

Our Contributors.

TO A YOUNG MAN ABOUT TO ENTER COLLEGE WITH A VIEW TO THE MINISTRY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

MY DEAR SIR,—Most heartily do I congratulate you on your choice of the noblest calling and the poorest profession on earth. If the Holy Spirit has led you to say: "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel" consider yourself highly honored among the sons of men.

Kindly allow me to call your attention to a few things that a young man is none the worse for thinking a little about when beginning that course of study which the Presbyterian Church requires from those who enter her ministry in a regular way. Some of the matters that I propose to discuss with you are not pleasant, but it is far better to think about them now than fret and worry about them later on.

Don't enter the ministry under the delusion that your Master cannot be faithfully and efficiently served in any other way. Good elders are just as useful as good ministers and much more useful than poor ones. Congregations that would, if vacant, have fifty candidates scrambling for their pulpits sometimes find it difficult to get half a dozen men to serve in the eldership. A really efficient Sabbath-school superintendent is often more difficult to get than a fairly good minister. The men who manage the business side of church work are doing just as important service as the men who preach. The ministry that raised two millions for the Church last year preached more eloquently than some of us can do in the pulpit. It is much harder to get money out of some men than it is to preach to them. Don't then, my dear sir, enter college under the delusion that Christ cannot be well served outside of the ministry. There are a thousand ways of serving him well.

Don't attach much importance to the common view that sordid motives are impossible because ministerial salaries are low. The minimum salary, seven hundred and fifty dollars a year and a house, is a small income for a man who might earn two or three thousand a year, but it may be a temptation to a young man whose earning power at hard work is fifty cents a day and may never be much more than a dollar. Small salaries merely shift the temptation to enter the ministry from sordid motives from one class to another—they never remove it.

Please assume from the very first that you go to college to study—not to preach, not to manage the institution, not to take charge of the professors, not to "run" the societies that have become a part of college life, but to do honest work in your own room and in the lecture room. If you labour under the affliction that time spent on Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Philosophy, Rhetoric, the Natural Sciences and other subjects put on the calendar by older, if not really wiser men than you is lost time, give yourself to meditation, penitence and prayer. Ask for more light and more common sense. If at the end of a reasonable time the affliction is not removed, take yourself over body and bones to the Plymouth Brethren. You are not the raw material out of which an efficient Presbyterian minister can be made.

Years ago the necessities of a growing church in a new country made student-preaching a necessity. The Church had no choice in the matter. Students had to preach both summer and winter, and right well did many of them acquit themselves. The conditions, however, are changing rapidly. There is no longer a scarcity of preachers. More attention is given to "full courses" and "honors" and "degrees," and matters of that kind. The people are not so gospel hungry as the old settlers were. Whether preachers or people are any better than they were—whether the people who want more tone in the pulpit know their Bibles half as well as the old Scotch and Irish settlers did—are questions that need not now be discussed. The one thing clear is that a student should study in order that he may be better able to meet the changing conditions under which he must work when his college days are over.

Don't go to college under the delusion that when you have finished your course the Presbyterian Church is under any obligations to find you a congregation, or, indeed, any other field of labour. Presbyterian polity assumes that the call of the people is indispensable. That may be the right theory or it may be a wrong one, but there it is. You cannot change this part of the polity while you are a student, and it is well you should think about it before you commit yourself to the Presbyterian ministry. A world of disappointment and misery would have been saved to the church if all young men had thought about the call of the people before entering the ministry. Almost every day we hear of good ministers disappointed, soured, embittered and hopeless because they cannot get congregations or even a fair chance to preach in vacancies. It would be cruel to say to a man in that unhappy position: "You should have thought of the calling business before you entered the Presbyterian ministry." All the same he should have thought of it.

A good deal has been said lately about the "dead line of fifty" in the ministry. The phrase came from the same direction as the Gerry-mander, the P.P.A. and a number of other things of bad odor. Intelligent and influential congregations have no such line. It does exist, however, in congregations of a certain class, and in too many mission stations, and it is well for you to know that it exists. There are two sure ways of avoiding the snag. One is to keep out of the ministry, the other is to die young.

