

PREACHING FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY.

We desire to second the motion of our correspondent, whose article appeared in our last paper, to the effect, that ministers have been sadly delinquent, in the matter of instructing the people, as to the duty of giving a liberal support to the ministry. It is self-evident, that this is a part of the whole counsel of God, which ministers should not shun to declare. And yet, almost with one consent, they have shunned to declare it. A sermon earnestly unfolding the doctrines taught by Paul, in 1 Cor. 9th, is a rare phenomenon. Who ever heard or saw such a thing? But why not?—It is a part of the Scriptures? It is a prominent doctrine in the Scriptures. It is a doctrine vitally bearing on the welfare of the churches. Then why not preach it? The truth is, those ministers who have had a full support from their people, have seen no need of preaching it; and those who have had stinted salaries, have feared the imputation, that they were pleading their own cause. And those who doubted whether they had enough or not, have feared that their preaching would be taken as an intimation, that they were not satisfied. But these are narrow views of the subject. Irrespective of individual occasions, broad interests of the church require, that the people should be well instructed on this subject.

Of the many branches of evil, that flow from the deficiency of this kind of instruction from the pulpit, we will name only three. And the first is, an unequal distribution of the burden of supporting the ministry. There are, in all our churches, some, who know, and are willing to do their duty in this particular. And if all were like minded, the task in most cases would be easy. But in many congregations, a very considerable portion of the people have a very defective sense of obligation in this matter. They would be ashamed, to shrink from paying a common debt; but the dues to the minister, they do not recognize as a debt. They never have entered into a Scriptural conception of the matter, and hence are willing to contribute as little as possible, for this. So that their ignorance of the subject increases the burdens of those who know, and are willing to do their duty. And doubtless, the ability of societies to support the ministry, in many instances, is considerably curtailed by just this kind of ignorance. And if the delinquency of ministers has been the occasion of this ignorance, and if the results of it have recoiled upon them in their being straitened for support, it were well, if their straits would remind them of a very obvious duty.

The second evil growing out of this ignorance of the people, and this delinquency of ministers, is developed in the estrangement of many from the house of God. While we are investigating the subject of home heathenism, it may be well to inquire, whether among the causes of estrangement of people from the sanctuary, there is not a prejudice against a salaried ministry. Many, in their dense ignorance of christian principles, and in the blindness of their hearts, will be found to be opposed to the preaching of the Gospel, because it is not done by angels, or some other class of beings, as independent of human support. And nothing is more natural, than that this prejudice should have sprung up, as the offspring of ignorance of what is right and scriptural on the subject, and that that ignorance should be the result of a want of a correct public sentiment, touching the subject, generated in pulpit instruction. If ministers had been more industrious on this point, and thrown around them a light in which the truth and right of this matter must be seen, not only by their own hearers, but by those in neighborly intercourse with them, this prejudice now so hurtful, would have a vastly diminished power. If the ministry had laid aside all false delicacy, and given instruction on this theme as fully and lucidly as Paul has given it, and thus giving the popular mind a mastery of the subject, there would not have been room for this prejudice, to do its work in multiplying our home heathen. And many doubtless, would have been now in the house of God, whose Sabbaths usually find them in the haunts of idleness or dissipation, expatiating there upon the odiousness of a hireling ministry.

The third evil has been felt in thinning the ranks of the ministry, as well as of the congregation. Christian enterprises linger for want of ministers to carry them forward.—Fields white for the harvest suffer for the want

of reapers, and young men are becoming more and more reluctant to enter the ministry.—The number in course of education for the ministry is now less, than it was twelve years ago, though the field for their employment has doubled in breadth and in the urgency of its demands. And why is this? Without pretending to name all the causes of it, we say, that one of the causes is a complaint multiplied on the public ear, that ministers in general have but a meagre support, and are filling a thankless office through an anxious and contentious life. The young men who should enter the ministry have eyes to see, and judgment to draw conclusions. And they see, that the cases in which even able societies give what is a just and competent support, are the exceptions and not the rule—that there is, in the aggregate, a great amount of injustice of people in dealing with ministers—making their condition hard and their relations precarious. Say if you please, that this does not hold the young men excused for disobeying an obvious call to enter the ministry. It is enough to reply, that this cause, acting on the imperfectly sanctified minds of pious young men, is enough in many instances, to deter from the ministry many, who if they had entered it and developed the graces of the Spirit, might have become burning and shining lights in it. So that the whole interests of the church suffer, and the whole progress of the Gospel is retarded, by the unnecessarily forbidding condition of the ministry. And yet the cause of this state of things is traceable, in no small part, to that false delicacy of ministers, which has held them silent on an important theme, and prevented the formation of a correct public sentiment.—*Puritan Recorder.*

Pastor and People.

