

18295

# THE GOSPEL MINISTRY,

IN

## A SERIES OF LETTERS

FROM A FATHER TO HIS SONS.

*William Howard*  
BY THE

REV. WM. S. WHITE, D. D.

LEXINGTON, VA.

36  
*Ex*  
PHILADELPHIA :

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

NO. 821 CHESTNUT STREET.

[1860]  
H

BV4010  
W52

---

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by

JAMES DUNLAP, TREAS.,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Eastern District  
of Pennsylvania.

---

STEREOTYPED BY WILLIAM W. HARDING, PHILADELPHIA.

THE LIBRARY  
OF CONGRESS  
—  
WASHINGTON

TO THE  
STUDENTS  
OF  
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, VA.

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR,

WITH AFFECTIONATE AND PRAYERFUL SOLICITUDE,  
THAT THEY MAY BLEND THOROUGH SCHOLARSHIP WITH  
GROWING PIETY, AND CONSUMMATE PRUDENCE WITH  
BURNING ZEAL; SO AS TO SCATTER THE LIGHT  
OF LIFE, BREAK THE POWER OF SIN, GIVING  
PEACE TO MEN, AND GLORY TO GOD.

( 3 )

# INTRODUCTION.

---

THE following letters were actually written to one son preparing for the work of the ministry, and to another just entering upon that work. For reasons that need not now be stated, they were first published in the Central Presbyterian of Richmond, Va. They were prompted by the consideration, that parental responsibility does not cease until life ends. At every stage of our being, there are lessons to be learned which none but a father can teach, and influences to be felt which none but a father can exert; and the son wisely instructed, and governed in childhood and youth, will accept with thankfulness these lessons, and yield with cheerfulness to these influences, even when his own head

has grown gray with years. Children really brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," never think with pleasure, but with pain, of the time when the law of the land discharges them from parental authority. The language of such is, "It is my father's prerogative to command, and both my duty and my privilege to obey, so long as I need his authority, or he needs my help."

A father, once writing to an absent son, on his twenty-first birth day, said with pleasantry, that the chief design of writing on that day, was to absolve him from further allegiance and declare him free. The son had already reached a position in life both honourable and lucrative. To the surprise of the father, he replied in a very serious strain, declaring that the day had been one of much sadness to him, because in the eye of the law, it terminated the period of his minority, and added, "My dear father, I neither expect nor desire to be freed from your authority, until you are translated to a better world."

The first of these letters sets forth with sufficient distinctness, the design with which they were written. Both of these sons received their

theological training at Union Seminary, Prince Edward, Va. So high an estimate does the writer place on the extent and thoroughness of the instructions there given, that the thought never for a moment entered his mind of attempting to supplement those instructions. But his sole purpose was to insure the warmth of parental affection into the lessons already learned from the able and accomplished professor.

Taken all together, they contain nothing but familiar hints on the most common place topics connected with the practical working of the christian ministry—hints drawn almost exclusively from an experience of thirty-three years spent in this great and blessed work. They are now transferred from the periodical to the bound volume at the earnest solicitation of many friends both in and out of the ministry, to whose judgment the writer trusts rather than to his own.

Should they contribute in any degree to render those to whom they were written or those who may read them, wiser, happier, or more useful men: should they serve to give distinctness to the conceptions of the young

man preparing to preach, or to lighten the burden which presses upon the young man beginning to preach, the highest expectations of the author will be realized.

W. S. W.

LEXINGTON, VA.

*September 18, 1860.*

L E T T E R S   T O

H. M. W.,

A

STUDENT IN THE SEMINARY.

( 9 )

# LETTERS

## TO A THEOLOGICAL STUDENT.

---

### LETTER I.

MY DEAR SON :—Your professors are worthy of your highest confidence, and warmest love. Their instructions are full and ample ; and instead of seeking to supplement those instructions, I only propose to address to you a few plain hints which may possibly serve to impress what they teach, by adding to it the force of parental affection.

The student in the Seminary differs from the pastor, as the cadet

in the military academy differs from the soldier in camp, or on the field of battle. And as the study of fortification and gunnery differs from the application of what is thus learned to the privations of the camp, and the dangers of the field, so, in great measure, your present pursuits differ from those which await you in future life. But, do not push this thought too far. All your professors have been able and successful pastors, and are hence prepared so to illustrate theory by the results of a large experience, as to render your success in the work of the ministry, greatly dependent on the thoroughness of your studies in the Seminary. Whether in the Seminary or out of it—whether a

student of theology, or a pastor, your avowed object is one. To this all your studies now, and all your labours hereafter must be directed. The grandeur and glory of this object transcends the highest conceptions of the mightiest mind. It occupied a prominent place in the counsels of God before the foundation of the world, and it holds an equally prominent place now in all the dispensations of providence and grace. For the attainment of this end, holy men of old both spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. For this, Christ as man, lived, laboured, died; and as God, arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. For this, Prophets and Apostles

taught and suffered unto death, and the long line of martyrs soaked the earth with their blood. This object is nothing less than the restoration to man of the lost image and favour of God, the subversion of the empire of sin, and the universal establishment of the kingdom of the Prince of peace.

This great work for which you are now preparing, may be divided into two general departments. To this division the Apostle refers when he says to the elders of Ephesus, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house." Here, as in every thing, we are prone to extremes. Some rely almost ex-

clusively on the pulpit, others on pastoral visitation.

Public preaching is the chief work of the ministry. It is this which God chiefly blesses, and to which we must mainly look. But both are necessary; for both are ordained and sanctioned of heaven, and woe to him who neglects either. And woe to him who, while in the Seminary, fails to prepare fully for both. How can one hope to preach appropriately and usefully, unless he know the character and condition of the people? How can he know how to adapt the remedy to the disease, unless he know the character and the extent of that disease? And how can he know this without close and personal inquiry? His

inquiries must respect the peculiar type of the disease—the constitution of the patient, and as his practice proceeds he must inquire diligently into the effects produced by the remedies thus far prescribed. No doctor in the land can prosecute his calling successfully, by the delivery of lectures or the prescriptions of empiricism. He cannot hope to restore the inmates of an hospital by standing at the door and prescribing for those inmates in a body. He must go from couch to couch; he must feel the pulse, and look into the eye, and into the mouth of every patient.

So, he who would heal the “sin-sick soul” of man must do, or the patient must die. And unless you

can acquire some skill in this department of our great calling, I shall almost fear to see you licensed. I have often listened to profound and eloquent sermons with unutterable pain, because, notwithstanding their logic and their learning, they lacked appropriateness. The garment was of good materials, and well made, but it did not fit.

Whether your spiritual charge is to be large or small, in the country, the village, or the city, an extensive and complicated system of moral machinery will be necessary. People of all ranks, ages, and conditions must be reached and influenced.

What reaches one will not touch another. Medicine which will cure one patient, will kill another. In-

deed that which will heal a given individual at one stage of his sickness will kill him in another. Some such view of the case Paul must have taken when he spoke of "rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each his portion in due season," and when he says, "if by any means I might save some."

Go where you may, you will find some who are sceptical. This often results from wilful ignorance of God's truth; is always accompanied by prejudice, and sometimes by inveterate and unconcealed hatred of all that is good. These men will not attend church, and are almost inaccessible in private. On other subjects they know much and reason acutely. They possess immense

influence, and stand like impassable mountains in the preacher's way.

Others go not so far. They simply care for none of these things. They are either inordinately anxious to make money if they are poor, or as anxious to keep and increase it if they are rich. They attend church, if they like the preacher. But "having ears, they hear not."

Then there are those who profess respect for the gospel, and some willingness to sustain its institutions. They show the preacher kindness. If he is of a social turn, of good conversational powers, says little about religion and much about other things, their kindness will become very great. But they have doubts and difficulties far harder to

meet and remove, than those of the first class, because they have really read and heard and thought far more on such subjects than they.

Next he finds the really awakened sinners, such as honestly and earnestly ask, What must we do to be saved? Among such he finds persons of every grade in society, of every order of intellect, every measure of intelligence, brought up under widely different systems of education, and forms of family government; with every conceivable shade of preconceived sentiment on religious subjects, and obstructed in their progress by obstacles as various as their characters.

Next appear the backsliders—those who had hastily made, and as

hastily renounced a Christian profession, whose last state is far worse than their first. The prospects of none are so dark, the case of none so hopeless, as of these. And they too are of all ages, ranks, and conditions. With minds dark as night, and hearts hard as stone, they reject the gospel offer. They tell of impositions formerly practised upon them, of their folly in yielding to priestcraft and many other such things—and then they trample on the blood of the covenant, and frown on those who point them to that blood.

The church itself presents to the eye of the young preacher a scene often very discouraging. Here many denominations are seen, agree-

ing in many things, but differing in others. They often depreciate or neglect the great truths in which they agree, and so magnify the smaller ones in which they differ, that they often do far more to hinder than help each other. Their want of mutual confidence is often such, as to place them at the mercy of their common enemy, and expose them all to a terrible defeat. In the same denomination, the grades of intelligence, and the degrees of piety are almost infinite, so as often to obstruct the pastor's path, and almost crush his spirit.

Then there are countless little factions of deluded errorists, who fall upon his field and deafen his ears with their buzzing and croak-

ing, as did the locusts and the frogs the Egyptians.

Such is a hasty and very imperfect glance at the field to be occupied, and of the materials out of which are to be gathered and fashioned the lively stones composing the spiritual temple of Zion's King. To cultivate such a field, to give the requisite form and beauty to those materials, calls for eminent learning, consummate skill, untiring industry, and ever brightening piety. Here is a great moral malady—various in its symptoms and its stages, for the healing of which you are now preparing.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

## LETTER II.

MY DEAR SON :—In occupying the field sketched in my last letter, and for which you are now preparing, you will find ignorance to be instructed, prejudice to be removed, error to be corrected, enmity to be changed into love, guilt to be forgiven, and impurity to be cleansed. A justly offended God must be propitiated, the “sacramental host of God’s elect” must be gathered and disciplined, and the undying souls of sinners must be saved. What then must the pastor be, and what must he do? The whole field indicated by the above statement and questions would require volumes. I have undertaken merely to sug-

gest a few hints in a few familiar letters.

As to the scholarship and the learning needful, I can only say, when you have thoroughly mastered all that is embraced in the admirable course pursued in your Seminary, you will only have made a good beginning. I therefore urge you not to neglect nor disparage any branch of knowledge embraced in that course, and not to harbour for a moment the thought of licensure, until that entire course is thoroughly mastered. When knowledge is increasing, the standard of scholarship in all our schools and colleges rising, when schools of medicine and law are multiplying and raising their professions far

above the rank they once held, shall we fall behind? I rejoice to know that the professors who now fill the chairs in our Seminary, are wholly opposed to any retrograde movement on this subject. But this is a point I did not mean to touch, simply because I was convinced you would not need even a word of caution in regard to it from me.

You are most in danger from a failure to cultivate a devotional spirit. A Theological Seminary, in its external arrangements—its buildings—its lecture rooms, and its recitations; the intercourse of its students in the dining hall and upon the campus, is so much like a college, that the spirit of the college is very likely to prevail. The

critical study of the Bible is likely to supplant the devotional. That all the young man says and does, even his sermons and his prayers, should be subject to the criticism of his fellow students and professors, although useful and necessary, may yet become hurtful to his spirituality. Now, whatever else he neglects, he must not neglect the throne of grace. Fail in all else sooner, than in the cultivation of deep spiritual piety. Fail in this, and whatever your attainments in other respects may be, should you live to enter the ministry, comfortless and useless you will live, labour, and die. Mere intellectual endowments, leading to popular applause, more frequently entangle, bewilder, and ruin the

young preacher than all other baits of the devil combined. As to such endowments, Balaam possessed them in a very high degree, and Satan, the master of Balaam, possesses them in a higher degree than he. If he thus gain popular applause, he should not forget that it was to Simon Magus, "that all gave heed from the least to the greatest," and that it was of him the populace said, "This man is the great power of God."

