





Portrait of a man

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THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT PHILADELPHIA,

BEFORE THE

ASSOCIATION OF THE ALUMNI

OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON,

ON

WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 21, 1834.

BY

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IN SAID SEMINARY.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

DURING the session of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in 1833, it was resolved by a large number of the Alumni of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, who were then in the city of Philadelphia, to form an Association of those who were once students in that Institution. The objects of this Association were determined to be: to renew and perpetuate the friendship and intercourse which subsisted among them when fellow-students; to promote personal piety; to foster the spirit of missions; to incite to greater diligence in the work of the ministry; to support, as far as their influence can be auxiliary, the beloved Institution in which they received their Theological education, &c. &c.

One of the means which were deemed best calculated to accomplish some, if not all, of these objects, was the delivery of a sermon before the Association at its regular Annual Meetings during the sessions of the General Assembly; and the Rev. Dr. Alexander was unanimously requested to preach the first sermon. This he did on Wednesday morning, the 21st of May, during the recent session of the Assembly.

After the delivery of the sermon, it was unanimously resolved, "That the thanks of the Association be presented to Dr. Alexander for his excellent sermon, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of it for publication." And the Rev. Messrs. Barnes, Baird and Platt, were appointed a committee to carry this resolution into effect.

In obeying the wishes of the Association, the Committee have exceeded what was at first intended. They have thought it due to the cause of religion in general, to the Seminary which we all love, and to the Church of which most of the Alumni are ministers, to give this sermon,—the first of a series,—a wide circulation. They have, accordingly, determined that a copy of it shall be sent, not only to all the Alumni of the Institution, but to every minister of the Presbyterian Church, free of expense to them, save the postage

when forwarded by mail. The expense of printing more than two thousand copies has been sustained chiefly by a few of the Alumni, and a few distinguished and beloved lay brethren in the city of Philadelphia. The Committee have also caused to be prepared an engraved likeness of the author, which, they are sure, will be acceptable to all who receive it.

For pursuing this course the Committee have one or two reasons to assign, in addition to what they have already stated, and which they are confident will be entirely satisfactory.

1. The sermon itself is worthy of this extensive circulation, and indeed of a far larger one. It discusses a subject of the utmost importance to the ministers of the Gospel, abounds in rich and matured instruction, breathes a spirit of deep, and truly paternal affection and solicitude for those who were once the pupils of its author, is characterised throughout by wisdom, piety, and earnestness, and is expressed in that perfect simplicity of style which is displayed in all his writings. It is to be regretted that the reader cannot enjoy, as he peruses it, the expressive eye, the affectionate and solemn countenance, the thrilling voice, and the meek and paternal manner which accompanied its delivery.

2. The Committee believe that this sermon will be received by all, as a pleasing and profitable remembrancer of its beloved author, who has long enjoyed, as he has well deserved, the affections of his brethren, and sons, (as many of them may be called,) in the ministry; and whose piety, prudence, meekness, kindness, liberality, and other eminent qualifications for the office which he fills, and has long filled, render him the object of a respect, on the part of all who know him, which borders on veneration. That his life may be long spared to be a blessing, under God, to the Church, is the sincere and continued prayer of the Committee.

A

S E R M O N ,

ETC. ETC.

JOHN, xxi. 16. FEED MY SHEEP.

ALTHOUGH the Lord Jesus Christ treated all His disciples with condescending and affectionate familiarity, yet some of them He distinguished with more marked attention, and with more intimate access to himself than the rest. On what ground this preference was manifested, it is not for us to inquire; it is sufficient that we are sure that all His actions were guided by perfect wisdom, and sprung from the purest motives. Of the whole number, John only had the appellation of ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved;’ and to him it was granted, not only to be present at those interesting scenes in our Lord’s life and sufferings which were exhibited to few witnesses, but also to lean on his breast at the sacred supper, and to receive, as a legacy, the charge of the blessed virgin from Jesus while dying upon the cross.

But Peter also received many marks of special attention from his Master. He was applauded and honoured for his noble confession, that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God; was severely rebuked for his cowardly and carnal policy in endeavouring to dissuade his Master from meeting the sufferings which he had foretold; was forewarned of his shame-

ful and ungrateful denial of his Lord, and was the object of the special prayers of the great Intercessor, that his faith might not entirely fail in this hour of temptation and discomfiture. And when he had verified the prediction of Jesus, by thrice denying him, he was brought to a penitent sense of his sin by a reproving but gracious look from his suffering Lord.

After the resurrection, also, Peter, notwithstanding his fall, was not overlooked. The angels who appeared at the sepulchre to the women, charged them to inform his disciples of the event, and **PETER**; not naming any other. And it seems that Christ appeared to Peter before he had been seen by any other of the apostles. And here, at the sea of Tiberias, a place consecrated by the residence, the miracles, and sermons of Jesus, he directed his conversation, in a very special manner, to Peter; asking him three times, whether he loved him, and at each answer giving him a charge to "feed his lambs," or to "feed his sheep."

