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ARTICLE VIII.

The Power of the Pulpit; or Thoughts addressed to Christian Ministers, and those who hear them. By GARDINER SPRING, D. D. New York.

Since the brief notice of this work in our last number, a second edition of it has been published. It has not only been extensively read, but has called forth animated criticism. The interest and attention it has awakened are not to be referred, however, to the intrinsic merit of its discussions, for these are not marked with any peculiar originality or force, that we can discover; but partly to the character and position of the venerable author; partly to the fact, that ministers are always ready to hear and read counsel and exhortation in reference to the duties of their calling; and other people generally like to hear one minister lecturing his brethren; and chiefly, we have no doubt, because Dr. Spring has advanced views in regard to the character of the present ministry of the church in general, and the present system of preparatory education for the holy office, which will excite feelings of warm approbation in many—of violent disapprobation in many more—and of deep and anxious interest in all who love the church. He declares his opinion, that the ministry of the present day are inferior to those who preceded them; and that this deterioration is to be referred, in part, to the plan of education in Theological Seminaries. This is a subject, on which no man of Dr. Spring's position can speak at this time, without having many to hear, some with pleasure, more with zealous resistance and denial.

We do not intend to enter this discussion with the author and his opponents, nor to present our readers with a critical review of his work; but rather to embrace this opportunity, to present for their benefit and our own, wherein we believe lies the real "Power of the Pulpit," and whereby its efficiency, if it has been impaired, may be refreshed and restored.

We ought to say, however, that Dr. Spring does not condemn Theological Seminaries, without qualification; and

their friends ought not, as they seem inclined to do, to let loose all their wrath upon him, as if he had declared a war of extermination against these institutions. While he maintains that the former plan of training students for the ministry had its peculiar advantages, he confesses the present system has also its own. He says: "It is quite obvious that *something* has been lost by the change, and it is equally obvious that *something* has been gained. If I were called on to strike the balance, I frankly confess I should be not a little embarrassed." And again, he declares: "These, and other considerations, would lead to the conclusion that our Theological Seminaries *must be sustained*." He then points out some of what he considers the evils and dangers of this mode of ministerial education, and proposes two means of prevention and safety: first, "by a watchful eye over the young men who are there pursuing their theological education;" and, secondly, by selecting as "teachers of those who are being educated for the ministry, men of no inconsiderable experience in the pastoral office." This last point, he illustrates at considerable length and with a good deal of earnestness. It may kindle the zeal of a few whom it hits, but we believe the church generally will sanction and sustain it. We would be the last to say there should be no exception to such a rule, but that in the general, it would be wise and good, we think does not admit of argument.

Whether in fact the ministry of the church generally has deteriorated, is a startling question. It is a question which will run over the whole extent of the church in this country,—which will find its way to the bosom of every conscientious minister in the land, and set him on careful meditation and earnest prayer. Dr. Spring is not the first to propose it, or to answer it in the affirmative. He quotes Dr. Miller, and Professor Park, of Andover, as declaring the same opinion. We notice in a contemporary Review, the following remarks: "It is manifest that serious doubts begin to be felt by many of the best minds in the church, in regard to the present mode of educating the ministry, and the existing character of pulpit teaching. We know that the thoughts of many are turned to this subject, and a rigid investigation is being made. There is a seen and felt deficiency of moral power in the evangelical pulpit of our day,

and how to supply that want is one of the gravest, most vital questions that pertains to human duty and destiny." It is a solemn question, whether these things are so? We shall content ourselves with answering, that we fear they are too true of the pulpit in many parts of our country, but less so, we believe, in our own Southern Church, than any where else. We do not mean to boast; but we thank God, *here*, both church and pulpit have been far less corrupted and disturbed by external influences and inward dissensions than in other localities; and we believe have been preserved in greater simplicity, purity and power. We say not, there is no degeneracy among ourselves. In some respects, we fear there is; but we shall reserve our animadversions on this point, as matter rather for our own confessions and our humble prayers before God.

But, if the present ministry is inferior to the generation of holy men who went before them, what are the causes of the evil? We are satisfied they are not to be found solely or chiefly, if at all, in the present mode of theological education. That is "a mere circumstance." The present system wants no important part found in the former. Every advantage Dr. Spring enumerates as peculiar to the former may be, and often is, secured by the present plan, while many very valuable ones are furnished by it, which "our fathers" sighed for in vain. We believe the real causes of this degeneracy, are to be found in evils altogether different. Among the first of these, we would mention the tendency and results of the modern contrivance of "Education Societies." We give to the men of faith and prayer, who originated and have conducted these institutions, all honor due. And much it is, for their faith, and prayers, and labors. We also confess, they have been the means of accomplishing much real good. There are many ministers, a blessing to the world, an honor to the church, and among the very first rank of the ministry, who have been assisted in their education by these societies. But we may not disguise it from ourselves, nor ought it to be concealed from the church, that these good results have not been unaccompanied with evil. On this point, we will quote Dr. Spring, believing our readers will agree with us that there is much serious truth in his remarks:

