

9/22/30
Budget fund
S.A. 10

X
Per
P928A
v. 14

THE Presbyterian Quarterly.

No. 51--JANUARY, 1900.

I. THE TEACHING OF THE THEOLOGICAL CLASS-ROOM IN RELATION TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE STUDENT.

The aim of the theological student is generally a practical one ; he is in preparation for the ministry of the Gospel. With this end in view he is seeking to acquaint himself with the several parts of the theological curriculum. The promotion of his spiritual life—the increase of his faith and of the other Christian graces—is to him, therefore, of primary importance. Whether, indeed, the student has respect to his own well-being or to his qualifications for the ministry, the cultivation of the religious life should be his first concern. To know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life, and it is also the necessary condition of all effective service in the Kingdom of God.

Apart from his studies, there are various ways in which the candidate for the ministry will seek to cultivate and strengthen the life of the soul. He will do so through private prayer and reading of the Scriptures, through connection with religious societies in college or hall, through teaching in Sabbath school or elsewhere, through fellowship with some congregation.

But we are here rather to consider what help the spiritual life of the student may receive through his proper studies, and especially in the class-room. For we must not acquiesce in the notion that study is necessarily unfavorable to

VI. THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO QUIT ROBBING THE MASSES OF THE GOSPEL.

In the discussion of this subject let us notice: 1. That the Church is robbing the masses of the Gospel, and in the following ways :

1st. She is doing this in the choice of her sites for church buildings. She is from time to time pulling down her houses of worship in those districts which have been submerged by the masses and removing them to fashionable districts where there is already ample church accommodation. She is carrying off from the districts, which have been invaded by the laborer with his grime, noise and sweat and which have been marred by poverty, destitution and crime, with her houses of worship, the privileges of worship, carrying them into the neighborhoods of the prosperous. Instead of giving the Gospel to the masses and thus trying to save them, she is trying to save her local organizations to the rich and the happy. She is trying to save herself, not the masses ; and in the selfish effort to save herself she robs the masses as well as loses her own larger and fuller life.

The church commits the same sort of sin often in the choice of places at which new organizations are to be formed. She is the guardian of God's truth for the world and when she withholds that truth from his people through fixing on a false location for the house of worship, she robs the masses of the Gospel.

Instances of this form of robbery crowd upon the memory ; but it would be invidious to name such cases. It would be unpleasant and it would perhaps be wrong to name here cases of the removal of houses of worship from downtown streets to uptown streets, from the streets where the multitude dwell to the streets where the chosen few dwell, from the abodes of toil and poverty to those of earthly fortune ; but such we could name. It would be equally unpleasant to instance new churches that have been located so as to be accessible only to that percentage of the popula-

tion which can command public or private conveyances, carriages or street cars, to reach them—and erected in communities where church capacity is already in excess of the demand and without regard to the districts destitute of accommodations of the sort. But such cases are not unheard of; and they are robbing the masses of that Gospel which has been given in trust for them.

2nd. When the Church encourages any part of her members to run away from their own neighborhoods on Sunday, to enjoy services in other neighborhoods, instead of supporting the ordinances of God's worship in their own neighborhoods and so furnishing to the masses about them the Gospel, she robs them of the Gospel.

God gives us the Gospel not for ourselves alone but for our poor neighbors as well; and whenever we fail to do our utmost to share it with them, we rob them of it.

Of course, we all know plenty of church-members who fail to maintain the ordinances of the Lord in their own neighborhoods—persons who pass by the small churches in their midst where there are such, or who fail to have such churches organized and to support them, and betake themselves to a church of the prosperous and well-to-do in a distant quarter.

These persons leave the masses in their midst to go to the Devil. They carry, to all practical purposes, the Gospel away with them, often crying as they go, "How shall we reach the masses?" We cannot help knowing such cases if we would.

3rd. Moreover, the Church is taking away the Sabbath of the Bible from the masses, and so robbing them of the Gospel.

