

## ART. V.—THE PASTOR IN HIS STUDY.

THE brief answer that would generally have to be given to the question, "What is a clergyman to do in his study?" is that it is the one place where he can never be found. He has so many services, at all events in towns, at which he must be present; is so busy in his schools, his lectures, and his guilds; and must devote so much time to visiting his sick and the poor, that it is impossible to secure leisure for any regular course of reading. Most clergymen would, indeed, confess that their teaching would be more sound and fruitful, higher in tone, and more real and conscientious if they could find time for study. But they do not feel much practical necessity for it. For so much is done for them, that a very short time will suffice for the compilation of a sermon. Commentaries will supply them with good matter. There are newspapers and magazines which provide sketches for filling up, and books of sermon outlines, which, besides a frame, give even the more salient points for the necessary padding. As for their religious opinions, they need take even less trouble; for they can have them supplied, second-hand indeed, at a very cheap rate. The periodicals of the day will give them something to say upon all the subjects about which men are talking; and much that is valuable and of real interest is contained in them. Why, then, should the clergy study? They can very well pass muster without.

For the sort of reading described above is not study. It is desultory, imparts little solid knowledge, and instead of forming good mental habits, it rather dissipates the mind, and makes it incapable of sound and accurate and sustained thought. The use of newspapers and magazines is to arouse curiosity and whet the appetite—not to satisfy it. They serve as a stimulant, and not as solid food. There are magazines which, like the *CHURCHMAN*, have a higher aim; but, as a rule, men who have no better reading than periodical literature are content with the foam upon the top of the cup of knowledge; and therefore eagerly follow whatever goose-feathers of floating thought may be fluttering about at the time, without caring to observe how, one after another, they all in due time fall to the ground. Some new goose sheds its feathers, and desultory readers at once give chase, and find amusement in it, but no real knowledge. It is for children to pursue butterflies, and the clergy should be staid and reverend men.

For they have been called to a very holy office. They are required to be "faithful dispensers of the Word of God and of

His sacraments," and "have received authority to preach the Word of God." And very much depends upon the manner in which they perform these duties. For the Church to which we belong will ever be much what the clergy make it. Without doubt the influence of the laity is very considerable. If they require much, and have a high standard of what their clergyman ought to be, the very fact that they have high expectations will serve as a stimulus to their clergyman, and he will be more earnest in the attempt to become what they desire. But should their standard be low, the natural indolence of human nature and our inborn love of ease will make too many content with what contents their flock. But it is the duty of the clergy to be the leaders of opinion; and the standard of judgment will in the main be the reflex of that which they themselves entertain.

As a matter of fact, it has been the deeper sense entertained by the clergy of the responsibilities of their office, and the earnest effort made by them to attain to that high level on which conscience has told them that God's minister ought to stand, that has raised the expectations and views of the laity as to what they may reasonably expect their clergyman to be. And if, first and chief of all, they require their pastor to be one who will give them real and true help in leading a godly life, so do they also look to him for guidance in obtaining a right understanding of God's Holy Word, and in threading their way among the many doubts and difficulties of a sceptical age. But, sceptical as the age may be, it is the privilege of our Church still to retain a believing laity; and we cannot expect that this will long continue so to be, unless the Church can supply their mental as well as their spiritual wants. It would be a miserable day, not for the Church only, but for the whole realm, if, as is too generally the case abroad, our Church could supply the wants of pious souls, but had no sustenance wherewith to satisfy the cravings of men of robust intellect. Scepticism has not won the day as yet, but we live in a time when all things are examined and looked into. Men do not accept statements now as a matter of course because they are made on authority. Thank God the age of apathy has gone by, and men value truth too much to take it for granted. Every difficulty is now frankly stated, and by many a mischievous pleasure is felt in marshalling in strong array every conclusion that seems adverse to the claims of revelation. It is impossible for religion to escape an ordeal through which all things are passing; and if our clergy become unlearned our Church will lose its hold over men of earnest and independent minds.

