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AN ADDRESS TO THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS

ON

MINISTERIAL FIDELITY AND PRUDENCE.

The following excellent Address, from the pen of our valued friend, the Rev. Wm. SPRAGUE, D.D., Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Albany, N.Y., was communicated for insertion in our pages by the Rev. Samuel Ransom, Classical Tutor of Hackney Academy. We concur with that gentleman in the opinion that the sentiments inculcated in this article deserve the best attention of our theological students and young ministers.

IN the remarks which I am about to address to you, my young friends, I shall have respect, not so much to your present circumstances, as candidates for the sacred office, as I shall to your future condition as actually sustaining that office. Much, indeed, might be said on the importance of faithfully discharging your duties as theological students, and of regulating your whole conduct by the dictates of Christian prudence; but as you are so soon to be in the ministry, and as it is of great moment that you should bring to your work a well digested view of ministerial duty, I shall consider the topics which are placed at the head of this article chiefly as they stand related to your future course. I hardly need say, that in thus anticipating with appropriate counsels the office to which you are looking forward, nothing is more remote from my intentions than to

urge you forward to your work, at the expense of abridging your preparation; for whoever enters the ministry without an adequate training, to say the least, violates one of the fundamental rules of prudence in a student of theology.

By ministerial fidelity, I here intend an earnest, devout, diligent discharge of the various duties which devolve upon a Christian minister. Its leading elements are a spirit of ardent zeal in the cause of Christ; an uncompromising adherence to the dictates of an enlightened conscience; a fearless determination to encounter in the strength of divine grace the most appalling obstacles, and a readiness, if need be, to contend even with the principalities and powers of wickedness. Paul was an example of ministerial fidelity when he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, in the presence of the Roman Go-

vernor. So was John the Baptist, when he fearlessly reprov'd the wickedness of Herod at the peril of his life. And so, also, was Jesus Christ, when he denounced the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of the Jews, though he knew that he should fall a victim to the inalignant spirit which his preaching awakened.

By ministerial prudence, I mean that spirit of sound wisdom and enlightened caution in a Christian minister which aims at the greatest good by the most unexceptionable and inoffensive means. It supposes a watchful attention to the indications of Providence; a disposition to look at the more remote as well as the more immediate bearings of things, and never, unnecessarily, to give occasion for our good to be evil spoken of. The great apostle of the Gentiles exemplified this spirit in one of its loveliest forms, and in connexion with the spirit of Christian condescension, when he declared that he would eat no meat while the world stands, if he should thereby cause his brother to offend. And the Saviour of the world exhibited the most consummate caution in all his intercourse with his enemies; insomuch, that on one occasion, when they had met with an express design to "entangle him in his talk," he encountered them with so much wisdom, that it is said, that "no man from that day forth durst ask him any more questions."

From this general view of ministerial fidelity and prudence, it is manifest that the highest degree of the one is perfectly consistent with the highest degree of the other. Witness the cases already referred to. Where was there ever so much of unshrinking faithfulness in the discharge of ministerial duty, and yet such consummate address in every part of ministerial conduct,

as were witnessed in the divine Saviour; or, if we except Him, who was in all things the great model of perfection, who ever exhibited either of these qualities in greater perfection than both were exhibited by the great apostle? What mere man ever showed himself more ready to encounter, if need be, the horrors of martyrdom, than Paul? Who ever preached more fearlessly, who ever stood forth a more valiant champion for the truth, in all circumstances, and even at the peril of his life, than he? And yet, who was ever more ready to humour the prejudices of his weak brethren, or more disposed, in the best sense, to become all things to all men, or more careful to avoid every thing which would lower the dignity of the ministerial office, or detract from his own influence, or injure even indirectly, the cause of his Master? Let any minister keep the apostle constantly in his eye, as a model; and he may expect with good reason, that his own character will demonstrate, that prudence and fidelity are perfectly consistent with each other.