If you labour under the delusion that the work of a minister is easy, stop at once and never darken a college door. There is absolutely no hope for a student who thinks that the work of a minister of the gospel is easy.

In one—perhaps in more than one—of our colleges there is a species of student always described as "popular on the field." He is not of much account in his classes, but he is "popular on the field." Popularity on the field is a rock on which many a well meaning young man has hurt himself for life. My dear sir, do your duty faithfully in college first. Never mind "popularity on the field." The less you think about it anywhere the better. Duty is a much better thing than popularity.

THE LAW OF THE SABBATH AND ITS PRESENT OBLIGATION.*

BY REV. J. McD. DUNCAN, B.A.

THIS is the subject to be discussed in this paper. By the "Law of the Sabbath" we are to understand the Fourth Commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates."

Concerning this commandment two questions are suggested by the title of our topic, viz.: First, What is the meaning of this law; and, secondly, Is this a law of present obligation? The answer to the first of these questions need not detain us long. The command before us is easily understood. It requires the cessation, during one day in seven, of secular employments. It answers to the demands of man's physical, intellectual and moral nature by providing for a weekly day of rest. On this day it is intended that the body should regain by repose its freshness and vigor, that by varying its occupations the mind should recover its clearness and strength; that by withdrawal into a clearer atmosphere, the spirit should be quickened and purified.

The rest required by this commandment is not inactivity. We are told that God rested on the seventh day "from all His work which He had made." This does not mean that God became inactive. He ceased from a particular class of works which had occupied the six creative days. But the divine activity manifests itself in other ways on the seventh day. The occupations of the redeemed in heaven may furnish us with an example of the way in which our Sabbaths should be spent. The spirits of the just "rest from their labors." They have entered into peace. That rest is not opposed to activity but to hurry, distraction, toil, uneasiness. In heaven there is ceaseless activity. "His servants shall serve Him." "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty which was and is and is to come." A spirit can find rest only in activity. The true Sabbath rest consists in withdrawing our attention from what is seen, transitory, unsatisfying and fixing it upon the unseen, the eternal, the satisfying. True rest is not inactivity, but satisfaction. The weekly Sabbath is fitted to give us opportunities for the earnest, loving contemplation of God as revealed in His word, in His works, in His Son. In such holy occupation should this day be spent.

The Sabbath is a day of rest. And the rest of the Sabbath is a religious rest. It is such a rest as those require who are not merely animals, but spirits as well. This rest leaves no room for idleness, but affords ample scope for all the activities of our spiritual nature.

It need scarcely be said that the interpretation put upon the Sabbath law by the Jewish rabbis is to be rejected. The meaning of the Fourth Commandment is not expressed but perverted by the tradition which decided that on a Sabbath a nailed shoe might be worn; that a person might go out with two shoes on, but not with only one; that one might carry a loaf of bread, but that two might not carry it between them. Moses was not represented, but caricatured by those who found fault with the disciples for plucking the ears of corn and rubbing them in the palms of their hands and blowing away the chaff and eating, and who would condemn even walking on the green grass on the Sabbath because that was a species of threshing. Very different from the interpretation put upon this law by the rabbis, is that given by the Lord of the Sabbath. According to Him the performance of works of necessity and mercy does not constitute a breach of the law regarding the Sabbath.

The law of the Sabbath as found in the Fourth Commandment must be distinguished from other Mosaic legislation concerning the Sabbath. We read in Exodus xxxv. 15, "Whosoever doeth any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death." And again, we read that a man found gathering sticks upon the Sabbath day was put to death for his offence. Such legislation, of course, was entirely Judaic. No one regards it as binding on any nation now. But the fact that such laws as that which required a man to be put to death for Sabbath breaking are obsolete, no more proves that the law of the Sabbath contained in the Fourth Commandment is obsolete, than the abolition of the death penalty for adultery or blasphemy proves that the Third and Seventh Commandments have ceased to be binding upon men. It is not ingenuous, it can scarcely be considered honest,

* This paper, which was read at a Conference of the Synod of Toronto and Kingston, professes only to have gathered together some of the leading arguments advanced by those who have maintained that the law of the Sabbath is a moral and perpetual commandment.

to represent those who maintain the perpetual obligation of a command found in the decalogue as maintaining also the perpetual obligation of requirements found in the ceremonial law.