The rank and file of the Church are helping to destroy the Sabbath now, by the circulation of the Sunday issue of the daily papers, by the operation of the railway lines, by the running of excursions, by the use of the street cars—all of which are carried on in the very teeth of the divine command. Even the highest court of our Church helps in this destruction of the Sabbath by the tacit approval of the

use of the street car in going to and from church, though the lines be employed for the purposes of gain throughout the day in express violation of God's law.

Thus the Church is taking away the Sabbath from the whole army of mail agents, newspaper men and boys, railroad men and street car men. And not only this. The Church is secularizing this day—turning it into a secular holiday largely in the eyes of the rest of the world; and by these means. And in taking away the Sabbath—in taking away that stated period set apart of God for his worship through the study of his revealed will and prayer and praise—they take away all vital possession of the Gospel; they rob the masses of the Gospel.

Now, we know that this is true, we know that many are engaged, in a more or less direct way, in taking away the Sabbath and with it the very possibility of a vital grasp of the Gospel, from the people. They insist on the circulating of the dailies on the Sabbath, on the distribution of mails, on the operation of street cars. They thus knock completely out of the Sabbath and ultimately out of the Gospel, the army of operatives; and they secularize the day and profane it in everybody's eyes. The people do it and our Church courts do it. They, in these ways, rob the world of the Gospel.

These are notorious facts. The most of them are widely recognized, and in word they are condemned. But we would not be misunderstood: The Church in our day is not utterly bad. It is even relatively considered a missionary church, reaching out in a way after the masses. Although a secular spirit prevails in it, there are true children of God. Through them the Church is making many praiseworthy and even Christlike efforts, does mission work of a genuine sort at home and abroad—employs some of its noblest spirits therein. Far be it from us to belittle this work of giving the Gospel to the masses or to belittle these workers.

But there is a waywardness attaching to some of the Church's work and a quality of doing it at arm's length that

makes it of too small value. And it must be said that the influence of the Church's nobler effort, is largely neutralized by the robbery with which we here charge the Church. Christ's servants can never take the world for him by such inconsistent and half-hearted service. The world needs in the Church examples of unswerving and whole-hearted obedience to God—men to do God's work in God's way—men with somewhat of God's own regard for his law and his creatures; and men with such sympathetic appreciation for God's handiwork in the men and women of the masses, that they will be willing if need be as our Lord did, to live and work among them, day in and day out, for their salvation. The rank and file of the Church must be brought up to this ideal.

We do not expect God to do enough in our rank and file. We do not set the proper ideals before them. Let us take a case. There is one family of church members of refinement and culture living in a neighborhood of twenty families belonging in common parlance to the masses. We allow, sometimes encourage, this family of refinement, to insist that a part of the twenty shall distribute the mails, a part print and circulate the Sunday edition of the daily, a part operate the street car on which they may ride to church or parks.

This is not the way to reach the masses with the Gospel. It is the way to rob them. To require all this is to rob of the Sabbath a host of employees; it is to secularize the Sabbath in the eyes of the rest; it is ultimately to rob them of the Gospel.

And for this family to run off to another neighborhood for the enjoyment of worship is the directest form of robbery, also, of the whole home community of the Gospel. It is the withholding of that which God put into their hands for the very purpose of giving over to those about them.

It is time that the Church, in her choice of locations for buildings of worship, in encouraging her members to run away from their own neighborhoods in order to "worship" instead of worshipping where they can aid their neighbors,

in taking the Sabbath utterly away from some and in secularizing it in the eyes of all—the Sabbath which is God's appointed stated day for the study of his word—robs the masses directly and indirectly, to large extent of the Gospel which it is trying to give them.

II. The duty of the church to quit robbing the masses of the Gospel is so plain that there should be no need of arguing it. But it may be irrefutably argued as follows:

1st. The masses need the Gospel. The burdens of life sit heavily upon them. Their life is one of grinding toil, irksome poverty, and often hopeless struggle against inevitably growing destitution. The Gospel would bring to their view a land of promise, a haven of rest, a heaven of riches, and a struggle of victory. The masses need the Gospel in order to the introduction of the element of hope into their lives, in order that their sordid courses may be turned into paths of glory; and their crushing drudgery into joyful service to him who maketh all things work together for good to those that love him even to them that are the called according to his purpose.

