

COVENANTER.

 DECEMBER, 1861.

MINISTERIAL QUALIFICATIONS.*

GENTLEMEN OF THE THEOLOGICAL CLASS:—We are about to enter once more upon our labours in the wide and fertile field of theological inquiry—to reap and gather, we trust, large stores of knowledge in the various departments of doctrinal, biblical, and historical research—to secure additional culture of the intellect and of the heart,—all these to be employed in the immediate and special service of our Redeemer and Lord. We meet at a time of peculiar interest: when the sins of the churches and of the nation have, at last, provoked the fierce indignation of the Most High: when the hand of God, the Governor among the nations, long and threateningly lifted up, has come down in awful judgment upon an insensible and obdurate generation. “The sword is upon the liars, and they dote: the sword is upon the mighty men, and they are dismayed: the sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people: a sword is upon their treasures, and they are robbed.” And these—have we not reason to fear—are but the “beginning of sorrows?” Upon these “sad calamities” it becomes us to ponder much and often—to investigate their causes—to ascertain our own relation, personal and social, to the dealings of God with “the people of his wrath”—that we may attain to a clearer view of our own, and the church’s, and the nation’s duty in so great a crisis, and thus stir up our own souls, and the souls of our afflicted countrymen to resort in faith and penitence, in humility and with holy purpose, while it is called to-day, to the true and only source of help and deliverance.

Great as are the issues at stake, however, in the convulsions which are now shaking the very foundations of law and social order, and regulated liberty, in this land, we must not lose sight of other matters, in many aspects even more fundamental and momentous. These convulsions will have their day. They will be followed by a return to some—and may we not hope, better order—social and national, resting upon more substantial foundations, relieved of every incubus, and disentangled from all sinful complications—more conducive by far than the present, to human welfare and the highest end of all, the glory of God. In the mean time, however, so far from allowing the

* Address delivered by James M. Willson, at the opening of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Allegheny, Tuesday, November 5, 1861.

turmoil of events to divert mind and heart from the concerns of the church of Christ, his kingdom and gospel, we should turn to these as themes of surpassing and enduring interest. These themes, and the church herself, should be the more endeared to our hearts, while we witness the strife and struggle of contending hosts on the field of national and bloody conflict. We should direct our attention, not exclusively—not so much—to the throes of a nation in its agony—but mainly to the hand which controls events and all their issues, and to that inner and special kingdom in which Christ dwells by His peculiar presence, and which he employs as the prime instrument in accomplishing the higher and more beneficent results of his outward workings—in whose character, and spirit, and activity, are concerned, not temporal changes and deliverances, but spiritual and eternal. Even in great national convulsions, it is not the external that merits the closest attention—not the measures of the politician, or the plans of the general—not the movements of armies, the thunder of artillery, the rush of cavalry, the deadly charge of the bayonet—not victories and defeats, but the principles and ultimate designs which prompt the contending parties, the motives which actuate the great masses of whom the politician and the warrior are but the representatives and the instruments—the ideas which have brought into hostile array these panoplied battalions. We must enter the region of conviction and feeling; we must study the hopes and the fears, the remoter aims and purposes—in a word, the interior life of the contest, if we would either rightly inform the mind, or give just direction to its active powers. Much more should we investigate with the deepest interest, the springs of events which lie still deeper—the methods and purposes of the divine government and grace; that word in which they are revealed; the agencies by which they are ascertained and diffused; their operations on mind, or heart, and their connexion with visible changes in the affairs of men. These are the real influences which control the acts and destinies of men and nations. They are abiding. When we learn them, we go to the roots of things: we are really instructed, admonished, or encouraged.

Hence, however deeply we may feel the calamities of a present civil contest of no ordinary character—which, in any event, must work great changes in the future history of this nation and continent—yet it is imperative that we be, even more than heretofore, devoted to the more important fields of religious inquiry: to doctrine, to the church, her nature, endowments, history, functions, duties, privileges, and prospects—her relation to Christ, her institutions, and ordinances, and entire organization, her claims upon men, individually and socially, her high place—central to all divine providences toward men and nations; her ministry, their calling, duties, qualifications, encouragements: to the word of God, the fountain, the guide, the supreme authority in all our investigations. Waving, then, all such topics as now engage so fully the public mind, I keep within the line of our own special studies and duties, and select for a topic as especially suitable to our present circumstances, and as a proper sequel and complement of our inquiries heretofore in regard to elements of success in life, and into the importance and means of Intellectual Culture, as

essential to the proper discharge of those ministerial functions which have to do with every ecclesiastical and spiritual interest, *some general and comprehensive qualifications for the full discharge of the duties of the Christian ministry*; and, of course, of the candidate for so eminent an office. For whatever place and rank we may assign to the cultivation of the Intellect—and in its own sphere this can hardly be exaggerated—the mere possession of gifts, the most enlarged and quickened by exercise and acquisitions, literary and scientific, is but a foundation for a nobler, and even more indispensable superstructure.

