

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE II.

THE LIMITS OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

BY THE REV. EDWARD N. PACKARD, SYRACUSE, NEW YORK.

THAT there is an increased pressure of responsibility coming upon the ministry of the present day grows more and more painfully evident. Respecting this pressure two diverse tendencies are manifest: on the one hand, there is less to favor the ministry in the social and intellectual life of the world; while, on the other, there is more thrust upon it inside the church. Men in general rely less upon their spiritual fathers and teachers for guidance, while they exact more of them as managers of religious business. The minister fills too small a place in the whole life of man and too large a place in the church. This has come about gradually through many complex causes, but chiefly through the departure from the primitive pattern of church organization, and the refusal or the inability of the laity to do their share of the work. There are certain simple duties in the Christian life that are its unchanging mold. Religion is the dress of faith. Its place is in the outward duties such as Christ performed as our pattern. No division of labor in the church can release the members, as a whole and individually, from these duties; yet they are constantly neglected by the church at large or done through substitutes. It is not an exaggeration to say that not a few seem to regard the pastor and the women of the churches as alone responsible for the care of the sick, the comfort of the sorrowful, for carrying sympathy to the downcast and outcast, showing social attention to strangers, for the nurture of the young, and restraint upon the law-breaking classes. For this, so some

imagine, the minister is *hired* as the coachman is,—using the word with no intentional indignity, but with the same underlying conception of his office. He is a substitute in Christian warfare. He is a paid overseer of a religious concern. It may not be most convenient for him or the people that he should be made the settled pastor; and anon the sheep are without care because the hireling fleeth. The laymen are not idle, but busy, too busy and too heavily weighted with business cares to have strength and leisure, as they believe, to visit the fatherless and the widows, to converse with persons on religion, to know the stranger in his home and family, and to have a real share in the oversight of the church.

It is not intended to imply that this comes from lay ambition, or covetousness, or strife for place and consideration amongst men. All are on a common level of consecration and of worldliness, of success and failure. The real causes are deep. They are ultimately moral and they affect insensibly the whole world. Christian life to-day may be as good and wholesome as at any period since the days of the apostles, but it is almost grotesquely unlike the early pattern. The gap between the church and the masses has never been so great as the gap between the church and Christ. Possibly if we considered this more honestly we should see fewer deaf children sitting in the market-place. The constant need is of more holiness and more practical sense in Christian work. The men in the churches are working in this overburdened world at unreasonable hours, knowing that to cease doing so is simply to drop out of one's place and not recover it; working hard up into the sacred hours of the Lord's Day or quite through them. Often, when less enslaved by business, they are compelled to drag a wearied body, and offer a preoccupied mind, to the worship of the Almighty. Or, if they are independent, to use the common phrase, and have capital and are employers, their responsibilities and working hours only increase, unless they are well towards the top places in business. It is easy

to say of the capitalists that they should relinquish a part of their load so as to acquire time for Christian service. It may be that this is impossible: the whole may be endangered if a part goes from their hands,—such is the remorseless grind of the business world in this latter half of the nineteenth century. And still, in spite of it, we must have more lay helpers if we are to see our divinely appointed service performed. The early churches were chiefly made up of the laboring classes, and yet they had time to work for Christ and to evangelize much of the world of their day. Out of such a condition of things, with laymen doing little personal work, it is no wonder that there is a call for men in the ministry who are good pastors, who can attract the young, and keep hold of the strangers, and preach with seraphic eloquence.

As to the work of woman, whatever may be true in politics, she need have no fear as to her sphere in the church. It will be large enough. The foreign missionary interest has largely passed into the busy hands of Christian women. They read the intelligence, prepare the missionary concert, raise—in some churches at least—most of the money for foreign missions. They pray and call on the husband, father, and son to commute through the contribution box. They do most of the social work of the church in the homes of the people, while men are losing the art of being social in one another's houses. Women do the chief work in keeping the temperance issues alive. Perhaps more men would come to church if the men of the church did more to induce them to come. Ministers are popularly associated with women because their brethren among the laity demit their own responsibility to such an extent that church activity looks feminine.

Besides all this, the weakened conscience as to church obligations throws a wholly needless burden upon pastors. Take the one item of neglect to unite with new churches, when residence has been transferred from one locality to another. Forty per cent. of the non-attendants at church in a certain

community were found to have old and unused letters of dismission in their pockets.