They need it in order to good morals. However philosophers may be able to maintain themselves in the decencies and proprieties of life and exhibit in themselves examples of exalted morals, the common people—the masses—have never shown the abilities for proper self-restraint, respect for law and order, and the maintenance of high and noble endeavor, except when moved by honest religion. The abolition of religion in the French Revolution was succeeded by the reign of bestial passions in the multitude. The deprivation of the Continental Teutonic peoples of the Gospel in the course of our own century through the work of the critics has been followed by greater laxity of morals. The people need the Gospel in order to the best type of morals.

The masses need the Gospel in order to spiritual life. Not that the Gospel itself will give spiritual life. But that by the ordering of God it must be preached and heard as a condition and instrument of his saving souls. If any peo-

ple need salvation, the masses need it; and if any people need the Gospel, therefore, the masses need it.

2d. The prosperous and well-to-do part of the Church has before it a gloomy future unless the Gospel shall be given to the masses, and left with them.

No man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself. If the masses of this generation be not leavened with the Gospel yeast, the Church will become a relatively smaller thing in the next generation. It will have less power; and it will exert less influence. The world will exert more power over it. There will follow on increasing secularizing of all that is sacred in Christianity; and the blight and chill of an ever-growing hostility of environment. The Church's future depends under God on its giving the Gospel to the masses. In the ages in which it has done this it has grown rapidly. In other ages it has necessarily declined.

3d. The Church owes it to God not to rob the masses of the Gospel.

This is the genius of God's redemptive work in man's behalf that he will have his Gospel given to the poor. Christ read in the Synagogue of Nazareth from the book of Isaiah, concerning himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath annointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* In this manner our Lord Jesus distinguished his mission as a ministry to the poor; and let no man eviscerate this text by making "poor" refer exclusively to the poor in spirit. The term is inclusive of poverty in the ordinary sense. He pointed, again, to this peculiarity as a proof that he was God's Messiah. You recall that John the Baptist, in prison and in temporary season of doubt as to whether the prophet of Nazareth, to whom he had pointed as the Lamb of God, were really the Messiah, called two of his disciples and

* Luke iv; 18, 19.

sent them to Jesus, saying: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Then Jesus answering, said unto them, "Go your way and tell Jesus what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them."*

The divine pleasure with reference to the Gospel is thus made clear; and it appears that God is pleased to have his Gospel preached to the poor. He will represent himself as the poor man's God as much as the rich man's. He even lays special emphasis on the preaching of his Gospel to the poor. Now if the Church were inspired fully with the mind of Christ it would be found giving the Gospel more freely to the poor, and not doing this at a distance as to lepers, but in sympathetic contact. As Christ went about daily among the poor doing good, the Church should, so far as such a course is possible for it, be found doing the same.

God the Creator and Providential Governor, said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And who is thy neighbor? That Samaritan there, fallen amongst thieves--any poor fellow-creature whom you can help. God has made you his keeper--God the Creator and Moral Governor. God the Redeemer has reimposed the obligation. Is it an humble wish? He has humbled himself by the incarnation, the lowly ministry, and the ignominious death. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Because you owe it to the Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, God, to help the Church to quit robbing the masses of the Gospel.

Because God is worthy of the fulfillment of his every desire, let the Church quit robbing the masses of the Gospel.

But why argue further that which is already patent to the meanest intelligence? The arguing even so far has been rather to emphasize the fact that the Church is guilty of robbing the masses of the Gospel, than to prove that it ought not be guilty of such conduct. "Of course it ought

* Luke vii: 19-22.

fall in with the plan; that it will not work; and that in some cases it ought not to work."

We answer there are a few exceptional cases where some members of the church ought to work with other than the nearest congregation of their kind, where a few good members of substance, intelligence, character and influence as practical workers, ought to go to a distance and worship with a weak congregation. There are such cases. They are exceptional; and in their case there must be no breach of the moral law in order to reach their place of service.

But as for the unworkability of this plan: Nobody could expect it to be realized in a day. But let us "talk about it and write about it" as Martin Luther used to say; and let us wait on God. Were we to do this, twenty years hence a mighty revolution would at least have commenced. We lack heroism of faith. Why should we not in this realm, also, attempt great things for God and expect great things of God?