My purpose, then, is to urge the cultivation—I. Of a high sense of the dignity of the office of the ministry. II. Of a sanctified curiosity. III. Of a true, earnest, and evangelical piety.

I. *The dignity of the ministry.* The peculiar character of the Christian ministry as an office and function, arises not from the persons to whom it is intrusted. They are but “earthen vessels:” men of “like passions with others:” possessed of endowments, either natural or acquired, no greater, perhaps much more limited than those of many in the community around them, or it may be in the church. Tried by the highest tests of intellect, acquisitions, sagacity, manners, and knowledge of human nature in its ordinary modes of action, the minister of Christ may—I do not say will or should, but—may present evident tokens of inferiority. Nor does the surpassing excellence of this calling depend upon any mysterious communication of a certain imaginary spiritual *χαρακτηρ*—or upon a singular indwelling of the Spirit, infused in the rite of ordination, and inseparable from the laying on of hands—claimed, most falsely and presumptuously by the clergy of the Prelatic order, and, at times, hinted at by some of the more evangelical—even of the better schools of Protestantism—and that has left its traces in much of our ecclesiastical literature. There is nothing mystical—no charm—no hidden and awful character, about the ministerial office. Such notions, indeed, were early entertained in the Christian church, and have come down along the line of declension and apostacy, somewhat impaired, it is true, by the clearer light of later days—but reaching even to our own times. Wherever and whenever they have a place, these mistaken ideas have always been found the fruitful parents of clerical arrogance, of spiritual despotism, and of real ministerial degradation—of popular and anti-christian delusions and superstitions; of moral and religious debasement in the entire body: and these, just in proportion to the measure and extent of these false and really Christ-dishonouring imaginations. The minister is but a man, after all. The true dignity of this office rests upon a twofold basis.

1. *The peculiar relation which it sustains to Christ as the Prophet and King of the church.* And this, as it is an office established by Him, as consequently recognised by Him—and hence, as He stands by his minister, acting in his own name. Established by Him: for He has set—fixed in His church—an order of “teachers and pastors”—of whom it is said, under the title of “stars,” (Rev. i.,) that He “holds them in his right hand.” Recognised by Him, so that what they “bind on earth is bound in heaven.” To reject them, is to reject Him. By whom He stands, for so He has promised—“Lo,

I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." In all this, however, giving no warrant to hold themselves as anything else than brethren—called to special functions in relation to the word, and the world, and the church: "not as lords of the faith" of the saints, but as "helpers of their joy." Not as if those who bear this office are invested with any authority beyond the limits of that word of Christ which is the rule of their ministry, as fully and as imperatively as it is the rule of the people's faith and life. Nor as if in their hands—as Papists' claim—were the right of supreme, authoritative Scripture interpretation. Whatever of that power or right may be attached to the ministry in their exhibition of the word of Christ, there remains to every hearer of the word, in its full extent, the right and the duty of "searching the Scriptures whether these things be so." Still, within the prescribed range, and in the faithful and intelligent exercise of their ministry, the common Master and Lord of all does acknowledge, sanction, and ratify their official teachings and acts: and this the day will declare, to the confusion of many an ignorant and carping critic, and of many a despiser of Christ in the person of His ambassador.

2. *The dignity of the ministry has its origin in the singular nature and excellency of the work to which those who bear it are called.* They "handle the word of God;" they deal with minds, rational and immortal, and with hearts, feeling and active; and this not in matters, directly or chiefly, of worldly and temporary interest, but with immediate reference to the highest relations, most sacred obligations, most enduring hopes. True, that word, which it is the function of the ministry to illustrate and apply; that character, moral and religious, which, as an instrument, it is employed in forming, possess no inconsiderable importance even in reference to things this side of eternity. The ordinary business of life, the conduct of the family, affairs of state, are all moulded by the teachings of the pulpit. The light which it sheds shines now and here: the power which it exerts, makes itself felt in every department of human life. The pulpit holds no secondary place among the mighty influences which have converted the savage tribes of ancient Europe into enlightened, orderly, and enterprising civilized nations. Education, morals, manners, owe as much, at least, to the labours of the ministry as to all other causes combined. And the enemies of liberty in our own land are not far out of the way when they charge the change of public opinion at the North, which has been the guiltless occasion of the madness which rages at the South, to the teachings and testimony of the pulpit and the church, as they have exhibited the law of love, and have called upon the domestic tyrant to release the victims of his avarice and his lust. Faithless as many—a large proportion—of the thousands of Christian ministers have been, to the true principles of human rights—few as there are comparatively, who have "cried aloud, and not spared" this giant sin of the land, it cannot be questioned that the exposure of this iniquity by their earnest utterances has mightily contributed to the formation of those new feelings, and that new power, which are now arrayed against Southern arrogance and aggression. And so in every other great and promising movement in the nations. Still we are not to lose sight of the prime truth that the ministry has to do mainly with souls in their