In getting the subject before us, consider also the second service on the Lord's Day. Out of the seminary comes a young Timothy to be ordained and set over a church. But for what? To preach the Word? Undoubtedly. But he soon finds that he has been appointed, by usage at least, to preach two sermons a week, and that the second one must be preached to a half-empty house. This is not a calamity it may be, but it is an annoyance and a burden. He feels himself responsible before God for the creation of an earnest and interested evening audience. Such, however, are the habits of the congregation that in the morning he comes home from the pulpit with his mouth filled with laughter; in the evening, with sawdust. In the morning he may be something of a Pharisee; in the evening he says, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Under these depressions he is tempted to enter the "novelty business," and to hire men-singers and women-singers, and that of all sorts. He may resort to stereopticons or paintings to catch the popular eye. He will choose perhaps startling themes, and do anything, in a word, that is not positively secular and wholly irreverent, to induce the very Body of Christ over whom the Holy Ghost has made him overseer, to attend to its own business and support the preaching of the Word.

Against these methods of calling together the people I have nothing to say in criticism. A living dog is better than a dead lion. Respectable death, dullness, indifference to the situation,—these are not apostolic nor Christ-like. But there is some better way for the churches than to leave upon their pastors the load of creating audiences. This should be shared by the church. If more souls can be reached at the evening hour in some unconsecrated spot, some street corner or park or theatre or public hall, why not resort to them, rather than die of inanition, or resort to novelties that soon weary and leave all as before?

But our young brother is called to preach in a church?

Yes! And he may find upon it a debt which he has been secured to raise by his genius and toils and by his personal attractions. If the community is small, the forces weak and few, gladly will he lend himself to the work, and large will be his reward. But imagine him in an ambitious and rising town, with rival spires and organs, and facilities for oyster suppers; how hard he must hoist on the mortgaged elegancies and conveniencies! Whitfield was buried under the old church at Newburyport. Many a good man whose name is not Whitfield has had his ministry buried under a highly architectural and elegant monument which he unwittingly built for himself!

Possibly, however, the hardest task set before the neophyte pastor is the creation of a fresh and abiding spiritual life amid the exacting and well-nigh overwhelming demands of the world upon those to whom he ministers. Respecting this we may adopt the striking words of another in his address to the people at an installation service: "In ye olden time when furnaces were unknown in the churches, and people brought living coals in footstoves, what a sight it would have been if the minister alone had brought living coals into the church and every member had tried to warm his toes over the minister's stove! Ridiculous! Impossible! Not unlike such a scene is the modern prayer-meeting. The minister comes with his mind and heart full, living fire on his hearth-stone. His people come, often having given no thought to the subject, having spent no time in secret prayer, no spiritual glow, their hearts like hard, cold lumps of anthracite, and they crowd around his hearth-stone, trying to warm up a little by his fire, and more than likely, if every one is not made to glow with warmth before the hour is over, the pastor is thought to be at fault. Not a spiritual man! Given the impossible task by an exacting people of generating, singly and alone, spiritual heat and power enough for a whole church. Ah! Beloved, you must have *fellowship* with your pastor!"

That the burden now resting upon conscientious pastors

is not an imaginary one, appears in the various attempts to multiply and distribute the work laid upon the churches in the providence of God. It is seen that the flocks in our larger cities cannot be cared for by one man, nor the outlying multitudes reached by present appliances. So the churches are reaching out, here and there, uneasily and uncertainly, towards this and that device for securing the end, sometimes it would seem, with the least expenditure of men, women, time, and money. Here and there some highly gifted leader, in our own and in other denominations, has seized the problem and applied the scriptural remedies, but there has not yet been a serious examination into the division of labor among the disciples of Christ at large. What is called "organization" is too often a merely mechanical affair in the eyes of the many. It stands for a few committees, more or less useful. It means the adoption of some new patent, like the fountain-pen or the type-writer or the bicycle, all very well in their way for those who can afford to use them, but bordering on personal luxury. They are not,—these methods of church work,—as many think, the very hand and foot, and eye and heart, of the church, as they must be to be worth anything. What we call "organization" is often not sacred nor Christian nor on apostolic models. A vastly deeper question arises before us as we touch this theme: Are we organized as Christ would have us?