One has truthfully and beautifully said, that "prayer is the breathing forth of that grace which is first breathed into the soul by the Holy Ghost." Every offering then, not made in the spirit of such prayer, is destitute of the purity and fra-

grance of heaven ; and is not only unacceptable but hateful to God ; so that prayerless study, prayerless preaching and visiting are worse than useless. What does not come from God never returns to him. All our services not baptized by the Spirit, freely given in answer to prayer, will be less acceptable to God than the offerings of paganism. Many even labour for years—labour industriously and skilfully, yet little or no fruit appears. Saints are not edified nor sinners saved. The garden of the Lord is rendered neither fragrant nor fruitful under his culture. And yet, he is admired for his good manners and good sense. Crowds attend upon his ministrations and admire his eloquence.

Many such cases exist. How shall they be explained? What is lacking? He does not pray. Secretly it may be, yet really, there lurks in his heart a feeling of dependence on the orthodoxy, or the logic, or the eloquence of his sermons; on the multiplicity of his labours, or on the hold he has on the confidence and love of his people. He knows better. He knows, theoretically at least, that the excellency of the power is of God. And yet such thoughts obtrude, bewilder, and weaken, because he does not really watch unto prayer.

Suffer me then to enlarge on a thought already suggested. When we come really near to God, he freely grants us the sweet influences

of his grace—"all grace comes from the God of grace"—all that begins and completes the life of God in the soul of man. The soul enlightened and warmed by a near approach to the true altar, radiates both light and heat, and thus creates an atmosphere which refreshes, beautifies, and strengthens all who breathe it. "The river comes originally from the ocean, and not even the range of rocky mountains can prevent its return to the ocean. So, that alone which comes from God can return to God." Hence we feel and exhibit just so much of heaven, as we feel and manifest of the spirit of prayer. From this source alone can come our usefulness.

Whatever else a man may have

or do, he never does, he never can become the channel through which God pours his grace upon the hill of Zion, unless he lives in constant, spiritual contact with heaven. He must bring God to his people before he can lift them to heaven.

Then whatever else you neglect, fail not to study upon your knees, such expressions of the word of God as these, "And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." "Ask in faith."

One has said, "If the thing desired be not in the promise, it is a sin to pray for it. If it be, it is a sin not

to believe that we shall have it.” We pray in faith, when our expectations spring not from our sensible enjoyments, our freedom of utterance, from the numbers who join with us, or from their or our apparent fervour, but simply and solely from the testimony of God—from the ability, worth, and willingness of Christ to fulfil the terms of the covenant. Such a spirit of prayer is the first, the highest endowment of the ministry to which you now look forward. It is equally essential to your present condition and pursuits. Think not that this may be acquired hereafter. Just as well defer the study of Hebrew, church history, or theology. Nay, just as well, and even better,

leave the Seminary at once. As is the student, so will be the preacher. An exception to this remark occasionally occurs, but there are just exceptions enough to establish the rule. Let all you now learn be baptized in a heart burning with love to Christ, and breaking with compassion for deathless souls perishing in sin. Let every day begin and end with the thought, "I am here, not to acquire learning with a view to win popular applause, but through God to acquire skill in winning souls to Christ."

YOUR FOND FATHER.

## LETTER III.

MY DEAR SON :—What was said in my last letter of the importance of the cultivation of a devotional spirit, by no means precludes the necessity of skilful and vigorous effort. It cannot be too often repeated, that “prayer without effort is presumption, and effort without prayer is atheism.”

The young man who goes reputably through the Seminary, who studies and prays as he ought to do, will secure the approbation of his professors, and the admiration of his fellow-students. The hopes of his Presbytery and his friends may be excited in a high degree. And yet in the work of the ministry he

may fail. The hopes excited may soon be withered. A vacant church once applied to a minister of much experience to know, whether a young man recently from the Seminary, would suit as their pastor. The reply was substantially as follows: "I regard the young man of whom you inquire, as pious, intelligent, and industrious. Indeed his scholarship is of a very high grade; his sermons, both in matter and style, are far above mediocrity; and his anxiety to be useful very great. But still I am afraid he will not succeed; and I cannot commend him as likely to suit your people." Now one is curious to know what could be lacking in the qualifications of that young man. It is

very evident that with such high qualities as he confessedly possessed, there could be no serious defect. Now, trivial as it may have seemed at the time, it was still sufficient to drive him about from church to church, making some friends and some enemies, yet doing no perceptible good for many years. All he seemed to lack was that rare but invaluable quality, *common sense*.

If you have access to Kennedy's life of William Wirt, you will find in volume 2nd and page 209, a letter to one of his daughters, in which he speaks of common sense and genius in contrast. He says, "Common sense is a much rarer quality than genius. It is not, as superficial thinkers are apt to suppose, a mere

negative faculty—it is a positive faculty, and one of the highest power. It is this faculty that instructs when to speak, when to be silent, when to act, and when to be still; and moreover it teaches us what to speak and what to suppress, what to do and what to forbear. Now, pause a moment, and reflect on the number of faculties which must be combined to constitute this common sense; a rapid and profound foresight to calculate the consequences of what is to be said or done, a rapid circumspection and extensive comprehension so as to be sure of taking in all the circumstances which belong to the case, and missing no figure in this arithmetic of the mind, and an accuracy of decision which must be

as quick as lightning, so as not to let the occasion slip. See what a knowledge of life, either by experience or intuition, and what a happy constitutional poise between the passions and the reason, or what a powerful self-command, all enter into the composition of that little, demure, quiet, unadmired, and almost despised thing, called common sense. It pretends to no brilliancy, for it possesses none ; it has no ostentation, for it has nothing to show which the world admires. The constant and powerful action of the intellect, which makes its nature, is unobserved even by the proprietor ; for every thing is done with intuitive ease, with a sort of unconscious felicity. See, then, the quick

and piercing sagacity, the prophetic penetration, the wide comprehension, and the prompt and accurate judgment, which combine to constitute common sense, which is as inestimably valuable as the solar light and as little thought of."

Of genius without common sense, he says, "It is a fever of the brain—sparkling with delirious brilliancy, a nocturnal exhibition of fire-works in a state of rapid metamorphosis; now it is a horizontal hoop turning and whizzing and cracking and shooting off its lateral spouts of fire—and then it plays at blind man's buff, and moves about as confidently as if it had its eyesight; then bump goes its nose against the mantle-piece, and then the blood flows; it

turns in a different direction, and smack go its shins against a sofa, and blood flows again—it drops its hands and they are seized by a dog; it picks up what it supposes to be a stick to strike the dog, and it proves to be a rattlesnake, which stings it to death—and such is genius.” “Of itself it is a mere bedlamite: but combine it with common sense, and you make it a radiant seraph. That is the union which my soul delights to honour.”

Now glance again at the work for which you are preparing, and tell me if there is a profession on earth which calls more loudly for the constant exercise of common sense. You are to deal with men, “dead in trespasses and sins.” Your

great object will be to raise them into newness of life. You must therefore be prepared to answer numberless questions relating to the interests of three worlds. You must remove doubt, quiet fear, silence prejudice, encourage the timid, alarm the secure, humble the proud, rebuke the impertinent. You must be skilful in guiding the judgments, the emotions, the consciences of men, and all this you must do, so as not "to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Surely this demands "skill and expedient," so as to know what will perplex, as well as what will enlighten and guide. Cecil says, "The minister is a fisherman. If some fish will bite only by day, he must fish by

day; if others will bite only by moon-light, he must fish for them by moon-light. He has an engine to work, and it must be his most assiduous endeavour to work his engine to the full extent of its powers, and to ascertain its powers in the first step towards success."

For such work the greatest prudence and the highest wisdom are requisite. Here the rash, the impetuous, the timid, the vacillating—however learned, or however pious, invariably fail. You aspire to be the leader of the "sacramental host of God's elect," in its never ceasing conflict with the powers of darkness, and to do this successfully, yours must be the skill and courage of the

most accomplished general. You must know how and where to entrench your forces—when to fight, and when to fly—when to resort to lawful stratagem, and when to invite to public combat. In all this common sense must hold the helm.

Learn before you enter upon this mighty conflict to distinguish wisely between mere rashness and true courage—between genuine humility and arrant cowardice. To drive headlong, utterly regardless of consequences—to be indifferent as to whether you are to vanquish your foe, or he vanquish you—to expose your own forces at every point to the hottest fire of the enemy,—this is not courage, but madness.

He is the fearless minister who

neither fears groundless censure, nor covets unhallowed applause; who feels under no obligation to try to please every body, nor yet seeks to provoke any. "It is a foolish project," says Cecil, "to avoid giving offence; but it is our duty to avoid giving unnecessary offence. It is necessary offence, if it is given by the truth; but it is unnecessary, if it be occasioned by our own spirit."

When a man's good sense, intelligence, amiability, and piety, accompanied by affability and industry, are known and read of all men; then, if he "speak the truth in love," he never can give "unnecessary offence."

Such will be the hold he will

have upon the confidence and the love of his people, that he may rebuke with all plainness and even severity, and no clamour will be raised to disturb his peace or impair his usefulness. By a law of our being we can only excite in the breasts of others the emotions which burn in our own. Anger begets anger, and love begets love.

“I wish I could make that teacher angry,” said a bad girl once to her school-mate, “for then I could be angry myself, and not be ashamed to show it.” If joy is ever felt in the world of darkness, methinks it is, when students of Theology, and still more, when ministers of the Prince of peace, are found so ignorant of the dictates of common sense

as to attempt the prosecution of their work rashly and recklessly.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

#### LETTER IV.

MY DEAR SON,—I have thus far spoken of the importance of intelligence, piety, and skill in the minister of the gospel. There are matters of far less consequence than these, and because they are less important, they are sadly overlooked. But the want of a quality in itself of small value, may seriously impair the usefulness of a minister, in many respects, richly endowed. That now in my mind was made

the subject of a volume by the late venerable and honoured Dr. Samuel Miller, so long an ornament to Princeton Seminary, and still, through his descendants and his writings, a blessing to the world. This volume bears the unpretending title of "Letters to a Theological Student, on clerical manners and habits." It was first published in 1827, and I well remember in what terms of disparagement it was at first spoken of by some, whose position in society and even in the ministry, most unhappily, as I conceive, checked its circulation and weakened its influence. Its fullness of instruction, and minuteness of detail, may detract from its value to some; but still it well deserves

and will richly repay the attention of every student of Theology. I recommend this book to your serious attention. The second and fourth letters should be committed to memory, and the third should be read more than once.

Manner may be almost said to make the man, and yet some, who have been distinguished for their talents and piety, have spoken of it in terms of disparagement. Of these John Wesley was one. On one occasion while addressing the preachers under his superintendence, he said, "You have no more to do with being gentlemen than dancing masters," and even the great and good Richard Cecil has endorsed this sentiment, and said

of himself and his brethren, "We are more concerned to be thought gentlemen than ministers. Now being desirous to be thought a man who has kept good company, strikes at the root of that rough work, the bringing of God into his world. It is hard and rough work to bring God into his own world."

Now, to be "more concerned to be thought gentlemen than ministers" is indeed a sin of no ordinary turpitude. And if the church was cursed with such in Cecil's day, he did well to rebuke them with severity. Nor will I complain of his saying it "is hard work to bring God into his own world." But I am far from believing that it is rough work, if by this he means,

as the connection in which he uses the term seems to intimate, that it must be done in any other way than that which comports with all that is deemed becoming among well bred people. Such expressions, from so high a source, contribute in no small degree to form in ministers, a system of manners so rough and even boorish as to render them the objects of ridicule among the truly polished and refined. I have known the usefulness of some ministers sadly lessened in this way. "The field is the world," and he who seeks to cultivate that field must be fitted to find access to every part of it. He must be both accessible and acceptable among the educated and uneducated, the polished and

the unpolished. Not that he must seek to please people of all habits and all tastes. Not that he must adopt either the dress or the address, which is popular among the gay, the frivolous, and the sensual. But while he avoids the extreme of dandyism on the one hand, and of clownishness on the other; while he is neither frivolous nor rude, he should ever seek to be the christian gentleman.

