

But if there is real prophecy here, we need no further proof of its authenticity. For we cannot suppose that God would vouchsafe his prophetic spirit to one in a later age, who was endeavoring to palm himself off upon the world, as a contemporary with Moses. This would be to give countenance to deception, and at least to approve of evil for the sake of a good result. Not so have we understood the character of him who is "not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent."

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## ARTICLE V.

### ON FULFILLING THE MINISTRY.

By Rev. N. Adams, Boston, Mass.

As we look back on those who in different generations and ages of the world have constituted the ministry of the true religion, we are struck with two things which preëminently characterize them. One is, that those of them who have fulfilled their ministry, have been *earnest men*. If we may speak of Moses as a minister of Israel, we have in him, a powerful example of earnestness. The faithful prophets were eminently earnest men; it is like the sudden sound of a trumpet to meet the name of Elijah, Samuel and Daniel; while the lives and sufferings, or the unequalled utterances of the other men of God in the Old Testament, and the histories of the Apostles, make this great impression on the mind, that each of them had his special work to do; and how was he straitened till it was accomplished! The tide that was set in motion by the Apostles, imparted its vigor to the early Christian fathers, till it lost itself in the great sea of human philosophy, and became for a time only one of the cross currents in the ocean of human thought. But see the Reformers of the sixteenth century, French, German and English, of any one of whom, Satan might have started and said, as Herod did of Christ, "It is John the Baptist whom I beheaded." The English Puritans were earnest men; the fathers of New England were baptized with fire. Wherever we find a ministry exerting a decided influence upon their generation, we find men of strong impulses, consecrating themselves wholly to their work.

With this earnestness we notice another peculiarity in them. The thoughts and labors of a faithful and able ministry are always

identified with the peculiarities of the age in which they live. We do not see them absorbed in religious, philosophical, literary speculations and labors. Their learning is employed in practical efforts for the welfare of their contemporaries, in illustrating the great principles of common life, as well as of revealed truth. They translate the Bible. They enter into the controversies of truth with error; they expose the time-honored, moss-grown follies of the age, and make their own generation wiser and happier for their having lived in it. We may select any able, faithful minister of Jesus Christ in any land or age, and the history of his mind, his studies, his labors, is a part of the history of the times in which he lived.

It becomes an interesting question for every minister of the Gospel, What does my ministry in this generation and age require of me?

In fulfilling the ministry, we must be earnestly devoted to its private duties and labors.

A man who undertakes abstractly to live for the world, as some do, never makes his influence turn to any good account. In an exhibition of manufactures and mechanical improvements, we seldom find a useful invention which was the result of a mere general interest in mechanism. The cotton machinery, the compound blow-pipe, the new plough, are invented by practical manufacturers, chemists and farmers. The great or useful idea breaks upon their minds when contending with the difficulties of their several employments, or they are accidentally discovered in the processes of their industry. The principle of gravitation was not revealed by that falling apple to a literary or scientific loungee in Lincolnshire; it met the eye of a man who, though sitting at ease in his garden, was looking on everything around him as a student. Nature, with her beautiful laws and arts, provokes her ardent lovers only, to the discovery of them, as the amorous shepherd in Virgil says of his maid, who threw an apple at him, as nature did at Newton, and fled:

“Malo me Galatea petit,—  
Et fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri.”

*Bucol.* III. 64, 65.

Luther could not have produced such a commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, had not his heart and mind been qualified for it, by preaching and expounding for years the doctrine of justification by faith. What do we care for the learned treatises of mere scholars on scarlet fever or nervous disorders? The

man who has had large practice and experience in contending with death, and has been conversant with the outgoing of human life at its hundred gates, is the man to whose theories and remedies we yield respect. So in religion. A man who has tested his opinions by their practical effect on men, who has derived new views of truth from observing human nature, who has seen the power of his appeals and illustrations in his intercourse with the common mind, knows most of the Bible as the great treasure-house of wisdom. It would be better for a man to study theology and prepare to preach under John Bunyan, than under Thomas Aquinas, however justly styled "angelical doctor," "the eagle of divines," "the angel of the Schools."