2d. Let the church encourage the people to support the ordinances of the Lord's worship in their own neighborhoods and quit running off to fashionable churches, by means of conveyances, either public or private.

As we have seen, numbers of well-to-do people make an exodus every Sunday from their own neighborhoods to fashionable quarters, where they and their children can enjoy the advantages of a congregation which they judge to be a desirable social club.

They go either by private or by public transportation and particularly by the street cars. They thus wreck often the possibility of maintaining services edifying in a high degree in their own territories.

The Sunday street cars and other public means of transportation looked at from the point of view even of enlightened Christian expediency, are amongst the greatest curses that ever afflicted the Church. They are a constant temptation to multitudes to go to churches remote from their homes for professed worship and instruction, instead of helping to maintain worship for their poor neighbors. They are

not, you say. It has as little right to do such foul wrong as the Pharisees of Christ's day had to shut the gates of the kingdom of Heaven against the multitudes, by their rubbish piles of tradition."

Let us ask in the third general place : III. How can the Church quit robbing the masses of the Gospel? We answer:

First. By having the ordinances of God's worship celebrated in every neighborhood every Sabbath day, so far as this is possible.

To put the matter in a concrete form: The Presbyterian Church of Richmond ought deliberately to district the city, try to establish a church within walking distance of every soul in the city, and to maintain the ordinances of worship there. In that case the poor people unable to attend church beyond walking distance could go to the house of God. They would have so far the privileges of the Gospel.

It might be objected here that if our Presbyterian Church of Richmond was to attempt this, it could have no great church buildings and no very large congregations. We remark, on this objection, that it has not been proven by actual experiment. We remark, further, that we are not aware of a divine command resting on us to build and maintain large and imposing edifices of worship. We are also satisfied that many of the church edifices of our land are monuments of selfish pride, vainglory, and want of true allegiance to the Lord. They embody a great waste of the Lord's money. Some should come down and give place to more modest houses of God, and the wealth piled up in them ought to be used in the spread of the Gospel. While there is no obligation resting on us to build and maintain such incubuses on the cause of Christ, we are under obligations to give Christ's word to his people. Therefore, we ought to have more houses of worship and houses so designed as to subserve the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel rather than fewer. We should aim for more accessible churches rather than for a few large and handsome churches.

It might be objected again, that it is "not worth while to attempt thus to district the city because the people will not

a constant temptation to great numbers of the able members of the flock to run away, carrying the Gospel from the masses.

But I hear some one objecting. How else can the families of the sons worship where their fathers have worshipped or do worship? We answer: Hath God said that they shall worship in the same place? This sentiment is often purely heathen. It is good Chinese religion, in which ancestors are worshipped. But God expects us to worship him, that is, to serve him. And the way to serve him is not for men and women to pass the church doors where they ought to labor for another to which sentiment binds them.

I hear some one else objecting: "How else can these people enjoy worship so thoroughly? How else can they hear preaching so suited to their tastes? How hear such acceptable service of song? How else be so lifted in prayer as by the leading of their favorite pastor? We ask: Who has said that pleasure in the service—enjoyment of it—is the only or the first end of service? Not God. No, my brethren, our old Shorter Catechism is right in making the "chief end of man to glorify God and enjoy him forever." The first end of man, of life, of worship, is the glorification of God. This is not merely the teaching of the highest human philosophy, as when Emmanuel Kant taught that man has a two-fold end—happiness and duty, but that duty must be done even at the cost of happiness. It is the teaching of the word of God. The Church ought to teach his people to ask, where ought we worship? not where would we enjoy attending church most? The men who ask the latter question alone, still bows at the shrine of self. We all sing:

"Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own his cause
Or blush to speak his name?"

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?"

But we act often as if the case were altogether different. We shun the battles before us. We act as if our desires would carry us straight to Heaven.