“By good manners,” says Dr. Miller, “I beg you will understand me to mean, those manners which christian purity and benevolence recommend, and which, where those graces reign, they will ever be found substantially to produce.”

Dr. Witherspoon, in his Letters

on Education, strongly urges the utility and importance of polished manners, and remarks, "that true religion is not only consistent with, but necessary to the perfection of true politeness," and fortifies this opinion by the "noble sentiment of the Prince of Conti, viz: 'that worldly politeness is no more than an imitation or imperfect copy of christian charity, being the pretence or outward appearance of that deference to the judgment, and attention to the interests of others, which a true christian has as the rule of his life and the disposition of his heart.'"

This is a matter of far more consequence than many suppose. The minister perpetually meets

with people who are far better judges of his manners than of his mind—of his bearing than of his preaching. And they judge of him, as they see and understand him. The result of this is, that the easy, affable, and polite manners of the christian gentleman will often secure a cordial reception to him who cultivates them, and even to the sacred message he bears ; when one superior to him in every thing but in manners is treated with neglect, if not with scorn.

Even the uneducated and unpolished are pleased with polished manners in their minister, provided he is humble and kind. A congregation of coloured people once complained of a minister, because he

acted towards them, and preached to them as if he thought "they had no sense and no manners."

Take the following statement from Dr. Miller: "One of the most excellent ministers I ever knew, a man of refinement and polish, as well as of ardent piety, exceeded most of my clerical acquaintances in his incessant attentions to the poor. He would go to the houses of the meanest and poorest, with an ease and freedom truly exemplary, would seat himself on a broken stool or block of wood, and appear to enjoy himself as if he was in the most convenient parlour; and would, with a singular felicity of manner, place those whom he addressed just as much at ease,

as if they were conversing with an equal. It was in reference to him that a poor, but eminently pious, old woman said,—“O sir, you cannot think how kind and good he is. He's not a bit of a gentleman. He comes in and sits down in my poor place here, just as if he had been used to being with the like of me all his days.” The Dr. adds, “Though I knew the venerable man to be a real and uncommonly well-bred gentleman, I was particularly struck with the old woman's significant language, and thought it one of the highest compliments she could have paid him. She had, no doubt, been accustomed to associate, in her own mind, the title of gentleman with manners of

the supercilious and revolting kind. An association to which, I am sorry to say, the manners of many, who would be thought real gentlemen, give too much countenance." Some such association must also have existed in the minds of Wesley and Cecil.

This matter is often better understood and practised by physicians than preachers. The members of those two professions resemble each other in this, that they must be quite as familiar in the cottages of the poor as in the palaces of the rich. They necessarily practise a great deal together, and each should learn from the other. I have often felt rebuked by seeing myself so immeasurably surpassed by him who

ministers to the body, in the ease with which he would seat himself by the sick bed of the humblest and rudest patient, and by brief and simple questions, interspersed with expressions of sympathy and kindness, draw from the sufferer all that it was needful for him to know. In such situations all reserve and austerity must be banished. Use the simplest language. If you have occasion to recommend a book for a sick child; don't say "it is well adapted to the juvenile reader," but say, "it is well suited to the young reader." Instead of "interrogatory" say "question." Instead of "averse to God," say "opposed." When the poor mother wants to know what you think of the condi-

tion of herself or sick child, and there is improvement—say “better,” in place of “convalescent.” And so of a thousand other words. I think it was Hobbes who said, “words are the counters of wise men, the money of fools.”

As I have referred to physicians, let me say, that preachers often misunderstand them. In an experience of thirty-one years in the ministry, I have met with but one of this noble profession of whom I have had reason to complain, and he soon confessed and apologized for his folly. But then you must satisfy them that you have common sense; that you no more believe in nostrums for the mind than for the body; that as they must have

respect to the mind in their treatment of the body, so you must regard the body in your treatment of the mind.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

### LETTER V.

MY DEAR SON:—In my last it was intimated, that very much depended both upon the dress and the *ad*-dress of a teacher. Now, to give undue attention to these betokens littleness of mind. It is impossible to make wise people believe, that a head contains much brains, that can be made giddy by a bonnet or a hat. And yet the “outward adorning of putting on of apparel”

has its place and its uses. Unaffected neatness is the true definition of becoming dress in all persons, and should be rigidly adopted by the student of theology and the minister of the gospel.

It was once quite common for each denomination of Christians—and especially for the ministers of each—to be readily distinguished by a peculiarity of manner, dress, and even intonation of voice. This is highly objectionable. No such badge of distinction should exist among the well bred of any profession. The minister with a well trained mind, and cultivated taste, should not differ in these respects from the pious lawyer, doctor, merchant, or farmer, of similar culture

—unless indeed, an exception be made in the case of the plain black suit for the minister.

Some ministers appear to think, that their manners in the parlour must be the same as in the pulpit. They deem it proper and indeed necessary to preach every where, and essentially in the same style. They forget that they meet with their friends in the social circle, as equals, and they must not dictate here, so much as converse. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Some seem not to understand the true import of the plain, old-fashioned word, conversation. Webster's definition of the word, is this: "Familiar discourse, general intercourse of sentiments; chat; unre-

strained talk, opposed to a formal conference ;” and I beg leave to add, opposed to formal speechifying. It includes both aptness to talk, and aptness to listen, and also a knowing when to do the one, and when the other. Plain and pious people show such deference to preachers, are so fond of hearing them talk, that they are often unwittingly led to engross the conversation to a censurable extent. With us old men, this temptation, added to the constitutional garrulity of age, sometimes leads us to “talk an infinite deal of nothing.” But even this is not so censurable in the old as in the young.

While some err by seeking to carry the pulpit into the parlour,

others go to a far more common and mischievous extreme. These leave the minister in the pulpit, and take only the gentleman into the parlour: and having been solemn and weighty in the former, they become so frivolous and frothy in the latter, that it is hard to realize that he who prayed so fervently and preached so eloquently, can be the same man whose "foolish jesting" now fills the room with boisterous merriment. I once heard a distinguished layman say of a somewhat noted preacher, "When he is in the pulpit, I wish he would never leave it, and when out, I wish he would never enter it." The reason he gave for this strange wish, was, "that he was so much of a preacher in the

pulpit, and so little of one out of it."

William Jay, in his life of Cornelius Winter, makes the following extract from one of his letters, to a young minister, "May you have wisdom to keep conversation from degenerating in the least degree. Connect piety with cheerfulness; but let not the former be driven out by the latter. Keep not all your religion for the pulpit; have it at heart and at hand; at dinner and at tea; and let every occurrence furnish you with a subject for spiritual improvement."

As to Mr. Winter's social habits, his biographer further states, that it was a fixed rule with him "never to write a letter without *aliquid*

*Christi* in it," and adds, "neither in his letters nor conversation were such reflections delivered quaintly, nor from a common place vocabulary, like those of some formal letters and writers, who have a number of sentences prepared for the occasion, artificially introduced, and used till they are worn out. His remarks grew out of present circumstances, they were the spontaneous expressions of the moment, the natural effusions of a thoughtful mind, and a feeling heart. He was perpetually lamenting the waste of time by interruptions, and the loss of it by inability to improve it as he would. Referring to an engagement with a person of quality, he observes in one of his letters—"It

gave me some little specimen of the attendance great people require, when they condescend to be friendly to a poor preacher, and I wish to know little of them, but with a design to do some little good by them. They make one spend more time to eat a dinner than seven of them are worth."

That the preacher's influence in social intercourse should be felt for good, let him duly consider the following pertinent remarks made by Mr. Jay in the biography already referred to. "There is something defective," he says, "especially in a minister, unless his character produces an atmosphere around him which is felt as soon as entered. It is not enough

for him to have courage to reprove certain things; he should have dignity enough to prevent them: and he will, if the Christian be commensurate with the preacher, and if he walk worthy of God who hath called us into his kingdom and glory."

One has quaintly but truthfully said, that "we must not only give an account for idle words, but for idle silence also." Conversational powers are a gift to be "earnestly coveted by the minister of the gospel." Much of his time must be passed in society, and many of his fairest opportunities for usefulness will then occur. Yet theological students rarely seem to think that this is one of the qualifications for

the ministry to be sought and improved in the Seminary. If every man cannot be agreeable and useful in society, he is at least bound not to be offensive in society. Dean Swift has said, "there are hundreds of men who might not only be agreeable, but really shine, who, on account of a few gross faults, which they might easily correct in half an hour, are, at present, not even tolerable. They pass through life not without usefulness, but are considered a nuisance wherever they go." Some from constitutional taciturnity—others from absence of mind—and others again from a want both of mind and heart, wrap themselves up, even in company, in a mantle of moody silence,

and seem to presume on being thought wise, only because they have nothing to say. Such ministers soon become a terror, especially to the young of their congregation. Some ministers are fitful—now a fit of moroseness seizes them, then of hilarity—now a fit of loquacity, then of silence. They claim from the people a great deal of indulgence, and yet far more than they deserve.

Upon all proper occasions, both in public and in private, the preacher must render it obvious that his range of thought, his knowledge, his piety, his social qualities, all conspire to fit him to be both agreeable and useful in every circle to which his duty may call him. He need not, he should

not seek to make a display of any thing he possesses. This would be odious. But on all proper occasions, and in every proper way, he must show himself able to lead—otherwise, he may rely upon it, the people will not follow.

I close this letter with a quotation from the Task of Cowper, which to some may seem too long, and to others too trite, but every line of which should not only be read, but studied by every student of theology in the land.

“Would I describe a preacher such as Paul,  
Were he on earth, would hear, approve and own ;  
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace  
His master strokes, and draw from his design,  
I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;  
In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,  
And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste,  
And natural in gesture, much impressed

Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,  
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds  
May feel it too ; affectionate in look  
And tender in address, as well becomes  
A messenger of grace to guilty men.  
Behold the picture ! Is it like ? Like whom ?  
The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,  
And then skip down again, pronounce a text,  
Cry—Hem , and reading what they never wrote,  
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,  
And with a well bred whisper close the scene.

In man or woman, but far most in man,  
And most of all in man that ministers  
And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe  
All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn ;  
Object of my implacable disgust.  
What, will a man play tricks, will he indulge  
A silly, fond conceit of his fair form,  
And just proportion, fashionable mien,  
And pretty face in presence of his God ?  
Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes  
As with the diamond on his lily hand,  
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes,  
When I am hungry for the bread of life ?  
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames  
His noble office, and, instead of truth,  
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock."

This is but a part. Read the whole attentively.—Cowper's Task, Book 2.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

### LETTER VI.

MY DEAR SON:—While in the Seminary, it is important for you to form just conceptions of the relations sustained by the different labourers, whom God has appointed to take part in enlightening and saving the world. The pastor is not only not required, but he is not permitted to do every thing. It is just as improper for him to encroach upon the province of others, as it is for them to encroach upon

him. The parent, the ruling elder, the deacon, the private member of the church, has his position and his work, as really, as divinely assigned to him, as the minister of the gospel. The orbits of each of these touch at many points, but should never come in conflict. Neither should ever seek to take the place of the other, still less should the work be expected to advance when any one of them is found standing all the day idle. It is impossible to determine with perfect accuracy where the responsibility of the one ceases, and that of the other begins. But this much is certain, that each must do his own work in its appropriate way, time, and place, or the hill of Zion will

become a fruitless waste. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him—and the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

This illustration the apostle applies expressly to the different labourers in the vineyard of the Lord. See 1st Corinthians, 12th chapter, with the excellent commentary of Dr. Hodge, recently published.