relation to God, to eternity, to heaven and hell. Indeed, whatever it works towards ameliorating the present condition of man, individually or socially, is owing to the heavenly nature of the doctrine which it teaches; to the universal and abiding character of the law which it promulgates; to the awful nature of the eternal sanctions with which it accompanies denunciations of wrong; to the infinite blessedness which it is authorized to hold out to the believing and the holy; and to the entire change which it is thus instrumental in working in the mind, feelings, hopes, and conduct of all to whom its beneficent efforts are blessed of God.

A sense of the worth and importance of the ministerial office resting upon grounds like these, I would, then, urge upon every student of theology; partly, because in this Christ is honoured as the wise and gracious King in Zion, in whose name this office is held and its work performed; partly, that the heart of the student, and of the minister as well, may thus be stimulated to labour diligently in his high calling, and in preparation for it; partly, as a means of guarding him against a spirit of discontent with his office, as if it failed to answer the ends of a true and honourable ambition; and, partly, that he may be filled with gratitude to Him who has judged him worthy of a place so near to Himself, so important in its relations to His kingdom, and to the welfare of immortal souls. I urge this, also, from a conviction that not a few of the evils which, through human infirmity, mar the beauty and hinder the efficiency of the ministerial office as a living function, have their immediate source in low and unworthy views regarding it on the part of those to whose hands it has been intrusted, and corresponding feelings in regard to its paramount dignity and excellence. The student should ever hold his place among men as one so high—I still speak of the office itself—that none could have dared even to enter it unless called of God—too high without a special designation for even angelic nature to occupy; outranking the chief seats of honour and authority in any department of merely human concern; and too pure to be polluted by any feelings of envy, or jealousy, or rivalry, or pride, or covetousness; or to be degraded by any intermixture of carnal or sinister ends and motives.

II. There should be cherished a *sanctified curiosity*. Man is curious and inquiring. The mind, essentially active, demands new objects of thought. So long as it retains its peculiar attributes, it cannot remain satisfied with present acquirements. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." A fulness that would leave no place for farther acquisition would bring with it, not merely satiety, but a kind of death. Were there nothing left to put in motion the energies of the inquiring intellect, man would dwindle and die of a starvation incomparably more painful than any to which the mere physical constitution can be subjected. From childhood to old age—except when at times overborne by causes external to the mind, and then always such as inflict stupefaction or pain—this characteristic of our mental structure never ceases to exhibit its nature and its power as one of the leading features of a rational being. In the language of a modern and standard metaphysical writer:—"The absolute completion of knowledge would be the paralysis of any study;

and the last, worst calamity that could befall man, as he is at present constituted, would be that full and final possession of speculative truth, which he now vainly anticipates as the consummation of his intellectual happiness." Says Pascal:—"In life we always believe that we are seeking repose, while, in reality, all that we ever seek is agitation." And, again, the above-mentioned writer thus expresses the same truth, in terms needing, however, some explanation:—"It is ever the contest that pleases us, and not the victory. Thus it is in play; thus it is in hunting; thus it is in the search of truth; thus it is in life. The past does not interest, the present does not satisfy, the future alone is the object that engages us." This faculty has, indeed, like others, suffered deeply from the degrading influence of sin. And hence we see it exemplified in thousands of petty forms; seeking its gratification in a multitude of objects of inquiry far beneath the earnest attention of a soul accountable and immortal: in the gossip of the hour, in the details of the sayings and doings—the little acts of the life of a neighbour; in the fluctuations of fashion; and, still worse, in canvassing the peculiarities and peccadilloes of still imperfect men and women; or, rising somewhat, in the useless investigations to which not a few devote their precious hours, under the name of literary or antiquarian research, and in the eagerness with which men so often ask, as the Athenians of old, for some "new thing,"—the only important element being its novelty. And nearer akin to its original nature and office, in the greedy inquiry for the tidings of events of greater magnitude in the realms of art, of science, of commerce, of revolution, of war, and in the earnest and honest pursuit of secular knowledge in its various departments, and in pushing researches into the yet unexplored regions of nature.