When engaged in the ordinary round of ministerial and pastoral labor, we perhaps do not always think as we ought, that every act of service we perform may have, and ought to have, an influence in qualifying us for being useful to the age and world. If a man makes up his sermons for the Sabbath just to render his equivalent for his salary, or makes his visits to clear his lists and his conscience, or attends at the sick-bed and at funerals, as a mere official, the quality of his mercy is certainly not 'twice blessed,' if it even blesses them who receive it. In the proper preparation and effort of heart and mind to write a sermon, a man can gain something which will make him increasingly and more extensively useful. There is no better exercise for the intellectual powers, the affections of the soul, the literary taste, and the various literary acquisitions, than the careful preparation of a written sermon. In conversing with individuals for their spiritual good, a minister will derive instruction by the clearer presentation to his own mind of his own views, or have new trains of thought awakened by the suggestions of others. In a word, if a man would fulfil his ministry in its best influence on the world, let him devote himself earnestly and faithfully to the ordinary duties and labors of the ministerial and pastoral life. Were we speaking to an ambitious man, and if such a man *could* be sincerely devoted to the labors of the ministry, we might safely say: The path of honorable distinction in the Christian ministry, lies among the ordinary duties of the pulpit and the pastoral life. An earnest and faithful performance of these duties in the true spirit of the Gospel, affords the only hope of extensive usefulness and even of common success.

A pastor ought to have the same interest and zeal in managing a case of mental trouble, in attending upon a sick bed, in ad-

ministering consolation and advice to a mourner, in reclaiming a backslider, in curing the diseased conscience, in leading a soul to the Saviour, that a lawyer has in preparing and managing a suit, or a physician or surgeon, his case of sickness or surgery. He who devotes his best energies to the pastoral care in this manner, fulfils his ministry in an eminent degree. He preaches unlike other men; his scholastic and literary acquisitions are like the ore which is smelted and moulded, and comes to us in forms for practical use. When an accomplished scholar is also a highly practical man, in any profession, his influence is always great. It is eminently so in the ministry and the pastoral care.

But in the nature of things every able and faithful minister of the New Testament is a man of public spirit. While his first and direct efforts are to instruct and save the people committed to his pastoral charge, and he makes this his profession, he wishes to live for the world for which Christ died. It has already been shown, that the most hopeful way for a man to do this is, to be earnestly devoted to his private work as a preacher and pastor. There is another way in which we are to fulfil our ministry, and which indeed is essential by a reflex influence to the highest success in the private labors of the profession.

To fulfil his ministry, a man must lend his influence to the age in which he lives.

The people to whom he ministers are affected in their character and feelings, by the character and tendencies of the times. Unless his own mind is affected in the same way, he does not meet their wants and sympathies, he exerts no controlling, guiding influence even in his private sphere. Now the question which every one should put to himself, who wishes to fulfil his ministry, should be, How shall I exercise the ministry among my flock so as to serve my generation and the world. In answer to this question several things may be mentioned, which it is essential for a minister to aim at in fulfilling his ministry in its influence on the age.

In order to fulfil his ministry in its influence upon the age, a minister must be a scholar.

The preparation and delivery of mere exhortations addressed to the feelings of men, is unworthy of his high office. The great truths of natural and revealed religion, and of Christian morals, demand of him that study and investigation to define, expound, and illustrate them, which will enable him to add something to the general stock of knowledge. His sermons may never indeed be

published, much less be formed into a system of theology or morals for a text-book; but he may be the means of instructing his hearers in theology and morals, so that through them the world may insensibly be advanced by him in sacred knowledge. Many ministers are the sons of farmers or mechanics, whose views in theology were made distinct and clear through the instructions of able ministers, who lived and died obscurely it may be in the country village, but to those parents they are indebted for their correct impressions in sacred truth, through the prayers at the family altar, incidental instructions on some of the deep things in religion, and especially by some theological books which the preaching and conversation of the pastor led the parents to purchase for the family library, and which, before the children could fully understand them, they had read, or at least became acquainted with, to a degree which laid the foundation for their present doctrinal views, generated in them a taste for theology, and perhaps inclined them in early life to think of the Christian ministry as their future profession. It was because their pastor was a scholar that their father, (or which is quite as likely their mother,) became a sound theologian, and these men able ministers of the New Testament. They now occupy places in relation to other parents and their children, such as he filled;—it depends on their studies and on their character as scholars and divines, how much the world shall be profited in the same way in which that man of God has blessed the world, in being indirectly the means of their consecration and qualification for the sacred office.