For unbelief in the present day is not a thing hidden away,

nor is it vicious. It is open, respectable, and often the result of honest doubt, and of difficulties either not answered at all, or answered so wrongly as to turn doubt into denial. And men now argue in defence of their disbelief, and find numerous supporters. Nor ought we to forget in the presence of this large and wide-spread scepticism that men need intellectual comfort. In the Middle Ages, when vice was rampant and men were governed by brute force, men needed chiefly religious comfort. We are not living among coarse surroundings now, nor is our moral sense shocked and outraged every day. The outward aspect of most things now is pleasing and agreeable, and men are not driven by horror at the things they see around them to immerse themselves in cloisters. But the mind is in a state of unrest. Questions moral and religious are mooted which are hard to solve. If the clergy give only religious comfort they are below the mark in an intellectual age. And how can they give mental rest if they do not study with earnest and careful attention the problems of the day? It is mere trifling with solemn responsibilities if all they do is to read in newspapers and magazines the last new thing started, the last problem ingeniously set forth. They must dig deeper, and examine the foundations of the faith, and learn what it is that supports the superstructure; and so they will become intelligent guides for souls harassed by the wordy warfare that goes on all around.

And amid the din of scientific and other controversy there never was a time, I believe, when so large a proportion of the laity were earnest and intelligent believers. In times happily passed, yet not so long ago as to be forgotten, the mass of the people were apathetic upon most religious questions; and large numbers of men even in high positions led immoral lives without shame, and often without reproach. In these days there is more earnestness on both sides. We may leave out of account the immoral. The pastor's study has little bearing upon them; but it has to do with belief and unbelief. And those who disbelieve now do so thoroughly, and are prepared to give intelligent reasons for their denial of more or less, or even of all, of the articles of the faith. And their reasons must be met by proof, and arguments stronger than those which they bring forward. And happily, not only do more believe than at any previous time, but more of them know why they believe, and why they have taken their side with Christ. But will they not look to their clergyman for sympathy? Ought he not to be fit to talk with them and advise them upon the subjects of their thought? And ought not the young to be forearmed if necessarily they must and will hear of these doubts and difficulties in every drawing-room, and in

most of the books which the press pours forth in such a never-ending torrent?

Plainly one result of the greater earnestness of our times and of the larger diffusion of knowledge, and of the more thorough understanding of the truths that are at stake, is this, that the clergy must be prepared to take their place, and that a leading place, in this battle, not for the faith only, but for truth. Of course it cannot be expected of all the clergy that they can be profound scholars and able exponents of the course of modern thought. As a matter of fact, the clergy of the Church of England do hold a very creditable place among educated men. There are few departments of science or philosophy in which they are not well represented, besides their own proper field of theology. But the general well-being of the Church and its hold upon the laity do not depend entirely upon the position of its leading men. The mass of the people will judge, not by what they read, but by what they see. The Church to them is represented by their own clergyman and by those in the adjoining parishes. That which will chiefly influence them will be the sincerity of their own pastor's personal belief, the earnestness of his own work, and the ripeness and fulness of his teaching. They will expect wise words full of instruction, and able to build them up in the faith, and to guide them safely through their doubts. If God has given him the ability he ought to read and meditate and think, so that by his means hungry souls may find sustenance. If his endowments be too slight for this, then he may be content to give in his life and conduct the proof that he, at least himself, believes and practices what he preaches.

Without this all the rest is indeed useless. Nothing less will satisfy the people than the having placed over them one who is himself a devout and earnest man, and who sets them the example of a holy and spiritual life. To such a one they will look with confidence, and will come to open to him their difficulties, that they may obtain guidance and counsel. For deep in the heart of men, hidden away though it often be by the sins and the falsities of their lives, is a longing after peace with God, and for something nobler and holier than their own selves. Seldom is the belief in God and the wish to be reconciled with Him quite lost in any man's heart, and thus the devout life of their clergyman is often a power where he least supposes it so to be. While for the man sunk in sin, with all that is best in him buried beneath the foulness of a bad life, a clergyman, whose standard of piety is low and whose life is frivolous, is utter ruin. His efforts, faint at the best, and feeble as the bruised reed, become nought when his clergyman is no help to him. He has little enough to help

him from within, and what hope is there if the aid he ought to have from without is little too?