The peculiarity of this property of mind to which I now refer, is its exercise for the mere sake of knowing, without any necessary reference to the results of knowledge. It is the desire to *know*—to know for its own sake. It is true, that in nearly every department of inquiry—great or mean—there is also a use, an end, of which the mind takes synchronous account. Even in the greed of mere gossip, besides the mental activity which it awakens, there may be the gratification of feelings which act as additional stimulants to curiosity—love or hatred, jealousy or envy, the love of self-exaltation, or a malignant desire to depreciate our neighbour. This secondary, but not less important element of the desire to know, appears in a far more honourable light in the higher regions of inquiry to which I have adverted. Men, for example, seek to know nature, that they may acquire more power over material things, and thus perfect their processes, and add to their gains or their influence: in the better and more benevolent classes of minds, that they may confer benefits on their kind.

I have said a *sanctified* curiosity—a desire to know truths and facts which bear directly on things and ends spiritual and divine: a holy curiosity to learn the truth of Christ; to know more of God, of his word, of his government, providence, and claims; more of man, his relations, responsibilities, character, history, and destiny; more of the grace of God in its source, its workings in the heart, its influence

upon the life. In themselves these are, beyond all question, most important to all men, as matters of personal and eternal interest. Hence none can wisely or safely neglect them, or even give them a subordinate place; but they constitute, as all know, the special field of ministerial study; and *demand* study, constant, earnest, and persevering.

How shall this be secured? What principles of our nature are there that will operate with sufficient power to overcome indolence and weariness, and supersede common and worldly curiosity, and the thousand other ever-acting hinderances? I answer as before, a holy curiosity, a sincere desire to know more of them; a desire in regard to divine things, analogous to that which actuates the ardent scholar, whether the boy on the bench, or a Humboldt in his palatial library—in reference to the knowledge of secular things and of nature. It is possible, indeed, to make acquisitions without this. In common life extraneous influences may do something to secure attention and industry. At school, the twig or the reward; the impulse of rivalry, the approbation of teachers and friends: at mature age the applause of the world, or the inferior motive of pecuniary reward. But all are aware how precarious such motives are—how defective at best. And hence the best teacher is not the one who either drives or induces the pupil to make the greatest efforts; but he who is successful in awakening the dormant curiosity of the scholar, so that he will learn that he may know—who takes in hand the lad, whose soul is upon tops, and kites, and shows, and military parades, and opens out that better part of his nature, if it exist, which takes naturally to mathematics, history, science, or literature. He may teach less, but he elicits a disposition to learn, and sends out his pupils with their eyes, and ears, and hearts opened to something higher and more profitable than mere superficial and every day matters.

Precisely so, even in the pursuit of theological knowledge. 'It is possible—does it not sometimes happen?—that the student of sacred literature may follow a regular and studious ante-licentiate course: may acquire a respectable position as a scholar: may come forth reasonably equipped for his work; but, all the while, under the influence, too largely, of extraneous considerations. His student-work is prescribed—a certain amount of acquisition is expected of him. It is indispensable to his future standing. Still his heart has not been deeply and thoroughly interested. And, hence, what is—what may be—the sequel? He has ceased to be, in technical language, a student, and ceases to be a learner. The studies of the hall are largely laid aside. His Hebrew, and Greek, and critical investigations, with historical inquiries, are chiefly abandoned; and even his study of doctrine, and of Biblical science, is pursued only so far as to provide for his weekly ministrations. Of general acquirement he makes little,—it may be none. He does not "dig for wisdom as for hid treasures."

The results of such a course are, in every way, most deleterious. There is the loss of that literary *afflatus*, which gives spirit, and zest, and finish to his thoughts and their expression. His public labours are in danger of becoming little other than a reiteration of "things old"—very old. The learning of the past is even measurably forgotten. Instead of growth in fulness and in power, there is rather

increasing leanness and weakness. The dignity and influence of his place and functions are inadequately maintained. His own satisfaction in his work is replaced by tedium and weariness. Surely it is all-important to guard well against issues like these—to cultivate an earnest desire to attain a wider comprehension of that truth which is illimitable in its range, and to cherish that holy curiosity which will ever operate as a propelling power, unceasing in its action, and rich in its rewards.

(To be continued.)

A PRACTICAL VIEW OF INFANT BAPTISM.

(From the Biblical Repertory.)

The parties to this transaction are four—the parents, the church, the child, or children, on the one hand; and the triune God on the other. These all are intimately and deeply concerned. The first three, though separate from each other, yet all stand on one side, allied parties, as it were, while God is the sole party on the other; having an individual relation to each of them in particular, and also a grand relation to the three united in covenant with himself, in this one business. While dwelling upon each of the parties, it will not be practicable to leave the others entirely out of view, as their relations are so very intimate; yet as far as possible attention will be given exclusively to each in succession, and in the order just named. The church ought to understand what is meant by this solemn ordinance in all its bearings.