Nevertheless, there always has been, there is at this day perhaps, in an unusual degree, a disposition to divorce these qualities in ministerial character. On the one hand, fidelity degenerates into indiscretion, uncharitableness, and even vulgarity; and on the other, prudence not only grows tame and insipid, but turns itself into a mere worldly policy, which would hardly shrink from acting over in substance, the crime of Judas. And hence it comes to pass that prudence—the genuine virtue—is by many denounced and set at nought, and the very name is considered as enough to brand a minister, at least, with a sickly and miserable inefficiency; while he, who is bold, and honest, and faithful, is

for that reason set down on the list of those who would turn the world upside down. It is my earnest wish, my young friends, to guard you against both these errors; to keep you from separating things which the great Head of the Church, in the economy of his wisdom and grace, has joined together; and to bring you to display in your own characters the beautiful attraction of great prudence commingled with great fidelity. I request your attention to a brief consideration of the union of these two qualities in respect to several of the leading departments of ministerial duty.

I. In respect to PREACHING.

Fidelity requires that the most humbling, and to the carnal mind, the most offensive doctrines of the Gospel, should be held up by every minister with great distinctness and prominence. I may specify particularly, the malignant nature of sin, the entire depravity of the unrenewed heart, and the absolute dependance of every sinner for salvation, on sovereign grace, through the atoning blood of Christ, and the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. These truths are at war with the natural feelings of unrenewed man. Men do not wish to be disturbed in their pleasures by having the danger of their condition set before them, or to be wounded in their pride, by being told of their inability to accomplish their own salvation; and hence, when these great truths have been presented even with the utmost affection, they have often been met with a spirit of malignant opposition; and the preacher has been publicly denounced, and his motives assailed with an unhallowed and bitter asperity. Nay, so deep is the enmity of the heart against these peculiar truths, that it has not

unfrequently happened, that those who have exhibited a strong attachment to their minister during the season of their carelessness, have, under the influence of an awakened conscience, become so sensitive to the truths he has preached, that they have openly become his enemies, and in some instances, have even taken the lead in an attempt, not only to neutralize his influence, but to ruin his character. All this proves beyond debate, that while the minister who preaches faithfully, wields a weapon of tremendous power, it is one which will sometimes be mightily resisted, and will provoke a shower of reproaches upon himself. But no matter how high the spirit of opposition may rise—though it should mount up even to a malignant phrenzy—these offensive doctrines *must* be preached, and in the proportion in which they are exhibited in the word of God; and whoever substitutes any thing else in the place of them, is guilty of dealing deceitfully with his Master's message, and must expect to bring upon himself the blood of souls.

But if you would be found faithful in preaching the Gospel, you must not only bring out its offensive truths, but you must do it with great plainness and simplicity. There is a way of mixing up the truth of God with the wisdom, or shall I say folly,—of man; of neutralizing the effect of the doctrines of the Bible, by burying them up amidst the speculations of human philosophy.—In opposition to this, you are to hold up the truth just as it is, and to trust to that alone in the hands of God's Spirit to do the work, unaided by any reasonings or speculations that are of mere human origin. What you have to do is to wield the naked sword of the

Spirit; and if you attempt to improve it by any devices of your own, you will inevitably blunt its edge and prevent its efficacy.

Some ministers who preach the truth, fail nevertheless in fidelity, for the want of an honest and pungent application. Here again, you are to be on your guard. You are never to consider your work done when you have merely stated the truth; but you are distinctly to trace its relations to your hearers, to show them its bearings upon their characters and prospects, and to endeavour, if possible, to waken their consciences into lively exercise, so that they shall recognize it as the sword of the Spirit. When you spread before them the utterly ruined condition of the sinner, and the fearful scenes which must open upon him in the next world, if he enters that world unconcerned, you are to endeavour to carry home to them the conviction that they are the sinners described, and if they are in any degree awakened, instead of lulling them to sleep by mere general representations, you are still to hold up their true character as guilty rebels, and to show them that there is no way of escape except by the blood of the everlasting covenant. It is only in proportion as the preaching of the Gospel is discriminating, and is brought to bear directly upon the consciences and personal interests of men, that we have a right to calculate upon its legitimate effect: any thing else will never be the fire and the hammer to break the flinty rock in pieces.