The first thing which claims our attention in these words is, the tender solicitude which the great Shepherd feels for his flock; a solicitude, which has no measure, abatement, or termination. "A woman may forget her sucking child, but I will not forget thee," is the language which he uses to them. In life, in death, and after his resurrection, he still bears them on his heart; just as the high priest of the Jews bore the names of the twelve tribes on his breast-plate, when he appeared before God.

But who are they whom Christ denominates "my sheep," "my lambs?" They are undoubtedly "a peculiar people," "a chosen generation." Christ always makes a wide distinction between his sheep and the rest of the world. They are the elect people, "whom God foreknew, and whom he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son: who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love"—"being predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,

according to the good pleasure of his will"—“to the praise of the glory of his grace.” They are the persons given by the Father to Christ, not one of whom can be lost; for Christ giveth eternal life to all that were given to him. (John, x. 28.) “And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” They are such as from eternity were beloved of the Father and the Son: for whom the good Shepherd layeth down his life. “I am,” says he, “the good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” And again, “I lay down my life for the sheep.” The apostle Paul seems to have had the words of our text in his mind, or rather the sentiment which they express, when he addressed the elders of Ephesus in this solemn exhortation: “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and unto the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.” This is that “little flock,” to which it is the “Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom.”

The sheep of Christ do all, sooner or later, “hear his voice and follow him.” Before he goes after them, to call them by his word and Spirit, they know him not, although they are known to him. During this time of ignorance, they wander far from the fold, and the pastures of the good Shepherd; have no delight in his word and service; but when he draws them to himself, and reveals to them his love and his glory, they leave all for his sake, and are ready to follow him wherever he goeth; “through evil report and good report.”

While on earth, they are the objects of his special care. For their sake the church was established; and all its ordinances and institutions are intended for their nourishment, growth, and consolation. In their seasons of darkness and tribulation, He never forsakes them; but his arm is continually stretched out for their protection, against the ravenous beasts of the wilderness, which are ever “going about, seeking whom they may devour.” After conducting them safely

through the perils of the wilderness, they pass "the valley and shadow of death," under his guidance; but even there, "they fear no evil," for He is with them, and with his rod and staff he comforts them.

From what has been said, it appears, that the sheep of Christ are now in three states, widely different from each other. One part are not yet in the fold, and know nothing of the good Shepherd, that bought them with his blood. Another part are in the church, or at least in a state of grace, and hear the voice of the Shepherd, and follow him; but are still liable to many diseases and disasters, and exposed to many fierce and powerful enemies. The third class are safely gathered into the general fold above, and feast in celestial pastures, where no ravening beast enters, and where they are exempt from all disease, and from all danger.

Another prominent truth, in these words, is, that LOVE TO CHRIST—SUPREME LOVE TO CHRIST—is the most important qualification of a pastor of Christ's flock. The question is thrice put, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And in each case, after receiving an affirmative answer, the Lord Jesus commands him to feed his sheep, or to feed his lambs. Is not this as much as to say, none are qualified to feed my sheep, who have no love to me? And the thing is sufficiently evident to reason; for he who has no love to the owner, will have no real regard for the safety and health of the flock. Among men of the world, it sometimes happens, that one passion becomes so strong, that it nearly swallows up all others. Thus, avarice in the miser, is found potent enough to counteract the strongest propensities of nature. Ambition, also, in others, carries all before it. Every thing subserves the one pursuit, or yields to it. Now, such should be the case with the minister of the Gospel. The love of Christ ought so to predominate, so to possess his mind, and to bear him along, that every interfering, or opposing principle, should be neutralized or extinguished. This should suggest

all his plans, guide all his operations, give energy to all his efforts, and afford him comfort under all his trials. Constrained by the love of Christ, he should cheerfully forego all the comforts of ease, affluence, and worldly honour, to serve his Master in places far remote; or far removed from public observation. This holy affection should impel him to undertake the most arduous duties, and encounter the most formidable dangers; this should enkindle the ardour of his eloquence, and supply the pathos of his most tender addresses. This is the hallowed fire which should be kept bright and burning continually. All other warmth is no better than "strange fire." Nothing but the love of Christ, can make a truly faithful pastor, or evangelist, assiduous in all his services, and indefatigable in the most private and self-denying duties of his office. Other motives may lead a man to great diligence in preparing for his labours in the pulpit, where splendid eloquence wins as much applause as any where else. Other motives also may stimulate a minister to great public exertion, and give him all the appearance of fervent zeal and devotedness to God, in the eyes of men; but if supreme love to Christ be wanting, he is, after all, nothing; or, at best, a mere "sounding brass or tinkling cymbal." Genius, learning, eloquence, zeal, public exertion, and great sacrifices, even if it should be of all our goods, and of our lives themselves, will be accounted of no value, in the eyes of the Lord, if love to Christ be wanting.

The church is now using laudable exertions to increase the number of ministers; but, we may multiply preachers; we may educate them well, and they may be acceptable to the people; but, alas! if they love not the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion will not be built up. The great harvest will not be gathered.

But I proceed now to what is my principal object, to inquire how the sheep of Christ's flock should be fed. Or, in other words, to give an outline of the duty of a pastor to his flock.