"Nor is it any marvel, nor ought it to be any serious disappointment, that in an enterprise so untried, and conducted upon so large a scale, there should have been some unhappy failures. There have been not a few; we confess they have been unhappy." "So much has been said and done of late years, on the subject of educating poor and pious young men for the Gospel ministry, that the obligation of furnishing the pulpit from any other classes of society, seems to be in a great measure lost sight of. Now, we enter our solemn protest against some modern views of this doctrine. It were a calamity greatly to be deplored, should we act upon the principle, that poverty and low birth, are essential qualifications to the Christian ministry; and that a well-bred man, is disqualified from becoming a minister of the Gospel, because he is well-bred, and the son of a rich man, because he is rich. Yet such is the strong tendency of the public mind: The church of God, and ministers themselves, scarcely think of looking for men to serve the Lord Jesus in his sanctuary, save to the poor." "There is something wanting in this class of men: Even not a few of them, who have gone as missionaries to the heathen, have given more trouble, and more expense, than those who have found their way to the pulpit, unaided. They expect too much; they have, to too great an extent, the habit of dependence on others. If we look over the land, too, we shall find the leaders of new measures, and that fearful radicalism which has distracted the churches, among those who were low-bred men; who have been brought up from their youth to be jealous of clerical influence, and who have not grown up with those sentiments of respect for the Gospel ministry which it deserves. Let me not be misunderstood. A poor young man, is not necessarily a low-bred man; it is not because he is *poor*, that he may not be entitled to high confidence. If we doubt the expediency of introducing *low bred* men into the pulpit, it is because 'the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots.' It is a sure way to bring the office into contempt, when the church makes to herself, 'Priests of the lowest orders of the people.'"

These remarks are plain and to the point — to some, they will be extremely unpalatable, but the only question is, are they true? We are satisfied to fortify our opinion by the experience and authority of the venerable author, and thus submit it to our readers.

Another evil, to which we believe the present inefficiency of the pulpit may be traced, is the view which many have taken of the nature and warrant of a call to the ministry.

We refer to the notion that a man should decide the question of his duty to preach the Gospel, on the same rules and principles on which he would decide to enter the profession of law or follow the trade of a blacksmith—that is, by a consideration of his abilities and the indications of external Providence, his means and opportunities. The necessity of an inward, direct, special and supernatural operation of the Spirit of God calling him to the work of the ministry is denied. Every pious young man, it is said, is bound to inquire whether he has the natural qualifications necessary to fulfil the sacred office, and whether the Providence of God furnishes him with the opportunities and means of preparing for and entering upon it. If these questions are answered in the affirmative, he is to conclude himself *called of God* to the work. According to this view, when followed out to its legitimate results, the nature and warrant of a call to the ministry, are precisely the same as those principles and rules of Christian duty which would lead a man into any secular avocation.¹ A call to preach the Gospel, and an obligation to plant cotton, are exactly of the same nature, and to be determined in exactly the same way. We are convinced these views are pregnant with mischief as well as error. Where they are insisted on, and become current, they must inevitably introduce many into the ministry who ought never to have entered it. But that is not all. A moment's reflection will show that they tend to degrade the sacredness of the office; to bring it down in the view of preachers and people, from its holy eminence to the level of *common things*; to lessen the sense of responsibility in those who fill it; and to cripple all energy, zeal and confidence in discharge of its duties. We regret to see the apparent agreement of Dr. Spring with these erroneous views of the subject. We say *apparent*, for he does not directly discuss the question; but he too plainly indicates that such are his own conceptions of the nature of a call to the ministry. Thus in chapter viii., he ascribes “the divine authority” of a minister, to the fact that he has been regularly set apart to the office by the church, and to the commission given by Christ to the Apostles, previous to his ascension. On page 134, 1st edit. he says:

“It is sufficient to our present purpose, to assume that the Christian ministry is a distinct order of men; and that every man

who possesses the necessary qualifications, and is approved and set apart to the office, by the express judgment of *the Church*, acting either in her own capacity, or by her official representatives, be those representatives a Presbytery, or an Ecclesiastical Council, or a single Bishop, is a divinely commissioned minister of Christ."

"The *commission*," then, is not *direct* from the Spirit of God, but comes through *the Church*; and to possess it, one needs only to have the requisite "qualifications," and regularly belong to "*the order*." Again, p. 130, he says, "the commission is but a recorded one." But his view of the subject is still more plainly indicated, in Chap. xix. On p. 335, he affirms the question ought to be deliberately presented to the mind of every well-qualified young man,

"Whether he can *the better serve God and his generation*, by engaging in some one of the other learned professions, or in the ministry of his Son? *This is the only question* which a conscientious man will look at."

This question, then, will decide whether he *is called* to the ministry. If he is convinced that he can best "serve God" in the ministry, then he is to conclude that he is called to that work. This is precisely the question which every conscientious Christian man is bound to put to himself, in view of any and every trade, profession, or avocation of life. The humblest mechanic is bound, before he determines on his trade, to question and decide, "whether he can the better serve God and his generation" in that trade or in some other? In our opinion, Dr. Spring's question is preceded and answered by another, viz:—Whether he is called of the Holy Spirit of God to the ministry? And the answer to it is to be found, not in the man's education and abilities, not in external Providence, alone and of themselves. It is to be sought, first and chiefly, in the inward operations of that Spirit. If he is thus called to the work, then he can "best serve God and his generation" in the ministry. If he is not so called, he can better serve him and them, any where else. Our author goes on to say, "There is no miraculous call at this age of the world, to the work of the ministry." Here he loses himself and his readers in the fog of the word "miraculous." Will he say there is no

supernatural and *Spiritual* call? This is the question. He might as well say, "there is no miraculous call" to repent and believe the Gospel. So there is not, in some of the many senses of that vague word. But there is a *supernatural* and an "effectual call" of the Holy Spirit. And this call is no more comprehensible and cognizable, than his call to the ministry. Dr. S. proceeds to remark, "Whether one is called to it, is neither more nor less, than whether, upon a full view of the subject, it is his *duty* to enter it." This is precisely the theory which places the nature and warrant of a call to preach the Gospel, on the same ground as a call to any secular avocation. The man whose duty leads him to make pins, has as really and as truly a *divine call*, as the most God-honored minister in the Church, and a call of precisely the same nature and warrant. We would say, "the question, whether it is one's *duty* to enter the ministry, is neither more nor less than *whether he is called* to enter it?" Dr. S. continues:

"Like every other question of duty, this is to be decided by those leadings of divine Providence, which indicate, to an ingenuous and obedient mind, what his heavenly Father would have him to do. What are these indications? Are they not, a heart sincerely devoted to the service of God—an honest purpose of living to his glory—a willingness to be devoted to him, in that way in which we may probably perform the most essential service—together with those *natural talents and opportunities* and means that fit us for this employment."