The tendency of things for a few years past has perhaps been, to assimilate the ministry of our denomination to the habits and professional character of our Methodist brethren who, according to their views of duty, are as faithfully devoted to the work of our common Lord and Master as we, but whose professional plans and habits in the ministry are directed chiefly to a present effect. We have encouraged the taste among the people for frequent exhortations; preaching has partaken more of the mere hortatory style, than in former years. While engaged in such efforts, much study is necessarily a weariness to the flesh. The time and strength which should be spent in preparing the discourses for the Lord's day, have been in too great a degree given to the unnatural and destructive effort to maintain three services on the Sabbath. The effect of those services on ministers, is apt to be an indisposition to study during the following week. The remarks on this point

have reference to ministers in the larger towns and cities, and not to those whose situation makes them virtually missionaries. We are bold to declare that, as a general thing, the way in which a minister who has the care of a congregation, in a compact place, can spend the evening of the Sabbath for the greatest good of his people in every respect, is, to rest. His mind and all his sensibilities are alive to the great work in which he is engaged, and if he can then withdraw himself, ordinarily, from the excitement and labor of a third service, he will find thoughts and feelings crowding upon him for future use, and his whole system will be recruited and somewhat replenished for the labors of the ensuing week and Sabbath. It seems to many of the people a light thing for a pastor to conduct a sabbath evening prayer meeting, and "just to make a few remarks;" but those few remarks are the straws by the addition of which to his load, the camel-driver broke the back of his camel. Let the rival denominations hold their frequent meetings for exhortation, and draw away some of our people; the best way to compete with them is, by the character of our stated labors on the Lord's day, and not by the number or the fervor of our religious conventicles. In the end, the pastor who commends himself to the consciences, and to the understandings, and to the healthy tastes of men, will have more influence, and build up a better congregation, than he who seeks to gratify the morbid feelings of people in those meetings, which to him, in his exhausted state of body and mind at the close of the Sabbath, are like the fearful night-sweats of a consumptive patient.<sup>1</sup>

There is one view in which this suggestion is of great practical importance. As preachers, the age and world demand that we be something more than mere exhorters, and therefore that we give more time and strength to our sermons. Far distant be the time when we shall know anything supremely in our calling but Jesus Christ and him crucified, or be anything more or less than ambassadors for Christ. But we see men in our profession eminent in scholarship, and taste, of an enviable reputation as

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<sup>1</sup> "The demands of such congregations as expect three sermons on the Lord's day, are preposterously absurd. They make a demand which no man can adequately meet. An attempt is made to satisfy it. The result very shortly is, the congregation begins to complain of the exercises of the pulpit, as being crude and insipid. *Hurried and frequent preaching upon the affecting and important doctrines of salvation, seriously injures and impoverishes the mind, exhausts the power of feeling, dries up the dew of a man's sensibility, and leaves the soul to chill in the coldness of apathy.*"—Robert Hall.

