

Period. 2006

v. 4-5

1892-94 THE

ANDOVER-HARVARD  
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

# UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

NO. 1—SEPT. OCT., 1892.

## I. LITERARY.

### WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? OR, CHRISTIANITY AS RELATED TO CHRIST AND HUMANITY. \*

By Rev. E. H. HARDING, D. D.

CHRISTIANITY is that system of religion of which Christ is the founder. As a system of doctrine, or as a fact, it is the provision of a way by which man may be restored to the favor of God: God reconciled to man by the cross; man reconciled to God by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit changing his heart, bringing him into harmony with God; God reconciled by Christ on the cross; man, by the Spirit in his heart. Objectively, Christianity is a system of facts. Subjectively, it is a new and real life in the soul, the soul answering to the provisions of the gospel made for man, transmuting doctrine into life, realizing this system of facts in its own experience. It is the soul appropriating Christ as set forth in the gospel, as the result of a new power, viz., the Spirit's presence working in that soul to that very end.

Christianity differs from all other religions in the fact that it demands an obedience, and makes claims on the soul which no other ever dreamed of. It demands perfect and complete obedience to a law whose sweep, length and breadth no other religion ever conceived possible: a law which requires not only complete rectitude in all outward moral obligations to one's neighbor, and complete rectitude in all outward duties toward God, but absolute rightness of heart toward God and man,

\* A lecture delivered before the students of the Seminary.

## OUR SESSIONS REMISS: HENCE, IN PART, OUR NEED FOR MORE AND STRONGER MINISTERS.

BY PROF. T. C. JOHNSON.

The number of our ministers compared with the number of our communicants would show that, if proper adjustments could be made, our people might be well supplied with preaching and pastoral oversight. Hence, many are little inclined to sympathize with the cry for more. But it does not seem likely that these adjustments could be made. The Spirit of Independents is so vigorous in many of our smaller churches that they will not admit of proper grouping. The power of selfishness is so strong in many of our larger and better-to-do churches that they will not send out their pastors as often as once a month to give the bread of life to a dying neighbor. And the pastors themselves are, in more than an occasional case, disinclined to preach where neither encouraging audiences greet them, nor remuneration of any temporal sort is forthcoming. This being the case, plainly the cry for more preachers is a cry that should be heard, even if we hear that cry only as it comes from the unsupplied churches in our present bounds. But who can hear the cry as coming only from the narrow bounds of our own congregations. Communities, where we have no organizations are awaiting ours, as the most Biblical form of Christianity. These communities are not a few, in all parts of the area over which the southern church is scattered. And whether the heathen make an articulate cry for the Gospel to us or not, the Master's commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost," rings in our ears. We all agree, our ministerial ranks are thin compared with what they ought to be.

Without anything of the Pharisee, we can look with no little complacence on the kind of men which, for the most part, make up the Southern Presbyterian ministry. They are as a rule, educated, cultured gentlemen, earnest, devoted men of God—men who see truth clearly, love it, and are willing to stand for it, though it costs. Nevertheless, this body of men is conscious that it has not strength enough; that it needs

more men of more perfect education, and more men of greater moral and religious strength. It needs men of strength, especially today—men of the profound sagacity of Calvin, and the heroic courage of Luther, and the honest scholarship of the lamented Bishop J. B. Lightfoot. The difficulties before the church at present are real and imminent. The kingdom of this world is gathering for another huge onslaught on the church of God. We not only need more ministers; we need less frail ones. We need men of more intellectual and moral force.

The noblest spirits in the ministry feel this need keenly. In a private letter one whose name stands second to no other in the annals of our church says, incidentally: "We need more ministers, but we need increase in quality far more than in quantity. The most important thing to be done in our seminaries is to inspire the spirit of thoroughness and integrity." In another letter, from one of the most influential of all our city pastors, words of similar import occur. And the following words show how President F. L. Patton views the situation: "I do not exaggerate the importance of the pulpit in our day; with the poor crying; with immortality increasing; with infidelity rampant; with anarchy raising the red flag; with apathy abounding; with *laissez faire* the motto of the well-to-do; with multitudes of men and women who were trained to believe in Christ drifting on to the other world without any concern for their own salvation or the salvation of their fellow-men; it is high time for some John the Baptist, scorning luxury and holding earth's honors and luxuries in light esteem, to stand between these pinched children of poverty on the one hand, and these enervated sons of wealth on the other, and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

*In view of the demand* for men who will truckle neither to the oppressing rich nor to the lawless poor, who will not truckle to the spirit of age, who will speak the truth as they see it, without fear of branding, as an old foggy, or as a bigot, or a would be reformer, our ranks seem weak.

