving orbs are fitted to awaken, would part with an organ which was the medium of such revelations to his mind, of objects transcendently brilliant in themselves, and speaking emphatically of uncreated glory?"

Who, that has looked on "the human face divine," whether it be the awe-inspiring visage of the veteran servant of Christ, or the freshness and beauty of youth, and especially the loved countenances of the domestic circle, from the infant to the matron, would voluntarily, part with his eyes; or have them sealed against the entrance of light, unless the alternative were voluntary rebellion against God? And yet the eyes may prove the occasion of sin. Hence "Job made a covenant with his eyes."

So also must every one who would maintain his innocence. There are times when their use must be controlled—objects upon which they must not fasten themselves—they must not be allowed to gaze; or they will become the inlets of sin the most polluting, of deeds the most bloody and cruel."

The In-dwelling Word.

Many blessed consequences flow from having the words of Scripture in the memory.—We cannot always have our Bibles in our hands; especially if our calling leads us to manual labor.

When you walk by the way, good thoughts will be promoted, and evil thoughts will be shut out by some good word of God turned over in the mind. Choose your text in the morning with this view.

When you are at work, you may derive unspeakable profit and comfort from ruminating on some savory promise. It may, by the blessing of God, do you as much good as a sermon.

When you are at prayer, texts of Scripture in the memory will aid your devotion, by awakening right feelings, suggesting seasonable requests, and prompting to suitable expressions. Thus you join "the Word of God and prayer."

When you retire to rest, or lie awake during the night watches, or sit beside the sick or dying, you may taste the sweetness of many a gracious promise, and may say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

When you are in pain, fear, sorrow, or sudden peril, one verse of the Bible may be like a star to the benighted mariner.

Oh, be persuaded to make it a part of every day's duty, to commit to memory at least one new verse; and fail not to store up like treasures in the minds of your beloved children.—*Chr. Intelligencer.*

Set your Affections on Things Above.

As the bee is ever on the wing between the flowers and its honey cells, so should our affections ever be going forth in prayer to God without and returning to God within. Amidst all the busiest scenes of our pilgrimage, we may be moving to and fro on the rapid river of mental prayer; that prayer which lays the whole burden of the heart on a single sigh.—A sigh breathed in the spirit, though inaudible to all around us but God, may sanctify every conversation, every event in the history of the day. Prayer will be fatiguing to flesh and blood, it uttered aloud, and sustained long.—But there is an undercurrent of prayer, that may run continually under the stream of our thoughts and never weary us. Such prayer is the silent breathing of the Spirit of God, who dwells in our hearts; it is the temper and habit of the spiritual mind; it is the pulse of our life, "which is hid with Christ in God;" it is the consciousness of the divine nature communicated to us in regeneration. Prayer of this kind may be breathed "without ceasing."—*Rev. W. H. Hewitson.*