preachers and writers, who are just as faithful, practical, ardent men, and who can be as hortatory, as zealous in promoting personal religion, as those who think that scholarship is to Christian zeal only like oxidation to iron. We cannot promote the highest interests of the souls of men, much less of the churches, unless in addition to personal religion we cultivate our intellectual and literary qualities. This age and this country are remarkable for youthful zeal and energy in the arts and sciences, which are every month receiving contributions from practical mechanics, artists and scholars. Creative genius, in this age of improvement, is crying to the various competitors in the arts of life, as the helmsman in the Trojan boat-race did to his oarsmen: "Nunc, nunc insurgite remis?" Shall every galley outstrip ours? Shall the pulpit be inferior in the standard of its productions to the work-bench and the looms? Shall every man magnify his office except the preacher? The statement and illustration and the enforcement of Christian truth, must be made in ways adapted to the various susceptibilities of man's nature; for even he who came not with excellency of speech, declaring the Gospel of God, was a preacher, able and worthy to stand on Mars Hill, while a mere canting gospeller could not have uttered words as he did to be a model of address, as well as of faithfulness in preaching. The minds of some good and zealous men need something corresponding to the *detent* in a clock; for a clock which strikes too often, and is as apt to strike thirteen as any other number, ceases to be useful. Some of our most eminent English brethren confess that there are qualities in the American style of preaching, which they have observed and copied to their advantage. It is to our credit, that our preaching is formed more on the model of Baxter, than Barrow; but we do need to filigrane our practical style of preaching with the gold of John Howe, and the silver of Jeremy Taylor, with a slight infusion of the French arts. Let us not only live near to God, and seek to know more of the spirit and power of the gospel in our preaching, but let us strive to preach so as to advance men in all excellence, as well as save their souls. The Bible has as much genius and talent as of other excellence; let our sermons imitate the Bible. So shall our influence endure when we are dead. In order to this, we must be careful not to waste our intellectual and physical strength.

When we think of the facilities which the age affords the scholar, it seems unpardonable in us if we do not avail ourselves of them. The teachers of philology, theology, science and litera-

ture anspoured at our feet. It is not a just and discriminating fear and censure, which many express at the prolific deliveries of modern literature. When the tide is coming in, there will oftentimes be rolled upon the beach a somewhat hideous mixture of things on the earth, and of things under the earth;—all the forms of sea-weed, driftwood, dead fish, bricks, with enamelled shells, and valuable stones; while here and there a monster of the deep will be projected into the small frith or into the spouting horn of the rocks, and sharks watch for those who bathe in the surf. But yet it is a tide that is coming in, a tide with its refreshing breeze, a tide that lifts many a heavy laden bark from the sands, and unmoors the weary captive from the calms, and fills our stores with the riches of other climes. Liberty will always tend to libertinism; free governments nourish the monsters of ultra democracy and freethinking, as the same overflow of the Nile fertilizes Egypt and fattens crocodiles. If a man now wishes to pursue the study of any language, ancient or modern, his only difficulty will be in choosing between the many excellent Grammars and Lexicons,—or the '*res angustæ domi*' forbid the gratification of his wishes as he reads the lists of new editions of classic authors. In English literature and criticism, we have cheap editions of the most valuable writers in prose and poetry, and with them volumes of critical Essays, collected from the leading Reviews which have influenced the literature of the world for the last half century. Everything that can furnish the scholar for his work, is made ready to our hands. Now to us, as ministers of the gospel, is committed the glorious work of enriching the mind of the world with the treasures of religious knowledge and moral truth. We must be faithful to this trust;—by qualifying ourselves, through study and learning, to aid society in its progress.

In fulfilling his ministry in its effect upon the age, a minister is bound to promote the great objects of benevolent effort in his day.

I said in the beginning of this discussion, that while the ministry of the old dispensation was chiefly for the preservation of the truth, the ministry of the new dispensation is for its propagation and preservation. We have not been baptized with the spirit of this new dispensation, unless we are active in promoting the spread of the gospel and its kindred objects. We ought to take a lively interest in the cause of education, and raise the standard of the academic preparation of the young for professional life. Our benevolent societies should be cherished by us with discriminating and zealous care. A part of our most earnest efforts for



the good of our people, should be to instruct them as to their obligations to do good, and the ways of doing it. We must not be jealous or cold towards benevolent institutions; if they need to be improved, let us apply suitable remedies, but insist on having their great objects in some way accomplished.

Some are afraid to urge benevolent efforts and contributions, before their people because their salaries are in arrears. If they understood human nature and the power of the gospel, or even Christian policy, a little better, they would find that the sure way to make their people do their duty to them, is to increase the love and zeal of their people for the salvation of the world. In fulfilling the ministry in our generation, we are to be forward in withstanding prevalent errors, and maintaining the opposite truths.

