THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

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THE PASTOR'S OFFICE AND RELATION TO HIS CHURCH.

Being impressed with the importance of the Pastor's office and the vital union he bears to the church, we beg leave to address to you dear Brethren on this subject, this our Circular Letter.

THE PASTOR'S OFFICE.

Of all callings that of the Pastor or under-shepherd is the most sacred. In its origin it is divine. It belongs distinctively to God and Christianity.

The Protestant Pastor goes forth, not a mere professional official or humanly appointed priest but a divinely commissioned and God called laborer in the Vineyard of his Lord. His credentials are from on high. " Called not of men or by men but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from on high." He who goes forth upon mere human authority, armed alone with intellectual power will not slay the Goliath's who defy the Lord's host.]

The Pastor's hope of success is, that God has called and qualified him, and hence will approbate and bless him in the work.

THE PASTOR'S OBJECT.

is to bring men to Christ; the noblest that can occupy the mind. This implies more than adding names to a churchbook, or even the gathering in of sinners. The Pastor may toil, unaided by the church : he may see many brought into the field, and yet Zion may languish and the spiritual life's blood of the church be at a low ebb.

The building up of Christian character is as important a work as the conversiou of sinners. If the Pastor succeed in developing a healthy Chistian life in the Church, it in turn, becomes a co-worker with him in the spread of gospel truth, and in attaining among, or in, others the higher Christian life, needful to be meet for the Master's use. In this work his own religious life and example will be a standard : hence his influence in society should be a leavening force for the Saviour, having for his highest aim the glory of God through Christ Jesus.

He is to feed the flock which Christ purchased, and protect them from the many dangers to which they are exposed. To do this, he must have a perpetual oversight, and care of, the church. The Pastor is an ambassador of God; sent by, and living in communion with Jehovah. carrying offers of salvation from God to man, and deeply interested in the reconciliation of the parties. Again, he is to be a teacher; 'one apt to teach', able to instruct the people. In order for souls to grow in the divine life they must receive divine instruction.

In this work he deals, not with his own opinions, or even human wisdom, but with divine truth as an irresistible force. In the power of that truth he should have a sublime confidence, knowing that "My word shall not return to me void." He is a leader of the Lord's host and governor of men hence to succeed he needs not only divine help but executive ability. In viewing the Pastor's office we get an idea of the sacred relation he bears to his flock. He stands in their midst, a member of their body and their presiding officer. They have chosen him for their spiritual instructor. They acknowledge that he possesses superior gifts and ability to teach. They have accepted him as God's ambassador to them, to settle the great concerns of eternity; and when laying hands upon him have virtually said that "God has called and qualified him to discharge among us the sacred duties of his office." Thus, with him, they have entered into the most binding and solemn relations, pledging him Christian fidelity and temporal support while he ministers to their spiritual wants.

church take hold of all be counselled by a man of whom they know little or nothing; when in doing it they regret the counsel of a Pastor, who has proved worthy of their confidence. Let the churches beware of those men and ever remember their first obligation is to their Pastors, the men of their choice

But very much of this unpleasantness arises from the idea, first on the part of the church, that it is an independent body having a right to ordain any man and unsettle him at pleasure. And second, on the part of the denomination that the man thus unsettled is a regular minister of the denomination, and it is our duty to accept him as such and receive his counsel; and though we have a Pastor yet we are independent and not obligated to heed his gifts. Some churches willingly claim the Pastor as their servant but ignore the fact that it is their duty to be subject to the gifts bestowed on him, of the Lord. If he give counselor express an opinion on an important subject, he is soon told that he is the servant of the church and hence has no voice. Thus they reject the very gifts that they have acknowledged God has called him to exercise in their midst. He is the servant of Christ and not of the church. "One is your master" even Christ. No church is independent of, or complete without its Pastor. We believe in church independence but we should draw a distinction between independence and license. Is it church independence for us to ordain a man, keep him a few months, and then turn him upon the body of other churches of the same faith. To ignore their counsel in important maters and obligate them to endorse our acts and judgement? It may be independence, but it does not, to us appear, reasonable. Is it consistent for the minority to deliberate for, and regret the counsel of, the majority upon the most vital questions? But it may be urged that the church deliberates for itself, and not for the denomination.

Then I ask what right has that church, to, in a few months, turn that man upon the denomination and under what obligation are we to accept him as a regular minister? Many of our churches appear to think they ordain men for the denomination which is inconsistent with their idea of church independence. The same independence claimed by a church in ordaining a Pastor, granted to the denomination as a body, releases it from relation to that man thus called, and obligation to accept the judgement of that independent church. Also the courtesy which obligates the denomination to recognize the deliberations of a church obligates that church to counsel the denomination in such deliberations.