Without personal piety learning will indeed avail little, and the men who really influence the mass of the laity are those who are holy and devout. Ability and intellect are precious gifts of God, and are best used when consecrated to His service. But piety and devotion are the offerings which we are allowed to bring of our own, and lay upon His altar, and men who so offer are the most fit for God's work; for His will is our sanctification, and He will surely bless those who are what He would have all men to be. The man who has given his own heart to God, is the man whom God will acknowledge, and who will gather the fullest sheaves for the heavenly granary. And so great importance does our Church attach to this, that she requires of every candidate for ordination, the assurance that he believes that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to offer himself to God's service. And this she does believing, that if the Holy Ghost is working in the minds of her clergy, He will form in them that devout character which is the first and chief requisite for winning souls for Christ.

But the Holy Spirit works not without means; and the two chief means for cherishing and strengthening His holy influence are prayer and the study of God's Holy Word. And this study is of two kinds: there is devotional study for the growth and development of our spiritual life; and there is intellectual study, and the thoughtful examination of the many grave problems connected with it. Both are important, but the first is the more so, and the laity value very greatly, and often sadly need scriptural instruction. But not only is it helpful to the laity, but also it is that which with prayer chiefly influences the clergyman's own life. And a man who knows his Bible well, and has meditated upon it, and prayed over it, will give his flock sound even if it be but simple instruction, and by his very sincerity and piety will furnish them with an antidote against intellectual doubt.

But a scriptural sermon does not mean one made by a diligent use of a concordance. A sermon may be garnished with abundant texts of Scripture and yet be utterly unscriptural. What is wanted is a constant study of the Bible, not beginning and ending with its perusal at stated times, but in which reading supplies food for thought, and spiritual things are compared with spiritual. When a man thus carries the Bible about with him he will speak from the fulness of his heart, and his words will be the fruit of his own experience. And the realness and genuineness of such teaching will carry conviction with it, and make it go straight to the hearts of others.

And herein lies one of the most important gains of the Reformation. The Bible was then placed in men's hands, not merely that they might know whether or not they were being taught what had the authority of Holy Writ, but far more, that they might obtain nourishment and sustenance for their own souls. If the Bible were nothing more than a proof of doctrine it might just as well have been left untranslated: for the appeal would then lie to the very words of prophet or apostle. But our reformers were anxious that the Bible should be translated into our own tongue, in order that all might have that which God had given to be the support of the spiritual life. Undoubtedly they did give Holy Scripture a most unqualified authority in matters of faith. For while accepting the tradition of the Church, and the writings of the fathers, as evidences of the existence of any doctrine at any particular time, they did not give such matters any co-ordinate authority. No one is admitted to Holy Orders except upon the solemn profession that he is "persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ;" and the clergy promise "to teach nothing as required of necessity for eternal salvation, but that which they are persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture." And this is, in the teacher, an indispensable use of Holy Scripture. The Bible is his rule of faith, and he is false to his ordination vows if he does not constantly compare his teaching with the Word of God.

But there is a higher and holier use of the Bible; and that is, as food for our own spiritual natures, and for the growth of our people in holiness. In the worst time the Bible was never wholly withheld from the laity, and the great influence of the preaching Friars was even due to the scriptural character of their sermons. What was so earnestly pressed at the Reformation was that it is the duty of the laity to read and study it for their own growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; and that they were not good Churchmen if they did not do so.