The study of Ecclesiastical History is one of the best means of peace of mind and of intelligent preparation in the controversies of the age. The human mind is running the round of follies and lies from age to age, and that which hath been, is, or shall be. As there is said to be nothing on land, which has not its resemblance and counterpart in something in the sea, so we shall find in the history of human opinions, a correspondent error in past ages, to the error of to-day. That old error was fought and overcome; and Church History is a temple where the 'spolia opima' are nailed up, "that we through faith and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." We have little else to do in this age of the world, with regard to errors, than to learn their history and see their end, and so be ready to meet them as they re-appear. This will prevent us from being dismayed at them, and also from spending too much of our time and strength upon them, as we are always tempted of Satan to do. There are occasions when we ought to consider that prayer which the legion of devils offered to Christ, "Let us alone;"—it would be their sorest affliction, and the lengthening of our tranquillity. There is pre-eminent wisdom in one of the counsels of that old bard,

" Who saw the Iliad and Odyssey  
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea."

He makes Minerva charge Diomede, when she came to excite him to the fight, to shun those parts of the field where the warring deities were fighting, whom she gave his eyes the preternatural power to see.

" These see thou shun through all the embattled plain,  
Nor rashly strive where human force is vain."<sup>1</sup>

There are times, (they may be rare, but there may be times,) when this counsel is profitable even for us. But still the inspired exhortation should govern us, " Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints."

The age and the world require of men in fulfilling their ministry, to be living examples of godliness.

The names of many good men in former times, associated in our minds with great moral excellence, are all that remains of them. Their works, if published, have gone into oblivion; their histories are not read, but tradition delivers their names from one age to another, as charmed words. As we see and know nothing of the hills and woods and seas in the distant star, that keeps its everlasting station on the bosom of the night, but its simple and beautiful brightness constitutes its character and value in our eyes, so the good name of many a good man, is all that lives after him, and takes its place forever in the firmament of human history. There have been great and good men in this commonwealth, who without adding much to the literature of their age, have been men of such well proportioned and balanced character, have excited such love, respect and confidence, that in the regions where they lived, their influence is like one of the old shade-trees, which is a glory and a blessing to all who live near it. Long and silently they grew amid changes and storms, spreading their foliage over the young and the old who sit under their shadow, and standing as memorials of their own faithfulness and usefulness, and of powerful virtues, the remembrance or suggestion of which, as exemplified by them, has a greater influence on the world, than the writings of many of their contemporaries, who in point of intellect may have been their superiors. Such influence as they exert was not gained by them in a day, or a year; they gained it by walking with God, as Enoch did his present influence on the world, whose name and brief history in the genealogy of undistinguished men, stands forth like a white obelisk among the wind-rows of sand. They gained it by their firmness in opposing the errors and follies of the day, the "*civium ardor prava jubentium*," by their meekness under trials, their Christian spirit when provoked and wounded, by their continuous, steady performance of common duties to the best of their ability. Now, though heaven may have with-

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, V. 120, 130.

held from us splendid talents, the power of goodness does not depend on them; and he who endeavors to be all which the influence of his profession and the Gospel which he preaches ought to make him, may in the highest sense fulfil his ministry in its effect on the age and world.

An earnest desire to fulfil the ministry as now suggested, will promote ministerial contentment and the permanence of the pastoral relation.

To a man intent on self-improvement, engaged in profitable studies, with resources of learning and a cultivated mind, the trials and vexations of his situation are less annoying, and are more easily borne. Some ministers and churches are sometimes disturbed by troublesome members; for example, by a man or a number of men, whose rough, uncultivated natures make them insensible to some of the influences of truth and goodness. They are animal in their religion, as they are preëminently in their constitution; they love loud, boisterous preaching, they are chiefly interested in the politics of the church. Some ministers flee from their places because of such men; but others, intent on pursuits which prevent them from being so much disturbed by these men, gain the control over them by kind and patient conduct. The words of Shakspeare are fulfilled:

“ You may ride us, with one soft kiss, a thousand furlongs, ere  
With spur we heat an acre.”