But along with fidelity in preaching the Gospel, you are also to exercise *prudence*. You will have occasion for this in the selection of your topics, with reference to the peculiar circumstances and needs of your congregation; for what at

one time may be fitted to produce the most happy effect upon an audience, may, under different circumstances, be worse than a mere dead letter. While fidelity requires that you should preach the whole counsel of God, it is the dictate of prudence that you should rightly divide the word of truth; and that in selecting your subjects of discourse, you should give careful heed to the indications of divine Providence. On the same ground you should endeavour to avoid a tedious uniformity in your discourses, both as it respects the subjects and your manner of treating them; for unless the mind is relieved by some degree of variety in these particulars, it will inevitably contract a habit of listlessness.

Again: While fidelity requires that the Gospel should be preached in its most offensive doctrines, with great plainness and simplicity, and honest application to the conscience, prudence forbids all offensive personalities, coarse allusions, and attacks on private character. Indeed, whoever commits these errors is more than imprudent; he sins against the dignity of his office, and exposes himself to the pity of the church, and the contempt of the world. You are indeed at liberty, nay, you are solemnly bound, to take off the covering from the carnal heart, and show it in the light of day, festering in its own depravity; and you are to endeavour to make every unconcerned sinner feel that this is precisely his own case; but this is widely different from designedly holding an individual up to popular odium, and especially in the spirit of anger or retaliation. Cases may occur, in which a minister may know facts in respect to individuals in his congregation, which have gained little or no

publicity; and it may be his duty to select some topic of discourse which shall bring out a word in season for them; and there may be other cases in which he may be called upon publicly to testify against particular sins, in consequence of an individual having fallen into them, lest his silence should seem to indicate a wish to screen the offender; but the moment he makes a personal attack from the pulpit, especially on one of his hearers, he lets go the sheet anchor of prudence, and not only defeats the end he has in view, if it be a good end, but not improbably plunges into a sea of troubles, from which, to say the least, he is not soon extricated. Many a minister has, by one incautious attack, even by a single expression, fitted to give unnecessary provocation to an individual, thrown a cloud over his prospects of usefulness, and originated a spirit of division and turmoil which has spread through an extensive community.

II. In respect to PASTORAL INTERCOURSE.

Fidelity on this head, undoubtedly requires that you should mingle with your people, if you have a stated charge, as much as is consistent with a faithful discharge of your other duties, and especially with your making adequate preparation for the public services to which you are called; though it must be acknowledged, after all, that the demands which are made upon a minister in this way, are in many instances unreasonable and excessive. But if you will be faithful, you must, as you have opportunity, mingle with your charge as a pastor. And though, as an individual, you certainly have a right to your own friends, yet as a pastor, fidelity requires that you should not limit your at-

tentions to any particular class; and that if there be any discrimination, the difference should be in favour of the needy, the sorrowful and the degraded. This is the class who are most likely, on some accounts, to be overlooked; and yet, perhaps, there are none who value the attentions of a pastor so highly, or are likely to improve them so profitably. Wherever your lot may be cast, you will be sure to have around you persons of this character; and as you value the blessing of those who are ready to perish, I would earnestly exhort you to throw yourself among them as much as you can, as a counsellor, a comforter, and a friend.