Here, then, according to Dr. S., are all the elements which constitute a call to the holy ministry. We perceive nothing more than the same principles and rules which ought to guide every Christian man in choosing the business of his life. We believe that we see in them a theory, the prevalence of which, in many parts of the Church, has done much to deteriorate the ministry. In the practice of it, many have come into the ministry who give sad reason to fear the Spirit of God came not with them. Its baleful influence has degraded the office in the eyes of the Church—weakened the hearts, and diminished the efficiency even of many, also, who *have* been called to the work by the Spirit of God. Its general application would bring every respectable Christian man into the office. Every real Christian

has all the "indications" Dr. S. enumerates. No man is a Christian if he has not the "heart," and the "honest purpose," and the "willingness" he describes. As for the "natural talents," it is undeniable, that men with very few have been eminently useful in the Church; and so far as "opportunities and means" are concerned, it is well known, that with the facilities now provided for the purpose, they are within the reach of any man.

We will only remark further, on these views, that we regard them as a chief source of another great evil, of which we shall speak immediately. It is because men have entered the ministry with no sense of a special and direct call that they have turned aside in such numbers from its appropriate work.

Another fruitful cause of the inferiority of the present ministry, is to be found in the want of devotion to the great object of preaching the Gospel. See chap. x. Dr. Spring has forcibly illustrated this point. We thank him for the earnestness with which he has pressed it. It seems to be a prevalent impression, that men are called into the ministry, not only to preach the Gospel, but to be teachers, editors, professors, agents, secretaries; and many who make it their work to preach, preach a great deal besides the pure Gospel of the grace of God. Many have lost sight of the great object for which the ministry is appointed and called, viz. — for the conversion of sinners to God, and the spiritual edification of his believing children. If we were required to point out the grand cause of inefficiency in the ministry of the present day, we would be disposed to fix on this one thing — the want of devotion to the great work of converting and saving the souls of men. We do not recognize ourselves as *called* and set apart to this one great end. We do not live and labor and pray and *preach* for it, as the one main thing we have to do. Our ministry is divided and diverted, and frittered away and expended on a multitude of collateral and subsidiary ends. We are not known and *felt* by the world, as men consecrated and devoted, with ever-living zeal and unwearied diligence, exclusively, and with our whole power, to the work of saving men from an eternal hell. The ministerial call is a simple and a single one. It is the very same given to the Apostle: "I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to

light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me." "God sent me" says the same Apostle, "to preach the Gospel." To convert the impenitent, to instruct and edify believers, constitutes the end of the ministry. In order to this, they are to "preach the Gospel." Any design hostile to this, or in any way inconsistent with it, or *beneath* it, or only indirectly subservient to it, or a mere accessory and subsidiary work, is a departure from its intention, and faithlessness to its duties, if it be made the main business of the ministry.

"God called them to the sacred office, that they might coöperate with his once suffering and now exalted Son, and his mighty and condescending Spirit, in converting a great multitude, which no man can number, intercepting their course to the gates of death; overthrowing the empire of darkness and sin, and establishing, extending, and perpetuating the kingdom of truth and righteousness, and peace and joy. Whatever subordinate ends, therefore, the Christian pulpit may secure in this or the coming world, its legitimate, paramount aim, is the glory of God in the salvation of men." "It is the *soul* that a faithful minister is thinking of—the deathless *soul*; it is this that he is praying for and preaching to, that he may present it to his great Lord, as 'his joy and his crown.' Such is the high, the grand aim of the the Christian ministry. It is this which gives such grandeur and power to the pulpit. Such it will appear to have been, when the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, are felt in their everlasting weight, and reality, and when the magnitude of God's redemption, and the wondrous results that have flowed from it, shall be unfolded." "It is but for the salvation of men to become the great object of the minister. His thoughts are but to dwell here, and his desires centre so habitually, so tenderly, so solemnly on this great object, as to make it the paramount passion; and his pulpit would read different lessons from those it often reads. Let this be wanting, the preacher's heart freezes, and his pulpit is but an icy tablet." "Is it any marvel that it should be powerless, when it seeks not to be powerful?" "Never forget," says the youthful McCheyne, writing to one of his brethren in the ministry, "that the end of a sermon is the salvation of the people." "We would have our minds imbued with this truth, and are greatly desirous that the minds of others should be more deeply imbued than our own. This is what our pulpit so imperatively demands." "It is a melancholy fact, that so far as

it regards the great object of preaching, the American pulpit is not on the advance. Not a few preachers there are whom it would seem captious to complain of, but who, at the same time, do not satisfy an intelligent and spiritual auditory. There is something wanting in their discourses; they are not full of light and power; the unction of the priesthood is not there. They are not so absorbed in the great object of preaching, that their hearers perceive the object they are aiming at; nor so intent upon it, that they themselves are cheerful or depressed, joyful or sad, as the pleasure of the Lord prospers or does not prosper in their hands." "The great deficiency in the church of the present age, is the want of a spiritual and urgent ministry." "Other professions are on the advance, but the pulpit is retrograde. There are more learned things and more beautiful things uttered from it than were once uttered; but it is fast losing its energy. It has more touches of the German artists, but less of plain dealing with the conscience; less of tenderness and love. It has more of transcendentalism, but less of Christianity."