Let, we say, the circumstances and needs of a church with the man of their choice for Pastor be presented before the intelligence of our denomination. Let the Brethren conslut not the momentary feelings of church or candidate, but upon what will ultimately benefit the cause of God and be for his glory.

And it appears to me that the church refusing to be thus counselled, abuses its independence and fails to exhibit the spirit of Christ. " In the multitude of counsellers there is.

2. It is conjugal care. In the Lord of glory, in the person of the Son of God, the union is formed. "Thy No. 27 Peters Street. Maker is thy husband." We read of the "bride of the Lamb's wife." The figure is expressive of closeness of interest, and warmth of affection. The heavenly Bridegroom supplies all the wants of his bride out of his own fulness, protecting her by his power; she cannot be poor while he is rich, nor weak while he is strong, and, guided all through the wilderness, she shall at lest come out of it leaning upon her Beloved. Your Husband careth for you.

3. It is regal care. The Lord of glory is the King of saints, and his subjects are brought to his throne to confide in his care and rest in his continued protection and all-wise government. He has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, and says, "Where I reign you shall reign, and when I sit on my throne you shall sit down with me." Your King careth for you.

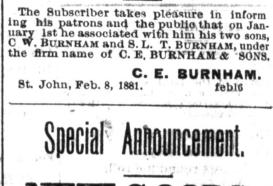
4. It is pastoral care. David said, the "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." He remembered how he had led his flock by the still waters-how he had made them to lie down in shady nooks by the side of the river-how in the summer's heat he had led them on the high hills that they might have the cool air, and how, when the winter set in, he had led them into the valleys that they might be hidden from the cold. Well could he remember the tender care with which he protected the lambs and carried them, how carefully he tended the wounded flock, and how he went after and brought back the wanderers. All this David well remembered, and then looking up he said "TheLord is my Shepherd." And he is thine, thou weak and trembling Manufacturers and Deallamb-thine, thou wayward, wander ing sheep; and all this will he do for thee, for he says-"I know my sheep, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," Your Shepherd careth

for you. This care is perpetual; in all the various difficulties, in all the multiplied sorrows, in all the tribulation through which you may pass, remember, thou pilgrim to a better land that he who has borne thy sins carries thy sorrows, and bids thee cast thy care upon him with the promise that he will sustain thee; and never shall a time come when it will cease



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But alas; In how many instances are these relations severed and obligations broken.

For example : A man goes into a community where there is a small Baptist church. He can talk fluently and possesses the faculty of exciting the emotional nature ; and, donbtless as a lay member would be useful in the church. He commences work. The people become interested, many, are excited, and no doubt some are benefited. The community is enthusiastic, not so much for the cause, as for the new man. Their sympathies for a time dwarf their judgment. They feel that the Lord of the harvest has sent down to them a shining light. They must have the man ordained. It is almost like sacrilege to dissent from them even in opinion. They know of neighboring churches who will, upon good grounds, oppose the movement ; hence they invite those whom they believe will comply with their wishes. The council convenes; the man is ordained and in our religious periodicals appears a glowing account of the ability of the new Pastor, and the magnitude and power of his work. But soon the excitement subsides ; the interest is gone, and things appear as they really are. The church awakes to the painful truth that their Pastor is not angelic, but human, and has wants like other men. They also realize that he cannot supply their needs and that he is void of those qualifications indispensible to success as a Pastor. In their better judgement they say " he is not the man we took him to be." and in this they are right.

The new Pastor soon learns that it is to his interest as well as that of the people's, to seek another field of labor, or, as is often the case other employment. Thus a man is turned out upon the denomination and we have to accept him as a God called and properly equipped Minister of Jesus Christ. Such a Baptist church, counselled by two or three others of similar views, has transacted business of the most sacred and important character, and the denomination as an intelligent body has to accept, yea, even suffer from the acts of said church, yes, we say suffer. Some of our most worthy Pastors have been driven from fields of usefulness, and their influence destroyed in said fields, by such men.

I ask what right has any man, thus leaving the church that ordained him, to interfere with a settled Pastor? And what claim to consistency or even honesty, can the church or any individual member of it make, who becomes the abettor of such men, in unsettling their pastor, with whom they have entered into the most binding obligations. How can a safety." Such sacred relations should not be entered, when the church is being borne along on the flood-tide of excitement, but with calm deliberation and in the fear of God. Let the church consider not merely the present feeling, but their future condition and necessity. They should know that the man of their choice has gifts adapted to their particular needs. Let them also fully know the wants of the man thus qualified and called of God. The Pastor feels his call is for life and let the church feel that upon that basis he becomes their permanent guide and spiritual teacher : that to them he is united by solemn ties.