I. The parents are the first, and, at the time at least, the most deeply interested party to this transaction. To them it has associations and bearings which are incalculably important. (a) Their right to bring the child is dependent on a moral qualification within themselves, viz., their faith. “The *unbelieving* husband is sanctified by the *believing* wife, . . . else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” The very act, therefore, of baptism, if it be performed in an intelligent manner, suggests the inquiry, Am I a child of God? Have I that faith which secures the “holy” child?—the child whom God incorporates into his visible kingdom? If not, what do I here? Without faith it is impossible to please God. At the very outset, therefore, he is thrown upon the work of self-examination, and is led to a renewed self-consecration. In this spirit the offering is made, with the earnest and confiding hope that the God of providence and grace will accept the lamb. (b) In the next place, the faith and resolutions of the parent touching the child, are eminently Scriptural and salutary. It is by nature impure. It belongs to a fallen race. It must be born again by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is therefore given to him for purification. Deeply imbued with a sense of its depravity, the faithful parent solemnly promises to watch and guide his offspring with the tenderest care. He will cultivate his own mind and heart, that he may do justice to the child. He will order his own conduct and conversation with a view to moulding its character properly. He will govern with prayerful consideration and solicitude, withholding whatever may be injurious, and giving whatever its highest interests

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(Concluded from page 104.)

III. *Sincere and earnest piety.* Under this title I include the entire bent of the soul towards God: the principles of the new life, which manifest their nature and their energy in a lively faith, in profound penitence, in evangelical hope, in supreme love to God, in heartfelt concern for the souls of sinners, in habitual and cheerful dependence upon God, and submission to his will—these, regulating and governing the entire life as a life of prayer, of devotion, of personal holiness, of heavenly temper and aims. On this, in its relation to the soul's salvation, it is not now so much my purpose to dilate. I urge its cultivation, chiefly, in its bearings upon the life and labours of the Christian minister. And even with this limitation, bringing before you but a few out of many considerations that might be presented. And,

1. *True piety alone awakens and regulates that principle of curiosity just considered.* In this originates that spiritual taste, which seeks its gratification in Scriptural researches—in things divine and eternal: as itself begins in that renovation of our carnal nature, effected by the Spirit of Christ in the new birth. The doctrines and spirit of the word, the law, the gospel of Christ, are alien from the heart controlled by natural impulses and appetites. It counts them "foolishness." It finds nothing in its affections and tendencies prompting to sacred inquiries. It can take delight in traversing the wide fields of nature—in measuring the heavens—in ascertaining the movements and relations of their mighty and marshalled hosts—in mechanical adjustments—in exploring the dim records of the past, as imbedded in the earth itself, or inscribed by human hands—in profound metaphysical and economical investigations—in compelling all these to contribute to the physical welfare of man, and the amelioration of the laws and varied operations of the social fabric. But in all this, it sees dimly, if at all, the presence of that wise, and beneficent, and mighty One, whose hand has formed all these things. Its eye is closed. Its tastes are earthly. They remain so until that great day in the history of a human soul, when the spirit of life from God enters it. Then a change passes over its innermost nature—a change from "darkness to light." Then it receives direct from on high new powers of perception—new tastes and aptitudes. It ceases to be a heart fleshly and impious. It begins to "thirst for God," not only as revealed in his glorious handi-

work, but especially as seen in the volume of revelation. It desires to know him in his being and perfections—to know him in Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, in whose light the soul sees light—to know the Spirit in his mysterious and ever-present workings—to know the ways of that Providence which controls the most complicated movements, great and small, in the kingdom of God—to know how to approach, and serve, and enjoy the living God. Henceforth the transient things of the visible world—inner and outer—while they lose nothing, even gain in beauty and attractiveness, for God is seen in them—are prized at their true value. The unseen and eternal becomes real and present—that which reveals them, “better than rubies”—“more than gold, yea, than fine gold”—true “wisdom and understanding.” The purpose is formed, and grows with growing piety, to “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.” This the soul seeks, because it has tasted of its sweetness, and has felt its beatifying power.

2. *True piety imparts an ability to understand, and wisely, and affectionately, and perseveringly to exhibit gospel truth.* It is not enough to present truth, nor even to enforce it by argument. Both may be done, and still something be painfully wanting. There may be, in the method of exhibition, no persuasive power. It is all dry. No more like living truth, than a corpse is like a man. In what this persuasive power consists, it may not be possible to state very clearly in its details and elements; but it lies, evidently, in the soul of the speaker. It is the life of the speaker, which goes along with the truth, and makes itself felt by the hearer, awakening a sympathy with him who addresses us, and tending to mould the convictions and feelings into unison with his. One form of it the French call “*onction*”—anointing. Its existence is beyond dispute, as is its importance, and the general fact that it originates in the full incorporation of the truth with the understanding and affections of the orator. It may, indeed, be partially simulated. Chromatic tones, interjections, and upturned eyes, may counterfeit it; but not beyond detection; and detection, as in all other cases of fraud, however pious, awakens supreme disgust and aversion. To be effective, it must be sincere. It can only be sincere, when it has its birth-place in a heart full of Christ, of compassion for the perishing, of holy indignation against error and sin—in a heart imbued with genuine evangelical piety.