Our blessed Lord, here employs two words to signify his flock, "lambs," and "sheep," that it might appear, that he would have Peter, and other pastors, to overlook none, however weak they may be. He also uses two words to express the duty of pastors, in taking care of the flock. First, he says, βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου, *feed my lambs*; next, he says, ποιμαίνει τὰ πρόβατά μου, *perform the office of a shepherd to my sheep*. The only reason for bringing the original into view here is, that the difference between the extent of the meaning of these two words, is not preserved in the English version. The second word, here employed, has a much more extensive sense than the other. It is often used to express the idea of government and guidance, as well as feeding. No word is more common with classic writers, to express the whole duty of a king in governing and providing for his people. This word, therefore, properly includes the whole duty of a pastor to his flock.

It will be no how necessary to take notice here of the extravagant claims which the Romanists found on this text, in favour of the regal power of their pontiff, over the whole church. It is sufficient to observe, in regard to such claims, that no one would ever have thought of looking to this text for support to them, unless there was a great deficiency of other evidence.

It would be presumptuous to undertake to give a full view of pastoral duties, in the time allotted for this discourse. Volumes have been written on the subject, and it would not be difficult to fill many discourses, with the detail of the various and important duties of the pastoral office; but my object is only to bring forward a few things—a mere outline, which each of you is capable of filling up; and which, I trust, you do fill up, not merely in theoretical knowledge, but in the daily practice of the duties of your office.

1. This duty of feeding the sheep of Christ, implies, that we should endeavour to gather them into the fold, and intro-

duce them to the pastures which he has provided. Christ said to the Jewish people, "other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring." He meant the people whom he had chosen, who were then scattered among the heathen, in different countries. These were not of the Jewish fold, but they were his sheep. They were not yet brought home, and had not yet heard his voice, but he claims them as his own. To gather in these, was the first object of the ministry of the apostles. "Go," says Christ, in giving the commission, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Go teach, or make proselytes, of all nations;" and, accordingly, "they went every where, preaching the word," and the Lord was with them, and great was the company of disciples. The sheep were now gathered into the fold of Christ by thousands. The Gospel net was seldom cast in vain, but under the direction of the Master, it inclosed a multitude of men. And why may we not hope to see similar effects from the preaching of the Gospel, accompanied by the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, in these latter days. Most assuredly, if the world is to be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea; if all nations are to be given to Christ as his inheritance; if all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, then the ingathering of souls in all former seasons, is nothing more than the first-fruits of the glorious harvest which is yet future. God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save; the Word has lost nothing of its energy; and the residue of the Spirit is with him. Why then are we so unbelieving, and so easily discouraged, as though Zion would never arise; as though the fulness of the Gentiles would never come in; as though the promise would never be fulfilled, that all Israel shall be saved?

If this good work had been prosecuted as it was begun, by this time, there would have been none left in the wilderness; the whole world would before now have been included in the visible church. But alas! although the church has changed

its situation, yet it is doubtful whether it is much more extensive than at the close of the apostolic age. Much the greater part of the world is still unoccupied ground; and the commission to go into all the world to call in the lost sheep, has devolved upon the present ministry, in all its force. This long-neglected duty, has of late engaged the attention of the church, and some have felt the constraining obligation of the divine command, and have gone forth, to preach the Gospel among the heathen. (May the King of Zion prosper them in their work!) But still little, comparatively, has been done. Professing Christians, in general, are not as deeply interested in promoting this object as they should be. Ministers are not sufficiently impressed with the duty which is incumbent on them. The lost sheep ought to be gathered from the east and the west, and the north and the south; but when the inquiry is made, "Who will go for us?" we do not hear a sufficient number promptly saying, "Here are we, send us."

This is undoubtedly the most important and glorious work, about which the minds of men can be occupied. All other enterprizes, whether scientific, political, or economic, terminate on some benefit or convenience which relates only to temporal things; but the conversion of the world to Christianity is connected with the eternal welfare of mankind, and at the same time, would promote their happiness in this life, more than all other causes which can be put into operation; for "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is; as well as of that which is to come;" and is in all respects the greatest gain. And this great and glorious work is predestinated. The Scriptures must be fulfilled, and God is able to accomplish all his richest promises to the church. This dark world shall be enlightened. This corrupt world shall be regenerated. This confused and deformed world shall be restored to order and clothed with beauty; and this miserable world be filled with joy and rejoicing. Glorious things, indeed, are spoken, in the volume of God's prophecies, respecting Zion:

she shall become the joy of the whole earth, and all nations shall unite in calling her blessed. And these extraordinary benefits shall be conferred by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel; and this inestimable treasure is not committed to angels, but to men. You are the ambassadors of Christ, by whom a rebellious world is to be reconciled. You are of the number of the workmen by whom this spiritual temple is to be built; and as your season of labour is circumscribed within narrow limits, it behooves you to work the work of God while the day lasts, for the night cometh on apace, when no man can work. You will never have another opportunity to glorify your Lord upon earth. Whatever you may do, others will arise who will be honoured with glorious success in the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. The sheep must be gathered into the fold, and the good Shepherd will cause them, even from the ends of the earth, to hear his voice and follow him. Happy, indeed, will those pastors be, who when He appeareth, shall be able to exhibit a multitude converted by their ministry.