That we are not following the primitive pattern appears upon the most cursory glance at the Pastoral Epistles. The early churches were extremely flexible, highly organized bodies, with a large development of individual gifts accompanied with a large oversight of their manifestation and guidance. There was a board of elders, among whom came the preaching pastor and the teaching pastor, but there was no distinct order of preachers. These special laborers (the preachers) were only eminent members of a board, all of whom had the care of the church laid upon them, as a matter of fact and not of title (1 Tim. v. 17). The elders, in the separate

churches, are frequently recognized in the book of Acts. (See chapters, xiv. 23; xv. 2, 4, 6; xx. 17. James v. 14.) At the head of each church stood, not a lonely minister performing nearly all the functions of preacher, exhorter, teacher, leader, and shepherd of the sheep, but a *company* of godly men. Next to the elders in honor and office there came, in these first churches, a board of deacons, appointed to attend to the charities of the congregation and to look after the sick and needy in person. (See Acts vi. 1-6; 1 Tim. iii. 8-13; Phil. i. 1.) Deaconesses were chosen apparently from the widows and older women of the congregation; and they attended to their own sisters in sickness, while they prepared them by instruction for baptism and watched over them during their first steps in the Christian service. These deaconesses, as regular church officers, are referred to by the apostle Paul at the opening of the sixteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea." In the First Epistle to Timothy, third chapter, eleventh verse, he speaks also of the "wives," more properly "women helpers" or "deaconesses." Evangelists were not at that early period outside, irresponsible workers, as many would regard them to-day, but missionaries preparing the way for the more settled order of the churches. The gift of prophesying was duly provided for, and was exercised by laymen in connection with public worship. Timothy was the subject of such prophecies. (See 1 Tim. i. 18.) There were no closed churches at that day. Preaching was a daily ordinance, and so probably was the Lord's Supper. All this was made possible by the distribution of gifts of the Spirit and of offices in the churches. Only a staff of regularly appointed persons could have carried on such a work, and all this was when the members of the churches were largely poor people.

Although this pattern of efficiency, oversight, and instruction was early lost sight of, we must remember that it was manifested under the glow of the Pentecostal effusion. Hence

it claims our interest and respect, nor are we at liberty to say that was not a pattern, in its essential features, for all time. Indeed, it is claimed by the Catholic Apostolic Church that the apostles were not the last of their order, and that they have successors in our own day. They assert that this was promised by St. Paul when he enumerated the gifts to the church in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians; for there we read that the officers, from the apostles down, were given "until we all come in the unity of the faith unto a perfect man." It is claimed very generally of course, and with much force of argument, that as the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit vanished early, so these special offices (except those of minister and deacon) vanished, too, by a sort of natural necessity. Even this loss of the miraculous powers in the body of Christ was not admitted by Dr. Bushnell in his "Nature and the Supernatural." Its revival is anticipated by many devout persons. But without admitting the claims of a fresh apostolate in one of the denominations of the day, nor the manifestation of the miraculous, why may we not return to any of those first gifts of the Head of the church? They had certainly the blessing of God upon them. Because an office like that of prophet or deaconess is not *permanently* necessary, it does not follow that it may not be revived from time to time as occasion calls for it. That there is a movement in this direction may be seen in the recent action of the Methodist General Conference at New York, which made provision for such an order of women, recommended by the experiment of the Prussian deaconesses, to act in companies or individually, at home or in mission fields. The English bishops made recommendations in the same direction in 1871.¹

Now note that when our honored spiritual fathers revived the primitive form of church government they also revived the primitive ministries. It seems to have been a most natural and logical thing for them to do. They looked into the New Testament, and finding that the churches at the

¹See article by Rev. W. S. Rainsford in the *Independent*, June 14, 1888.

first had their elders, and their deacons, and their deaconesses, and their prophesyings, they simply provided themselves with the same. Robert Browne, writing in 1582,² describes the offices of the churches as follows: "A pastor is a person having office and message of God for exhorting and moving and guiding accordingly. A teacher is a person, having office and message of God, for teaching especially and guiding accordingly, with less gift to exhort and apply. A reliever [or deacon] is a person having office and message of God to provide, gather, and bestow the gifts and liberality of the church as there is need, to the which office he is tried and received as meet. A widow is a person having office of God to pray for the church, and to visit and minister to those which are afflicted and distressed in the church." In the Amsterdam church in 1610 there was no question as to the appointment of several elders, some to teach and preach, and others to administer, together with a distinct board of deacons. This was held to be according to the precepts of the New Testament. Discussion arose as to the mode of their appointment. "Prophesying" formed a distinct feature of public worship, and was exercised by laymen, after the sermon, under the supervision of the elders. Thus the first churches of New England, with their *two* pastors, one for preaching and the other for teaching, their board of elders ruling the flock, their deacons to look after the charities, their deaconesses and lay prophets, were better organized for work than are our largest and most successful churches to-day.³