I have admitted that truth may be spoken, while it is uttered without this persuasive element. This admission must not be extended too far. Without religious feeling, spiritual and devout, truth cannot be seen in its proper beauty and loveliness: many truths cannot be discovered at all. I instance such as relate to genuine experimental piety. None can be appreciated at their real and intrinsic value. There is a knowledge of the “things that are given us of God,” to which it is impossible to attain in any other way than by the Spirit’s special illumination. Without this, gospel truth cannot be digested and assimilated—incorporated with the whole intellectual, and moral, and emotional constitution. It may be in the intellect, as is a problem in mathematics, but it has not entered into the heart—has not reached its innermost recesses, (fountains.) It is only when the heart is touched,

as well as the lips, with a live coal from the altar of the Lord, that the words of life come forth with light and power. The living waters flow only from the smitten rock.

3. *Earnest piety is indispensable to that faultlessness in common and Christian morality, which should ever characterize the student, the preacher, and the pastor.* A high grade of morality is justly required in him who brings God's message to men, and in him also who has devoted himself to this work. It is expected that he will be "harmless and blameless," even beyond that measure exacted from the Christian in any other station in life, or office in the church. Infirmities and defects of character, scarcely noticed in others, appear great in him. Indulgences, modes of recreation, which in others are judged leniently, if at all the subject of adverse remark, are in him severely condemned. There is a sentiment diffused every where—even the darker ages—and depraved communities are no exceptions; it was found in Pagan and Papal Rome in reference to their priests—that he who professes to be God's messenger and minister to men, should be, beyond others, free from moral taint. That, in some aspects, this sentiment may be exaggerated, and work injustice and injury, I cannot question; but so universal a feeling has some deep and solid foundation in the nature, and functions, and ends of this office, and the felt personal relations of the minister to all these. He is an "ensample," and must meet the responsibility arising out of this fact. Not that there is one moral law for him, and another for the ordinary professor of religion. But as his opportunities of knowing the right are, in some respects, greater, and as his position is one of greater influence for good or for evil, the weight of that moral obligation to aim at Christian perfection, which rests upon all, is immensely enhanced. A father is under the same moral law as his children. But inasmuch as his conduct will inevitably mould, in measure, that of his offspring, it may well be required of him that he exercise the utmost vigilance, lest in anything, however minute, he deviate from the narrow way of rectitude and truth, propriety and purity. He is responsible, not only for himself, but largely, also, for his household. So with the Christian minister. His character will be reflected in that of his people. His faults injure, not himself alone, but the souls of others, with Christianity itself, and the name of his Master. The same holds, in no inconsiderable degree, of him who is but a candidate for the ministry. He is regarded, not only as a Christian, and so bound to exemplify Christian law, but as one who is soon to take upon himself the place and entire responsibility of a most sacred office. He will be marked. Many eyes will be upon him, friendly or hostile. In the case of others, youth is esteemed as a partial extenuation of minor divergencies from the rigidity of Bible morality: but not in his. He is expected to come up to a high mark. It is the law of Christ, that "a bishop must be blameless."

I have said, "common and Christian morality." These are not, indeed, to be placed in different categories; for there is no true morality but that which is also Christian. But we distinguish, for our present purpose, between that class of moral acts which all men, however unwillingly, cannot fail to recognise, and another that is impera-

tive, I admit, upon all, but is not so clearly discerned, except by the Christian intelligence. I instance, of the latter, the law of the Sabbath, and of both all that comes under the head of social recreation.

(1.) *The Sabbath, and its sanctity.* Of these the world knows very little, and is, of course, regardless. Under some restraints, through the influence of a Christian sentiment, the world without, and the looser class of professed Christians, feel no compunctions in regard to many things which the law of the Sabbath condemns. Hence idleness, sleep, visiting, secular reading and conversation, recreations, are regarded as allowable, perhaps even desirable modes, of filling up the day, at least in part. Of the higher view of this day of rest, and the exercises proper to it, it is not now the place or the time to speak. It is enough to say that the truly enlightened and devout put a very different estimate upon this "day of the Lord." It is to them a day set apart and sacred to the special service of Him who has reserved it for himself, and hence to be sanctified with the utmost vigilance. Here, also, the ministry are looked to for an ensample: for they, of all men, are supposed to know and feel its requirements. If they are careless or lax, it will be a signal which others will see, and be tempted to follow, endangering not only this institution, but the whole interests of evangelical Christianity.