"And we beseech you Brethren to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." 1. Thes. 5: 12-13. "But watch thou in all things en dure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." 2. Tim. 4:5.

JOSEPH CAHILL.

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT BY THE WAY.

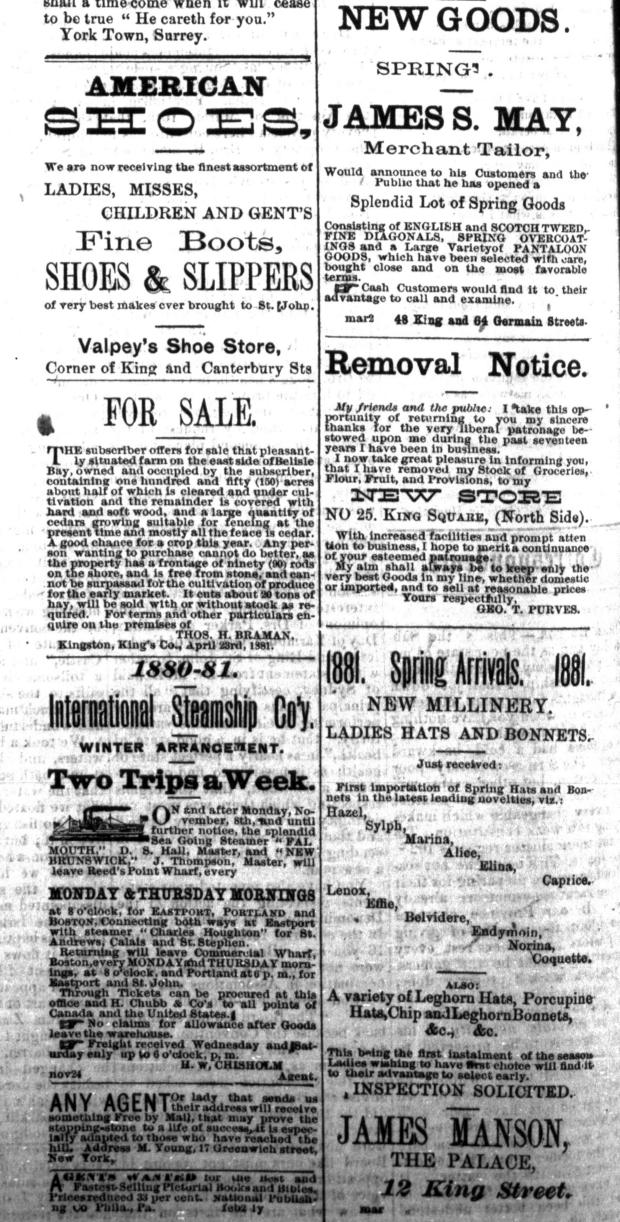
BY RFV. J. E. CRACKNELL. "He careth for you." 1 Pet. v. 7.

Sweet thought ; believer, Jesus cares for you. Obscure, despised, unworthy though you deem yourself to be, the Lord has interest in you.

Are we not tempted sometimes to think that we are too small, too insignificant to be under the notice, or to occupy the concern or attention, of the God of heaven-that it is inconsistent with his dignity to be occupied with the petty interests of his creatures? Infidel philosophy may argue thus, but what a contrast with the teaching of him who said, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God ? And consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Plainly does the Great Teacher affirm that, while there is nothing in conscious or inanimate nature that is too vast for his power, there is nothing too minute for his care. He controls the greatest, he appoints the least. He is God all-sufficient ; nothing can exist without his support, nothing can transpire without his knowledge, nothing can result without his permission.

While God cares for all, and "is good to all," he specially eareth for you, O humble believer in Jesus, bought with the Saviour's blood, and sealed with the earnest of the Spirit as a child of God, and an heir of glory. There is not an angel in heaven for whom God so cares as he cares for you. Yes, you, who feel sometimes that you are alone, unloved, uncared-for, unthought-of. We too much lose ourselves into the crowd, and merge ourselves into the mass, forgetting our individual interest in the special care of a covenant-keeping God. May the Holy Spirit enable each believing reader to realize the personal application of this precious truth so rich in consolation. He careth for you.

What kind of care is this ? how may we describe it ? 1. It is paternal care. " Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." How full of meaning the Saviour's words, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Knowing whoweth that ye have need of all these things." Anowing your wants, how well able is he to supply them, seeing that the "gold and the silver are his, and the cattle upon a thou-sand hills;" and not more able than willing, for he is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who changeth not. The most friendly breast will one day cease to feel, and those hands that often ministered to our necessities will one day be cold in death ; but when 'my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Your heavenly Father careth for you.



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