The Christian soldier should learn a lesson from the soldier in earthly warfare. And what havoc it would work to the best laid plans if Lawton's men in the Philippines were allowed to go over to McArthur, and McArthur's to Lawton at will. How would it do for General Otis to address the men of his regiments as follows: "Soldiers of the United States, consult your pleasure not your duty in regard to your regimental commanders. If you wish to remain with your proper leaders and fight, do so. If such is not your pleasure, go where you please. Seek your pleasure first as to where you will serve and what you will do."

The Church of our day would apparently approve of such an address.

But some one objects again. "Society is stratified, and the different strata will not worship together." Stratification! We may talk in some connections of the strata of society; but not as amongst men in relation to God. There is no "respect of persons with him." The slave and the free are alike to him.

The genius of the New Testament is at war with the idea that we shall cultivate this social stratification in the worship of the common Father and Redeemer of all. No; we must lift the ideals of duty in the minds and hearts of our people, make them see that the great laws of love to God and love to man demand such considerate behavior of poor to rich and rich to poor, of superior to inferior and inferior to superior, that their meeting together in the house of God shall be a positive pleasure to each class.

We are afraid to make the high demands of God's people which he makes of them. Let us trust him, and call on them for high things.

You say, again, "It is impracticable. You cannot get people to gather for worship in the way you propose."

It is impractical to do in a day, but it is sheer assertion to

say that it cannot be done. Nor must we ministers forget that it is sometimes our duty to attempt the morally impossible with our people; for the morally impossible in this sin-cursed earth is sometimes the only right thing, and we are obliged to attempt the right.

Third. The Church can quit robbing the masses of the Gospel by stopping its stealing of the Sabbath.

It has been seen that in several ways the Church is robbing the masses of the Sabbath. It robs a great army of mail agents, newspaper people, railway employees and street car men of the Sabbath. In a very effective way it, by its secularizing influence, helps to rob the rest of the world of the Sabbath which God gave it to keep for its own sake and the sake of the world. It robs men of that stated day fixed of God for the worship of him through the study of his word and prayer and praise; and in taking away the day, it takes away from vast numbers the possibility of vital possession of the Gospel.

Man is a creature of habit; if he will learn the word of God he must have a set time recurring regularly for its study. Sunday is the divinely appointed day. To destroy it is practically to destroy the Gospel. To take it away from the people is to take the Gospel away.

The Church ought to quit robbing the people of the Sabbath.

We may take measures to secure the better observance of the Sabbath, on the part of the business world—it will not amount to anything unless the Augean filth of the Church's Sabbath profanity itself be first washed away. The reform must begin in Jerusalem. Let the ministers quit their Sabbath-breaking and let the rank and file be taught that God has laid down one law for them and the minister; that esoterism is a lie; that God expects his people to keep the Sabbath; that he does not allow them to take any man's Sabbath or to secularize it and thus rob the masses of it, and of the Gospel which practically goes with it.

But we hear some objecting : "The Church does not sec-

ularize the Sabbath in the case of the street cars on the Sabbath. It uses them in the service of God, to attend worship or to conduct worship." The truth obliges us to answer: "Not so fast. There is confusion here. There is no confusion in God. He is the author of the Decalogue. He has said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He has forbidden all works on that day save those of necessity and mercy. He can not have commanded you to help run the street cars on Sunday as a money-making enterprise; but that is what you are doing. The companies are running their cars to make money on the Sabbath, not as necessities or mercies. They deliberately violate the fourth commandment. You aid them, support them. You are *particeps criminis* in their violation of the fourth commandment. Logic is inexorable. In many cases, perhaps in most, one of the inducements to the companies to move their cars on the Sabbath is the number of church-goers they can count on carrying. You uphold, support and entice them to this violation of the commands of God. Oh, that our people could see this matter as that devout genius, Stonewall Jackson, saw it. He saw with perfect clearness that the Christian could not countenance in any way, even for a supposed good end, such transgressions of the divine law without becoming thereby responsible for the violation. There is no possible way of evading the force of our present contention, It is shallow-pated trifling to point to acts of ours inconsistent with our contention. Our lives are not impeccable. We ought to quit these forms of robbing the people of God's Sabbath and his word. And if we are guilty of other forms of doing the same thing, we ought to quit those too.