And when missionaries offer themselves, there is not that promptness in the churches, to contribute liberally to their support which is desirable. And perhaps there is not always that self-denial and readiness to endure hardship, in the missionary, which the nature of the service requires. There ought to be more expedients to lessen the expenses of our missionary stations; for upon the scale of expense on which they have been conducted, it is certain, that operations of this kind must be circumscribed within very narrow bounds.

If the Christian church felt her obligations to her Lord and Redeemer as she ought, the whole body would be like a great missionary society, whose chief object was to spread the Gospel over the whole world.

It was the last public act of a greatly respected and highly gifted servant of Jesus Christ, personally known to many of you,

and by character to you all, when on his death-bed, and when heart and flesh were failing, to dictate a set of resolutions* to be laid before the General Assembly of our Church, the object of which was, to make a public and solemn declaration, that the Church consider herself as a great missionary society, instituted for the conversion of the world; and that henceforth she would make that her great object. The Moravians have effected more than all other protestants, although few in number, because they have made the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, the primary object of their association.

But how many of Christ's sheep may be still uncalled in our own land? Is there zeal enough, and exertion enough, in supplying the destitute around us, and in our frontier settlements, with the means of grace? Are not large districts of country lying desolate, as it relates to the institutions and instructions of religion? Consider, dear brethren, what should be done, and what duty devolves upon each of you in this respect. Foreign missions, and home missions, ought never to be viewed as rival or interfering objects. They are only different departments in the same great field of labour; and success in the one has a direct tendency to promote the prosperity of the other.

2. Next, let us consider the manner in which the sheep, when gathered into the fold, should be fed. The word of God is, in general, the food with which his people must be fed. The knowledge of the truth, is the proper nutriment of the spiritual life.

Now, to feed the flock of God, the pastor must understand the Scriptures. And he must feel in his own soul the experience of the efficacy of the truth. "For if the blind lead the blind, will not both fall into the ditch?" A guide of the

* The reference is to the Resolutions dictated by the late lamented Rev. Dr. John H. Rice, during his last painful illness.

children of God, ought to have a deep and rich experience of the manifold grace of God; and should be well acquainted with the various cases of conscience, which are common among the sheep of his pasture. His very soul should be imbued with the spirit of the Gospel. And he should be of a very tender and compassionate disposition, towards all persons labouring under trouble of mind.

To feed the church of God, it is necessary, that the **TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL** be preached. Error can never nourish the soul. Error, even when mingled with truth, is like poison in our food. It is a thing much to be dreaded and avoided, to preach what is not true; or, what God has never commanded us to teach. The pastors of Christ's flock, have the strongest motives to induce them to "take heed to themselves and to their doctrine." They should be exceedingly solicitous to know what the truth is, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of the people; and when they do know the revealed will of God, we be unto them, if they do not preach it faithfully.

The whole counsel of God should be declared. Nothing that can be profitable should be kept back. The scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God, brings out of his treasure things new and old. The Old Testament and the New; the law and the gospel; the promises and the precepts; the predictions and the histories; the justice and the grace of God;—in short, every thing which the Scriptures have it as their object to reveal, we must preach. Yet, as in every system, while all parts are necessary in their place, some are more absolutely essential, and occupy a more central, and more prominent place; so, in the system of Scriptural doctrines, some truths must be made more conspicuous than others; and must be more frequently and earnestly inculcated, because on the knowledge of these, salvation is suspended. But every part of divine revelation should receive proper attention. The people need to be instructed in all that God has revealed for the edification of his church.

The word of God must be exhibited in its genuine simplicity. The babes of Christ grow and thrive only by the "sincere," (*i. e.* untainted, unmixed,) "milk of the word." This celestial nutriment will not bear to be mixed with human inventions and philosophy, without great injury. There should be no adulteration of the truth. No diluting of it. No combination of it with things foreign to its nature. Clear, sound, simple expositions of divine truth, should form the basis of the pastor's instructions from the pulpit.

The truth should be preached in a discriminating manner, with adaptation to the state and capacities of the particular flock to which it is addressed, and with seasonable and powerful application.

A mere general exhibition of the truth, without skilfully dividing it, so as to give every one his proper portion, is such a method of feeding the sheep of Christ, as will bring shame on him who thus dispenses the word. What should we think of the skill and fidelity of a physician, who should mix up good medicines and dispense them indiscriminately to all the patients in a hospital? Very much like this is the conduct of the preacher who deals out the word of God, without regard to the different characters of his hearers. Careless sinners must be awakened and persuaded by having the terrors of the Lord set before them. The watchman must not fail to sound the alarm, and testify against the sins of the people. "He should cry aloud and spare not." For if he fail of being faithful, their blood will be required at his hands. (Ezek. iii, 17-21.)

Gainsayers must be convinced, and their mouths stopped with solid argument. And yet we must instruct those, who oppose themselves, with meekness. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." "The servant of the Lord must not strive," but yet he must "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." The ignorant must be instructed.