Doctor Spring's weight of character, his experience, his known piety and judiciousness, give these remarks which we quote from him, a force that will compel attention and respect. It is indeed, we fear, a lamentable fact, that the pulpit has very far fallen short, or turned aside from its grand aim. Just so far as it has, it has lost power. How many pulpits have become "chairs of philosophy," or of science, or of literature? or arenas for strife and argument, in a thousand questions besides the Gospel?—places for far read scholars and champions of logic, to display themselves, and make the vulgar stare? How many ministers of the Gospel harangue their hearers with the principles of one *philosophy* or against those of another—on the morals of war, or of commerce, or of politics? with scraps from the learned, or quotations from the poets—discussing and quoting the wisdom of Bacon, or the sentiments of Shakespeare, as often as the doctrines of Paul or the teachings of John? How many, forsaking the preaching of the Gospel traverse the country "from Dan to Beersheba," advocating some new or old contrivance "for doing good?" Thank God, in all these respects, things are better than they were, and we see gathering signs of still further improvement. May they be multiplied and fulfilled a thousand fold! The command of God and the need of the world,

are not for men to wanton with the muses, wander in the Elysian fields of fancy, play fantastic gambols among the flowers of literature and science, or to waste their breath in blowing up the bubbles that amuse the babies of the world, or uttering the Babylonish jargon of some incomprehensible metaphysics—but for men far seen in Bible doctrines—who having been taught of God, are sent by him to speak of judgment and eternity; of a Saviour, and a heaven, and a hell:—for men, who, whether they can display the learning, the courtly elegance of style, and the classic diction of the schools or not, can yet preach the Gospel “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” We may be able to waken on the lyre of genius, strains of melting melody, to cause its silken strings to speak forth harmonies of angelic sweetness; we may enter the very penetralia of science and philosophy; explore and reveal their secret mysteries; amaze and dazzle the world by the splendor of our intellectual achievements; but what is it all, if we do not preach in its simplicity the Gospel of a crucified Saviour, foolishness indeed to man, but the wisdom and power of God? We tickle the ear of men, we gain their empty applause, we destroy their souls and our own.

We will conclude what we have to say on this point, by one more quotation from Dr. Spring. He points to an evil under which the church every where groans, and often indignantly rebels—one which degrades it in its own eyes and in the eyes of the world:

“The too prevalent impression that candidates for the office are to be sought, and found exclusively among the poorer, if not the lower orders of society; and the consequent multiplication of ministers, many of whom are not fitted for their office, the loungers about our large cities, of men with too large expectations, or too little industry; the numerous applications of ministers for public charity in every part of the land, which accomplish little more than the defraying the expenses of the applicant, some of which are undertaken for this sole object, together with the whole system of *secularizing* the pulpit, by making those who occupy it, quite as much the solicitors for money, as they are the preachers of the Gospel, are things that are not a little degrading to the ministerial character. A strange minister scarcely comes among us, but the people at once suspect him to be a beggar.”

No part of our author's work pleases us so much as that contained in chapters xi., xvi., and having reference to the *personal piety of ministers*. No other portion of it will be so profitable to his readers. Dr. S. thinks the ministry of the present day deficient in piety, when compared with "our fathers." None will be more ready to confess this than the ministry themselves; but we do not see the propriety or advantage of such invidious and wholesale comparisons. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." But while it is for no man to condemn his brethren, there is no doubt room for improvement in this particular, as there has been in the ministry of every generation. We question if any have been so conscious of the fact, as those whom Dr. S. rebukes. No men are so afflicted with their manifold imperfections as the ministry of the Gospel; and none are more ready to hear an exhortation from even the humblest of the Lord's servants. We shall make no apology, therefore, for devoting the remainder of this article to a more particular consideration of this subject, for their sake and for our own. Our brethren will be the last men to retort on a preacher with "Physician heal thyself;" or to judge of a truth by the character of him who proclaims it. He who has them for an audience, may bless himself that he has those to hear, who will receive his message according to its own merits; judge the word he utters with candor, and himself with charity. To this audience, we desire now to address ourselves, in the fear of God, and in the love of the Lord Christ. Would that we were able to press our thoughts upon their souls, with a love tender and earnest as the Saviour's, and with a power irresistible as that wherewith he wakes the dead!

If we are indeed called to this high work of the ministry, the first desire of our heart, is therein to glorify the Divine Master in the salvation of souls—to preach to the conversion of men and the perfecting of the saints. If we have the true spirit of our calling, we regard nothing with such dismay,—no contemplation crushes our souls with such anguish and agony,—as the thought of appearing before the Lord with our solitary talent laid up in a napkin, to hear the sentence, "Thou wicked and *unprofitable* servant!" On that dreadful day, when he shall come in power and great glory, to gather all people and nations before him, if

in all that company of shameful sinners, there be one more overwhelmed with shame and confusion than the rest, it must surely be that unhappy minister who can present no fruit of his high commission—who must stand naked and solitary in his guilt and dishonor—and when required to show the results of that great work entrusted to his hands, must remain silent and condemned in the consciousness of failure and neglect, and utter unprofitableness.