(2.) *Social recreation.* The human constitution, physical and mental, is of limited capacity, either of labour or of endurance. Its energies are soon exhausted; and by no process more rapidly than by intellectual efforts. It needs not only the restorative aid of abundant—not superabundant—sleep, but also of that change of activities or of scene, which, for this very reason, have been called emphatically recreation. For the proper working of the mental machine in its full vigour, changes of this kind are imperative: more so in childhood, when we are, mainly, little animals; much in youth, while the system is undergoing expansion in every direction; and also during the active periods of life, when the powers are severely taxed by some active occupations; less—almost none at all—in old age, when the principle of life acts sluggishly and feebly. One of the forms of recreation is the free and happy interchange of thought and feeling in the circle of friends—associated, perhaps, with other appliances, which all can appreciate and improve. But here opens a question of no inferior moment to the ambassador for Christ, the pastor, the exemplar of the Lord's people—a question of times, modes, and limits. Into its details I shall not, of course, enter. It may suffice to remark, that few things require more careful study, the exercise of a sounder judgment, or a more tender conscience. On the one hand, none can rightfully shut themselves out from this sort of intercourse. Their own social nature—the obligation resting upon all to use their measure of gifts for the promotion of the happiness and improvement of others—the necessity of recreation, impose upon all, and the more as they are the more cultivated and informed, a duty in this matter. But with what unceasing watchfulness! what holy fear of God! what earnest desire to know and do the right! what searching of heart! lest, like the family of the patriarch of Uz, they sin grievously against God in the hours of social abandon, and perhaps inconsiderate freedom and

gayety! I do not condemn—far from it—all relaxation of mind, and flow of heart, in these seasons of social re-union. To carry into such scenes the fixed attention—the solemn gravity of the study—would defeat their ends. What I urge is, that there be ever maintained a due regard to the presence of an eye, all-seeing and pure. And it should be added that all, but especially the minister of Christ—and, for a similar reason, the student of theology—should exercise no little caution, lest the attractions of social life, and of general recreation, infringe upon the hours of study and of meditation, and upon the imperative calls of duty; lest habits be formed, which will interfere sadly with comfort and efficiency in the work to which the life is devoted; lest the spiritual tastes and powers of the heart be impaired. Still more. The world looks on. What it will cheerfully allow in others, it will even mock in him. It will follow his steps. His claims to respect and honour will be repudiated if he turn, too often, to the house of even lawful mirth.

But to return. It may be safely asserted that the only sure guide in this part of the ministerial life, is to be found in a living and active piety and devotion: a piety so sincere—a devotion so entire, as never to lose sight of place, position, relations, duties, and obligations: a piety so pervading that it fills the heart with a relish for things spiritual, and finds its highest enjoyment in these, and knows no recreation in any place or acts, unless the precious grace and presence of God are there to hallow them.

4. *Piety alone can sustain the heart of the Christian minister amid the toils and disappointments, the privations and discouragements that so often attend his labours.* There is much to attract in the functions of the ministry—to attract the godly. The dignity of the office, the nature of the work, its results and fruits, the approbation of Christ, and a future glorious reward. But withal, it is a work attended by not a few and pressing difficulties, personal and official. The message which it bears is one uncongenial to the natural heart. Even to gain the ear, is not rarely a matter requiring no little effort. The most momentous truths, the most solemn warnings, the most affectionate invitations, are often heard with listlessness and inattention. A tale of even imaginary sorrows, a doubtful anecdote, a highly-wrought description of some fanciful scene, will open every ear, and fix every eye; but “the terrors of the Lord,” the love of Christ, the glories of heaven, the anguish of a hopeless perdition, are scarcely heard; and if heard, fail to touch the heart, change the character, or amend the life. The most faithful of Christ’s co-workers will often be compelled to say in bitterness of spirit—“I have stretched out my hands to a gainsaying people.” Again, he will find himself exposed to mistaken or malevolent misconstruction in his life, in the pulpit, and in other ministerial labours. He stands as a mark for unfriendly criticism; and, be assured, of this he will have his portion. As his office compels him not only to teach, and invite and allure, but also to exhort, and reprove and rebuke, he is in a constant state of warfare with every corrupt affection, and every sinful social custom and law; and these within and without the church. He pleads Christ’s cause against all sin and sinners, open enemies, and pretended friends. Opposing the

truth, men often array themselves in the attitude of personal hostility to its honest advocate. His plainness is called rudeness; his hatred of sin, censoriousness or malignity; his uncompromising adherence to principle, bigotry and all uncharitableness. Besides all this, he has in his own heart many weaknesses. Doubts will arise as to his fitness for his work, or his call to it. The adversary of souls will harass and vex his spirit. He may possibly be subjected to the privations and anxieties which attend a straitened pecuniary condition. And to close the dark catalogue, he may find little sympathy in his sorrows; and this, partly because his heaviest trials come from sources which none can fully appreciate but such as know them by personal and official experience, and partly, because the hearts of men—even of good men—are but partially imbued with genuine Christian tenderness and sympathetic feeling.