As at the first, so among our fathers in New England, there was a falling away from this pattern. The church and state became mixed, injuriously for the churches. Our incongruous and wholly unscriptural parish or society came into existence. Quite early the double headship of the churches passed away. No elders were appointed and no

²Quoted in Bacon's *Genesis of the New England Churches*, p. 84.

³Dr. R. Eddy, *Congregationalism versus Innovation*, in the *Congregational Quarterly*, 1872.

deaconesses. Propheying in the old form became unknown. To-day multitudes of churches do not have a settled pastor of their own. A standing committee takes the place of the elders,—a most useful device but lacking scriptural dignity. We do not read that when Paul and Barnabas had appointed “committees” in every church, but had “ordained them elders,” they prayed with fasting and commended them to the Lord on whom they believed.

The deacon’s office is filled to-day with the best men in the churches, no doubt, for the duty, but in most cases they are too busy to attend personally to the care of the poor and sick, the outcast and the stranger. It is more and more difficult to find men willing to take even the title of deacon and the reluctant sisters are elected to serve as visitors. They do their work well. But why should not the church lay hands on some of its eminently qualified women, and assign them to an office with solemn consecration and prayers? Our propheying is done chiefly now in the prayer-meeting. Instruction is given in the Sunday-school. We are glad to note a movement to give this teaching function of the church a higher place, but in too many churches there is no real oversight by the church of what is taught in the Bible classes. One thing may be taught in the pulpit and another in the pews. One line of morals may be inculcated in the class room and another in the church fairs and debt-raising. Boys are warned against lotteries by those who sell tickets to ring-cakes for the sake of a new organ. The sessions of the school may become a formidable rival to the public worship, and children grow up without due reverence for God’s house and his ministers. In the Christian Endeavor work we see a most vigorous and healthy movement towards the distribution of responsibility among church members, and the exercise of gifts by all for the good of all. But while we recognize a divine hand and great benefits in all these branches of common helpfulness, we wait for a larger place for the scriptural appointments among them. All these things are made too secular. When our

Lord ascended on high, we read that "He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, teachers; for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ."

With their inheritance of freedom, Congregationalists are perhaps the slowest of all ecclesiastical bodies to adopt new measures or to take up again old and lost methods of work. The nearer we approach the idea of the church as a town meeting,—a sort of "go-as-you-please" affair,—the more secular become our lines of work in and about the church. We are far behind the more highly organized churches in humanitarian work. Mr. Moody says that the Church of England does the best work for the evangelization of London. The ritualistic ministers in our cities can teach us how to reach the lowest strata of the poor and lapsed masses. Mr. Loomis well says⁴ that the difference in the number of paid workers in the common churches of England and our own is very noticeable. Over against their corps of clergymen, missionaries, bible-readers, deaconesses, trained nurses, stands our pastor, single handed or, in exceptional cases, with one or two assistants. Is it a wonder, he asks, that they accomplish more than he? Dr. Hitchcock says: "And yet in the apostolic and early church, which wrought such wonders, preaching was not exclusively an official prerogative. Strictly speaking, there was no order of preachers. The only orders were apostles, elders, and deacons. Afterward, properly only two, elders and deacons, bishops being not apostolic at all. Anybody might preach who had anything to say, worth saying. Not till near the close of the fourth century were laymen forbidden to preach. And then the church had got far along in the bad way, going farther and farther till she heard the trumpet of Luther. As I look out over the world, calculating the chances, I confess I do not see how Christianity is ever to carry the day, unless the great bulk of our church membership becomes also a ministry.

⁴Modern Cities and their Religious Problems. By Samuel Lane Loomis, N. Y., p. 183.