It is moreover a dictate of fidelity, that you should endeavour, by private conversation, to make yourself acquainted with the spiritual wants of those to whom you minister. Many a man has been reached by an affectionate and earnest address in private, who had shown himself proof against the most pungent and solemn appeals from the pulpit; and the reason is, that the concern in the former case acquires an individuality which does not belong to a public address. And then, again, this kind of intercourse is of great moment in its bearing on the preparation which a minister makes for his public services; it is one of the greatest helps to his rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to every one a portion in due season. But in order that these important ends may be gained, it is necessary that your conversation should be conducted with great seriousness and tenderness, and in the spirit of direct and honest dealing with the conscience; for any thing short of this may even contribute to a false peace, and aid, rather than prevent, fatal self-deception. And here, I

cannot but remark, that the difficulty attending this duty is usually much less than is apprehended before it is entered on. There are few, comparatively, who are incapable of being approached, in a proper manner, in respect to their soul's salvation. Instances have frequently occurred, in which a minister, after a long conflict between the dictates of conscience on the one hand, and of a mistaken delicacy on the other, in respect to a personal religious conversation with some influential member of his charge, has been alike surprised and delighted to find, on making the attempt, that all his apprehensions had been groundless, and that the individual concerned, was more than willing, not only to be instructed and counselled, but to open his heart in the freedom of unreserved confidence.

But here, also, there is a great demand for prudence. If you mingle much with your people, the familiarity with them which you will acquire, may expose you to lose sight, in some measure, of the relation you sustain to them; and the character of the pastor may be, insensibly to yourself, merged in that of the gentleman, or the friend. Prudence dictates that you should guard against this evil; and that the freedom of your intercourse, instead of hindering, should be rendered subservient to your pastoral influence. You are also, on the other hand, to avoid every thing like artificial stiffness, or the appearance of affected sanctimonious airs; for the effect of this will be to excite disgust, not only towards yourself, but towards every thing you may say. In conversing with individuals, respecting their own spiritual state, you are to have much respect to seasons and circumstances. It has happened, not unfrequently, that violent prejudices have been ex-

cited, and the mind rendered, in a great degree, inaccessible to all religious influence, by its being approached abruptly, and incautiously, and in a manner adapted to shock its finer sensibilities. In all ordinary cases, if you would do most and best with an individual, by conversing with him in regard to his spiritual interests, you will let the conversation be entirely private; for it is a rare case, that a person, not decidedly interested in religion, will converse with any freedom respecting his own exercises, if there is more than a single individual to listen to him; and any attempt to make him converse under different circumstances, will not improbably result in closing his ears and his heart against you. In some instances, too, where there is great reluctance to personal religious conversation, it is wisest for the time, not to attempt to overcome it; for while the attempt would most probably be abortive, it might oppose a barrier against all future religious intercourse which you would never be able to remove; whereas, by yielding to the present current of feeling, and carefully watching future opportunities, you might ultimately, and with great ease, accomplish your object. There are some persons with whom it is a maxim, never to converse with an individual, especially one who is known to be indifferent to religion, even for a moment, without throwing in some word of counsel or reproof: without questioning the purity of the motives by which such a course is dictated, I must be allowed greatly to doubt whether it has the sanction of Christian prudence. I would indeed, have you watchful for opportunities to commune with the careless and ungodly respecting the concerns of their souls; but I would have you avoid attempting

it when there is really *no* opportunity. If I mistake not, an obtrusive and offensive mode of introducing serious conversation, amounting sometimes even to a violation of the common proprieties of life, is an evil which has been growing of late, to an alarming degree, in the church; and though I will not undertake to say, that good may not, in individual instances, have resulted from it, yet I cannot doubt, that on the whole, it has been a fruitful cause of prejudice and opposition, needlessly incurred against the cause of truth and piety.

III. In respect to REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

Fidelity on this subject requires that you should labour to the extent of your ability, and in all the ways which God has marked out for the advancement of the general cause of revivals. You are to bear in mind that this is emphatically the cause of the Spirit of God; and that all you do to promote and extend it, is so much done for the direct accomplishment of the great purposes of Christ's mediation. You are to look upon it as the noblest cause for which the heart of man or angel ever beat; and you are to regard no sacrifice as great, which shall be the means of extending its influence and increasing its triumphs.