In seeing the mild but powerful influence which some gentle nature in a pastor exerts upon them, and at last the subdued tone and manner of those men, weeping at their errors, there has been a pleasant recollection of one of those enduring couplets in the New England Primer:

“ Whales in the sea  
God's voice obey.”

We must not admit that the true influence of piety cannot soften and subdue the most ungracious character. To flee from such men, even from Ahab and from Jezebel, results frequently in finding only a juniper-tree for a resting place, and in being reproved by the still small voice of the Lord God. No reflection is intended upon those who have been the subjects of frequent changes in the ministry; we all remember the ministerial experience of Jonathan Edwards at Northampton; still is it not true, that more of scholarship and love of study in pastors, would frequently make them more contented in their places?

If we were more impressed with the duty of self-improvement in every kind of excellence, as a means of usefulness in our age and in the world, ambition would less frequently make us aspire to places of apparently greater usefulness. This temptation among pastors, of greater usefulness, is a great and mischievous folly. The operation and result of it, is sometimes illustrated by the fable of a bottle, in which a fermentation was going on, and made the vessel feel, that could it but have greater scope for its pent up energies, it would fill immensity;—it burst, and was “like water spilled on the ground, which could not be gathered up.”

There is a cause of changes in the ministry, which the piety and scholarship of the best of men find it difficult to withstand, and that is, the insufficiency of the salary, or the irregularity with which it is paid. If the experience of ministers, even in New England, could be spread before the world, there would be found tales of exquisite suffering which would astonish the churches. The secret sorrows which are thus occasioned, cannot be proclaimed; the sufferer would destroy his influence to speak of them; he would give occasion to enemies to exult and reproach, and so he buries his sorrows “darkly, at dead of night,” as the British soldiers buried Sir John Moore, for fear of the enemy.

One of the most useful men to any church and society, as many know by experience, is a prompt, gentlemanly Treasurer. On the appointed days, and perhaps at the same hour on those days, he makes his appearance at the Pastor's house, and the Pastor sees in him, as it were, a whole congregation earnest to fulfil their obligations to their minister. The bonds of love, through a delicate sense of obligation and gratitude, insensibly grow stronger in the Pastor's heart. He respects his people more, he is admonished and quickened in his duties. But when the Treasurer comes far behind his time, and then pays over only a small part of the large arrears, and dolefully tells the minister that the Society is very poor, and that they find it exceedingly difficult to raise his salary, then the minister and his wife have long and sad conferences about their straitened circumstances; they meditate an encroachment upon the little property which a relative left her, the knowledge of which is the reason felt or assigned by some parishioners for refusing to pay their dues. From the experience which brethren in the ministry have related in confidence, it may be asserted, that if there be any cruelty and any suffering which is peculiarly exquisite and keen, it may be found in the treatment of a sensitive pastor by an unfaithful people, and in his secret sor-

rows on account of it. All men love to be paid promptly. It is a universal truth, that 'short reckonings make long friends.' You never pay money to a laborer or tradesman promptly and with willing mind, without putting him in good humor. How freely he speaks about the weather, inquires for the health of your family, indulges his innocent wit, smiles, thanks you, and makes you feel that you are one of his benefactors and friends. Now if any man taunts ministers for loving to be paid promptly and cheerfully, they may say to him, in the words of Terence, "Homo sum, et nil humanum a me alienum puto;" and if he asks what that means, it might not be unkind to tell him, that if he had had a more liberal education, he would both have known the English of it, and never would have uttered the reproach.

Instead of sundering the pastoral relation with a spirit of impatience or retaliation under trials, we should look at them as a part of our personal education for greater usefulness here and happiness hereafter. Among our losses here, we shall in heaven count the loss of an affliction our greatest calamity. For many a loss will be made up to us there, but the lost benefit of afflictions can never be repaired.

To fulfil the ministry, in its highest sense, is the best preparation for a future state.