The babes in Christ must be fed with milk ; the mature believer with strong meat.

The mourner must be comforted, and the weak and faint supported and refreshed, with an application of the free and gracious promises of God.

But in order to adapt his instructions to the various classes of persons in his charge, and to meet the various exigencies of the people, the pastor must descend from the pulpit ; he must follow his flock to their homes. He must teach not only “publicly,” but also “from house to house.” He must find out, by personal acquaintance, the wants and diseases of mind under which they suffer. He must patiently, assiduously and perseveringly set himself to feed the sheep of Christ ; and not to overlook the “lambs,” who are first mentioned in our Lord’s charge to Peter. It matters not whether by these we understand the weak in faith, or those of tender age ; both must be carefully nourished. The youth form the most interesting part of the flock of every pastor. On them rest the hopes of the church. They must soon stand in the places of their fathers. They will very shortly have the whole concerns of the church of Christ in their hands. How important is it then, that they be trained up in the way they should go ; “brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Among all the “signs of the times” which are encouraging, there is no one more calculated to inspire hope, than the attention paid to youth in Sabbath schools, and in catechetical and Bible classes.

This is, indeed, to begin to build on a good foundation. If we would have the tree to grow strait, we must attend to it when young and tender. Let these efforts then be continued and multiplied. This is so far a compliance with the command of Christ, “feed my lambs.”

By means of Sunday schools, now so widely extended over the church, the faithful pastor is furnished with a troop of auxiliaries, in the faithful discharge of his duty, unknown to

our fathers, and which should be appreciated as one of the distinguishing blessings which God has granted to his church in our days. That pastor who does not cherish and patronize this catholic institution, manifests an ignorance or indifference in regard to the welfare of the lambs of his flock, little consistent with sincere love and fidelity to the great Shepherd. The superintendence of these schools, within the bounds of his charge, properly belongs to the pastor, and his assisting elders; and when the actual duties are transferred to other competent hands, the direction and government should remain with him. But I must not omit, what has long been with me a favourite opinion, that these Sunday schools should include persons of all ages: all your people, even though grey-headed, should be in a course of regular instruction. The truth is, that most adults need to have the same lessons inculcated, which are given to the children. This, moreover, is no impracticable theory. The experiment has been tried, in a number of congregations in Massachusetts, and the result, as far as is known, is delightful. It is not necessary for adult men and women to be catechised as children are, but they might be formed into classes; might appoint a leader, or take this office in turn, and might prepare a certain number of chapters, on the contents of which they might freely converse, for an hour or two; and such as desired it, might be permitted to propose questions, to be answered on the spot, or to be reserved until the next meeting. We are, in fact, all children, while in this world, and need to learn something from God's word every day; and such an employment would fill up the vacant hours, and enliven the spirits of the aged, when they are so apt to become torpid, for want of interesting objects of attention. And I verily believe, that it would be the means of preserving their powers from sinking into dotage.

And if parents could be induced to co-operate more zealously in this work; if mothers, especially, would be

persuaded to be more earnest and assiduous in instilling divine truth into the infant mind, who can tell what a reformation might be wrought in one age? And I cannot but hope, that maternal affection, which is one of the strongest as well as tenderest feelings implanted in the human constitution, begins already to be directed into its appropriate channel. The existence and success of "*Maternal Associations*," intended for the mutual assistance of pious mothers, encourages me to believe, that this powerful and inextinguishable yearning of the maternal heart, the nature and force of which mothers only can appreciate, is about to be sanctified to the great object of promoting early piety, and sowing the seed which may ripen into religion in mature age, when this effect fails in earlier life. If I were called on to declare what means of conversion, beside public preaching, had been most blessed of God, I should unhesitatingly answer, **MATERNAL INSTRUCTION.**

The pastor of a flock may well be compared to the physician of a hospital. It is important for him, as far as possible, to know the case of each individual under his charge; and especially to search out such as are labouring under peculiar maladies. He must not only be ready to visit his people, but prompt to enter into religious conversation with them. Not merely of a general and uninteresting kind, but relative to their own state,—their various spiritual troubles, conflicts and temptations; and having learned the cases of spiritual disease, he should study them with care, and bring them specially and individually before the Throne of Grace; and should not cease to visit such persons, however weak and erroneous their views may be. And even if they seem to derive no benefit from his conversation, he must not forsake or neglect them. Like a kind physician, he must show his sympathy, when he can apply no effectual remedy.

The sick, also, he must visit, and deal with them faithfully,

skilfully and tenderly, according to their respective characters and states of mind.

