

and heard as Christ's representatives, His high commissioners on earth. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The ends of this ministry are again exemplified in the growth of evangelical piety. It is no part of the plan of grace to convert sinners and then leave them, like the eggs of the ostrich in the sands of the desert, to be warmed into life or to perish at hap-hazard. The good work begun must be carried forward. The babes must be nourished with the pure milk of the Word. Christians of every degree can only live and grow by continued supplies of grace for grace. It is much for nursing-fathers to see their spiritual children brought to the birth. It is more to find them well sustained, at first with the "milk of the Word," and then, as they can bear it, with stronger food, growing into tall, healthy and vigorous Christians.

It is another great end of the gospel ministry to spread and perpetuate the religion of Jesus. This is the burden of the great commission: "Go, teach all nations; lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is the glory of a Church to possess and employ the elements of vitality and self-extension. Christ's presence and power in His Church were symbolized in the burning bush. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." An enlightened and pious ministry, vigorously sustained by the affections, prayers, and active co-operation of Christian people, cannot fail to spread and speed the everlasting gospel to the ends of the earth and the latest generations of time. This honor have all the saints, as co-partners with ministers of the Word, and as valuable aids in their blessed work.

The value of the Christian ministry cannot be overstated. As an instrument of conversion, it has been remarkably successful in the past. What has been, will be. It has been employed in ages past to bring down the live coal from the heavenly altar, and blessed to kindle and keep alive the holy fires of the heart, the closet, the family, and the house of prayer. It has laid the foundations, broad and deep, for a sound and healthy social system. Generations unborn are the better, long in advance, for the sanctified agencies of this often lightly-esteemed institution. All civilization, so-called, be it ever so imposing, that lacks this essential element of human progress, is no better than barbarism refined.

II. Among the means for promoting the ends of the ministry, we find the preaching of the Word first in order and importance. "It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." This, His own plan, is and must be wise and good. No other, no adverse scheme, can have His approval or lasting success. "Preach the gospel; preach the preaching that I shall bid

thee:" these are the terms, and they are not to be altered, amended, or set aside. "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing, to preach the Word." The inspired author of this solemn charge was himself a noble example of its force and effect. He best magnified his office by knowing nothing but Christ crucified. His example is warrant enough, and his marvellous success encouragement enough, for us. That is the preaching by way of pre-eminence which tells on the heart and conscience for the purposes of salvation. It is in beautiful accordance with our Redeemer's intercessory prayer, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

The preaching of the gospel, pure and simple, is not, indeed, the short and easy way to pulpit fame. There is much man-worship mingled with the professed worship of the sanctuary. It is one of the sad signs of the times that the demand for the unholy fire is put forth at all; and sadder still, by far, that the supply exceeds the demand. The whole scope of the gospel is against the grain of our fallen humanity. It has so much to do with correction and reproof, that, to meet the fastidiousness of many hearers, the message is not seldom softened down into mere entertainment. Man-worshippers are not charmed with the direct Thus saith the Lord, and the abrupt Thou art the man: but they are delighted with smooth things; they are in raptures with beautiful nothings, well said and soon over. Far distant is the day when Satan's kingdom shall be overturned by such feeble assaults. When the Old Testament worthies, in the spirit of Ezra the Scribe, fought the battles of reformation with the best effect, they used the sword of the Spirit—the pure Word of God. They read in the book of the law, and gave the sense and meaning. The weapons of our warfare must be sharpened on the tables of the law, and made mighty, through God, to destroy sin, the first, and death, the last enemy of our race, in the blood that cleanseth from all sin.

The apostle forewarned the young minister of a time to come when men would not endure sound doctrine; when people of itching ears should heap "to themselves teachers, turning away their ears from the truth and themselves unto fables." That time has come. We must meet it by a close reference to our instructions. The world appears, with the progress of light and truth, to be growing scrupulously sceptical and fastidious. In the arrogance of mere reason, "men rush in where angels fear to tread." They are only satisfied with their own solemn trifles. With such high priests in the temples of science and at the altars of reason-worship, it is not strange that the apostles and prophets are sometimes treated as subordinate standards of authority. It may yet come to this, that a closer invitation of the Master of Assemblies