But while you are to do all you can by your prayers and efforts for the *general* cause of revivals, you are to labour with distinct reference to the revival of God's work, within the more immediate circle of your ministerial influence. You are to endeavour to impress Christians with their obligation, not only to maintain an unexceptionable deportment in their intercourse with the world, but to make direct efforts, as God gives them oppor-

tunity, to arouse and press the conscience of the sinner, and to stir each other up to greater diligence and zeal in the service of their Master. You are to watch carefully the first motion of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of your people, to caution them against grieving this divine agent from his benevolent errand, and to do every thing you can to operate with him in the great work of salvation. You are to labour, especially at such a time, not only in season, but out of season; to adapt your instructions to the various classes of the careless, the inquiring, and those who are rejoicing in hope: endeavouring to prevent any from slumbering through such a scene, lest their condemnation should thereby be sealed; to save any who are awakened from returning to a habit of carelessness on the one hand, and settling down upon a false foundation on the other; and to bring all who have professed to hope in God's mercy, to refer their exercises to the scriptural standard, and to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. It is proper, in such circumstances, that opportunities for religious instruction should be more frequent than at other times, that meetings both of a more public and a more private nature should be somewhat increased, and especially, that there should be opportunity of conversation with those who are inquiring, and those who have hopefully been the recent subjects of grace. And in all that you do, and in all that you exhort others to do, you are to realize your entire dependence on God for a blessing; and hence, that the revival may go forward in purity and peace, you are not only to cherish a spirit of earnest prayer in your own bosom, but to do your utmost to keep the same spirit in

lively exercise in the hearts of Christians with whom it is your privilege to co-operate.

But if fidelity requires that you should enlist in the cause of revivals with earnest and persevering effort, *prudence* demands that your exertions should be directed with the most thoughtful and discreet regard to circumstances. You are to avoid all efforts to produce mere animal excitement; for nothing, more effectually than this, mars the purity of a revival, and ministers to the cause of self-deception. You are to guard against the adoption of all measures which do not manifestly receive the sanction of God's word, and especially against those bold and harsh measures which have often been adopted with reference to present effect; for though in individual cases good may have been accomplished by them, and though they may have been the means of extensively waking up public attention in a certain way, yet the ultimate effect is to introduce a flood of error and hypocrisy into the church, to diffuse a fanatical and disorganizing spirit, to weaken the appropriate influence of ministers, and to inflict a vital wound upon the cause of revivals. You are to bear in mind, that during a revival, as well as at all other times, if you are a settled pastor, it belongs to you to take the lead, in whatever respects the advancement of religion among your charge; and that you are not on any consideration, while you retain your place, to surrender this office to another, whatever reputation he may have for wisdom, or experience, or piety: least of all are you to yield the direction of your own charge to one who comes pretending to extraordinary skill in revivals, and in a spirit, which would seem to say, "stand by,

I am holier than thou:" for if any thing is to be learned from the past, you may confidently expect that the labours of such a man among your people, will bring in their train distraction and confusion, and every evil work. In your treatment of inquiring sinners, while you are to conceal nothing from them of the horrors of their condition, you are to deal with them in the spirit of Christian affection, and to avoid all exaggerated representations; for a spirit of severity, or a spirit of exaggeration, while it is wrong in itself, will be likely to defeat any good end which it may be intended to accomplish. In your treatment of professed converts, you are to guard against all those modes of addressing them, which would take for granted, that they have *certainly* been regenerated; for in every such case there is danger of self-deception; and a false hope is one of the greatest of all evils. You are to discourage a spirit of religious gossiping, especially a disposition to count up prematurely the number of converts, and to talk in an exaggerated manner concerning the power and extent of the work: for hardly any thing is better fitted than this to arrest its progress, and injure its character. You are to regulate with great care the number as well as the character of religious meetings; taking care, not only that every thing be done decently and in order, but that these public services do not exceed the actual exigences of the case, and do not interfere with more private religious duties. You are to keep back the hopeful subjects of the work a suitable time for making a public profession, that they may have opportunity to test the genuineness of their hopes; and while you are to bring them for-

ward gradually, to lead in social religious exercises, you are to guard them against appearing prematurely in public; for the love of display is often a ruling passion of young converts; and I need not say that it is not the most favourable to the cultivation of Christian humility. In a word, while you are to account it your highest privilege that you are permitted to spend and be spent in promoting a revival of religion, you are to take heed by every means in your power, that you give no occasion for your good to be evil spoken of.