There, at that judgment seat, in a little while *we* shall appear. Inquiry will be made for the fruits of our holy calling. Between *this* hour and *that*, lies the scene of our labors, the history of our performance, the record of our success. If we are not utterly unfit for the work, we regard it with trembling anxiety. With souls burdened by the weight of eternal responsibilities, we are inquiring how they should be met, and sustained—wherewithal, shall we be so endued and furnished, as to stand successfully beneath the duties laid upon us, and appear approved in that day, when we are to give account of our stewardship, and meet the reckoning of that God, from whose searching scrutiny there is no concealment, and no escape. To ourselves and to our brethren, we offer the answer, that the *main thing, the one great, all-important thing, is a work of grace in our own hearts, of extraordinary power and perfection*—all other gifts and qualifications are secondary; all others come behind at an immense distance. Our success in the ministry, depends first and most—not on our talents—not on our learning—not on our eloquence—not on our powers of argument, instruction, or persuasion; but first, and most, on our *personal piety*. Be our other gifts as great as they may, without eminent personal piety, we shall never be eminently useful to the church. We may think we are. Others may think so. But it will be a mistake. On the other hand, be our other gifts small as they may, with eminent piety, we shall be eminently useful. The world may not notice us, we may not be honored by the church, men may bestow upon us no reward. But angels will know and love us, all heaven will know and rejoice over our work, the divine Master will smile upon and bless us, and eternity crown our head with everlasting glories.

Personal religion is the inward life of faith, love and power, through the operation of the Holy Ghost. It reveals

itself to consciousness *in faith*, and is developed in love, joy, peace, and all fruits of the spirit. *Eminent* personal piety, is a special and extraordinary unction of the Holy Ghost, whereby the Lord "fulfils in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." It consists in a *faith*, which gives to things unseen and future, the power and effect of things seen and present; which converts convictions into experiences, hope into assurance, doctrines into facts and realities; which thus purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. It consists *in love*—all devoted, constraining, supreme, and sanctifying love to the divine Jesus—love which suffereth long and is kind, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth. It consists *in joy*—joy in God, in doing and suffering his holy will—joy in infirmities, in reproaches, in dishonor, in pain and weary travail, in watchings and fastings, in labors and perils, and tribulations,—for His sake, that He may be glorified. As the general grand result and effect of it on the minister, it consecrates him wholly, body and soul, to the glory of Christ in the work of the ministry.

That the connection of such piety with a minister's success may be apparent, we will illustrate first, its effect on himself; secondly, its effect on his fellow men; and in the third place, its relation to the promised presence and power of the Lord Christ.

And in the first place, let us consider its effect on the merely mental and intellectual powers of the soul. Its absorbing aim and purpose, the presence of its vast conceptions, will concentrate the powers of the mind, wake up sleeping energies of thought, and quicken into life and vigor faculties, which but for it, would have slumbered forever. Such religion will urge the mind onward to new fields of thought, and to intellectual efforts, of which otherwise it would never have been capable. This unction from on high will rouse the soul into activity and power; purify and clear the mental vision, and reveal new worlds of thought. When the stupendous revelations of divine truth break forth out of clouds and darkness and become facts and realities to faith, they will expand the powers of the mind, enlarge its understanding, arouse its dormant faculties, call forth its latent energies, and develope whatever of intellect, or of elo-

quence, or of logic, or of feeling, or of fancy, it may possess, and concentrating them all, on the accomplishment of its grand purpose, clothe the minister with might and with power to convince and to persuade.

Personal piety is the *reflection* of the truths of religion in the experience of our own souls. It is an experimental and spiritual *sense and knowledge* of them, without which they cannot be properly known or understood at all. Until the divine Spirit writes them in our hearts, we are in fact altogether ignorant and untaught in the truths of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." If, therefore, we imagine a mere intellectual acquaintance with the truths of the Gospel—ability to explain them systematically—to prove them by logic—to enforce them with argument and eloquence, qualify us to preach them, we have made a miserable mistake. We cannot be said to know any one of them, unless it has been reflected in our own experience, with life and power, by the Spirit of God. We must be able to preach it from our own heart, as well as from the divine word. We must be able to say, in a spiritual sense, with the Apostle, "that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." We may preach orthodoxy, and the true philosophy of religion—deal in arguments, convictions, illustrations, sentimentalities, but we will carry our hearers no farther than we have gone ourselves. If we preach a philosophical, intellectual, poetical, or merely doctrinal religion, such inevitably will be all *their* religion. *Experimental* religion, alone, is true and real, and we can preach it no farther than we have it ourselves. Said the godly Brainard, on his death-bed, "When ministers have these gracious influences on their own hearts, it wonderfully assists them to come at the consciences of men, and as it were, to handle them with their hands; whereas, without them, whatever reason or oratory we may use, we do but make use of *stumps* instead of hands." And who of us will not bear witness, with all who have gone before us, that it is only when the truth has its power on the soul of the preacher, that it has power on the hearts of his hearers. It

is not ideas, abstractions, philosophies, doctrines, the world needs, but facts, experiences, life and power.

Consider, also, the effect of such piety on the moral character of the preacher. This, alone, will furnish him with the *moral power* necessary for the successful fulfilment of his work. It is that moral power itself. By moral power, we mean in its broad and general sense, *a will* for his work. Without a high degree of piety, that will we have not, and we cannot have. Nothing else can give us a heart to encounter, and carry us successfully through, the labors and difficulties, and toils and trials, and self-sacrifices, the day after day, year after year, wasting and wearisome cares and burdens of the ministry. If his soul is not strengthened and upheld, and borne forward by a religion of extraordinary life and power, a minister will fail constantly. Nothing else can supply that patience and perseverance, and courage and energy, which he must have in order to succeed. It is not enough to be a sincere Christian; he must be an eminent Christian. Mere piety will not do. The work demands piety of high perfection and power.