It is a solemn and beautiful association—that between a pastor and his people. The pastor has devoted himself to the office of bringing messages from God to the people; the people have pledged themselves to the receiving reverently the communications of eternity from the lips of the pastor. Woe unto the one if he be faithless and sluggish; woe unto the others if they be inattentive or unbelieving. Woe unto the pastor if he be sluggish or faithless! Of all the duties that have ever been put upon man, there is not one to which is attached a title of the responsibility which hangs around the preaching of the gospel. At a time when the judgment is sufficiently matured to decide fairly on the solemnities of the ministerial office, and an unqualified avowal that he thinks himself moved by the Spirit of God, the clergyman is set apart to the services of the sanctuary, and binds himself to the work of feeding the flock of the Redeemer. The faith which he professes to believe, he must teach it till he die. The vigor of his understanding, the labor of his studies, the fervency of his prayers, all must be gathered into one hearty dedication, and given unreservedly to the mighty work of turning sinners from the error of their ways. And if there be a pause in the arduous career—if there be treachery, or time-serving, or cowardice; or if the base desire of sordid gain, and the unhallowed lust of reputation, intrude themselves into the seat of sacred functions: O! then there breathes not upon the broad face of the earth, the man more deserving than this misnamed minister of Christ, to become a mark for the finger of indignant scorn, and to be wept over and bewailed by all that is holy and noble in creation. Woe unto the people if they be inattentive or unbelieving. Sermons die not. Every means, every opportunity, every warning, every lesson, they are registered in the book of the doomsday; and when the throne is set, and the startled dead swarm up from the sepulchres they shall stand out as witnesses against the careless and impenitent—and then shall it be seen that a faithful ministry, if it lead not a man to be a candidate for glory, is as a millstone around his neck, dragging him down into the depths of perdition.—*Melville.*

The Dead.

There is something startling in the manner, in which God designates the impenitent—DEAD in trespasses and in sins. In a more fearful sense than if his lifeless corpse was already coffined, is the sinner dead. Dead he must be, or how could he be so sullenly regardless of his highest spiritual interests. He would not lie in his chamber, till his limbs were cindered in the flames, unless he were dead; and if not dead, how could he disregard the grave, the judgment, and eternal fire? If not dead,

how could he be so insensible of God, his Maker and Benefactor—how so unmoved by the dying love of his Redeemer? He must be dead, or the word of God, flashing terror from every page; or the voice of Providence, uttering admonition from every bed of pain, and from the fresh grave of every acquaintance; or some of the influences which are operating upon him in their mightiest play, would melt or alarm him. Between the song of heaven, and the wail of hell; between the voices of angels and the shrieks of fiends; between the smoke and terror of Sinai, and the blood and groans of Calvary, every muscle would not otherwise remain stiffened, and every pulsation stopped.

Ah! it is too true—the sinner is dead.—And there are parents of many children, who have not a living child; friends, who, of a large circle, have not a single living friend. Life and death are strangely and sadly mingled together. In the family; in the neighborhood; in the church; on the same seat; at the same table; locked in every close relationship, and bound by every tender tie, the living and the dead abide together. Oh! should God strike the life from each body that contains a dead soul, how would mourning and agony clothe the community—how would the groans of bitter lamentation be heard from almost every house. How many would be fatherless—how many childless—how many widows—how many friendless. Youth, lovely even in death, would be scattered over the valley, and numbered with the slain, and the strength of manhood would be withered in dissolution. But what is the death of the body to the death of the soul! Oh! if a prophet might weep over the valley strewn with the dead of his people, how may he that is abiding under the pressure of the Almighty's curse—DEAD in sin, be baptized with the tears of pity; and wept and wailed over, as more worthy of Christian sympathy than the poorest son of suffering disease.—*N. Y. Evan.*

The Heart—The Heart.

No error is more common or deceitful than to take a correct exterior for true piety. Holiness, true devotion and piety have their seat within. They take hold on the soul, and constitute the character of the internal man. To trust to outward rights and ceremonies for justification, is to die in sin and lose the soul at last. He who experiences not the power of the gospel on his soul, renovating, sanctifying, fitting it up for the home of the Holy Ghost, but trusts to the popular virtues, has caught the shadow for the substance, and has no hope. He whose soul is never drawn out in ardent aspiration after God and holiness, but rests satisfied with present attainments, has but a cheerless prospect beyond the grave. He who leans not on the hallowed cross, and draws from thence his hope of justification and eternal life, but rests on the virtue of his own works, has overlooked the grand secret of piety, and awaits a sad disappointment. God, with whom we have to do, is the searcher of hearts and the trier of reins. He, saith the Apostle, is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter. This is with God the test question; the judgment question, how is it with the heart? Does the holy fire of love burn upon its altar? Does the light of truth beam there? Does grace reign unrivalled? Reader, see that your religion is genuine, heartfelt, soul-renewing, life-giving.—*Morning Star.*

The Centurion at the Cross.