We are not ministers only; we are Christians, as we hope and believe, and we have each an immortal soul. My destiny as an immortal spirit, my character as a Christian, are of more intrinsic importance to me than my official, professional calling; and it becomes me to make that calling subservient to the deathless interests of my soul, in my future, endless state. Ceasing then, to be, professionally, teachers, we are to become learners, to have teachers, and take our place among the spirits of just men, as they pursue the path of life in their discoveries of the Godhead and of the universe. Ministers are like men who are keeping school while fitting for college. Rising from the capacity and employment of school-masters in our preparatory state, we are soon to enter as it were a university where boundless fields of knowledge, and sciences, it may be, numerous and different as the various worlds to be explored, with their varying natural history and physical constitution, are to be opened before us, our faculties adapted to these pursuits, our affections towards God and the companions of our happy immortality increasing with the increase of our knowledge and powers. But this will not hinder us, it is true, from becoming teachers again.

For such a state, intellectual and moral, but chiefly excellent and desirable of course in its moral and spiritual character and influences, man is placed in this world to prepare. As ministers we have all the means of preparation for it which others enjoy, and some in addition. Our professional duty leads us to study spiritual things; we must define our ideas of them, we spend much of our time in writing upon them, and in conveying to others our conceptions of them. To qualify us for this work, God bestows upon us special spiritual gifts, the whole church of the living God prays for us, and in answer to their prayers, and to make us useful to them in spiritual knowledge and affections, "the God of all comfort comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Cor. 1: 4.) When, therefore, this service for the church of Christ which we fulfil in the ministry is finished, we go as the spirits of just men made perfect go, to enter upon the employments and enjoyments of Heaven. There without doubt the happiness, the attainments, of that man will be chiefly to be desired who has made this ministry exert its highest influence on his mind and heart. We may covet the joy of that man who on earth was chiefly employed in studying, in illustrating in his preaching, the unsearchable riches of Christ; to him Christ will be preëminently the Word, the Logos, of the Godhead; the atmosphere of his mind will have been peculiarly fitted, to receive from Him who is the brightness of the father's glory a degree of light which no unfallen seraph could so fully enjoy. If with full spirit of the Christian ministry that man shall have embraced the world in his liberal and earnest charity, and lived to promote the kingdom of Christ on earth, angels might desire the experience of that man in heaven qualified by such preparation for the enjoyments and employments of eternity.

But in addition to this influence of his earthly ministry upon his mind and heart, which is in addition to that of other men, look at him as having been the means of saving many from destruction. He is recognised by them as the faithful friend to whom under God they owe their salvation. It is said by a distinguished writer, that it is natural to man to lose in after life the reverence which he once felt for the teacher of his youth. But this change of feeling is only the effect of the change in our general feelings from childhood to manhood, or else of a discovery, that the things which we learned had not the intrinsic interest with which our

fancy clothed them. There is no feeling apart from natural affection deeper and stronger, than that of one who has acquired some valuable knowledge, towards him who kindly imparted it. Neither is there any hatred more intense, than that of one who has been misled in his intellectual pursuits or in his moral sentiments, towards his incompetent or false teacher, when the pupil comes to years of maturity. If you are conscious of having suffered in the acquisition of knowledge or in the formation of your mind, from the incapacity or errors of a bad teacher, there are times when you secretly feel that no punishment would be too severe for him. You would almost be willing to see him turning the everlasting and fruitless wheel of Ixion, or rolling up, with Sisyphus, the ever descending stone. The martyrdom of the man of whom St. Chrysostom tells us, placed alive in a bag of snakes, would not be an inappropriate vengeance for him who corrupted your imagination and perverted your moral sense. The future condition of that man is more to be deprecated than anything else, who spent his life as a teacher of a false religion, on whom a great congregation of souls in hell will pour their curses, while he in the lower deep to which he flies from their sight, thinks of the souls whom he kept from Christ and heaven. But, in contrast, give us the joy of that man whose scriptural and discriminating and faithful efforts shall have brought many from darkness into God's marvellous light. His face, his voice, his words, will be identified with their happiest recollections of earth, and mingle with their richest experience in heaven. O let us take heed to the ministry which we have received in the Lord, fraught with such consequences, that we fulfil it.