The poor of the flock must never be forgotten by the faithful pastor. Many of the most precious of Christ's sheep and lambs, are found in this class. "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." It was a distinguishing proof that Jesus was the true Messiah, "that the poor had the gospel preached unto them." And when the other apostles had no other instruction to give Paul, they earnestly requested, that he would "remember the poor." "The same," says he, "which I also was forward to do." Religious influence is said rather to ascend than descend. It is, I believe, a fact, that a pastor's influence over the higher classes of society, will be greater, if he pays chief attention to the poor, than if he assiduously courted the rich. The poor are much more accessible than the rich, who are fenced round by so many forms of etiquette, that to address them personally and pointedly, is considered as a want of good manners; but, generally, the poor can be approached without danger of giving offence; and they consider the attentions of a minister as a condescension and favour. They also need religious instruction more than others, because their time is commonly completely occupied and their education defective. It is of high importance to guard the poor against habits of idleness and intemperance. These vices are the source of most others. To which may be added, the spending of the Lord's day in an improper manner. No evil is more threatening in free countries than the increase of pauperism: unless a check can be given to it in England, the country must be ruined; and its progress here is alarming. Pastors have more in their power, in regard to this branch of political economy, than any other class of men. Experience has fully shown the inefficacy of legal provision for the poor. The true remedy can only be found in raising their character, by instilling into their minds sound religious instruction. There is a culpable negligence,

in most of our churches, in making suitable provision for the accommodation of the poor. In most Protestant churches in our large cities, you see very few of the poorest of the people. They have no place, and they are ashamed to appear in such gay assemblies, with their tattered garments. It is said, that in no country in the world, is there such an exhibition of gay clothing in the house of God, as in these United States. Does not this, in connexion with what has been said, deserve the attention of the pastor? I consider unbounded luxury, in dress, furniture, and equipage, as one of our crying sins.

Here, it would be in place, to speak of the exercise of Christian discipline, if time would admit of our taking up this interesting subject. But we must pass it over with one or two remarks.

All discipline is intended for edification, and not for destruction. Even when one who had been in the church, was delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, the end aimed at was, that "the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Discipline, seasonably and faithfully administered, would produce a most salutary effect. It would, indeed, sometimes offend the pride, and rouse the wrath of false professors; but by this means they are led to manifest their true character, and show what manner of spirit they are of. But on the minds of sincere believers, though erring, discipline will generally, sooner or later, produce the happiest effects. They may wince under the rod; and, for a time, a rebellious spirit be manifested, as when a child is corrected; but if the rod of discipline be applied in a firm and judicious manner, the proud spirit bends, and humble penitence ensues. But, when I speak of discipline, I take the word in its full latitude. I do not mean, principally, the arraignment of church members before the church, or church courts. This is the last resort, and should never be used till other methods have proved ineffectual. That discipline which is most likely to be salutary, is

that of personal admonition and reproof. If when a brother commits a fault, he should be admonished for it by any one who is the witness of it; or if the pastor, or some of his assistants in government, would go to an offending brother, and affectionately warn, exhort, or rebuke him, as the case might require; how much evil might be prevented!" "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be as an excellent ointment, which shall not break my head." The pastor, by a vigilant inspection of his flock, might observe the incipient tendency to go astray, and by using what may be with propriety called, preventive discipline, they might be entirely restrained from wandering, or reclaimed as soon as they had begun to deviate from the right path. The true way to prevent the disagreeable necessity of formal trials before church courts, is to be faithful and vigilant in administering that discipline which consists in a personal application of the truth of God, to such as are beginning to slide. And this, though peculiarly incumbent on pastors, and other officers of the church, is not confined to them. To neglect it towards any brother, even under the Mosaic economy, was reckoned equivalent to hating him. And there is nothing in the way of exercising this discipline, but culpable pride, and a weak tenderness, or aversion to give present pain, though the effect should be ever so salutary. "Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine."

1. If the GREAT SHEPHERD of the sheep took so lively an interest in the welfare of the flock when he was upon earth—if they were peculiarly his object when he endured the pains of death on the cross,—if he directed his chief attention to the same subject after his resurrection, while he conversed with his disciples on earth—then, we may infer, that he still bears his people on his heart. But we are not left to inference; we have positive proof, that the salvation of his purchased flock is the object which he is continually promoting before his Father's throne. The case of every one of them he presents in his prevalent intercessions. And in the exercise of his mediatorial

government, he protects, guides, and comforts every one of his sheep and lambs. The character given of Him by Isaiah, he still verifies. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall carry the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." The situation which he occupies is the best possible for exercising a general superintendence over all his people, and providing for all their wants.

The opinion of Christ's reigning personally and visibly upon earth before the day of judgment, which at an early period of the church prevailed, and which has been zealously revived in our day by the *prophetic* men of Great Britain, is destitute of all solid foundation. In that case, he must, as when formerly upon earth, take up his residence in some particular country, where, to the churches on the opposite side of the globe, he would be as invisible and inaccessible as he is while seated at the right hand of God. The same reasons which rendered it expedient for Him to leave this world, and ascend to heaven, still exist in all their force, for his continuing there. Faith does not require that its object be visible to sense: it is the property of faith to see those things which are invisible, and the greatest blessing is not to those who have seen and believed, but to those who have not seen, and yet have believed.