Perhaps there is no subject, my young friends, in respect to which you are more exposed, by the circumstances of the times, to be led into extremes, and of course, into error, than this upon which I am now addressing you. It cannot be concealed that there is a spirit of unhallowed zeal, of raving fanaticism, abroad in many parts of the church, which has already carried desolation in its progress, but which claims to be the spirit of revivals in an extraordinary measure—a spirit of fidelity in the cause of Christ, such as the church has not before witnessed. Allow me to say, that there are some reasons why you are peculiarly exposed to become, in a greater or less degree, imbued with this spirit. You possess the warm feelings of youth, and of course, are predisposed to yield to exciting influences. You have had but a limited experience; and have not learned, as thoroughly as you may hereafter, that God is oftener in the still small voice, than in the earthquake or the whirlwind. And more than all, the spirit of which I am speaking, comes to you under the name of great zeal for the salvation of souls: and this is a hallowed name which addresses itself at once to

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your own religious sensibilities. But I feel constrained to exhort you, by a regard to your comfort and usefulness in the church, and to the honour of the Master to whom you are devoted, to beware how this spirit is suffered to controul your actions, or to gain a lodgement in your bosom. It is not the spirit of the Gospel. It is not the true spirit of revivals. It is not the spirit who came to seek and to save that which was lost. But it is spiritual pride, bitter censoriousness, reckless innovation; and I say it unhesitatingly, wherever it prevails, it withers the plants of righteousness, and wastes the vital energies of the church.

Nevertheless, I would distinctly remind you that this very state of things may, after all, expose you to rush to the opposite extreme. You may regard with so much disapprobation and disgust the fanatical doings of the day, in connexion with revivals, that you may come, by insensible degrees, to lose your interest in revivals themselves. You may witness so much of the counterfeit coin, that you may be ready to doubt whether there be any that is genuine. In your great caution to avoid the evil, you may not be sufficiently diligent to secure the good. Guard yourselves then, as well on the right hand as on the left. Let not your fidelity degenerate into extravagance, or your prudence into inactivity and indifference. While you are willing to speak openly, honestly, fearlessly, against the abuses of revivals, be at least equally ready to pray and labour to the extent of your power for the blessed effusions of the Holy Spirit. Remember that genuine revivals are just as precious, just as worthy to be desired and prayed for, as if there were no spurious excitements; and he, who apologizes even to himself, for

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want of zeal for the one, on account of the existence of the other, trifles with his own conscience, and affronts the spirit of God.

IV. In respect to the BENEVOLENT ENTERPRISES of the day.

You are coming into the ministry at a period when the church is in a good degree awake, compared with her condition in other times, to the great work of sending the Gospel through the world. It is manifest that a system of effort is already begun, by means of which the final victory, over ignorance and sin, is to be achieved, and the whole earth is to brighten into a field of millennial triumph and glory. *Fidelity* to your ministerial vows will require that you bear a part in this great work of moral renovation; nay, that you consider this as one of the grand objects of your ministry, and that you make vigorous and persevering efforts for its accomplishment. In sustaining the great system of effort which is now going forward, and in enlarging it as future exigencies may require, there will be a demand for much patient deliberation, and wise counsel, and fervent prayer, and in all this you are to bear a part as God gives you opportunity. And I hardly need add, that the streams of public charity must grow broader and deeper, and many new fountains must be opened, before the whole world will be brought under the healing influences of Christianity. And in bringing about this result also, you will have much to do; much, especially in the circle in which your lot is immediately cast, in elevating the tone of benevolent feeling, and inducing all, so far as you can, to cast liberally into the treasury of the Lord. The obligation to this duty should be enforced, not only publicly, but in private; and your best exertions should be put forth

to swell the amount of public charities in proportion to the increasing facilities of employing them for the conversion of the world.