It is easy to say that none of these things should distress the heart of an ambassador for Christ. But they *did* move the heart of Jeremiah and Paul: yea, some of them, the heart of a greater than either—of our Saviour himself. Whence, then, our support? Clearly not in anything earthly. We may not indeed disparage the measure of success allotted us here. We may rejoice with a satisfaction truly heavenly, in any evidence of souls converted and saved through our instrumentality. We may enjoy no little the unshaken friendship of brethren, beloved and honoured. We may find some solace, when wounded by coldness or aversion without, in the precincts of home—in the confidence and love of the domestic circle, or in the retirement of the study, as we read, meditate, and pray. But all these will be insufficient—some of them not even appreciated, unless the heart is with Christ; unless to him we commit our way; unless we look to him for our reward; unless our prayers are as incense ascending from the heart full of love to an unseen Saviour and friend, and of zeal for his cause and glory. “I had fainted,” says the psalmist, “unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” “All men forsook me,” says Paul, “notwithstanding the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me.”

5. I would urge the cultivation of ministerial piety *on the ground of its relation, direct and indirect, to that of the church.* This has already been partially presented. That which bears, at so many points, upon the process of preparation for official duties, in and out of the pulpit, has, necessarily, much to do with the religious condition of the church. But it may and does operate in other, and not less effective modes. It prompts to that earnest prayer which is, after all, the prime means of securing the blessing and help of God. It beams out as the light, and tends to fill the church with its illuminating and quickening power. Coldness and indifference of heart exert, on the other hand, and equally, a chilling and depressing influence upon all other minds and hearts. These results, indeed, do not invariably follow. Jeremiah was full of zeal for the Lord; his hearers remained deaf and cold, carnal and impious, stiff-necked and rebellious: while in some souls there may be a vital warmth, and depth of pious conviction and emotion, which even a Judas could not extinguish. We are happy to believe that such piety was found in the darkest times of the

mediæval church—when the outer sanctuary was trodden under foot of Gentiles—when the masses of the priesthood were utterly ignorant of God, and slaves to every evil lust and passion. But these are the exceptions. The law remains, and appeals with no less power to the conscience and heart of the minister and pastor. If we would see a living, loving, and earnest church; self-denying and laborious, submissive and holy, active and public-spirited, let us do our part in providing for her such a ministry. It is said to each of us, as well as to the youthful evangelist—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

In thus presenting before you some of the leading qualities and feelings of the ministerial mind and heart, each has been made to rest upon its own intrinsic merits, as called for in all lands and times. In this age, however, there are some peculiar reasons for yielding them a special attention. The ministry is almost always either under or over-estimated, either despised and slighted, or regarded with superstitious reverence. In this day chiefly the former. Few appear to feel the sacredness of the office, or to be disposed to allow it any authority. And such a public sentiment may even re-act with no little power, unless protected against it, upon the ministry itself. Again, our times are singularly fertile in objects of exceeding interest to the active and inquiring intellect. There is danger that time and thought will be unduly surrendered to the importunate solicitations of these secular matters, in their countless variety, and, in some respects, acknowledged importance, unless we are actuated by a constant and craving desire to know more of the heavenly and invisible. Hence ministerial piety itself is in peril. There is danger, at least, that it will fall short of that earnestness and energy, which a calling so spiritual, and the high interests at stake in it demand. It is an age eminently worldly and active—an age requiring the exertion of all the power that God's truth, apprehended by the intellect, and embraced in the heart—all the power of a resolute purpose in the work of the Lord, to meet, overcome, and reform. Cherish, then, at this stage of your work, a whole-heartedness in it; and let every faculty be consecrated to holy exercises and acts, to study, meditation, and prayer, that you may come forth in this great crisis, and in the great arena, fully satisfied of the incomparable excellence of your work: quickened by holy desire—a thirst for sacred knowledge: and animated by a thorough and energetic piety—loving Christ, and his gospel, and his cause, and his testimony, and the souls of sinners. Thus you will become—and at this all should aim—"burning and shining lights:" and thus, whatever the immediate fruits of your toils, you may hope to win, each for himself, by the grace of God, and as his gift, a crown of righteousness resplendent with many jewels, unfading and eternal.

(From the Biblical Repertory.)

A PRACTICAL VIEW OF INFANT BAPTISM.

(Continued from page 107.)

III. We come in the next place to the children themselves, the subjects of this ordinance, as a third most deeply interested party.