

do so. Neither of two narratives is discredited by the absence of information as to which event described took place first.

The encyclopædia article by Professor Schmiedel referred to by Canon Henson is a monumental example of Talmudic minuteness. He treats the story of the Resurrection as the rabbis treated the Old Testament. The weary traveller wanders painfully through the colossal accumulation in the search for conclusions, which when found are seen to be doomed from the outset by the methods employed and the assumptions made. It is seeking the lost crew of a derelict ship on a desert, troubled waste of waters; or the bones of a dead enterprise in an arid and limitless Sahara.

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THE SECULAR IN RELIGIOUS WORK.

HOW far it is helpful that the secular element should be admitted into professedly religious work, is one of the problems of the day. Hardly as the Education Act may seem to bear upon some of those engaged in the ministry of the Word, much as they may conscientiously regret that the religious training of the young should in so great a measure pass from their charge, the working out of this Act may after all tend to their increased freedom for the discharge of other duties, of which many pastors have a superabundance.

This problem, the problem of how far faithfulness in the discharge of their sacred office should lead our pastors to take up secular matters, must continually appeal to them, and sometimes perplexingly. Overwhelmed with work, as is generally the case with the best of them, not only leaders in the ordinances of the house of God, but expected to dispense the bread of life from the pulpit with due adaptation to the needs of their hearers; reckoned upon as the disinterested friends and advisers of any member of the congregation who claims their time and attention; expected to support and to multiply agencies directly religious,—beyond these justifiable claims, are not further calls too often made upon them? Whether it be choral society, football team, or hospital committee, the name of the pastor is almost sure to be in request, and, when given, is more than likely to involve a further draw upon his already overdrawn time and strength, and may even be met to the detriment of his own proper and more important work. Even the office of president, when held con-

scientifically, cannot be altogether a sinecure, but means real responsibility.

Not long ago one of our Church papers described the amazement of a missionary who had lately returned from the foreign field, and who was engaged in deputation work, at finding his brethren at home turned into what he calls "the general amusers of their congregations." "It is not as though," he continues, "this had brought any perceptible increase in the number of those attending their ministry, or as though the rolls of communicants had become longer—rather the reverse."

Is this a right state of things, even allowing that the missionary's picture may be a little overdrawn? It would be more likely to be right were mortal man without his limitations, if the most gifted, the strongest among men, were not apt all too soon to come to the end of their resources when those resources are ceaselessly drawn upon.

Bishop Thorold remarked that it was one sign of a man's approach to the age of forty when he began to realize that he was never intended to do everything, not even everything that ought to be done by someone. Earlier in life, enthusiastically conscientious souls may have thought themselves to blame if they let slip what is called an opportunity, never stopping to consider whether that particular opportunity was intended by God for them, or for another. Such are apt to imagine that whatever crosses their path ought without doubt to be attempted by themselves, and, moreover, ought to be succeeded in. But as years pass, experience proves otherwise. It proves that each must await his call from God to a particular work; that each has his peculiar limitations, and that these must perforce be recognised.

Even though his time may be already more than full, a pastor may find it difficult to say a downright "No" to the captain of the football team, to the secretary of the hospital committee or of the choral society, as to many others who appeal for a share of his time and interest. He, if a true shepherd, is longing to influence every member of his flock, whether young or old. And in these days what wonder if he feels he dare let no right opportunity slip by? Considering all this, ought the pain of being obliged to refuse be forced upon him? Ought not godly laymen—hard worked, too, but each with his quota of time and strength to be used in the service of God for his fellow-men—ought not such to step in, as many have already done, and take the responsibility of conducting these secular matters in the right spirit of the fear of God? Could not many in their leisure hours thus free their pastor for his more spiritual work? The adage holds good that change of work is often as good as play.

“Unless I do it myself, everything connected with the congregation slackens or falls through,” was the comment of a clergyman who ought to have been in the prime of life, but who had been aged and forced too near the verge of overwork by the manifold claims made upon his strength.

Does it need saying that it is the conscientious, faithful ministers of the Word of God to whom reference is being made, not to those described by a hard-worked laity as “having an easy time of it.” Who ought to work harder than the minister of God?

Were faithful pastors without their limitations, they might perhaps be expected to take in the kind of thing that so many unselfishly do strive to compass, often quite against their personal wishes. As other men, they are finite as regards purse, time, and strength; and if too much be laid upon them, it must be to the detriment of their more important, their spiritual, work. Work for God in its many differing branches ought to be divided and subdivided amongst the right agents.

In the early days of the Christian Church the Apostles seem to have seen this clearly. “It is not reason,” said they, “that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables,” though the others, chosen for the serving of tables, were to be men, not only of good report and of wisdom, but “full of the Spirit of God.”

Too much ought never to be expected of one person. The secular ought not to be overmuch pressed upon the spiritual worker, lest the spirituality of the work undertaken by him should suffer. A certain amount of what is called secular work must always be connected with the more direct service of God, and this secular part ought to be carried on by suitable agents as a real part of the same service, carried on in faith, with wisdom, and under the guidance of the Spirit. Some are called to one kind of work, some to another. True consecration consists in a whole-hearted, loving response to whatever the call from God may be.

But it must be borne in mind that the extent to which the spiritual worker will respond to secular demands must also be determined, somewhat, by the kind of temperament that has been given him, as well as by the type of his personal gifts. Some are gifted in one direction alone, and are apt to see one thing rather to the exclusion of others. The one thing may be of great importance, and such people are generally able to carry a matter through. The world's greatest reformers are said to have been men of this type. Then, there are others who, in grasping for the highest, have let other things drop; and what wonder, if the highest be really within their reach? So,

again, some, owing to the temperament with which they were born, cannot but take a wider view, though it may be a more superficial one. Others really require the lighter phases of life to enable them to fulfil its more serious aspects. These varying types of character are to be found as often amongst our pastors as amongst their flocks, and such considerations influence the life work of all.

Much may be rightly termed religious work that is not directly spiritual. In the organization of industrial flower-shows, parish concerts, sales of work, that these should be reckoned real service for God gives impetus to many who worthily take part in them. It would be matter for regret if the best of one's music, the choicest of one's flowers could not be dedicated to God. And when this is done sincerely, humbly, in the spirit of thankful worship, nought of worldly conformity need perforce creep in.

But let it be emphasized, that in Christian work the more directly, perhaps the more exclusively, the aim is spiritual, the more evidently spiritual is the result likely to be. Souls are most often helped by those who aim at helping them. This is common-sense, and its principle holds good everywhere. Yet the more secular has its necessary part to perform. All parts of the complex frame of man need caring for, but surely this can be done without our pastors earning for themselves the title of "general amusers."

So soon as a large portion of the recreative and some of the philanthropic organizations of a parish are taken off the shoulders of those who are ministers of the Word (and surely to worthily administer that Word in all its fulness is no trivial life work), then, not only will the parishioners reap more benefit from their spiritual ministrations, but our pastors will be able to deal more effectually and individually with all classes, after the example of their Lord and Master, "who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." And this lightening of the pastor's work on its more secular side can be effected without allowing him to feel in any way left out in the cold.

The members of a congregation are often themselves to blame for the shortcomings of their pastors. Said one of these: "My friends, if I am not what you want me to be, take to yourselves the blame. You do not pray for me enough." And to this may be added the fact that upon many a one is cast more than mortal man can bear, either for his own spiritual good or for the spiritual good of others, in the conduct of manifold organizations certainly outside the lawful province of a man who has given himself to the ministry of the Word.

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