But need I say that here also there is ample scope for the exercising of *prudence*. While you are to lay yourself out to the utmost, for the extension of the Gospel, you are to bear in mind, that there is no department of religious action, in which the want of discretion would be more sure to neutralize the influence of your well meant exertions. In pleading for any particular object you are to take special heed that you do not urge it at the expense of others which are equally important; that you do not cast them so far into the back ground, that when you wish to make them more prominent, you may find it necessary to contend even against your own influence. You will, on the whole, never gain any thing by such a course; for whatever of gain there may be to the particular object which you wish to recommend, it will be more than counterbalanced in the loss which will be sustained by the general cause. It is a dictate of prudence never to attempt to exaggerate the claims of any object you present; for if you are in the habit of doing this, your arguments and appeals will soon lose more than half their force; and by representing each as most important, you may actually put it beyond your power to do justice to the claims of *some* in which you feel the deepest interest.

If you undertake, as sometimes you will, the office of making personal applications for charity, you ought, if possible, to understand the characters of the individuals to whom you apply, and skilfully adapt yourself to any peculiarity of temperament or circumstances. In all ordinary cases, you may

properly consider your work as done, when you have faithfully expounded the claims of the object; for though there are cases in which it may be a duty to engage directly in a conflict with ignorance and prejudice, yet, in the great majority of instances, it is best to leave the matter to a man's own conscience. As a general rule, nothing is gained, but much lost, by pressing an application with great urgency, where it is not favourably received, upon an honest exhibition of its claims. You can never expect to tease a man out of his prejudices, though you might possibly succeed in teasing him out of his money; and even where this latter object is gained, it may be safely doubted whether any thing, on the whole, has been done for the cause; for it is more than probable, that you have put him into a bad humour in respect to the general cause of charity, which will in future be proof against all your importunity. Wherever a strong reluctance is discovered, in respect to contributing to any particular object, after it has been fairly presented, the true way in all ordinary cases, is to yield to it for the time, and give the individual an opportunity for further reflection. There is a sort of pride in most men which shrinks from

yielding to the appearance of dictation, and which chooses to have the credit of forming its own opinions. And, besides there are few things in this world, which even good men value so much as their money; and certainly you cannot expect that they will give it away to any other than a courteous application.

If I had not already extended this article too far, there are several other topics to which I should be glad, at least to advert; particularly the subject of ecclesiastical polity—the relation which you sustain to that branch of the church with which you are connected, and the duties which that relation involves. But this I must leave to your own reflection. Let me only say, wherever your lot may be cast as ministers of Christ, in whatever circumstances of conflict or trial you may be placed, be faithful and prudent. Never yield to a timid and temporising policy under the name of prudence! Never plunge into the wild excesses of fanaticism, and call it fidelity. You *can* be both prudent and faithful: you *must* be so, if you will gain in the happiest manner the object of your ministry, if you will have the best evidence of the Master's favour, or anticipate the highest future reward.

PATRIARCHAL LIFE, ILLUSTRATED FROM THE ILIAD OF HOMER.

IN a third and concluding paper we resume our remarks on patriarchal life, as illustrated by the Iliad of Homer. If our past gleanings in this rich and flowery field have tended in any degree to awaken the interest or promote the benefit of our readers, we are free to acknowledge that the labour has been exceedingly grateful to ourselves;

that it has enlivened many retired hours, and illuminated our conceptions of those simple and charming modes of life which give a distinctive character to the patriarchal and heroic ages. Animated by this consideration, and trusting that we address many who share with us in these feelings, we shall offer no apology for once