The sessions of our church could remedy this in the course of a few years. And it is the duty of the sessions to do so. It is the duty of the sessions—our pastors and their elders, to go over the names of all the young men on their membership rolls, and to try to determine which of them should be minis-

ters. They should ask concerning their youth, "Who of them may be useful ministers?" "Who of them have the right make-up, out of which to become good ministers?" Having reached an approximately satisfactory answer to that question, they should bring their judgment before that man or those men. Some one says, they would make sad mistakes. It is human to err. But they have access to God in prayer. And they should go to him. Their act of the sort intended should be a most solemn one. "When our Lord selected those to whom He was to commit His gospel, we are impressed with the deliberation and solemnity of the act: And it came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day He called unto Him His disciples and of them He chose twelve whom also he named Apostles."\* They would need the power to judge so far as man may, of the piety and the natural gifts of every man before them. They would need strength of character in order to prevent their with-holding encouragement from one and giving it to another.

The session has, of course, no compulsory power over the chosen candidate. It could only lay its judgment before the young man and urge him to an earnest consideration of the very first of all callings in usefulness. It could make him understand that it is the church's belief that God's grace in redemption, if not (?) his works of creation and providence, has given him an indefeasible right to every saint's best service where it will count for most. It could direct his attention to the loud, loud calls which God is now making by his providences for more preachers of the word. It could show him that all God's own are chosen for service, not to be served, primarily.

After all, the young man may refuse and persist in refusal. But should he, the session's hands will that far be clear of the blood of souls. And it may be that, if the young man is really a christian, if he has, like Isaiah, had his "vision of God" and his "vision of himself as a sinner" and his "vision of grace," he will, as he hears the voice of God calling—through providence, and his saints, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?", answer with Isaiah, "Here am I. Send me."

Such a course of action on the part of our sessions would

\*Philips Brooks's Lectures on Preaching, p. 37.

†Isa. 6:8. Stalker's The Preacher and His Models. Lect. II.

bring the ministry as a life-work before our strongest and most graciously endowed youth in a way that could hardly fail to meet with a noble response. Few men of feeble character would enter the ministry, men, who, as matters are, drift into this work because motion in that direction is along the line of least resistance. The lack of formal encouragement which their stronger brethren received would prove a positive obstacle in their path. We would soon have more men and stronger men.

The power to be thus used by the session, has, according to our belief, all along, since the establishment of sessions, been lodged with them. I do not mean that this power has been lodged solely with the session. Every christian has some of it. Every christian who can pray, can help supply our need. And everyone of good judgment can help, not only by prayer, but by rightly directed suggestion. But God has formally lodged the power in the sessions. They have it laid upon them as an official duty. They are officially responsible for the work.

But the reader asks, Where is the scripture for it?

In 2 Tim. 2:2. Paul writes to Timothy as follows: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." The implication is plain in these words that the men to be so taught were to be chosen for the purpose. Timothy is ordered to commit Paul's teaching to "*such as shall be able to teach others*" (*sic* the Greek). In cases where there was no session, the choice was necessarily largely Timothy's own. In cases where there was an organized church we are warranted, by the light of what is known of the church government of the age, in supposing that Timothy used the session in the full exercise of its freedom in this choice of "*such as should be able*" &c. As it was the habit of the Apostles to respect the ordinary officers of the church and the ordinary rights of congregations, Timothy would understand that his conduct in reference to such congregations was to be governed by the constitution of the church; that his choice of such individuals as should be fit for this special teaching should be through the church. We feel warranted in concluding with the highest probability, that he so used the church. For the right of election is elsewhere so carefully and constantly preserved to the church in respect to all ordi-

nary offices. Paul, indeed, makes no reference to the use of sessions. But a letter will hold only so much. Paul had no fears of a perverse literalism on the part of Timothy, and his consequent tramplings on the rights of a session.

And if the sessions in the Ephesian district had this right, and if the corresponding responsibility rested on them, there rests on all sessions similar responsibility, and there is vested in them similar rights. And if Timothy found no session to work through in carrying out Paul's instructions, it is, nevertheless, certain that sessions in all time subsequent to him have had vested in them the rights and resting upon them the responsibilities, which he as a one-man presbytery had in him. There was nothing suprapresbyteral in this choice of his. If he had the right, succeeding sessions have it.

Again, in Tit. 1:5, ff., Titus is instructed to ordain bishops; and their proper qualifications are set forth as a guide to their correct choice. His work was, we take it, the precise parallel in all substantial respects to Timothy's. His office and powers were parallel. And if Titus had the right of choice, the church has it. If the responsibility was his, it is also our sessions'.

If there is truth in the view which has been set forth above, we may no longer wonder at the fewness of our ministers in number, or lament that we go begging for talent and acquirements needed. For our sessions are sadly derelict.