By this I do not mean merely the passive ministry of character, though that is much, but active, personal concern, and direct personal service of some sort, aiming to make others happier, wiser, better, every believer a witness, every new recruit himself straightway a recruiter."⁵

There are then, it may appear to all, *some* limits assigned by the Head of the church to the responsibility of the minister for the sum total of work to be done by any church in a community. I have not attempted to define those limits, because they are indefinable. My purpose has been merely negative,—to show that in the very constitution of the church there must be a larger provision for the distribution of labor and care. Towards this end let us do what we may. Everything that leads the new convert to feel that he has come into a company of workmen for God will help. Anything that will lead the churches to study their organization prayerfully and intelligently, as being themselves responsible for their own field, will help. Anything that will elevate the office and functions of the diaconate will be the true direction. Anything that will induce a study of the early church can not fail to awaken sober and serious thoughts. Come what may, we must lay more upon the *men* of the churches and exact more from them, both for the good of others and their own spiritual health. It may be that we are not seeing the great revivals of former generations because the work of the world has come to drain the vitality of the church members. The pastor should recognize the fact that there is much work that he ought not to do, even if he can do it best, as his church fastidiously will tell him. Let him magnify his office by concealing it under the work he sets others doing. It will be a severe and self-denying task, calling for faith and patience with small results. He will have to overcome the conservatism, or one might almost say the rheumatism, of the spiritual body.

But a deeper and far more perplexing question comes

⁵Eternal Atonement. (N. Y. Chas. Scribner's Sons. 1888) p. 289.

before us when we consider the minister's responsibility for the acceptableness of his message.

Evidently there is a want of harmony between the gospel, as ordinarily presented in our churches, and the spirit of the age. This is not perhaps between the thoughts of men and our theology, but, more broadly, between Christ and all he represents, on the one side, and the spirit of the times, on the other. We are all conscious of the discord. Our churches show proof of it in some of the matters already considered. They have not, burning within them, the primitive evangelistic spirit. They show weakening, here and there, in the vital principle of faith. The conflicts within our own ranks, as Congregationalists, would be impossible in a revival period, in an intensely evangelistic age. The self-consciousness of the New Theology, is proof enough that it does not arise from nor appeal to the deepest springs of action and faith. Its cry is not that of a John the Baptist in the wilderness. The earnest preacher is sometimes at a loss to know what his church members will sustain him in preaching. He cannot wisely count on their unanimous voice in matters doctrinal. Under these straits, without going to the unwasting fountains of truth as revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, he may seek to put the new wine of philosophy and criticism into the old bottles from which he is accustomed to pour, with the result that might be foreseen. He would not withhold the truth, but he must be heard—so he feels—on some ground. He may be perplexed by the indirectness and the deferential character of the attacks on the positions he has held. The enemy's hands are those of Esau while the voice is that of Jacob.

But quite aside from all that may seem to be in hostility to the substance of the truth, there are adjustments of thought to the times that bring sore perplexities and doubts. The theory of evolution rises on the horizon, and for the present throws out of familiar perspective the teachings of Scripture. The "new learning," as it styles itself, comes in to raise the question in his mind whether prevalent ideas of the canon

are sound. If, under the laudable desire to reach the living thoughts of men and adapt the gospel to them, the minister gives himself wholly to the influence of these discussions, he will find himself at sea. He will be preaching his doubts and queries. Thus he is surrounded by a new world of thought, not yet out of chaos and old night. He is in contentions, it may be, within his own household of faith, as to some matters of doctrine. He may be tempted to believe that if he can only find out some acceptable method of presenting the truth, he will be heard and applauded. It is difficult to tell who is responsible for this want of harmony between the gospel, as we have heard and preached it, and the thoughts of men. But surely it is not the preacher.

At this point there come in certain questions of duty. Shall the preacher ignore all these disturbing elements? That, if it were possible, would be weak and cowardly. Shall he abandon his old positions and set sail for fresh breezes from any quarter? That would be hasty and foolish, to say nothing more of it. Shall he expend his chief energies in solving apparent conflicts? Or shall he rise to the defence of the truth when it is attacked by professional infidels whose blasphemies have a market value on the platform and in the reviews? To these questions, which are not imaginary but profoundly real and urgent, some reply must be made each for himself before the Spirit of truth. It is for us to act in view of the actual needs of those committed to our care by the Head of the church. But as to the opposition of men to the word of God, we need to take our bearings afresh lest we undertake a task that the Master himself has not laid upon us. Nothing can be more misleading than the assertion, put forth by the liberals of all sorts, that the message from the pulpit is unacceptable to men because it holds forth false views of truth and wrong propositions in theology. These errors may account for the unpopularity of truth, to some extent, in all ages since the first preachers went out, but they are not a distinctive mark of this period. The unwillingness of men to "hear and live" is a constant

quantity, and no mending of our theology in favor of a more liberal construction of God's ways will change the matter. The minister is not responsible for the unpopularity of truth, nor yet for "the truth," given as a deposit to the body of Christ. These glad tidings are a trust. "As we were allowed of God to be put *in trust* with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God which trieth our hearts." Whether we are preaching at home or on foreign ground it is not our function to ask what men want and will accept. Their wants are seldom their real needs.