Should you like to enter the ministry, you will find yourself at once side by side with the ruling elder—an officer who, by divine appointment, stands but little lower than the preaching elder. From him you may expect your most ef-

ficient earthly hindrance or help. If he has been put into the eldership merely because there was no one else to fill this office—if he has never studied with due diligence either our Form of Government, Book of Discipline, or the Bible, with a view to learn his duty, you will find him ignorant, self-willed, and slothful to a degree that will threaten to crush your spirit. I have neither the time nor the heart to speak, as the sad truth would warrant, of the extent to which our young ministers suffer from this source. Inform yourself now fully as to the source, the nature, and the duties of this office, and should you commence your ministry where a church is already organized, let your

labours begin with the ruling elders. If they cannot be induced to fit themselves fully for their work, and to enter upon it vigorously, you had better abandon the field. Of what use would it be to spend one's time in training the private soldiers of an army for conflict with the enemy, when the officers who are to lead these soldiers into battle, know little or nothing of their duty, and are unwilling to put in practice the little they know? The poor disheartened young preacher is often reproached for doing so little good, and sometimes for leaving now one, and then another half tilled field ; when, if the truth were known, it would appear that the blame should not rest upon him, but upon the

ruling elders who are by far better informed about every thing they undertake, and prosecute with vastly more zeal their secular callings, than they do the work they have, "by covenant and by oath," engaged to do for God. I earnestly commend to you the thorough reading of Dr. Miller's work, and Rev. Mr. Ramsey's sermon on the eldership. Some one has said, "If the doctrine taught in Mr. Ramsey's sermon be sound, then we ought to have schools in which to train men for this office, as we now have Theological Seminaries for the training of ministers." This was the language of one who found fault with the sermon. Now I accept the consequence as fairly deducible

from the sermon, and maintain that if schools are not established for the purpose, there should be in every congregation some specific form of instruction framed and conducted, with a view to fit the young men of that congregation to fill vacancies in the session, or to enlarge it from time to time as necessity may demand. Should you be sent as a missionary, as I hope you may be, to some fresh field where no organized church exists, be not too hasty in seeking an organization. Commonly, ladies join the church more readily than our sex, and they are worth far more when they join. So it seems to have been ever since the conversion of Lydia, which took place at a female prayer

meeting, held on the river's side, through the instrumentality of that great missionary, the apostle Paul. I am far from advocating the appointment of females to office in the church, but as there were, in Paul's day, "women who laboured with him in the gospel," whom he so warmly commends in several of his Epistles, so there are now. And I advise that if your labours begin as I have supposed, rather than encumber yourself with unsuitable elders, keep that matter in reserve, availing yourself, mean time, of a committee of ladies. An admirable supply of such may be found almost any where.

Language cannot be plainer than that which makes it the duty of the

ruling elder to help in overseeing the flock—visiting from house to house, conversing and praying with them—warning the unruly, comforting the feeble minded. The pastor dispenses the truth on the Sabbath to the people in a body, then, through the week he, with the elders as his “help,” must by personal intercourse help each to understand and apply the lessons publicly taught. The stated congregational prayer meeting should be conducted ordinarily by the pastor, but as occasion may require by the elders. In addition to this, there should be several district prayer meetings, held, if you please, on the same day or evening in the respective districts

of the congregation, and always conducted by the elders.

The platform, as well as the pulpit, must be employed in the service of Christ; and this is, and should be, as open to the ruling as preaching elder. For instruction on this point I beg that you will refer to Dr. Hanna's life of Dr. Chalmers; vol. 2nd, appendix E. and F. In many of our churches ruling elders may be found, well fitted to occupy the platform at monthly concerts, on days of fasting and prayer, at the anniversaries of our various benevolent societies, in opposition to the making for gain, and the using as a luxury of all intoxicating liquors, in the support and defence of the cause of educa-

tion, and especially in our ecclesiastical courts. Here is the wide and inviting field to which the eye of the church should be steadily directed in the election of ruling elders; to which they too should look, and for which, to a greater or less extent, they should prepare. This subject will be resumed hereafter.

Next to the ruling elder, I notice the parent. The domestic constitution is of Divine appointment. Differing from the purely civil and the purely religious, it partakes of the nature of both. Here the church and the world meet, and here only can they rightfully meet.

I am now concerned with that feature in the family which is

sacred, and would ask, if this wonderful constitution was designed only, or chiefly for this world? Surely not. This is apparent in its very structure. God instituted it for a religious end. On this subject John Howe says, "If the most fundamental relation in a family, the conjugal relation, was appointed by God for a religious end, then certainly the family must be, in the design of its constitution, set up for that end. Did he not make one? said the Prophet. Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? 'That he might seek a godly seed.' He did not design the original constitution of that fundamental relation, only that there might be a continued descent of

human nature, but that religion might be transmitted from age to age, and this design he never quits."

Long before the time of Moses we read of family sacrifices, and the covenant which secures all our hopes embraces the family. So that the family is not only the fountain from which society emanates, but also a fountain which God created for the enlargement of his church. Here, in the family, members of the church and of the world must meet by divine appointment. With what sacredness does this thought invest the position of parents! Both worlds meeting, both must be kept in view, both by the parent and that parent's pastor.

The parental and pastoral relations to the young of the household, stand intimately related to each other and to their joint charge. These relations must not conflict. They may be readily made to harmonize, and were designed to do so, or they may so come into collision as to produce the saddest results. This much is certain—no pastor can expect to retain his flock for any length of time, who does not retain his hold on the young. The shepherd looks to his lambs for his future flock, and he who neglects these will soon have no flock to feed. And so it will be with any of Christ's under shepherds. Such attentions must be shown to the young as will secure

their confidence and engage their affections. But I cannot enlarge on this point—all I have time and space to say is, that preachers must know how to call pious parents to their help, and how to help them in making the family one of the divine institutions for the enlargement of Zion ; and to this the eye of the student must be turned, in the Seminary.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

#### LETTER VII.

MY DEAR SON :—I attempted to prove in my last, that the family was divinely instituted for the promotion of true religion. If this be so, every pious father and mother

must be a very important co-worker with the pastor. The church to which he ministers on the Sabbath is composed of all the separate churches belonging to each house, to which these parents minister all the week. What is taught by the one must be illustrated and confirmed by the other. As the pastor prays on the Sabbath, so must the parents each morning and evening of the entire week. The lessons he teaches in the pulpit must be repeated at the fire-side, and as they walk or ride by the way. They may greatly strengthen or weaken that pastor's hands, they may facilitate or retard his efforts for their children's good. "One reason I love Mr. — so much," said a very

small girl to her play-mate, "is that mother and father love him so much, and father prays for him every morning and night."

On the other hand the pastor may co-operate very efficiently with them. He must not look with indifference, much less with any measure of contempt, upon the children as beneath his notice. He must not, by stiffness or asperity of manner, render himself unattractive or repulsive to this precious portion of his charge. One of the easiest things in the world is, for the pastor to secure the confidence and love of the children of parents who act their part well both towards the pastor and the children.

But he must also learn to listen

with interest to what parents are inclined to say to him respecting their children. In his social intercourse, as well as in his public ministrations, he must instruct and admonish, he must soothe and encourage them in regard to their duties and trials. He must take a deep interest in the cause of education. He must seek by every prudent means in his power to awaken just sentiments on this subject on all over whom he has or may acquire influence. It has ever been the glory of Presbyterianism to found and to sustain the school, as the handmaid to the church.

The minister may do much to elevate the profession of the teacher to that degree of respectability and

usefulness, which it justly claims. To this end, he should converse freely on the subject with young and old, rich and poor. State facts, search out the young, encourage them to seek this profession, and afford them all possible assistance in preparing for it. Never rest until public sentiment is so enlightened, so changed on this subject, that it shall rank as one of the learned professions.

The schools being established, must be visited and addressed by the pastor. To do this successfully, he must acquaint himself with the best school books, the best method of instruction, and the best system of discipline. Thus furnished, he may counsel and greatly assist es-

pecially the young teacher. Thus, too, he may form the acquaintance of the young of his charge, secure their confidence, and win their love.

In thus co-operating with parents, he will also find it of the utmost consequence, to give due attention to the Sabbath-school. This school is not a substitute, but a help to parental instruction. The pastor, the ruling elder, the parent, must all co-operate with the superintendent and teacher, that this work may be properly performed. And of such consequence is the wise and efficient agency of the pastor in this work, that few men are found fitted for it unless they make it a subject of study, and unless they be-

comeskilful Sabbath-school teachers, while in the Seminary.

A chief excellence of this department of effort is, that it affords scope to every office bearer in the church, and to every private member, to labour for Christ. Where its claims are duly considered, the whole church must awake. "The greatness of Dr. Chalmers," says his biographer, "consisted quite as much in his skill in leading others to labour, as in labouring himself." As an illustration of this remark, see *Life of Chalmers* by Dr. Hanna, vol. 2nd, pages 130-137. You will there find the following statements—"Until Dr. Chalmers came to Glasgow, parochial Christian influence was a mere name. It was not

systematic, it was not understood. There was not the machinery for the moral elevation of a town population. The people were let alone. Some of the elders of the Tron church were excellent men. But their chief duty was to stand at the plate, receive the free will offerings of the congregation as they entered, and distribute them to the poor by a monthly allowance. Their spiritual duties and exertions were but small, and almost exclusively confined to a few of the sick. Dr. Chalmers began by interesting a noble band of co-labourers in the Sabbath-school cause; and within the space of two years, from only one general school of 100 scholars, he succeeded in increasing the number of district

schools to 40, and that of the pupils to 1200. On his removal from the Tron church, to St. Johns, he found there one general school of 128 children. Here also, adopting the district, in place of the general school, within six months 26 schools were opened, taught by 33 teachers and embracing 732 pupils. These schools continue to the present day, and there have flowed from this small, local Sabbath-school society, eight other societies in different parts of the city and suburbs, all fairly traceable to the impetus given in the Tron church by Dr. Chalmers in this branch of parochial economy. Had he done nothing more than promote the principle of

this local system of Sabbath-schools, he would not have lived in vain."

As an additional illustration of what well directed personal effort may accomplish, I refer you to the same biography, vol. 4, page 385-408. There you will find an account of his celebrated "West Port" enterprise. Do not fail to read it. I cannot forbear sending you the following extract from the conclusion of one of Dr. Chalmers' Sabbath school sermons. He says, "An unction of blessedness may emanate abroad upon every neighbourhood in which these schools are situated—that they occupy a high point of command over the moral destinies of our city, for the susceptibilities of childhood and of youth are what

they have to deal with. It is a tender and flexible plant to which they aim at giving a direction. It is a conscience at the most impressible stage of its history which they attempt to touch, and on which they labour to engrave the lessons of conduct and of principle. And I doubt not that, when we are mouldering in our coffins, when the present race of men have disappeared and made room for another succession of the species, when parents of every cast and of every character have sunk into oblivion and sleep together in quietness, the teachers of these schools will leave behind them a surviving memorial of their labour, in a large portion of that worth and

piety which shall adorn the citizens of a future generation."

The kind of effort indicated above is essential to the well being of the church of God on earth. The christian character can only be developed by proper diet and exercise. What food is to the body, that God's truth is to the soul. That truth must dwell richly in the heart, but it must also shine brightly in the life. The professions made, and the obligations assumed by all who join the church of Christ, bind them to a life of active effort for the good of others. The children of this world are wiser than the children of light. That servant of Christ, so honoured of men, and so blessed of God, Dr. B. H. Rice,

said to me, as I left his house to enter upon my labours as a Domestic Missionary, "You must remember that ministerial influence does not descend but it ascends. By this I mean, you cannot reach the poor through the rich, half so successfully as you can the rich through the poor." This wise remark admits of a variety of illustrations. The builder on Christ's spiritual temple must do as other builders do. He must begin low—begin by the preparation of materials, piece by piece—small and great—rough and smooth. Then, commencing with the foundation, build upward. What the good doctor said of the rich and poor, is equally true of parents and chil-

dren. You can reach the former through the latter far more readily, and influence them far more effectually, than you can the latter through the former.

Seek not to reap where others have sown. The fresher the field the better, the more abundant the materials, the more readily may your footprints be seen. Only love the work for the work's sake. Only seek to be happy by seeking the path of duty; and then the more arduous your labours, the more exquisite your happiness.

Let the church at large see that you can do something—that you can succeed in one kind of labour if not in another. If you cannot preach great sermons, possibly you

can circulate great books. If you cannot elicit the admiration of the learned, then through God's Spirit, save the soul of the ignorant.