Some one else objects: "We are under the necessity of using the cars. We live in the suburbs. Or we live in a district where there are few members of our faith."

Let us examine that necessity. If it is of God's imposition, then God is a God of confusion, for he has forbidden the desecration of the Sabbath. But is the necessity of God's imposing? You can't prove it. Who placed your

residence in the suburbs? Did God? You will have hard work to prove that you have no responsibility therefor. Take my own case. I live in the suburbs. Have I no responsibility for being there? It may be answered, "You have gone there for the health and comfort of your family." But we reply, "Might not God be pleased better with me if while studying the health and happiness of my family I were still more regardful of his honor?" Christ has said: "If every man come to me, and hate not (love not less) his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Does any one say, "You would cut me off from all social worship by such teaching." We remind him that one who spake with authority has said, "To obey is better than sacrifice." To a man or woman at a distance from a church who can only reach it by means of street cars run in violation of the Lord's commandment, we would say your duty is plain. It is to read and study with your family in your own home, or with such of your neighbors as you can help. There is something higher than gathering together in formal worship in a great church. "To obey is better than sacrifice." If men and women would pursue this course, the interests of the Kingdom of God would be indefinitely advanced.

But again, some one may say, "Only by allowing the use of the public transportation cars can men of great talent exert their full influence for good, and teachers of all classes reach their places of labor."

In reply we answer, it is to be feared that some ministers of commanding parts have reasoned that inasmuch as men who hear them will be greatly benefitted, therefore they need not be very scrupulous about the means of reaching the place of worship. This is an illustration of the working of that insidious Jesuit principle that "the end justifies the means." So we may say of our teachers working at a distance who use forbidden means to accomplish their ends.

There is no way of obviating the force of our present

contention but by showing that the fourth commandment is no longer binding.*

We would remark also, in passing, that no one may abuse our contentions by asserting that if applied the chariot wheels of Christ's cause would cease to roll; that no one may say he could then do nothing as missionary worker or teacher. He might indeed have to do his wish at greater cost. If we will do the will of God we may expect the way to be rough at times, we must expect obstacles and foes. But shall we learn nothing from the history of Israel of old and the Church at the time of Christ? Shall we not learn that the Church succeeded better in attaining the ends of her existence when she did the Lord's work in his way, though it looked hard? How much better for the Church under Moses to attempt the passage of the Red Sea as the Lord commanded, though the passage seemed impossible! How much better for Israel to have worshipped Jehovah without the calf than through the calf.

Our men of talent must not get audiences by turning themselves into golden calves. They must not use the hand of Uzzah in helping on the ark of the covenant. They must not transgress the commands of God in offering sacrifice. "To obey," for them also, "is better than sacrifice."

But once more, some one may object, "Sunday mails, Sunday dailies, Sunday trains, Sunday street cars are here to stay. What good can we do by protesting?"

This is one of the shallowest and weakest of all objections to our contentions. Sin is here to stay. Shall we not fight it? Our duty is not determined by the possibility of success but by the revealed will of God, the transcript of his moral perfections—the embodiment of the eternal principles of rectitude.

Is not the Church eating meat that it doubts about and

* We have in this discussion accepted as true the position of our Standards on the Sabbath. See Confession of Faith, Chap. XXI, Sections VII and VIII. Larger Catechism, Questions 115 to 121 inclusive. Shorter Catechism, Questions 57 to 62. We believe this position to be correct.

that even the world doubts about in this matter of trampling on the great Puritan conception of the Lord's day? Is not the Church incurring condemnation therefor and leading the world into condemnation? A blind guide?

I repeat, then: The Church is the guardian of the Gospel for men. When she does not give it fully and freely she robs the world—the masses—of the Gospel. She does not give it fully in the location of her places of worship, in the elective affinity principally on which she allows her congregations to be made up, and in her relative contempt for the Sabbath. In several ways she is robbing the masses of the Gospel, in spite of her acknowledged missionary spirit.

She ought to quit it for the sake of the people going down in sin unwarned, for the sake of her own future, and for God's sake, who has bought her with his own precious blood.

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.