The scriptural definitions of the minister's position tell a story as to his responsibility. Essentially he is an interpreter, and not a creator, of truth. If preaching is the administering of a trust, then one must needs know his trust, studying with an open and a fearless mind into it. Or is he an ambassador? Then he is to deliver the message from his government, precisely as he receives it, without shadings, additions nor subtractions. He is not to be put on the defensive when uttering things given him from the high authority he represents. His responsibility ends with the exact and well-attentpered delivery of his instructions. If war results, the government must bear the consequences. Or is he a teacher? He will draw the substance of his doctrines from the word of God, conveying to others what lies there. Or is he a herald? He must not evolve his tidings from his own consciousness, nor the consensus of feeling and opinion about him. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee" is his command.

Now it is assumed in such definitions that the word of truth will not be always acceptable, nor commonly so, save as it is attended with the power of the Holy Ghost. Is this true or false? What saith the Scripture itself? Certainly if we take the position of Jesus, or of Paul, or of Peter, or of John the beloved and the loving disciple, we shall have no doubt as to the matter. The opposition to the gospel, when preached in its purity and simplicity, does not come from scepticism, nor disgust at the old theology, nor from new

conceptions of the world's structure and man's place in nature, nor from recent criticism of the Bible. Its seat is infinitely deeper and the conflict infinitely more deadly. It springs from the old and unvarying enmity of the soul of man to his God. "What should be the one universal harmony," says Pusey, "jars with the one universal note of rebellion." Bible truths and facts are humbling to pride. They are exacting. Have our views of the book of Genesis been incorrect? The deeper question is this: Is there any God at all? Suppose we surrender the historical character of the book of Jonah, what then? If it is not historical let us say so, but this will not win over enemies to the assertion that God will punish sin. In the rising empire of mammon, in the heat of the business struggle, in the veneration paid to wealth, however obtained, we find, at least in part, the origin of the demand for something new and abreast of the times, something easy to hear and follow. Men who are accustomed to buy up everything they desire, from a piece of land to a whole legislature, cannot understand why they cannot, like Micah of old, buy up a preacher and have him to be their priest. And yet we know that society is near to a collapse when there are not somewhere within its borders those who cannot be bought nor sold nor intimidated, men that receive their light from the sky above rather than from the earth around, from the eternal order rather than from the changing times. But to the question again: Are the word and the world in harmony when you find the real word to give the world? The Bible says they are not in harmony. Paul exercises his trust, "not as pleasing men," assuming that men will not be pleased. He says the "carnal mind is enmity to God," that "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit," that the cross is a scandal. Our Lord said: "He that is of God heareth God's words; therefore ye hear them not, because ye are not of God." John says: "The light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not." "The world lieth in the Wicked One."

But this is not the attitude taken by Unitarianism in its whole history, nor by the liberalists within our own ranks. Their note is reiterated that the trouble is not with men but with our repulsive theology. We might quote *ad libitum*, but will content ourselves with taking the language of the author of "The Freedom of Faith." In the prefatory essay of that agreeable book, we find the astonishing statements made: "If Christianity has any human basis it is in its entire reasonableness. It must not only sit easily on the mind, but it must ally itself with it in all its normal action. If it chafes it, if it is a burden, if it antagonizes, it detracts from itself; the human mind cannot be detracted from; man is a knower; the reason never ceases to be less than itself without losing all right to use itself as reason. Consequently a full adjustment between reason and Christianity must be sought. If there is conflict, uneasiness, burdensomeness, the cause is to be looked for in interpretation rather than in the human reason. For, in its last analysis, revelation—so far as its acceptance is concerned—rests on reason, and not reason on revelation. The logical order is: first reason and then revelation, the eye before the sight. The reason believes the revelation because in itself reasonable. Human nature—so far as it acts by itself—accepts Christianity because it establishes a thorough consensus with human nature, in its normal action. It is as legitimate for the reason to pass judgment upon the contents of revelation as upon the grounds of receiving it. In fact they are both identical."