Two men I have known of blessed memory—long since taken to heaven, pastors of obscure congregations, but greatly useful, who were distinguished chiefly—the one, for his success in distributing good books, and the other for his zeal and success in the cause of Sabbath-schools.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

LETTERS TO

G. W. W.,

A

PROBATIONER FOR THE MINISTRY.

103

## LETTERS TO A PROBATIONER.

---

### LETTER I.

MY DEAR SON,—You have left the Seminary, and by Presbyterial authority, are now before the church as a probationer for the full work of the ministry. The transition through which you have passed, like every other movement in life, is attended with more or less pain, and fraught with more or less danger. It is indeed painful to pass from the intercourse enjoyed in the Seminary, to that which is

encountered in the world. The unanimity of sentiment and cordiality of feeling, the sympathy and the assistance enjoyed in the former, are almost wholly unknown in the latter.

The danger is often greater than the pain. When one passes from the comparative obscurity and retirement of Seminary life, to so conspicuous a position as that held by the preacher; when he first finds himself no longer among his peers, nor under the oversight of his superiors—now looked upon as a guide to others—listened to, consulted, honoured by those who are older, and who, on many subjects, are far wiser than himself, there is extreme danger of the

rising of a proud and vain-glorious spirit. Or, when the feeling of loneliness, incident to the change he has made, is experienced, and when the indifference of a cold and lifeless church combines, as it often does, with the opposition of an ungodly world to throw obstructions in his way, he is equally exposed to the rising of a timid and despondent spirit.

With the affection and fidelity of a father, who rejoices before God that He has made you a preacher of the precious Gospel, I adopt this method of saying a few things, in a very plain way, to guard you against self-conceit on the one hand, and despondency on the other.

Then, first of all, let me urge

you often to "examine yourself whether you be in the faith." Store your memory, more and more, with what the Scriptures teach of man's original and total depravity, and of God's method graciously devised, and mercifully executed, for his redemption. Let not anxious concern for yourself as a sinner saved by grace, be forgotten or neglected in your anxiety for the spiritual good of others. In addition to the word of God, read the best works on practical divinity. Make Baxter, and Bunyan, and Flavel, and Doddridge your constant companions. Dr. John H. Rice once told me that he had read Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, from beginning to end, more than twenty

times. With such books connect the singing of God's praise as in the well known language of our 87th Hymn,

“Grace first contrived the way  
To save rebellious man.”

If you are called to preach the gospel, it is not only true, that

“Grace first inscribed your name  
In God's eternal book.”

but it is equally of grace that you now preach to others. “By the grace of God, I am what I am.” Such a consideration is well fitted to encourage while it humbles us.

You should often review the grounds on which you resolved to consecrate yourself to the ministry.

Be not afraid to discover, confess, and renounce all impurity of motive

found mingling in the purpose you have formed. There can neither be success nor comfort without purity of motive, and singleness of aim. The love of Christ must constrain. The desire to glorify God and do good must control in the efforts made, in the field of labour chosen, the sermons preached, and the visits paid. Just so far as self-seeking, the desire for popular applause, or any other earthly consideration, is permitted to determine your movements, just so far may you expect to fail in all the great ends of the ministry.

Sad mistakes are often committed at the beginning of one's course, in the selection of a field of labour. Young ministers often err in giving

the preference to an organized church, however old, crazy, and barren, to a fresh and untilled missionary field. They pay, by far, too little respect to the wishes of their Presbytery, and even to their authority, however justly and explicitly asserted. They hunt for places, instead of assuming that easily attainable position in which places will hunt for them. The word "call" has magic power in their ears—and by this they do not mean a call from God to work where work is most demanded—and where it is most likely that encroachments may be made on the dominions of the prince of darkness, but an invitation to take the pastoral oversight of some church where the

emolument and the honour will be the greatest. They too often forget that the man makes the place, and not the place, the man.

There is a kind of clerical coquetry practised chiefly, but not exclusively, by young preachers, which every right minded man abhors, and which God, sooner or later, always punishes. Vacant churches are visited, and inducements held out to make the visitor a call, when little or no expectation is entertained of accepting it if made. Sometimes a ruling elder in some vacant church writes a letter to one who is already a pastor or stated supply, expressing merely his own desire and that of a few others, that the minister would abandon the field he

has in charge, and come to them. This letter is shown, and talked of; until by insensible degrees it becomes dignified with the title of a call, and in all probability finds its way into the newspapers.

Now, look above the churches. Look to God; ask with an humble, honest, earnest heart, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—and the place will be indicated in a way perhaps you cannot explain; and when thus indicated, enter into it with a cheerful and resolved spirit, labouring as if you fully expected there to live and there to die.

The young preacher often takes a position from which he expects soon to emigrate. This expectation withers his hopes, and paralyzes his exer-

tions. He accordingly expends more time in lamenting the barrenness of his field, and in devising ways and means to find another, than would be needful to render him both useful and happy where he now is. I fear it will be found in the last day, that Jonah has had as long a line of successors as Paul. He who, being called to Nineveh, goes to Tarshish, does it at his peril. He may well expect the Lord to send out a great wind upon the sea, so that there shall be a great tempest, which shall threaten his ship with destruction.

I am far from thinking that our vacant churches are to be neglected, and that every licentiate must be a missionary. I only indicate my

view of what should be the general rule, and what, other things being equal, the young man should prefer. Let the call of God made known by the leadings of Providence, and studied with humble prayer, determine. Nor do I think that the minister should never move. I believe it often happens that a man remains far too long in the same place. It is just as wrong to remain when God calls you away, as it is to go when he bids you remain. What I insist on, is that he shall not be a man, "given to change"—that he shall not be like one in a fever who seeks relief from pain by a change of position—but that he shall pray and labour wherever he is, as though he neither

sought nor expected any easier or more honourable position.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

## LETTER II.

MY DEAR SON,—My last letter may lead you to ask, what are the considerations which should induce a preacher to abandon one field for another. It is no easy matter to answer this question. If I should say a man should remove whenever his usefulness ceases, I might be told that it is difficult, and sometimes impossible to determine with accuracy, when that result has occurred. “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” and

it often happens that far more is really accomplished than meets the eye. For wise and good reasons God may not permit his servants to see the results of their efforts. It is sometimes the purpose of infinite wisdom that one should sow and another reap. But still this question may ordinarily be determined with no little accuracy, and the following considerations may help in doing so.

The church is the body of which Christ is the head. This body has many members. Among all these, from the minister to the humblest members, there exist relations from which obligations arise, both relative and mutual. The result aimed at is to be attained by the

joint efforts of all. Our stations in the church are different, but our work is substantially the same. "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive the reward of his own labour. For we are workers together with God." And, "neither is he that planteth any thing nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." The Apostle Paul speaks of the private members of the church as his "fellow labourers," and even sends greeting to "certain women who laboured with him in the gospel."

All cannot, nor should they if they could, be preachers. Nor can all hold even a subordinate office in the church. Nor can all be rich,

or learned, or very influential. But all can labour for Christ. All may be his followers, his servants. All may be like the poor woman who "did what she could" in anointing Christ for his burial. And she did far more than he who censured her as wasteful. The two humble Marys who were "last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre," did more to honour Christ at this particular juncture, than the eleven apostles "who forsook him and fled." It has been pertinently asked, "Who makes the garment? The spinner, the weaver, or the tailor?" A far more important question than this is, Who, under God, converted Timothy? Was it his grandmother or his mother, from whom, we are

told, he learned the Scriptures in his childhood? Or was it the apostle Paul upon whose ministry he attended when he became a man?

With these obvious considerations in view, it is safe to say, than when a minister of the gospel has done what he could to secure that sort and measure of co-operation on the part of ruling elders, deacons, and members, which the Scriptures obviously demand, and fails to do so, he is at liberty to accept a call to some other field, provided that call has not been improperly sought nor given. Time and space utterly forbid any minuteness of specification here as to the nature and amount of work to be performed

by the several detachments in "the sacramental host of God's elect." As to this, all needful knowledge may be readily derived from the word of God. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." This evidently means, let each in his place do all that he can to strengthen the hands and to cheer the heart of him who "labours in the word and doctrine." And if this be not done, the work will cease.

The loss of a finger, and even of a finger nail, may very seriously detract from the strength and efficiency of the human body. So the Church, the body of Christ, may be sadly hindered in its great

work of converting the world to Christ, by the failure of the humblest and weakest member to keep his place, and to do his or her appropriate part of the work. The man who merely oils the machinery of a locomotive is as needful to the rapid and safe progress of the cars, as is the conductor or the engineer.

Pastoral duty presupposes pastoral support. This is a subject very imperfectly understood, mainly because it is not duly considered either by the pastor or the people. It is revealed and enforced in the Scriptures with great distinctness. Here we have line upon line, and precept upon precept. It is very explicitly taught in Galatians vi. 6,

and in 1 Cor. ix. 11-13, and Phil. iv. 15. But the people are too avaricious, and the minister too modest or too timid to read or to say much on the subject. It is confessed that the minister undertakes the discussion of it under many disadvantages. He is an interested party. Strong prejudice must be encountered. Much ignorance and many mistakes must be removed and corrected. Many regard the life of a minister as one of idleness. They know of no other labour, but that of the hands or feet. They are not aware that the hardest, the most exhausting toil known to man is that of the mind. The body is ordinarily invigorated by manual, but often enfeebled and destroyed

by mental labour. And then multitudes regard the salary paid, not as compensation for an equivalent received, but as mere charity—a crust thrown to the hungry to ward off starvation. Hence, one who is raised above actual want must preach for nothing, and live upon his private resources. One of the strongest and most intelligent congregations in the Synod of Virginia lost a pastor who was so poor as to be wholly dependent on his salary for the maintenance of his family, and whom they had supported with ease to themselves and comfort to him. They secured a successor whose pecuniary circumstances were comfortable. This people loved their second pastor quite as well as

they did the first. They conceded that in all respects he was his equal, and in some, his superior ; and yet they curtailed the salary greatly, and pleaded as an excuse for doing so, that he was almost as well to do in the world, as some of the richest of them were." On inquiry, I learned, that his people made no such plea, in reference to their physician, or lawyer, or mechanic. No one expected the services of any of these to be rendered free of charge, on the condition that they possessed an ample patrimony. This sort of service they only look for from those who minister, not to the body, but the soul.

Now the pastor must give the people no occasion to suppose that

he is mean spirited or parsimonious ; that he seeks the fleece and not the flock. He must be known and read of all men as one of liberal views and generous spirit. He must so preach, pray, and visit as to make himself necessary to the people. He is to be fully and comfortably supported or not, just in so far as he gives himself wholly or in part to the work of the ministry. If only one half of his time and attention is given to this work, then he can only claim one half of his support. If only a third, then only a third of a support. And if his service consists only of one unstudied sermon a week, then he can justly claim no support. This rule is simple and just.

But with this rule in view, let the people be plainly told that God has unalterably decreed, that "they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel;" that the pastor comes to them as Christ's ambassador, and that He in whose name he comes, claims as his right the adequate support of him he sends. This is as really Christ's portion of their money, as the Sabbath is his portion of their time; and he who withholds the one is no less guilty than he who withholds the other.

The pastor who fails thus to teach fails to "declare the whole counsel of God." He keeps back that "which is profitable unto them." Let such a preacher duly consider that fearful passage in the close of

the Bible: "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

And let the people who withhold from the faithful pastor what God demands for his support—let them know that the Saviour has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And if it be a sin to rob man, it is far more sinful to rob God. He robs his fellow who wilfully withholds from him his due; and he robs his Maker who refuses cheerfully to render what he claims.

This subject will be resumed in my next.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

### LETTER III.

MY DEAR SON,—A minister of the gospel should not abandon a church for the want of an adequate support, until he has faithfully instructed them, as I intimated in my last, as to what God plainly requires of them in his word. And then he must tell them plainly that an adequate support is such provision as enables him to labour without the embarrassment occasioned by efforts to support himself; and such as will raise him above meanness in

his style of living, and such as preserves him from becoming an object of pity. The moment a people begin to say of their minister, "Poor Mr.—what a hard time he has! How sorry it makes me to think of his scanty table, and threadbare clothing!"—that moment his usefulness is diminished or ceases altogether.