This moral strength consists, mainly, in an overcoming faith and a fervent love. First, it consists in faith—faith in God, in His promise, His presence, His power; a faith which makes these *facts*, which realizes them to the inward soul; which, when we stand up before men to preach, throws us back upon God, and arms us with the assurance that Almighty strength and love are with us. It is *faith in our Gospel*—in its truth, its preciousness, and its power—a confidence that we hold in our hand a rod of divine efficiency, and that our message is the everlasting and invincible truth of God, which must prevail against all opposition of earth and hell. Nothing but this faith in God and in his word can sustain the preacher against the despondency and discouragements he must inevitably contend with. This alone can prevail against the spirit of indolence or of self-dependence. Nothing else can deliver him from the temptation to rely on his own power to convince and persuade; nothing else arouse him from that indolence and sloth which will creep upon him, silent as sleep, but strong as an armed man. This faith will sustain him in conscious weakness, ignorance and mistake; make him strong, cheerful, courageous to do and to endure; strengthen him against inward fears and outward trials; en-

able him to cast his burden on the Lord ; relieve him from wasting anxiety and consuming care ; keep him humble in success, recover and restore him in defeat, and in every time of need, prove a never-failing source of strength and salvation.

We need this faith, to realize the things which are unseen and eternal—to transform them from abstractions and mere cold convictions, into vivid and all-important facts. Besides the natural indifference of the soul to things invisible and future, and the constant and insidious intrusion of the seen and the present—the perpetual occupancy of the preacher's mind with the thoughts of divine things, and his daily familiarity with their contemplation, tend to dull and deaden his apprehension of them, and thereby to make him callous and cold and indifferent about them. He needs, therefore, a faith which will *substantiate* them to his mind, which will keep them before him as vivid realities, and press them upon his trembling soul, with all the power of things seen and present. This will impart an energy and a zeal and a confidence to his labors, which nothing else can give. It will infuse a tenderness, solemnity and power into his preaching, beyond the reach of the highest human talents. A faith which will reveal in power, to his startled consciousness, the Almighty God—the divine Saviour—his dreadful judgment—eternal heaven, and everlasting hell ; will stand him in stead, where every human principle and power would faint and fail. "This faith," says Cecil, "is the master-spring of the minister. Hell is before me, and thousands of souls are shut up there in everlasting agonies. Jesus Christ stands forth to save men from rushing into this bottomless abyss. He sends me to proclaim his ability and love. I want no fourth idea. Every fourth idea is contemptible. Every fourth idea is a grand impertinence."

This faith is also necessary to a minister, in order to an assurance of his own salvation. While the question of this is involved in fear and uncertainty, it will cut the sinews of his strength, and cripple all the energies of nature. Doubts of his own interest in Christ, will make him feeble, timid, inefficient and unhappy. "The joy of the Lord," the joy of pardon, of acceptance, of assured hope, "is our strength." It converts toil into pleasure, duty into privilege, labor into love. No language can express the importance of this one thing to a minister, or describe the infinite difference be-

tween preaching a Saviour seen, known, felt and loved as the joy and strength of his own soul, and preaching a Christ who is an object of fear, doubt, and uncertainty. The inconsistency, presumption, difficulty, danger and sin of preaching a Gospel which has not brought a sure salvation to our own joyful heart, should make us pause at the threshold, and enter the pulpit, if we enter it at all, on our knees. Now we know not any way to arrive at this settled and stable assurance, but by a work of divine grace in our hearts, of such clearness and power, as shall make itself manifest and indubitable to our own consciousness. This *may* be enjoyed — it ought to be — and it *must* be, if we wish to fulfil the duties of the ministry with much success. We say not that a minister cannot be useful without it. We say he cannot be *as* useful without it as with it. We say it will be to him, joy, strength, power, success. We say, without it, he will find his ministry toil, grief, fear, drudgery — a daily bondage and a living misery.

We mentioned *fervent love*, as the second constituent of the piety which will furnish us with the moral power needed for our office. The ministry is a life-time service to the Lord Jesus; and without a heart ardently devoted to him, it cannot be rightly fulfilled. It is not that *love of the truth*, or that *zeal for doctrine*, or for *the right*, for *the Church*, or for *party* and *sect*, which many exhibit, flaming and furious, and full of noise and pride, but it is a *personal affection* for the divine Saviour, of which we speak. This must be the principle and the power of our success. Nothing else can enable us to endure the work, with its wasting cares, its exhausting toils, its humiliations and sacrifices, and manifold temptations. Love for the right and the true will not sustain us; zeal for the Church or a party will not; earthly ambition and self-interest will not; nor a human philanthropy, a desire to “do good;” nor convictions of conscience; nor fear of perdition; nor pleasure in intellectual efforts — *nothing*, but a holy, fervent love of the divine Jesus — a love which can bear all things for his sake, pass victoriously through flame and flood, and triumph over the weakness of nature, the temptations of the world, the oppositions of hell — a love which will strengthen us when weak, refresh us in weariness, arouse us when lukewarm, and with invincible power bind us, body and soul, to our holy work. What is a minister without ever-glowing zeal, in-

domitable perseverance, perpetual activity, and invincible patience? And from what but fervent love of his divine Master can these spring? Who can succeed in any calling without an ardent love for it? and how can we love the work, but as we love the master? Some of us are bending all our energies to master the science of religion—to store our minds with all the furniture of knowledge—to acquire all the arts of oratory. What are we doing to perfect our hearts in the love of Christ? Learning and human skill will not do it—nothing but the power of the Holy Ghost shed abroad in the heart, received by prayer and faith at the mercy seat. We do well to equip ourselves in whatsoever armor knowledge and skill can give us; but of what advantage is it without strength and power to use it? *Love*, holy, fervent, consuming love is that strength and power. Without this, we will be as David in the panoply of Saul, encumbered with our own weapons. It is not absolutely necessary that we be gifted with eminent talents, learning and eloquence, but that our hearts should be filled with the love of Christ—with a love ardent, devoted, constant, absorbing, full of joy and power, is essential. If we have it not, we enter the ministry with peril to ourselves and to the Church. We will find its duties intolerably irksome; we will be the most miserable of men— toil through our work with reluctance, distaste, listlessness, horrible and loathing weariness; or we will neglect it, forsake it, cast it away, and be cast away ourselves. “Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest thou me?* Feed my sheep. He saith to him the third time, *lovest thou me?* Feed my sheep.”