The intrinsic honor and rewards, and the influence of this ministry on us, do not depend on place, or the number, or the character and standing in society, of those who attend upon our ministrations. He who does nothing but fulfil this ministry, who exercises the care, or as the old writers have it, with a sort of double sense in the word, the *cure* of souls, and makes continual proclamation of the gospel, fulfils the highest ends for which man is made. In order to fulfil them, we must pursue nothing inconsistent with fulfilling our ministry. Philip of Macedon asked his son Alexander if he were not ashamed that he could play so well on the flute? The reproof, though, in that instance, misplaced, conveys a useful lesson. We may have, indeed, it may be said, we must have, some diversion for our thoughts and hands; health of body and of mind require it. But if we play on any "flute"

to the neglect of our duty, if our interest in anything else absorbs or divides our zeal, we cease to be useful in the ministry in the highest sense. For no man can have more than one great object of pursuit, if he is supremely devoted and faithful in his calling.

Perhaps there is no object of greater interest to Christ and angels, than a good minister of Jesus, fulfilling his ministry in a retired and humble situation, or in a place of difficulty and trial. Could we see the interest which heaven feels and expresses in the Christian ministry, we should no doubt receive a fresh impulse in our work. Have the Apostles and the long line of deceased ministers, forgotten those who have succeeded them in the work which was dearer to them than anything else on earth, and which in its progressive accomplishment is more important than anything below the sun? Do the pilgrim fathers and the early New England ministry never think of us? Do the Mayhews never turn their thoughts to Martha's Vineyard, nor the Mathers to Boston, nor Eliot to Roxbury, and all the band of good ministers to their successors in these labors and toils? We know not what interest they excite in us among the heavenly hosts, nor what an unseen presence there is every Sabbath in our congregations. The judicious Doddridge, speaking of our ministrations in the house of God says :

"The heavenly natives with delight  
Hover around the sacred place;  
Nor scorn to learn from mortal tongues,  
The wonders of redeeming grace."

A great Christian poet\* speaks of "Church bells beyond the stars heard." Among those mountains, or in that small village on the sea shore, where an obscure pastor preaches, as he supposes, to only a few souls, the Sabbath bell perhaps, brings to his audience the angels of God, who are instructed by his Christian experience and his views of the gospel, and when that humble pastor is at last caught up to heaven, he finds that he is loved and honored there beyond his utmost expectation. In opposing the follies of Swedenborgianism, let us not forget that "we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses," nor that angels are "sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation."

But there is another consideration of greater interest and importance. When we meet Christ, we shall find that he has had his opinion of us, and entertains certain feelings towards us, in

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\* George Herbert. The Church—Prayer.



regard to the spirit and manner in which we have been doing our work. "Will it then be," says one, "will it then be a matter of indifference to him who distributes the crowns and allots the thrones of heaven, whether you have been among the most faithful and diligent, or the most slothful and negligent of his servants?" It is an interesting thought that they who have been companions and fellow laborers in these churches for Jesus' sake, are to know and love each other in heaven. They should therefore "let brotherly love continue;" endeavor to see eye to eye in everything; and, until they can do this, cherish kind feelings towards each other, and by their continued union, their increasing respectability as professional men, their devotedness to their work, advance the interests of their common faith. While we do not neglect ancient and modern literature, and theological science, let us read more frequently such books as Baxter's Reformed Pastor, and Doddridge's Essay on the Evil and Danger of neglecting souls. Our pulpits and our pastoral walks are not only determining our influence in the world, but they are to be the objects of vivid recollections in eternity. "My pulpit!" what words are these to every pastor! what associations will cluster round the remembrance of that place in my mind forever and ever! A minister is standing in eternity by the side of some king who is looking back on his earthly throne, a king on whose realms the sun never set, and the minister is looking back to his pulpit. On the king's realms the sun has at last set forever, but on the subjects of a successful ministry the sun of righteousness arises forever with healing on his wings. That king can never bless God for his kingdom and throne with the feelings with which a minister will say, "And I thank Christ Jesus my Lord in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." "My pulpit!" The character and history of its ministrations, will determine my future crown and throne.