To avoid such a result, the people should be urged to consider the time, the toil, the expense bestowed by the well qualified minister, to fit himself for his work. They rightfully demand the highest qualifications in him who ministers to them in holy things. No people of ordinary intelligence would be content with a pastor who had not

secured the education demanded by the Presbytery. Now in order to do this, he must renounce the secular calling in which he is engaged when he determines to prepare for the ministry. He must also resolve to look to no such calling in the future. He must at once enter upon an expenditure of at least \$300 per annum, for an average period of seven years. Indeed it is safe to estimate the gross amount expended by every young man in becoming a Presbyterian minister at something like \$2500. This is his outlay. Hence a very large proportion of our probationers leave the Seminary not only penniless but in debt. I knew a young man to commence preach-

ing just in this condition, who, had he not consecrated himself to the ministry, but held to the profession from which he went to the Seminary, would almost certainly have been a man of great wealth by the time he was ready to go forth as a penniless probationer.

The people should also be faithfully instructed as to the nature and extent of the service demanded of the preacher. He must preach, prepared or unprepared—whether the season be hot or cold, wet or dry, and often, whether he be sick or well. This he must do, at least 200 times in the year, and often more frequently than this. He must visit the whole congregation occasionally, and the sick, the

afflicted, and the anxious frequently. He must know of the sickness or affliction as best he can, although he is under no more obligation to go without being sent for, than is the physician. He must maintain an extensive correspondence; aid in supplying teachers with schools, and schools with teachers, churches with pastors, and pastors with churches. He must be visited, and it is his joy to be so, by every body, and at all times when occasion calls for it. Suppose the pecuniary value of these services were estimated according to the rates charged by doctors, lawyers, and others; the result would be astonishing. I know a very wealthy man with a large family who pays \$15 pew rent.

One year that family had the opportunity of hearing 150 sermons and lectures, and as they were much afflicted with sickness, received during the year over forty visits. Just think of the large amount of service with the pittance of compensation. Could they have heard as many lectures on any other subject, and received as many visits for medical or legal service for five times the sum? To pay a servant to prepare their food, or wait at their table, would have cost them a far larger sum.

People are willing to pay for other things according to their intrinsic value. This is right. But it surely is not right to make the precious gospel an exception to

this just rule. One is sometimes strongly tempted to think, that all other claims are more promptly met than those of the gospel, because others can bring suit and this cannot. "Did your people pay your late excellent pastor all they owed him before his removal?" I once asked of a ruling elder—"Oh no!" was the reply, "we still owe him \$500." I said to him, "You intend to pay him that balance before you seek a successor, do you not?" "Well," replied the rich old elder, "I s'pose we ought. But as times are very hard, and as Mr. —— is a mighty good man, he won't press us much for it. I'm sure he will be satisfied if we pay him what we can—and you know we can't do

without preaching. So, I would be mightly obliged to you, if you would try and get us a preacher." "Not I," was my answer, "if I knew of a dozen, I would not recommend one of them to you, until you had paid, to the uttermost farthing, what is now justly due to your former pastor, who, I know, is at this moment, suffering for what you owe him."

This is a very literal account of that interview. Oh, there is a heaven-provoking meanness on this subject, which must grieve the Holy Spirit, and which must be prominent among the causes of the present low and languishing state of Zion.

The minister himself is some-

times to blame. He is so when he fails to declare the whole counsel of God on this subject; and when he panders to the avarice of the people by being afraid to say anything about money in the pulpit. Some preachers are almost as much afraid of being called money-preachers, as they would be of being called Beelzebub. Say what the Bible says about it, and let the people call you what they will. Again—they are to be blamed for yielding the moment the pinch is felt, and betaking themselves to some secular calling too soon. The moment they do this, the avaricious church cries, “So would we have it.” And the more the man does for himself, the less he does for them, and the less

they do for him. They rob him of his living, and he robs them of their food; and they will starve together. They starve his body, and he starves their souls.

There is a passage in the book of Proverbs not sufficiently considered. It may be found in the 22nd chapter and 16th verse, and is as follows: "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." Ministers often sin against the latter clause of this verse. They "give to the rich," and this is here placed in the same category with "oppressing the poor to increase one's riches." It sometimes happens that the pastor of a large and wealthy church, pays

treble as much pew rent as the richest member. I have known one whose pew rent cost him at least \$200.00 per annum. By this I mean, that although he gave himself wholly and efficiently to the ministry, and although he lived as economically as common decency permitted, yet he was compelled to draw on his private resources to the amount stated, in order to supply the wants of his family.

A large and rich church once applied to the Presbytery to permit them to reduce the pastor's salary from \$700 to 550. The pastor was poor, and had an expensive family. He was a man justly and highly esteemed for his talents, his piety, and fidelity. He was greatly be-

loved by his people, yet they had succeeded in securing his approval of this novel proposition. It was conceded on all hands, that neither sum would be adequate to his support—and that there were 150 members able to assist in sustaining him—some of whom were very wealthy. Now this memorial may be paraphrased thus—“ We respectfully ask of this reverend body, that they will require of our beloved pastor, to contribute of his own substance \$150 per annum, for the support of the gospel in our congregation ; for if this is not done, then must one hundred and fifty of our number be compelled to add one dollar each to what is now subscribed in order to keep the salary

at its present rate." And the most surprising part of the whole business was, that the petition was granted, and the good pastor taxed, and the good people relieved accordingly. Now, never let a congregation treat you thus. It is giving to the rich. It is pandering to avarice. Deny yourself to the very uttermost. Live, as I know many of our dear brethren do, on the plainest food, and in the meanest houses, for the sake of a poor, a generous, a working, and a praying people. But never, no never, disgrace the ministry by permitting the rich and the avaricious to enjoy the blessings of the gospel ministry, when they will not give to that ministry an adequate support.

When the people have obviously given to the extent of their ability, and when they practise as much self-denial as you do—when they pray and labour as diligently in their sphere, as you do in yours, and yet cannot give you an adequate support; then, rather than leave them, resort to some other—always a kindred calling—to enable you to remain among them. A Christian school, so conducted as to become “an every day congregation,” is not only allowable, but may be rendered eminently auxiliary to your great work as pastor. But, never forget, that in every thing, you are to be the pattern and the guide of those to whom you minister.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

## LETTER IV.

MY DEAR SON:—The extent to which the pen and the press may be made to combine with the pulpit, in spreading the gospel through the earth, deserves early and earnest consideration. It is not my purpose to discuss at any length the propriety of using manuscript in the pulpit. Almost every thing depends upon the manner in which this is done. If the preacher read so closely that his eye cannot pass freely and almost constantly over the audience, and if his manner be that of the reader, and not of the speaker, he is not likely to be successful in so preaching that many shall believe. He may acquire the

reputation of a good writer and good reader, but a successful preacher he cannot be. Extremes here, as every where, should be avoided. I think it was Dr. Chalmers who said, "I write that I may learn to extemporize, and I extemporize, that I may learn to write." The most censurable method of all, is speaking *memoriter*, and ordinarily the best, is writing and taking into the pulpit from one fourth to one third of what one expects to utter, having thoroughly digested the whole subject. This method enables one to be free, and yet guards against incoherence and rashness. Preaching is making known the truth of God *viva voce*. The pen and the press are only other means of accomplish-

ing the same end. God acknowledges and blesses his own truth, whether preached or printed. The former, it is conceded, is most important, "for after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Both methods, however, have the divine sanction, and neither can be neglected without guilt. But they should be kept in their respective positions. Neither should be permitted to encroach upon or supplant the other.

A sermon fully written and closely read, can hardly be called preaching.

This reminds me of what I regard as a serious evil. I refer to

the extent to which sermons are printed, and written to be printed. This practice leads to a false standard as to the method, style, and matter. A sermon fitted to be read differs materially from one fitted to be heard. The circumstances and condition of the hearer are widely different from those of the reader. What helps the one, hinders the other. And hence we may conclude, that they must be reached and influenced by a different process. The eye, the voice, the attitude, all combine with the truth uttered, and not only add to its clearness but also increase its power. It is silly to say that it matters but little how the truth is communicated, provided it be the truth.

You might as well say, it matters but little whether a given piece of music is played upon a jews-harp, or a violin.

But what I wished to say is, that writing sermons to be printed has tended to weaken the power of the pulpit, on account of the inherent difference between the truth read and the truth heard. Are sermons as effective as they once were? They may be more eloquent, or at least, more rhetorical. They may even be more instructive, but are they not by far less impressive? Do they wake the conscience and stir the emotions as they once did? I think not, and at least one of the causes of this difference is found in the fact, that sermons now

are prepared with so much regard to the press. Being thus prepared, they are less simple, less colloquial and direct. A sermon intended, either now or hereafter, for the press will be prepared with less reference to the time of its delivery, and the people to whom it is addressed, than to a future time, and a distant people. In this the preacher resembles the Congressman, who speaks with less reference to the immediate impression to be made, than to the influence he hopes to exert on his distant constituents.

Still, the minister must write, and write for the press. How could the church and the world dispense with the writings of the great and good

of bye-gone generations? What a flood of light still falls upon our earth from those who, through the press, "though dead yet speak!" But let him write and publish letters, essays, books, rather than sermons.

I turn for a moment to a different subject, but one which nearly concerns your success and comfort. I refer to the spirit cherished, and the conduct pursued towards your brethren in the ministry. It is to be feared that the tie which binds the heralds of the cross together is neither so tender nor so bright as it once was. Preachers of the same gospel are more than brethren. They are fellow-labourers in the most sacred cause. Chords of sympathy pass

from heart to heart, which should not easily be broken. It is said that no friendships among men are purer and stronger, than those which exist among companions in exile. Brethren in the ministry are companions in exile, in the best sense. What are they but fellow-pilgrims toiling together along the same weary way—opposed by the same enemies, seeking the same blessed end, under the guidance of the same great Prince of Peace? One chart guides the footsteps, one kind voice cheers the hearts, and one banner waves perpetually in the view of all.

Then sympathize they ought, and sympathize they will, if they are animated by the spirit of their Master.

If it be obligatory on private Christians to bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ, much more is it obligatory on the heralds of the cross. The strongest, purest motives urge to this. They are identified with the cause of Christ. It is impossible to detract from the character, or in any way, to lessen the influence of the servant, without hindering that servant's work. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

We sometimes speak complainingly of the disesteem in which ministers are held by the people—of their fastidiousness in censuring,

their avarice in withholding from them an adequate support. In these things the people are often at fault. But may not this result, in part, from the low esteem in which ministers hold each other? Are they not often too ready to speak disparagingly of one another? Little defects of manner and inferiority of talents, are noted and spoken of even in the presence of a carping world. A minister of fair standing with his Presbytery cannot be asked to preach, because some would not like to hear him. The sacredness of the ministerial profession calls for the greatest purity of character, and where this is wanting, no pains should be spared to reform or remove from office the offender.

They should be clean who bear the vessels of the sanctuary ; and sympathy for the man should never be permitted to supplant fidelity to the office.

Ministerial meetings of contiguous pastors, held for mutual conference and prayer, are productive of great good. They burnish and strengthen the chain of sympathy and affection, as no meetings of Presbytery or Synod can do. Such meetings were more common in days gone-by, than they now are ; and to their disuse may be ascribed, in part, the present low state of piety in our churches.

Nearly allied to this, is the importance of adopting wise measures for the promotion of a fraternal

spirit among the people. What gravity is in nature, that love is in the church of Christ. It keeps each individual in his appropriate orbit, and secures regularity and efficiency in the movements of the whole system. But this lovely spirit has been tarnished—weakened by the fall, so that it exists even among good people to a very limited extent. Here, as in the solar system, are two forces operating in opposite directions, one drawing the members of Christ's body together, by drawing them towards the Sun of righteousness, the other driving them apart by driving them from that Sun.