Let us consider, in the second place, the effect of a minister's piety on his fellow men. Nothing can be more certain, than that a pastor will reflect himself in the people of his charge. “Like priest, like people.” They take the type, tone and temper of their religion, not from *what* he preaches, but from *how* he preaches; not from the doctrine of his religion, but from its life, spirit and power. There is something that goes along with a man's words, call it feeling, spirit-tone, or what you will, which has more effect than the words themselves.

The religion of which we speak, will make a preacher of eloquence and power out of any man. His experimental knowledge of the truth, will give him clearness of doctrine, cogency of argument, fertility of invention and illustration,

insight of the nature and working of human hearts, boldness, authority, earnestness, feeling, affection, tenderness and pathos.

It will give him something different from and superior to all these — something which nothing else can give — which nature cannot acquire or even imitate, a certain *heavenly, holy unction* — a supernatural spirit, investing every utterance, living and breathing in every look, gesture, word and sentence; full of heaven of holiness, of God, and of eternity. This is not mere earnestness, animation, fervor, feeling or tenderness. A preacher can imitate all these, and force himself into the appearance of them, when they are not real. But this of which we speak, cannot be imitated. It is the living Spirit of God dwelling in the preacher's heart, and enabling him to speak in "demonstration of the Spirit and of power." It flows from a soul full of faith and love, glowing with experience and enjoyment of the truth. Wherever it exists, it gives to the preacher a power over his hearers and a success in his ministry, to which no human genius and acquirements could ever attain. In some humble, unlearned, simple-hearted minister of Christ, have we seen it hold in breathless attention, both the philosopher and the peasant, bending all alike to his will, and with irresistible effect, sealing upon their consciences the truth of God."

Explain it how we may, it is undeniable fact, that where we find most of this, we find most success in the ministry, and the largest number of souls converted to God. We may travel over the world, and take the preachers of the Gospel one by one, and we shall find that it is not according to genius, learning, eloquence, or aught else, but this grace of which we speak. We may find men who dazzle the world with the splendor of their talents, but whose brilliant powers are blessed to the salvation of but a few; while, by their side, some unnoticed, ungifted, humble minister, is winning many to righteousness, by the power of holiness, by the eloquence of that spirit which lives in his words of simplicity and godly sincerity.

"Covet earnestly the best gifts, yet show I unto you a more excellent way." Genius, and learning, and eloquence may win gaping followers for ourselves, but nothing save a piety which shall pervade, with the Spirit of Heaven, all our ministrations, and prevail prominently above all other qualities of our preaching, can win disciples for Christ. We

may convince men, and compel them to believe in the philosophy, the doctrine, the history, and the morality of the Gospel, but we do little to convey to their souls its life and power, unless these preëminently imbue and characterize our sermons. Be a minister's other gifts what they may, without this unction from on high, he is, in fact, nothing. He may gain the applause of men—he may crowd his church with admiring hearers—he may have his name sounded about through the world—but, he is nothing. His ministry will, in the end, be barren and unfruitful; the bubble he has blown up will burst, and the result of his noise and labor will be emptiness and nothing.

Need we dwell, also, on the effect of a minister's religion, in his private and personal intercourse with men? Here, emphatically, is the all-important point. Here is a wisdom which we had better be dead than not understand.

We consider it of incalculable importance to remark, that the impression a pastor will produce on the whole, by his preaching, will be exactly according to that which he makes on his people in daily and social life. His hearers will hear him through the medium of his life and spirit in private; by these, his preaching will be interpreted and understood; his example will be taken as a commentary on his sermons—a commentary read, remembered and applied. He may try to make his preaching better and more powerful than his life, but he cannot. No solemnity and seriousness in the pulpit, will prevail against worldliness, levity and trifling out of it; no zeal there counteract his indifference in the parlor; no forced and affected earnestness and pathos in public, supply the want of them in private. No godly tones, no professional demeanor, no sanctionious manner, no fire and urgency on the Sabbath, will have any permanent effect against a worldly, lukewarm, carnal spirit and manner through the week. Do what he may, he will be to his hearers the same man one day as another. They will come to regard his zeal on the Sabbath as merely professional, as good acting, as very becoming the time and place, as some like to see the minister put on a gown when he goes into the pulpit.

“It is said that wealth is power; that knowledge is power; but to the minister, *character is power*. Without this, he is impotent and useless. It is his character for piety, which measures the power of his preaching. Let it never

be forgotten, too, that he cannot permanently establish a character for more piety than he really possesses. He cannot long appear more holy than he is in fact. The truth will out. He may act a part for a while, but in spite of himself, the inmost secrets of his nature will be revealed, and men read him through and through. It is a fearful thing to preach the Gospel. It is a more fearful thing to be set up as an example of the grace and power of the Gospel; to be looked up to as a specimen, an illustration, and a pattern of its fruit and effect. He may protest against this, and tell men not to regard *him* as a copy. It will be in vain. They *will*. How often has the world seen a preacher of almost superhuman power, swaying, with a breath, his enraptured hearers, touching, at will, any chord of the thousand stringed heart, and fixing the truth, like barbed arrows, in the very vitals of the soul — and yet that preacher is not blessed in his labors to the conversion of men. Would we know the reason; follow him on the Monday morning, as he mingles among his people, and as he meets them through the week, and we will find it — find it in the dreadful fact, that he is not the same man out of the pulpit he is in it. All the effect of his preaching, is nullified by his levity and trifling, or by his indifference and lukewarmness, or by his worldliness and love of money — by his practical irreligion and ungodliness. The life and power of religion, its zeal, activity and fervor, must be seen and felt in our every day walk, in all our intercourse with men — pervading every word and deed, with a heavenly spirit, with a tone and temper full of God and of the powers of the world to come; with an unction and a sanctity which will be felt where they are not seen. If we think any thing can supply the want of this, if we hope to do much good without it, if we suppose we can be better ministers than we are Christians, we are most miserably deceived. God grant that we may hearken and understand.