Are there any of us who have shrunk from confessing Christ before the world? Has the fear of man been a snare? Have we quailed under the frown of power? Have we shrunk from the fear of ridicule? Let this centurion reprove our consciences. Let the timid Christian learn a lesson from the boldness of the converted heathen. Or, are there any who have thought too meanly of Christ; who have seen no beauty in him that they should desire him; who have acknowledged him as a righteous man, but not as the Son of God? Let them consider how the hearts of these soldiers were melted even at the very foot of the cross itself; even in the humiliation of that hour, they were enabled to see the true character and dignity of the Lamb that was slain. The Jews remained strangers to it! those heathen saw, in that stupendous sacrifice, the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation, to

every one that believeth. So it is ever with the true child of God who is taught of the Spirit. That which is a mystery to the world, a stumbling-block to pride, an offence to the natural man, is to him, the foundation of all religious truth; he rejoices in confessing the faith of Christ crucified; he ceases not from the open profession of his Lord and his God.—*Bishop of Winchester.*

Experimental Religion.

Is experimental Christianity, then, the one thing needful? Is it the one thing needful to the perishing sinner, of whom inspiration hath said, that he "must be born again," or "never enter into the kingdom of God?" Is it the one thing needful to the prosperity of Zion, to the strengthening of her stakes, and the lengthening of her cords, and the beauty of her appearance? Is it the one thing needful to the joy of angels, when they descend from their native heavens to witness what is passing among the dwellers on earth? Is it one thing needful to the ultimate triumph of the Redeemer's meditation, to the preparation for that jubilee which shall be kept when the ransomed are all gathered home?—Then let the Church fall upon her knees, and unitedly supplicate a revival of experimental Christianity. While she clings to the truth with undiminished pertinacity, and labors to the extent of her power to promote sound doctrine, let her regard all this as subsidiary to the interests of vital godliness. Let her renew her zeal to send the Gospel abroad to earth's remotest bounds, but with every effort in this hallowed cause, let her connect a prayer that the power of the Gospel may spread with its light, till the last moral desert on earth shall disappear, and the angels shall again take up the song of "Glory to God in the highest," "because Christianity, daughter of the skies, has done her perfect work."—*W. B. Sprague, D. D.*

Obscure Passages in the Bible.

A gentleman who visits with great regularity the Philadelphia Penitentiary, the inmates of which his piety prompts him to instruct, had given a Bible to a convict, who would ask him, at each visit, with much shrewdness, some difficult questions formed from passages of the sacred volume; each time declaring he would not go on, if this was not first explained to him. The gentleman was unable to persuade him that it would be best for him to dwell upon those passages which he could easily understand, and which plainly applied to his situation. After many fruitless trials to induce the convict to this course, his friendly teacher said, What would you think of a very hungry man, who had not eaten a morsel of food for the last twenty-four hours, and was asked by a charitable man to come in and set down at a richly covered table, on which were large dishes of choice meat, also several covered ones, the contents of which the hungry man did not know. Instead of satisfying his exhausted body with the former, he raises one cover after another, and insists in finding out what these unknown dishes are composed of. In spite of all the advice of the charitable man to partake first of the more substantial dishes, he dwells with obstinate inquiry on nicer compounds, until overcome with exhaustion, he drops down. What do you think of such a man? "He is a fool," said the convict, "and I will be one no longer. I understand you well."—*Dr. Leiber's Essay on Penal Law.*

THE BIBLE DANGEROUS.—Yes, the Bible is, indeed, a dangerous book but for whom? It is dangerous for infidelity, which it confounds; dangerous for sin, which it curses; dangerous for the world, which it condemns; dangerous for Satan, whom it dethrones; dangerous to false religions, which it unmasks; dangerous, aye, highly dangerous to every church that dares withhold it from the people, and whose criminal impostures and fatal illusions it brings to light.

HUMILITY.—Many a poor man makes a bright Christian; God keeps him humble that he may dwell in his heart, and that the beams of his grace may shine in his life. The evening star, how bright it shines, yet it is lowest in the heavens. So God keeps you low that you may shine bright. Where do the rivers run that fertilize the soil?—not on the tops of the hills, but in the vale beneath.—So, if you would taste of the streams which gladden the city of God, you must abide in the vale of humility.—*Life of Rowland Hill.*