Thence he sends down the COMFORTER, who never leaves them, but abides with them forever. And for their edification he hath established numerous helps and means to aid them in making good their way to heaven. In particular, he has instituted the ministry of reconciliation. When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men: "Some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." To each of these under-shepherds

he gives commandment, "FEED MY LAMBS, FEED MY SHEEP;" and his eyes, which are like a flame of fire, are ever on these watchmen. He sees how every one fulfils his duty as a pastor or evangelist. He takes notice of all their exertions, and scrutinizes all their motives. If they are found faithful, he will not fail to encourage and prosper them. "Lo," says He, "I am with you always, to the end of the world;" and when our work is done, he will express his approbation of every faithful servant, in a manner which will astonish them. He will say, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord," and will exalt them to such glory and felicity, as it is not now in their power to form an idea of. But he also follows with a keen eye of displeasure, all slothful, unfaithful, and self-seeking pastors. And O! how he will resent their neglect of his beloved sheep and lambs, at a future day. Dreadful will be the retribution, when unfaithful ministers shall be called to give an account of their stewardship. Much is committed to their care and fidelity. They are the "light of the world," and the "salt of the earth;" but if their own light be darkness, and the salt become insipid, how miserable is the situation of those for whom they are appointed to watch!

Dear brethren, let us remember that our time of exertion will soon be over; the day of reckoning must soon come to us as well as others. Let us deal honestly with our own souls, and detect and condemn our own negligence and unfaithfulness, and be more engaged in our appropriate work, than we have ever yet been. Many of Christ's sheep are yet in the wilderness. They have never yet heard one call from the Shepherd's voice. Many for whom we ought to entertain lively hopes that they are of the destined number of the Redeemer's flock, are still among us, wandering in devious and dangerous ways. Can nothing more than has been attempted be done to reclaim them? Many of them are the children of the church, who have the badge of discipleship upon them.

Do pastors deal with such, with sufficient earnestness and tenderness? Do they bear them on their hearts before the mercy seat, as the great High Priest bears all his sheep? Is there among us no remissness, no forgetfulness, no turning aside to vain jangling, no undue attachment to the world? While we preach to others, and are ready enough, perhaps, to denounce upon them the terrors of the Lord, are we not cold and formal and insensible, too often living far from God, without free access to his presence, or enjoyment of fellowship with him.

2. When I see before me so many of the Alumni of our beloved Seminary, I am conscious of various and strong emotions. In the number, I observe some who were among our earliest pupils, who can no longer be addressed as young men. Middle age has been reached, and gray hairs already begin to appear, and furnish the solemn admonition, that life is on the wing; and that ere we are aware, old age is coming on apace.

When I look over the list of students, who were once connected with the Seminary, I cannot avoid an impression of deep sorrow, upon observing how the ranks have been thinned by the relentless hand of death. For several years after the Seminary was in operation, it was often a subject of remark, that not an individual of our number, had been taken away by death; but now, after the lapse of twenty-two years, I find, upon examination, that the number of students, who have deceased, amounts to more than sixty. Yes, it is a solemn fact, that more than sixty of the Alumni of the institution, have been snatched away from their earthly labours! Some, indeed, were cut down before they had entered on their public work; while others were permitted to preach the gospel successfully for a number of years. The fact which has now been stated, cannot fail to be received by you who survive, as a solemn admonition to be ready also; as "you know not the day nor the hour" when your Master will call for you, to

render up an "account of your stewardship." Another grave lesson which it teaches, is, that you should work while the day lasts, as the night rapidly approaches, when no work can be done. "Whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might." When this short span is gone over, there will be no possibility of returning to correct the errors, or compensate for the defects of your ministry. If we could only appreciate the value of our time and opportunities of usefulness, what energy would it not communicate to our efforts! Permit me then, in the view of the shortness and uncertainty of life, to exhort you most earnestly to exert all your faculties, and improve all your opportunities, to promote the kingdom of your Lord and Saviour. "Be fervent in spirit," constant in affection, wise in your plans, and indefatigable in your labours. Some of you may have what the world would call a hard lot. You may be subjected to many privations, and to heavy toils, in obscure stations; where, separated from polished and enlightened society, and even from much intercourse with your brethren, your hearts may become discouraged, and you may feel as if you were forgotten by all; but remember, that however you may live unnoticed by men, there is ONE whose watchful eye never loses sight of you, and whose sympathizing heart bears a part in all your sorrows. There is ONE, who has promised, that he "will never leave you nor forsake you," and that he will "be with you always, even to the end of the world." This friend, "who sticketh closer than a brother," has power as well as compassion; and has pledged his word, that all things shall work together for good, to them who love him. And in due season, he will reward you openly, for all the sufferings and labours endured for his sake.