We were to consider, in the third place, the relation of eminent piety in the minister, to the promised presence and power of Christ; but the length to which this article has already extended, leaves us room to say but very little on this point. It is apparent, from what has already been said, that there is a natural adaptation, in the possession of such piety by a minister, to the successful discharge of his office; but we must remember that, after all, our ministry will be

blessed with success, only so far as it is made successful by the effectual grace of the divine Spirit. It is our clear conviction, that this is usually given to his hearers, according to the measure of it in the preacher's own soul. There may be extraordinary cases, which are exceptions. But no minister is warranted to hope for the peace and power of salvation to attend his labors, except as he experiences them in his own soul. Explain this and philosophize about it as you please. We are concerned now only with the fact. And we say again, the piety of the preacher, his faith and love and holiness, have an important connection with the exercise of the grace and power of Christ, for the salvation of his hearers. He is Christ's *instrument*—the rod of his power, and he is useful or worthless according to his holiness. We may bewilder and blind ourselves with speculations about the divine sovereignty and decrees. But the Lord works by means, and *according to means*. The whole Gospel plan, as we have to do with it, is a system of means, in harmonious connection with divine power. Ministers are his means, for the salvation of those to whom they are sent; and if they are not saved, let us take care how we fling back the cause and reason on the holy God of love and mercy. We are commanded and charged to seek the salvation of every sinner within our reach, and we may pray and hope for it according to our fidelity. And if we suppose this is inconsistent with the highest and most Scriptural views of the divine sovereignty and foreordination, we only betray our own lamentable ignorance. In the true sense of the word, the minister's faithfulness is the condition of the divine blessing on his labors. His devoted piety is the condition of his faithfulness. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his own soul, must precede his outpouring on the souls of his hearers. The dispensation of the day of Pentecost, illustrated the nature and principles of the whole Gospel dispensation. On that occasion, the Holy Ghost descended *first* on the Apostles, and wrought with power on their hearts. Not one word is expressly said, of his influence on the hearts of the people.

Of Stephen it is said — "Full of faith and power, he did great wonders and miracles among the people, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spake." It is written of Barnabas, that, "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much

people was added unto the Lord. Paul testifies of himself, "by the grace of God I am what I am : and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain ; but I labored more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power." "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

All these Scriptures clearly connect a successful ministry with the special and abundant grace of God in the soul of the minister. They reveal wherein lies the power of the pulpit ; and if its efficiency in our day has been impaired, they teach us whereby it may be restored and increased. The divine Master alone, can give an efficient and successful ministry to his Church. He gives such a ministry, by calling men into the holy office, and enduing them with the Holy Ghost and with faith and power.

Here we rest the subject with the consciences and hearts of our brethren, as we endeavor to lay it near our own. It would have been easy to illustrate our remarks, by examples taken from every portion of the history of the Church, but those examples our readers can supply for themselves. With the experience of by-gone ages before them, we particularly beg the attention of our younger brethren in the ministry, to this subject. Well do we know how hard it is for a young and hopeful spirit, confident in its own powers, and eager for their trial, to let go its own strength and lay hold on God's.

Well do we know that insidious self-dependence, that lurks amid a thousand fears and misgivings, and is crucified and slain only by the torture and agony of a bitter experience, and a thousand failures and defeats. Various indications give us reason to fear, there is a growing tendency to seek the power of human learning and talent, rather than the power of the Holy Ghost, and the gifts of sanctifying grace ; to substitute love of orthodoxy, and zeal for our own church, in the place of love for Christ, and zeal for the salvation of men. Woe be to you, brethren, if you yield to these temptations : if you do not see and understand that the one first and all-important thing, is, to have your own souls enriched with a special and extraordinary unction of the

Holy Spirit! If we cannot persuade, we will prophesy. The time will come, when you will understand it; when you will mourn in bitterness, that you did not understand it now; when you will look back over years wasted and mispent in an unprofitable ministry, and weep, in conscious guilt, before the cheerless and barren waste. When you shall find that God has cast contempt on all your genius, and learning, and eloquence, and despised your vain gifts, while he has honored and blessed the humble piety and unpretending devotion of some weak and unlearned brother. Then you shall bend, with smitten and breaking heart, over the wreck and ruin of your unsanctified talents, and cry with anguish to God, to strip you of all, if he will but fill you with the grace and power of the Holy Ghost.

ARTICLE IX.

CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. *The substance of an argument against the indiscriminate incorporation of Churches and Religious Societies. Delivered before the Committee of Courts of Justice of the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the evening of the 8th of January, and on subsequent evenings, A. D. 1846, in reply to James Lyons, and Wm. H. McFarland, Esqs. By WM. S. PLUMER. Baltimore, 1847. 8vo., pp. 82.*

The argument whose title is above given, was drawn forth by a proposition which emanated from the Episcopal Convention of the Diocese of Virginia, that the Legislature of that State should pass an act, authorising once for all, all religious, benevolent, and literary societies and institutions, to hold and transmit property, given or bequeathed to them. Such an act would be a general law for the indiscriminate incorporation of all such societies, and especially of the various churches of each denomination of Christians.