The author then proceeds to outline a better interpretation of the leading doctrines in order to bring them into the range of sweet reasonableness. His construction of these doctrines, we must assume, is that of human nature in its normal action. Here we see Reason on its throne, so to say. Conflict, burdensomeness, chafing—these are removed by a few airy touches. Is there something in the Bible, my dear friend, that offends your sense of justice, your good taste, and the normal action of your nature? I picture to you the true Bible which you have never seen, as you have heard the

narrow gospel of the past. Look! The burden is vanishing! The disagreeableness is felt no longer. I have established a consensus with human nature. You are pleased! I am pleased! Human nature smiles. The Bible is quite another thing!

But a greater master uttered similar sentiments and made similar inferences from them. In his essay on "Christianity a Rational Religion," written in 1830, Dr. Channing says: "I am aware that it is the fashion to decry reason, and to set up revelation as an opposite authority. This error, though countenanced by good men and honestly maintained for the defence of the Christian cause, ought to be earnestly withstood, for it virtually surrenders our religion into the hands of the unbeliever. It places religion in hostility to human nature, and gives to its adversaries the credit of vindicating the rights and noblest powers of the human mind. Christianity does not divide the mind against itself, does not introduce discord into the intellect by proposing doctrines that our consciousness and experience repel." Having laid down these propositions, he proceeds to make his interpretations correspond with his theory. (The author of "The Freedom of Faith" has only followed his method.) "It has been strenuously maintained," he writes, "that Christianity contains particular doctrines which are irrational and which involve the whole religion, to which they are essential, in their own condemnation. To this class of objections I have a short reply. I insist that these offensive doctrines do not belong to Christianity, but are human additions." And what does he select as burdensome to himself, chafing to his mind, divisive of the mind itself? He selects,—and why not?—the Trinity, Natural Depravity, and Future Retribution.

This voice was echoed with increasing volume in Emerson's famous Address before the Harvard Divinity School in 1838. "Truth," said Emerson, "is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces I must find true in me

or wholly reject; and on his word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept nothing." Elsewhere and later he said that he saw Channing as "a necessary person, one affirming the verdict of the human faculties, and passing solemn sentence upon guilty dogmas by simply stating their offence against the moral sentiment."

Now if it is incumbent on the minister of the gospel to adjust his message to the thoughts of men, before those thoughts have been clarified by the Holy Spirit, his task, is an endless and a burdensome one. If, however, he recognizes the supernatural character of his message and casts himself at the feet of the Master for help in conveying it to a gainsaying generation, then he will rest and be patient. He will then be like Paul, who, in weakness and fear and much trembling, came to Corinth, determined to have men's faith rest not on the "consensus of Christianity with the nature of man in its normal action," but on the *power of God over human nature*. From age to age the heart beats on with the same indefinite yearnings, hopes, conflicts, joys, and sorrows. Thought may widen its field, but the soul must follow the narrow path to life. To the unvarying cry for deliverance from the love of sin and the burden of sin, we bring the everlasting gospel of a crucified Saviour. Were it a scheme of thought we present, we must needs adjust it to every phase of opinion; but it is not so much a doctrine as a Life, not so much a word as a Person. Hence its outlines must remain the same amidst all the criticisms and the changes effected by the discoveries of science.

While, then, the preacher cannot be held responsible for the want of harmony between his message and the spirit of the times, he is bound to be in sympathy with the times, and to understand the chief points of difficulty in the acceptance of Christ. He ought to *know* the main contention in philosophy and criticism, whatever he may bring forth in his pulpit. He should keep in the stream of life. Nothing that is human should be foreign to him. Only in this way shall he avoid waste of energies on enemies

already dead and buried, and have new weapons for new conflicts as they arise.