We come now to the second question to be considered in this paper. Is the Sabbath law a law of present obligation? From a very early period two opinions have been held concerning this matter. One opinion is that the sanctification of one day in every seven was a ceremonial, typical and Levitical custom and was therefore abolished when a better dispensation came. The laws of the state very properly secure weekly rest from worldly labors as a social and civic blessing. Public and associated worship of Christians is a scriptural duty. No day is so suitable for such worship as the weekly day of rest especially since it commemorates the resurrection of Christ. But this is all. To sanctify the whole day under the supposed authority of a divine command is Judaizing. The other opinion is expressed in the Westminster Confession and held by Presbyterians throughout the world. It regards the law of the Sabbath as a moral and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages. As briefly as possible I shall try to present the chief arguments which have come under my notice in support of the latter opinion, viz.: that the law of the Sabbath is a moral and perpetual commandment.

1. The Sabbath was instituted prior to the Mosaic legislation. In the Book of Genesis, after giving an account of creation, the sacred writer proceeds as follows:—"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them, and on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."

Those who have held the Sabbath to be a mere Judaical appointment, have contended that the writer of Genesis is not in this passage giving an account of something which happened at the creation, but is anticipating the institution of the Sabbath. Their opinion is that the Sabbath was instituted at Sinai and not at the creation. Two considerations seem to be fatal to this interpretation. The first is the place which this passage occupies in the narrative of Genesis. In the first chapter of that book, we have a simple straightforward account of the works which God performed. Then the writer, continuing his story, tells us that God, having finished these works at the end of six days, rested on the seventh. It is difficult to see how any one who has not a theory to support, can hold that in the first chapter of Genesis we have an account of events which took place at the creation, while in the earliest verses of the second chapter, we have an anticipation of an event which was to occur many hundreds of years afterwards. The plain man reading his Bible sees in the words "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" a statement of what God did after the work of creation was finished. If he is told that he is wrong, and that the writer is speaking of something that God was to do in the future, he will probably conclude that the Bible is a book intended only for the learned. There is a second consideration, which makes against the view, that in this passage we have merely an anticipation of a coming event. It is this. Unless the Sabbath was instituted at the creation, we find no account in the narrative of Genesis, of any provision for the needs of man's spiritual nature. Is it conceivable that God should make man in His own image and then, while giving him authority to use the products of the earth for the supply of his bodily wants, should make no provision for the wants of his soul? It is surely more natural to suppose that the Creator, after giving His creature directions as to the support of his bodily life, indicated by His own example, the means by which the spiritual life of man was to be nourished.

There are many indications of Sabbath observance during the patriarchal period. From the earliest times seven was a sacred and symbolical number among both Israelites and pagans. How is the meaning attached to this number to be explained? No natural sign in the heavens or earth suggests the number. For no heavenly body revolves in precisely seven months, days or hours. Nor do any of man's external members number seven. A reasonable explanation of this use of the number seven is found in the early institution of the week.

Other facts point still more clearly to the conclusion that the observance of the Sabbath was a part of the patriarchal religion. It was "at the end of days" that Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices. This phrase probably refers to the weekly Sabbath. God Himself observed the weekly interval in making preparation for the flood. Noah twice waited for a period of seven days before he sent out his dove. It was customary among the patriarchs in Mesopotamia, in the days of Laban to continue a wedding feast a week. From the history of Jacob's life we learn that the number seven was used to limit the ordinary duration of a contract. The feast of the Passover was to last a week. This appointment was made before there were any Levitical institutions. The account of the manna, found in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, shows that the law of the Sabbath was then in full force. Observe what happened. Of their own accord the people on the sixth day gathered twice as much of the manna as they gathered on other days. They received no directions to do this. They acted as if they were conforming to an established custom. Then Moses, when his attention was called to the conduct of the people, mentioned the Sabbath quite incidentally. He said to the rulers that the people had done quite right in gathering a double quantity on the sixth day. He added, "To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sab-