It is for the same purpose, in order that men, even the unlearned, may know the very words of Christ, that so great pains have been taken within the last few years to give the English-speaking race a Revised Version of the Bible. To this version the revisers gave time, thought, and their best learning, not merely without reward, but with the certainty that they would be bitterly attacked for their pains. But they felt that the teaching of the Bible is replete with manifold power, and that the more truly and exactly the words of the Master are rendered, the greater will be their influence upon

men's hearts. And so with the clergy. A ministry based upon devout meditation upon the Word of God will be a ministry of power; and the man whose teaching is Scriptural because God's Word is the daily object of his reverent study, will not be without a large meed of success in God's harvest-field.

In studying the Bible, and especially while reading in the New Testament the words of Christ, we are studying the truth itself. But we do well to read with careful attention the works of those who stand on a high eminence as its exponents. Especially we would mention with all admiration the name of that great teacher of the Western Church, St. Augustine: and in the many ritual controversies of the present day a man will not go far wrong who is a careful student of our own great writer, Hooker. Especially would I urge upon the clergy the duty of reading again and again the earlier books. Men read the Fifth Book, or extracts from it, to get Hooker's opinion upon points under discussion. But this is but a small matter. In the earlier Books the great principles are considered, by the help of which our judgment is to be formed, and no man will make them the object of attentive thought without rising from their study a wiser man, and farther advanced on the way towards that soundness of opinion which has earned for Hooker his special title.

Well would it be both for clergy and laity if the clergy would set apart a portion of each day for the study of great writers such as those which I have mentioned. And by study, I mean the reading and thinking them over, not for the sake of some controversy or the next Sunday's sermon, but for their own sake. By this calm use of them the mind becomes ripe and mature, and fruitful in wise teaching. Sermon writing, or the preparation of unwritten sermons, stores the memory of course with much homiletic matter; but for a man to be an accurate and thoughtful teacher, he needs deep firm foundations, not showing themselves ostentatiously upon the surface, but giving strength and consistency to all his views; and I am quite sure that there would not be so much frivolous thought and action in matters of ritual, if those early and most charming Books of Hooker's "*Ecclesiastical Polity*" were read with the attention which they deserve.

And any clergyman who had his mind formed by such calm, regular, and thoughtful study, would form a wise judgment upon all the scientific matters now in debate, and would be in no danger of panic because of the large assumptions which some scientific writers make. For much that has been taught us by men of science we have every reason to be most grateful; and not unfrequently the lessons they have

given were met at first by outcry and opposition; but have proved to be aids to the faith rather than stumbling-blocks. Other matters advanced have proved to be but theories, interesting, but incapable of proof, or even disproved by the advance of science itself. But much of the intellectual interest of these times lies in these scientific discussions, and though we may feel that the truth of the Bible is often dragged very unnecessarily into the discussion, yet as such is the case the clergy must be prepared to act as moderators, and when the minds of any of their people are distressed or startled by difficulties occasioned by scientific progress, they ought to have judicious and wise counsels to give, not as partizans who look upon all doubts as attacks upon religion, but as well-read and thoughtful men, whose minds have been formed and matured by earnest and devout study.

We are not living in mediæval times when all that was asked for was help in leading a holy life. We are living in days when men want mental peace. Holiness is now, as then, the one thing best and noblest; but other needs have to be considered and cared for. It may seem bold and impertinent to give an opinion upon such a point; but it does seem true that while the clergy are doing so much to satisfy the cravings of the devout soul, they do less and less to content men and women of active intellect. And without calm and regular study there will be nothing wherewith to feed the hunger of restless minds. Their questionings will remain unanswered, and doubts that might have led to sincere and earnest faith will end in disbelief. It will be a bad day for our Church when men cease to attend our services, and the pastor's words are valued only by those of feeble and unformed mind. Large numbers of the laity do read and study, and acquire not merely great knowledge, but what is better, accurate habits of thought. And they expect, and that with reason, that their clergymen, excepting of course special and professional branches of learning, shall be at least their equal, and in gravity and maturity of thought, even more advanced and sounder in knowledge than themselves.

R. PAYNE-SMITH.