We live in a statistical, self-conscious, self-reporting age. There is an unusual pressure for quick returns from all kinds of business, and the spirit invades the churches. They want brilliant ministers to lead in local competitions, and to fill up the empty treasury. And still there is a nobler side to all this. Fields stand white to the harvest, and the laborers are few. The ardent workman for God may be tempted to feel that the long hours of rich, meditative, quiet study, the generous acquaintance with the best thoughts of men, and the severe examination of the word of God are not to be allowed him, so long as the outward call is so urgent. Here is a temptation to lower the standard of real efficiency, in order to secure what may seem to be surer and quicker results. But the just demand for more laborers and for a more evangelistic style of workmen must not be turned into a depreciation of a learned ministry. Professor Phelps well says that ignorance is a remedy for nothing. At the head of the church there must be always a body of men able to teach in times of doubt and difficulty, and not as the scribes. If the pulpit is to retain its relative supremacy, costly work in mind, body, and soul must be done. It will demand self-discipline, self-poise, and contentment with distant results in the spiritual fields. We are in a new world of biblical knowledge. The curriculum of the theological seminaries is fast advancing. The common school and the college are not what they were ten years ago. The Sunday-school has created a class of highly intelligent Bible students, and the knowledge, once in the hands of a few, is now for the many. The churches must come to the relief of overworked pastors, and give them breathing time to commune with God and bring forth things new and old. They must exalt the demand for able, scholarly, godly men who may not appear at first to have popular gifts, but whose work will abide as the years pass on. For are we not called as ministers, first of all, to be servants of God and only secondarily servants of

the churches? Have *we* no souls to save? Do *we* not need, in the strain of outward duty, the freshening influences of direct contact between God and our spirits? How shall this come without a time of silence and a time when we know that we may enjoy silence? More than this, the minister is called to be servant of the Church Universal, before and because he is called to serve a local body of Christ. He cannot rightly exercise care over one little flock unless (in his measure) he feels the burdens of all Christendom, the sins that divide and weaken the whole flock of God, and the calls of the world for help. We speak of the Holy Spirit for service, and much we need him, but we need him more for our personal holiness. We need his inspiration to see our way through the Word of Life. St. Mark tells us that when Jesus called his apostles it was to a twofold duty; that they should be with him, and that he should send them forth as he desired. Christ first; work second! Religious work, religious business,—this is not in itself a sanctifying power. It may exhaust instead of filling one. It will devitalize unless maintained by personal, and not official, acquaintance with the church's Head. We may become mere religious functionaries tending a vast machine with a Christian name upon it, while we are poor and miserable and blind and naked in our immortal souls. In our stated gatherings we make abundant provision for business convocations, for discussions of duty, but where are our still retreats for the nourishment of spirits worn out with self and men and the world? What voice, in the whirl of religious work, calls us to-day, as of old, Come ye apart and rest awhile? Is there any rest? Is there a spot beyond the reporter's pencil?

In conclusion, it is proper to say that we pastors have probably borne an unnecessary burden of responsibility at times like the Week of Prayer. There should be a burden, but pastors may make up their own burden and it will be heavy indeed. Possibly they may have patterned their expectations on such a work as Finney's "Lectures on Reviv-

als,"—a book furnishing good diet to an indolent and unspiritual man, but well-nigh pressing the heart out of an anxious burden-bearer. The pastor may have groaned that no such glory as Finney describes, adorns his little tabernacle. But the methods of the Spirit vary with the generations. Revivals may take new shapes and be brought about by new methods. We may look in one quarter of the sky, where we have always gazed in hope and prayer while God had other things in store for us.

The ideal attitude of the minister would seem to be this: He lives close to the Master day by day. He recognizes the Holy Ghost within him. He takes orders from Christ as to work in time, place, and quantity. He does not hold a sentimental idea of immediate divine guidance for every act and step, but uses common sense and self-denial. Before him is the inexhaustible Bible, to be enjoyed by himself first, and then to be unfolded in its fulness to his people. Around him are God's world and providences. He is a man among men; cultivates human interests; is a good citizen, a father to his own children and to those of his flock. He is son and brother and father to all who will admit him to their confidence. He trusts the word, if he preaches it truly and faithfully, to sink by its own weight into some hearts and consciences. How many he cannot tell. He sows night and morning because he cannot know what seed will spring up to perfection. He does not expect to gather from all he sows nor that any one else will. He expects to waste words and work in getting small results. At times the field will glow with a rich harvest and he rejoices. At other times his Lord will summon him into Gethsemane to watch with him there for one short hour. He is not careful for himself, nor for his dignity nor orthodoxy. Such as he has he gives, and so has more for the next needy one. The burden of the world does not rest on him save in so far as he is united to Christ, and then it is not left on his shoulders. He seeks to serve One who, when he commanded his disciples to go and teach all nations, promised to be with them even unto the end of the world.