3. As you are now met to renew your feelings of mutual friendship, and to revive your affection towards our beloved Seminary, I would call to your remembrance some of the objects contemplated by the founders of this institution, as expressed

in the Plan which you often heard read when students. These objects are, "To furnish our congregations with enlightened, humble, zealous, laborious pastors, who shall truly watch for the good of souls, and consider it as their highest honour and happiness, to win them to the Saviour, and to build up their several charges in holiness and peace." "To promote harmony and unity of sentiment among the ministers of our church, by educating a large body of them under the same teachers, and under the same course of study." "To preserve the unity of our church, by educating her ministers in an enlightened attachment, not only to the same doctrines, but to the same plan of government." These important and desirable ends, it is your solemn duty to promote; and, perhaps, the responsibility was never greater on any ministers of the Presbyterian church, than on those of you who are now members of her supreme judicatory. The crisis is most interesting. Much, very much, depends upon the decisions of this body, at the present sessions. It does not behoove me to dictate, or even suggest to you, what in particular should be done; but it is right that I should exhort you to lay aside all prejudice, passion, and party spirit, and with sincere and honest hearts, in the fear of God, to consult and act for the real welfare and best interests of our beloved Zion, as you will answer for it at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, before which we must all soon appear. If now, while the ark of God is in your keeping, you should give it a wrong touch: if your measures should tend to destroy the purity, disturb the peace, or break the unity of this extended section of the Christian church, how awful your accountability. If through any want of wisdom or fidelity on your part, this well-organized society, should fall into dissension or disunion, what a triumph will you afford to the enemies of our common Christianity, and to those religious sects, which cherish feelings of envy and jealousy towards the Presbyterian Church. The enlightened friends of religious liberty in Great Britain, have their attention in-

tensely fixed on the important experiment which we are engaged in making in this country, whether the church can exist and flourish, without a connexion with the state; and as our denomination is among the largest and most influential, they are observing our progress with deep interest, and shall we, by our ill-timed dissensions and innovations, dash all their fond hopes, and cause them with sadness to admit the necessity of a religious establishment? Even the Protestants of Germany, are at this time observing, with excited interest, the acts and proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in America, not only as furnishing a solution of the grand problem, that religion can exist and flourish, without the aid of the support and coercion of civil enactments, but also because in settling their own church polity, many of the most evangelical of their ministers, are disposed to look to us as a model of the wisest ecclesiastical organization. Shall we disappoint the raised expectations of them also?

The interest which our dissenting Brethren of the Congregational Union, in England, take in the progress and condition of the American churches, is manifested, not merely by the report of others, but by a delegation which have reached our shores, and have already expressed in strong and affectionate terms, the sentiments and sympathies of this large and respectable body of orthodox, evangelical Christians. This fraternal communion of churches, separated by the wide ocean, is truly delightful, and affords a happy anticipation of that blessed time, when all the real members of Christ's household, too long sundered from each other by misapprehension and prejudice, shall be united in one holy family; one pure church, which shall acknowledge "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and shall ever "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." May these beloved brethren who are now among us, be privileged to carry back to their native country, such a report of our ecclesiastical state, as will cause the hearts of God's people in the land of our forefathers, to rejoice.

4. Dear friends, and once beloved as pupils, advancing age and debilitated health admonish me that my continuance here will probably not be long. My race is nearly run, and if it would tend to edification, I could fill your ears with lamentations, that I have felt so little and laboured so imperfectly for the honour of the Redeemer. But I forbear to dwell on this sorrowful theme. In regard to myself, I have only to ask an interest in your daily prayers. Most of you will probably see my face no more after our parting on this occasion. As my closing exhortation, therefore, I would say, "Trust in the Lord and do good." Be faithful, be diligent, be humble, be zealous for the truth and honour of God. Seek the wisdom which cometh from above, and which God has promised to give to the prayer of faith. Love one another and pray for one another. Remember also continually in your supplications those who are preparing to follow you into the ministry; especially bear on your hearts before the Throne of Grace, the Seminary which you love, and the dear youth who are there collected in successive companies. And surely I need not exhort you to remember Zion. Her very dust and stones, I trust, are precious in your eyes, and her prosperity you esteem above your chief joy. But the times in which your lot is cast are characterized by peculiar and striking signs, which it behooves you carefully to observe. The cry for help from afar is borne to you almost on every breeze. The demand for the messengers of truth begins to be made by the heathen themselves. The door for preaching the gospel is, in the providence of God, opened in almost every pagan land. The islands of the sea have already, many of them, been converted unto God, and have received in their own tongues, the law of the Lord. Many are running to and fro and knowledge is increased among the people. The church begins to feel her responsibility, and to be conscious of her power. At the same time the enemy comes in like a flood; let it be your care that the standard of the Spirit of the Lord be lifted up against

him. Satan rages with more than wonted fury, because he perceives, that his time is short. Christ, the King, has need of every talent which any of you possesses. He that has ten talents, and he that has one, are equally required to occupy and improve them to the utmost; and every poor service performed in faith and sincerity, shall meet a divine reward. Let no discouragement, nor distrust, in relation to the church, find a place in any of your minds. The cause is God's and he is able to maintain it, and has sworn that it shall never fail. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, for it is founded on a rock. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Fight the good fight of faith. Watch for souls as they that must give an account. Care only for the things of Christ, and nothing for your own things. If you make it your first and great business to seek the kingdom of God, all other things shall be added unto you. What may not you, who are now before me, and others of like character, effect for the building up of the waste places of Zion, and for the conversion of the world! Permit me then to conclude in the valedictory address of Paul to the Corinthians. **“ FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL. BE PERFECT, BE OF GOOD COMFORT, BE OF ONE MIND, LIVE IN PEACE, AND THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU.”**