Here the pastor needs wisdom from above. He must seldom, if

ever, listen to the language of detraction. In no case must he become a partizan in feuds among his people. He may sometimes act as the confidential adviser of both parties with the consent of both. But let him never listen, no, not for one moment, to ill-natured or uncharitable gossip. Let him send the offended to the offending brother, that according to the rule of Christ, he may tell him his fault alone.

In regard to offences which require the notice of the pastor or session, our form of government warns us against a resort to citation and trial, until all other means of removing the offence have failed. This warning is of immense value. By watchfulness in the pastor, by

a prompt resort to a private, unofficial, kind interview with the offending party, in nine cases out of ten, any further step may be rendered needless. The practice which obtains in many churches, of appointing one or more members of session as a committee to wait upon the erring member and report the result, is often mischievous. Such a step becomes, of course, a matter of sessional record, and this, of itself, is often sufficient to aggravate the disease it was designed to cure.

Two members of one of our churches, both men of great influence, became personally hostile to each other, and spoke and acted in a very unchristian manner. The offence was serious, and threatened

to create a storm which might shake the church to its foundations. The pastor thought and prayed, but said nothing to the session—nothing to any one. At length he addressed to each of the individuals a note, of which the following is an exact copy :

“ Dear Sir,—The relations existing between us, impel me to ask, in all kindness, for an interview either in your office or my study, as you may prefer. This communication is not official, but fraternal and confidential. My sole object is to prevent evil and do good. In other words, to see if certain matters affecting your personal character and comfort, and the welfare of the church of which you are a member,

and I, the pastor, may not be adjusted privately, amicably, and usefully to all concerned. Should you prefer to bring a friend with you, do so. Make your own selection."

The meeting was held in the pastor's study, and the result was most happy. The sound of distant thunder was hushed. The gathering cloud was scattered, and an immense amount of evil prevented. "An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure."

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

## LETTER V.

MY DEAR SON:—I had not time

nor space to finish in my last, all I desired to say on the subject of the proper administration of discipline. This is essential to the purity and growth of the church. But in this, as well as in every thing else, connected with the kingdom of Christ on earth, the wisdom of the serpent must be blended with the harmlessness of the dove. Both in the session and the Presbytery, the effort should be to prevent rather than to remedy the evils which discipline is designed to remove. A low tone of piety, the result of defective preaching on the part of the pastor, and of instability and worldliness on that of the members, will create an atmosphere under the influence of which, cases of disorder calling

loudly for discipline will spring up and grow as noxious weeds in a rich but neglected soil. And under such an atmosphere, the wise and effective administration of discipline becomes almost impracticable. It is from churches of the kind just described, that complaints and appeals come to our Presbyteries and Synods. It is from such that calls come to the higher courts for the healing of some old chronic malady, that by proper measures on the part of the pastor or session, might have been nipped in the bud. The knife, coldly applied to a cold church, is not likely to increase, but rather diminish its spiritual heat. You cannot restore a dead body to life by amputating its limbs. You must

reach its heart, the seat of life. If no heat can be created there, the case is hopeless. You had better bury than dissect such a body.

The session that is duly considerate of its diversified and solemn obligations, will find a pressing demand for a stated meeting at least once a month, besides other occasional meetings. At these stated meetings, full inquiry will, of course, be made by the pastor, of every ruling elder, as to the state of things in the different districts into which every congregation should be divided. Cases of sickness, of affliction, of backsliding, of neglected duty, of religious anxiety, will be reported as demanding consideration. To give due consideration to

interests so various and important will demand much time, much conference, and much prayer. At such times much may be done—more than any one would suppose who has not adopted this plan—to fan the flame of a rising piety and to check in its commencement the springing of disorder. In this way the influence of the session for good is constantly felt. Instead of waiting until some irregularity has become so public, and so serious, as to call for citation, the tabling of charges, and the summoning of witnesses, the erring member is first seen privately—then, if the evil be not remedied, he is requested to meet the session for mutual conference and prayer. When these pre-

liminary steps are taken, it will often be found needless to proceed any further.

Ruling elders are the pastor's privy counsellors. And when they are well fitted for their sacred and responsible office—when they meet their responsibilities with tolerable fidelity, their worth to the pastor cannot be told. But after all, they are not ministers. The promise, "Lo, I am with you always," was not made to them. It is a precious truth, that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" and a truth embodying a promise which all who believe in Christ have an equal right to plead. But it seems obvious that there is a sense in which God "guides in judgment,"

those whom he calls into the ministry, as he does not guide others ; so that few things are more important or more difficult than for a minister to determine, when to ask advice of his privy council, and when not. I mean, of course, in reference to matters not distinctly assigned to the session as an ecclesiastical court. In reference to every thing belonging to the session as a body, he has not even a vote except in case of a tie. Then, as moderator, he is entitled to give the casting vote. On this point I merely wish to guard you against too great freedom in looking to others. As to the indiscriminate manner in which some young ministers ask advice of ruling elders, private members—including

the ladies, both young and old, married and single—it is quite sufficient to remark, that such men, if they have influence, soon lose it, and if they have not, they never get it. What intelligent people can respect a man who has undertaken to lead the flock, and who perpetually waits for the flock to lead him? He should return to the Seminary.

But there is an opposite extreme, less amiable than this, and frequently far more mischievous. It is that of him, who, from self-conceit or obstinacy, refuses to ask advice at the right time and in the right way, and who from the same bad spirit refuses to abide by it when respectfully and reasonably given.

The one errs through imbecility, and the other through mulishness.

The most sincere and conscientious young minister will be anxious to know how his people estimate him. This anxiety may result from a good motive, but it may result from a very bad one. Occasionally it springs from a conviction that "without reputation he can neither get good, nor do good." A few young men need commendation as a safeguard against despondency. An intelligent gentleman, from a neighbouring congregation, called to-day, at my study. Upon my asking him how his young preacher was succeeding, after expressing a very favourable opinion of his worth both as a man and a minister, he

added this very remarkable expression—"My chief objection to him is, that he has too poor an opinion of himself." I do not remember to have heard that said, more than two or three times before, in all my life.

I greatly fear that the anxiety referred to, often arises from a censurable fondness for mere popular applause. Some betray this worse than childish vanity, by alluding to their own preaching with the evident design to elicit a favourable opinion. This is made evident by the manner in which it is done, and by the description of persons before whom it is done. I have known a few in my life, whose boldness and vanity were

sufficient to enable them to put the question in all its naked deformity, "How did I preach to-day?"

Dr. Conrad Speece once told me, that he was cured of this, very early in his ministry, in this way. As he rode from church in company with a plain but sensible ruling elder, after preaching a sermon which he thought very good for a beginner, he became very anxious to learn how it was regarded by the elder; and to this end, he made a variety of remarks, well fitted, as he supposed, to draw forth his views. But the old elder continued doggedly silent. At length he put the question directly, "What did you think of my sermon to-day?" To which he replied, "Well, Mr.

Speece, if I must tell you, I think that if I could preach as well as you did to-day, I could preach a great deal better."

The truth is, there are many ways in which one soon learns quite as much as it is safe for him to know of the esteem or disesteem in which he is held, without proclaiming his folly in the way now under consideration. One who really loves his work for its own sake, who preaches the gospel to glorify God in the salvation of sinners, will not, and need not ask, How am I esteemed? but the burden of his cry will be, Am I really preaching the gospel as my Master expects me to preach it? Am I doing good? Is the cause of Christ

reviving—the church advancing under my poor ministry? There is no great difficulty in answering these questions. And when they can be answered affirmatively, he is more than contented, he is happy. And what may be thought of his sermons or his manners, becomes a matter of small consequence.

But all the blame in this matter should not be laid at the door of the young preacher. This weakness is sometimes fostered in him by well disposed but silly people. There is a manner of talking about preachers, a freedom of censuring or applauding, which must, in some way, reach their ears. Even children are permitted and encouraged to take a part in this sort of conversa-

tion. All of every age claim to know just when a man preaches, visits, and dresses as he ought; when, in a word, he succeeds, and when he fails in all the great duties of his sacred calling. And whether all admit the obligation, or not, to aid, to the extent of their ability, in sustaining him, they claim the privilege of applauding or censuring him to their own heart's content. Now when a young preacher finds himself in the midst of a people who act thus towards his predecessors and others, it is not strange if he thinks, that it is of the utmost consequence for him to know in which of the two strains—whether extravagant eulogy or cutting rebuke—they speak of him. The

truth is, all of us deserve blame—, all too often forget the great objects and ends of the Christian ministry. All look too low, and aim too low. We either provoke God by idolizing or despising the instrumentality which he has ordained for the conversion of the world.

And yet the approbation of the wise and the good, prudently and seasonably given, is the sweetest solace to the preacher's heart, save the favour and the blessing of the God he serves.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

## LETTER VI.

MY DEAR SON:—I shall close these letters, by asking your attention to the consideration of revivals of pure religion. To this result all that the minister says and does must tend. For this he must study, visit, preach, and pray: for in the reviving of pure religion, he finds the consummation of the heart's purest desires. Until this is attained, he labours in vain and spends his strength for nought, and without this, he goes weeping to the grave.

Revival is a comparative term. It may indicate the present state of religion, compared with its state at some previous time; or it may de-

note the state of religion in one country, compared with it in some other country. In its literal acceptation, it implies the existence of spiritual life. He cannot be said to be revived, who never lived. Sometimes the state of things indicated by this term is restricted to one congregation, one family, or even to a single individual. When asked then what is meant by a revival of religion, it is sufficient to reply, that it is the increased power of religion, more or less extensively diffused. It is the obvious growth, the expansion of the life of God in the soul of man. It denotes an unusual and visible display of the grace of God in increasing the purity and power of true religion

in the hearts and lives of believers, attended or followed by the awakening and conversion of sinners. It is an extraordinary work of God, seen, "in making the wicked righteous and the righteous more righteous."

Are all or any of the churches in a revived state? This is but another method of asking, Does the work of conversion and sanctification keep pace with the means employed for this purpose? Consider the sermons preached, the Sabbath-schools taught, the tracts and books distributed, the number of our Societies and Boards, and then say, what ought to be expected, what should be the results?

We may form societies for reli-

gious purposes, we may found institutions for secular and sacred learning, we may erect costly houses of worship; but to regard these things alone as proof of a revived state of religion, would be most fallacious. There is no little fascination in the mere working of this vast machinery. Prompt and generous activity may be displayed in all this, without much true piety; for activity and bustle, noise and display, are all pleasing to the unsanctified heart; and then a public sentiment has been created, and such broad and ample channels have been opened through which expression may be given to that public sentiment, through the rostrum and the press, that all we say

and do, may be little more than a mere yielding to the current, a seeking to advance our own reputation.

We must then seek for other tests. We must look at the state of piety in its more hidden and less ostentatious forms. We must look to the fountain rather than to the stream. We must seek to ascertain the extent to which divine truth controls the heart, and regulates the life of the people. We must endeavour to learn the extent to which love for the gospel is evinced by its generous support, and also by the more hidden forms of pastoral labour.

Sad mistakes have existed, and to some extent still exist, as to the

nature, and the best means for securing true revivals of religion.

Some twenty-five years ago, the land was well nigh filled with what was then technically called revival preachers, and revival measures. These were the men, and these the measures with which wisdom would die, and upon the success of which the growth, if not the life of the church depended. Rare scenes were enacted, and much mischief done in those days. To some churches hundreds were sometimes added in a week. Many of these had exhibited no religious concern—many indeed were openly profane forty-eight hours before they were received into the church. The strangest thing of all is, that in no part of

Virginia, were these excesses carried so far, or did so much mischief as in our beautiful Valley. The churches in this region have not yet regained their wonted numbers and strength.

The great error of the times consisted in adopting a style of preaching, and a system of unscriptural measures, designed for excitement. The more of this the better. To unfold the great doctrines of the word of God—to aim at enlightening the understanding—to advise the taking of time to read and reflect, was, in the coarse language of the day, “to snow upon the people.” This course was only fitted to “pour water upon the fire.” The pastor was contemned and sometimes insulted in view of

his own people. Of this I witnessed the following illustration. A young licentiate wrote somewhat uncere- moniously to an esteemed pastor, proposing to hold a protracted meet- ing at his church. The request was granted. The first day of the meet- ing came. They met at the church, and the licentiate and the pastor stood together, surrounded by a crowd of gentlemen in the church yard. "Now, brother," said the former to the latter, you have to do one of three things. You must fall in with me, get out of the way, or be run over."

I would not even refer to these sad scenes, at this late day, if there did not occasionally appear symp- toms in some places of a desire to

have them re-enacted. Shun them as you would “the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday.”

Of genuine revivals of true religion every man must be a warm friend who loves the Saviour, and feels compassion for the souls of men. In the midst of such, was the church of Christ first founded, and by means of such, it has ever been the most prosperous. The Acts of the Apostles contains little else than a series of the most blessed revivals.

I am not the enemy, but the friend, of religious excitement, provided it be produced by a clear perception of God's truth. Indeed no other excitement deserves to be

called religious. The truth understood, applied and felt in its true import and just proportions, never yet produced too much excitement.

If I am asked what are the leading characteristics of a genuine revival of true religion, it gives me great pleasure to reply in the words of my venerated preceptor, Dr. John H. Rice. As far back as the year 1822, he spoke on this subject as follows:

“No man ought hastily to conclude that he is the subject of the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit. When under any excitement, we ought, as we love our souls, most carefully to consider its bearings on the various parts of the christian character. If its operation

on all be equable and salutary ; if repentance and humility be deepened ; if love to God and our neighbour be enkindled, faith strengthened, submission rendered more entire, the work of patience more perfect, obedience more prompt : in a word, if the whole tendency be to humble us, to exalt Christ, and promote holiness, we may be assured that it is a genuine work, and rejoice in it as a precious favour bestowed by a gracious God." Now when this mighty, moral improvement, this symmetrical increase of all the features of the true child of God, as portrayed by Dr. Rice, is witnessed as general in a given church, then is that church revived.

But this is quite a different thing

from that "series of excitements and collapses," which leaves the individual christian, and the church at large, as weak and worldly minded, as far from God, and as unfit for heaven, as it found them.

Dr. Rice says, "That which gives new life, should not leave us as though we were half dead. That which communicates new strength, ought not to leave us weaker than before." See Literary and Evangelical Magazine, vol. 5, page 301. You will there find many profound thoughts on this important subject.

It is a mistake to suppose that in order to have a revival, some means must be put in operation different from the ordinary means of grace. Even protracted meetings, held

with a view to bring about a revival, are to be avoided. Such meetings should be regarded as the effect rather than the cause of a revival. When the ordinary meetings for prayer are better attended than usual; when the prayers of those who lead in the devotions are more than ordinarily short, earnest, and spiritual; when irreligious persons, not accustomed to attend, are seen at these meetings; when the congregations on the Sabbath are larger and more solemn than usual; when the members in their social intercourse are known to speak often one with another on the state of the church, and the desirableness of a revival; when cases of awakening, even few in

number, are discovered to exist, then it is safe to conclude, that the prayer of faith has been offered, that God is near, and then a protracted meeting may be held with safety and profit.

And when the precious work becomes general, there should be no great multiplication of meetings, nor any suspension of ordinary business. Upon the Charlottesville Female Academy, from 1838 to 1848, God was pleased to send several seasons of refreshing. And in no case, even when the interest among the young ladies was deepest, and most general, was a single recitation omitted, or duty neglected. Indeed, at such times there was generally the hardest

study and the best recitations. The subjects of the work were told, that their regularity and industry in their daily duties, would be regarded as among the best evidences that they were truly converted to God.

The religion of the Bible was not intended for angels but for men; and for men as social beings, necessarily engaged in the honest and useful callings of the world. The young convert must learn at once that he is to constitute a part of "the light of the world—the salt of the earth;" and to act this part, he must keep every duty in its appropriate place—always, however, subordinating the temporal and transitory, to the spiritual and

eternal. If this be not done, he will be alternately religious and irreligious. He will burn and freeze by turns. His progress, if he advance at all, will be spasmodic.

This subject will be resumed in my next, which shall be the last with which I propose to trouble the public through you.

YOUR FOND FATHER.

---

## LETTER VII.

MY DEAR SON,—It is a matter of great consequence to determine upon the best means of ascertaining, who are in an awakened state of mind. It was once common, even

in portions of our own church, to call the anxious, in the face of the whole congregation, to occupy certain seats that they might be conversed with, and prayed for. The evils of this system are now so well understood, and so cordially admitted, that I shall content myself with saying, an experience of thirty years in the ministry, has only heightened my admiration of the men who succeeded in its overthrow.

The pastor should occasionally—even in times of great apparent coldness—express from the pulpit the hope, that there may be one or more in the congregation, anxious to know the way of life, and if so he should request them to let him know it, either by calling at his

study or addressing to him a note. The latter is an admirable plan, and has often been adopted with signal success. Where the congregation is divided into districts, with a ruling elder assigned to each, whose business it is to visit, and prudently to seek out such cases and make them known to the pastor, the work is done as it can be done in no other way. Many, very many, have been actually brought to my study in this way, of whose seriousness I should otherwise have known nothing.

Personal appeals to individuals must be made, but always with the greatest prudence. Rarely, if ever, should this be done in the presence of others, and always done with

great tenderness and brevity. Prolonged, sermon-like addresses to the unconverted, rarely do good, and often do harm. "A word fitly spoken, how good is it." Let the length of the personal address be determined by the reception it meets with. In seeking to win, we must be careful not to repel; in seeking to cure, we must not kill. "Give conscience fair play," was all Dr. Nettleton once said to a gray headed sinner—and, "Young friend, you must not forget that you have to die," was all that Rev. J. W. Douglass once said to a gay young lady, and in both cases, the result was the hopeful conversion of the person thus addressed.

The inquiry meeting, held in the

pastor's study, or in some other suitable place, has my cordial approbation. But this must be managed with much wisdom. Seldom, if ever, should there be singing at such meetings. In the language of Dr. Nettleton, "Young converts may be sung or may sing themselves into higher attainments in knowledge and piety," but I do not think that the awakened sinner is often converted by such means. Singing is not well adapted to his state of mind. Nor should there ordinarily be much conversation with individuals at such meetings. A short and appropriate portion of scripture should be read, and briefly expounded. Two or three prayers may be offered. The

pastor must be supposed to know the state of mind, in its various stages, of those who attend such meetings. And he must frame his remarks accordingly. When practicable, two ministers, or the pastor with one or two ruling elders, should attend, and they should converse together in the hearing of the inquirers, asking and answering such questions of each other, as an intelligent inquirer might be presumed to ask. The truly awakened are never flippant, and always express their feelings with the utmost difficulty. Bunyan thoroughly understood this when he sketched the character of Mr. Talkative.

Too much conversation with the

anxious sinner, at any time and in any place should be avoided. Such persons cling to the minister—will see and converse with him, if possible, many times in a day. His self-righteous spirit turns in this direction, and, of course, turns away from Christ. On one occasion. among more than forty anxious sinners, there was an intelligent lawyer. He and his wife were awakened about the same time. Their pastor had conversed and prayed with them at least three or four times. At the last of these interviews, held in their own parlour, a full hour was spent in reading and expounding the 51st Psalm and in prayer. The wife entertained a feeble and tremulous

hope. The husband was still in total darkness. He was born of pious parents, had been baptized in infancy, and was brought up after the good, old Scotch-Irish fashion. He had received a collegiate education, and notwithstanding all this—within two hours after the long interview just described, he hastened to the parsonage to learn what he must do to be saved. Thus do sinners of all sorts cling to human advisers and helpers, and thus it is that they will not come to Christ until every other refuge fails. Hence it is often mischievous to give them too much mere human help.

The number of public meetings should not be greatly increased

during a revival. This however should be determined by circumstances. Both the number and kind of meetings may be varied by the amount of preaching the people ordinarily enjoy, and by the amount of religious instruction they enjoyed in childhood, and subsequently. Where this has been sound and abundant, and where a taste for reading prevails, and where good books abound, there should be no great multiplication of meetings.

Nor should the subjects discussed, nor their method of treatment differ materially from the ordinary ministrations of the sanctuary. God sometimes owns and blesses one class of subjects, and sometimes another. The first case of conversion

which occurred at the commencement of a revival in Rockbridge, obviously resulted from God's blessing on the reading of "Thoughts on Family Worship," by Dr. James W. Alexander. And another extensive revival is known to have commenced with a sermon preached on the same subject. God's truth baptized by the spirit of supplications, and preached in faith, performs the work.

Still, there must be adaptation. Some subjects are peculiarly fitted to awaken, others to guide, and others to confirm and establish in the faith. The word of God must be rightly divided that each may have his portion in season. The

babe must have its milk, and the grown man his meat.

Ordinarily, the frequent conversion of the impenitent is preceded by the revival of the church. But this is not always the case. On more than one occasion I have known numerous accessions to be made to the church, when not more than three or four of the members seemed to be in the least revived. I knew an accession of sixty to be made to a large church, when the revival proper did not appear to extend to over one third of the entire membership.

Sometimes God carries on a gracious work with very little instrumentality. One of the most blessed revivals ever enjoyed by the

College church in Prince Edward, occurred about two years after the death of Dr. Moses Hoge, before the church had obtained another pastor, and when they had enjoyed very little preaching. "The great revival" at Briery commenced very soon after the death of Mr. Lyle, and before the people had secured a successor. In another church, which I dare not name, a precious revival commenced, when the pastor, from ill health, was unable to preach, or even leave his room. A large majority of the cases of conversion occurred in the space of some three or four weeks, within which time, the church bell was not rung, nor the doors of the sanctuary opened. The only public services

during all this time, were held in the pastor's study or parlour, and conducted as he sat in an easy chair or reclined on a sofa.

Such statements might be greatly extended. But I weary the printer and weary the reader. Rely upon it, we dishonour God, and grieve his Holy Spirit, by magnifying, as we often do, this or that man, this or that system of measures. On such a subject we must not dogmatize. Nor must the experience of any one man be made the guide for every other. This much is certain. The system which puts most honour on divine truth, which most effectually exalts God and debases man, which gives freest scope to the prayer of faith, and the labour of

love ; this is the system least liable to perversion, and most likely to be useful.

A few words in reference to the reception of members into the church will close all I have to say.

In determining the time of admission, respect must be had to the age, the previous training and the degree of excitement under which a profession of conversion was made. One who has been baptized in infancy, watched over and instructed with due parental fidelity, may safely be admitted to the church at a much earlier age, than those who have not been thus favoured, especially if the attention has been arrested, and the conscience awakened in the ordinary

course of religious services. Such may sometimes be safely admitted at the early age of twelve years ! The danger of mistake is always greatest in a time of revival. Then the mere animal sympathies are most easily aroused, and then one is most likely to feel merely because another does. The too hasty admission of young converts to the church is an evil. Here too, respect must be had to the age, previous training, and habits. As a general rule, observed now in several of our churches, persons should remain under the care of the session several weeks, as candidates for church membership, before they are fully received. It is far safer, and, every way, better to delay too long, than

to join too soon. The really converted will not suffer so much by delay, as the self-deceived or hypocritical will, by too much haste. It is wrong to say, as some do, that young converts not immediately admitted to the visible church, are as lambs left in the wilderness without a shelter or a shepherd. The moment they are converted, they become members of Christ's mystical body, and enjoy his protection and share in his love. I grant that it is of great consequence to receive these lambs into the visible church as soon as we have very satisfactory evidence that they are lambs. But "one sinner destroyeth much good," and it is far better, both for the individuals themselves,

and for the church at large, that half a dozen real lambs should be kept out a little too long, than that one goat should ever find place within the fold.

But I must close. The work of the ministry is a blessed work, only pursue it under the constraining love of Christ, and though obstacles may sometimes hinder, they cannot defeat it. The world may frown, but conscience will approve, God will smile, and you will be able to exclaim with Henry Martyn, as he died upon the burning sands of Persia, "Oh the luxury of doing good!"

YOUR FOND FATHER.

Jan. 23 1861.