

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### PULPIT POWER.

FROM A SERMON ON "THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS," PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF HAMILTON AND LONDON, 10TH APRIL, 1882, BY REV. JOHN THOMPSON, M.A., OF SARNIA.

Put your strength into this great and blessed work. Let the zeal of our Father's house consume you. Whatever other Churches may be inclined to do, our Church must follow the same policy in the future which she has so nobly endeavoured to do in the past, and put her main strength into her pulpits. If a Presbyterian minister is weak in the pulpit, he is weak all over. The pulpit should be the minister's home and throne, where he feels that he dwells at ease, and sits firmly on his seat. Victory is when the minister takes naturally and lovingly to the order and work of preparing himself each week to come forth as a strong man to run a race; his quiver full of arrows, and able to shoot so as to hit the mark.

The ministry being taken into partnership with the Holy Spirit Himself, in the great work of reclaiming and restoring lost man to the home and likeness of our Father, the office must demand from us the richest service we can yield. The work is the most transcendent ever committed to any agency, and therefore, like Paul, we may well say, "I magnify my office." Paul would not have exchanged his pulpit for Cæsar's throne and all the honours of the Imperial city. The reason why so many ministers do not rest comfortably in their work is because they do not magnify their office; and the same will prove true of every worker in life's busy scenes. No department of this world's labour will ever receive the strength and loyalty of a man's heart, till he puts his whole manhood into it, and consecrates his highest efforts to his calling.

If there is a work on earth in which a man can feel miserable, it must be in the ministry when there is no inward satisfaction or felt reliance on that Saviour whom he professes to preach; when there is a conscious incongruity between the habitual bent of his mind, and those responsible duties which his office leads him to discharge. There is nothing that steels the heart and takes away all nobility of feeling more rapidly than this. Want of heart in the work of the ministry dries the juices of the soul, quenching the holy fire, till nothing is left but the cold cinders and gray ashes of hypocrisy. There can be no lower form of human misery than an unconsecrated priesthood. Hence the many cautions that are given to those who are assuming the work of the Christian ministry. Gather all your resources, mental and spiritual; baptize them with the tenderest affections of your heart, and pour them all out in preaching the everlasting Gospel. Focus yourself on the pulpit, and make it supreme. When a minister shirks his great work, and endeavours to make up for his mental flabbiness by incessant running about to all conventions, conferences, committees, soirees, or even among the families of his people, he may get the name of being a very busy man, or "a dear, good man." He may be called a number of endearing epithets, but it does not follow that he is an able minister of the New Testament. He is in great danger of losing himself in petty details; and as one has said, be "A man of hop, skip, and jump, to be varied only by jump, hop, and skip." And when he has done that, you seem to be at the bottom of him. Too many in this way excuse themselves from the necessity of this severe mental toil, which exhausts the energies and leaves us sometimes like a sucked orange. It is easy to drift from our moorings and float with the current; to become a gossip at the street corners, or a close attender at conventions. It is easy, and too common, to mistake the fussiness of the flesh for the zeal of the Spirit. But they are the elect who have such a love for the great work of preaching as to make them willing to yield the best offerings of their brain and heart. Few are ready to offer themselves on the altar in devotion to duty.

Some congregations make foolish, unkind, cruel demands upon their minister, and insist that he should be an illustration of perpetual motion; and many a young man, full of zeal, yields to these demands in the morning of his work, and passes the day of his ministerial labours in wasting his energies.

In the name of that ministry in which the Church's glory rests, permit me to say, in all sober earnestness, OUR PEOPLE EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM US. A minister has to write as much as a lawyer in ordinary practice;

visit as much as a doctor; give as much attendance at Church courts as a member of Parliament; and, in addition, preach eloquent sermons every Sabbath. He must visit incessantly, and also be a modern Demosthenes; while in every household his lips must drop with honeyed wisdom. Moreover, he must give lectures occasionally, and these must be *rare treats to those who had the good fortune to be present*. He has to attend meetings, reasonable and unreasonable; be present at socials, reunions, etc., etc., and live in the community as if at college he had got wound up, and now, like a clock, could go on ticking for twenty, thirty, or forty years, without any trouble. The minister must be always on the move among his people, at every sick-bed, without notice; always in the homes of his people, and always in his own home to receive callers; at every public meeting, to deliver a brilliant speech; and have plenty of time to study and preach brilliant sermons and give eloquent lectures, brimful of genius; in fact, running over with originality and sanctified power—Salary \$600, the congregation raising \$400, and the Home Mission giving \$200!

But all these modern inventions, these thousand-and-one meetings, and all this shallow, parrot talk at conventions and Sabbath school Parliaments are sad substitutes for the grand, rugged, old-fashioned way of preaching the everlasting Gospel of the grace of God. "Preach the Word," let it ring in your ear day and night, and lie close upon your heart. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." It must be a preaching of the Cross. The life is in the blood. Preach Christ as the great atonement; glory in the Cross. It runs through all our religious, social, and political life. It permeates all conditions of society, from the base to the roof-tree! "The coronation of royalty is ratified by it; the judge takes his oath of office amid its sanctities. Its memorials cluster around our cathedral temples and humble village churches; the great message there proclaimed is a message from the Cross. Our beloved dead are laid in the silent grave with the words of Jesus and the resurrection in our hearts. The Cross reminds us of God's dealings with guilty men, and of that sacrifice offered up once for all. It is the substance of all our songs of praise. When we think of the Cross, we think of Jesus, our eternal Saviour, of the Rock cleft for us. The Cross reminds us of His infinite purity and infinite tenderness; of the chords of His love and the pouring out of His soul. It is, in short, the synonym of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. The Cross is the very power of God. The myriads of the redeemed before the throne on high are witnesses to and proofs of its saving power; while the tens of thousands on earth, saved from sin, clothed in their right mind, are a living testimony that the Cross has been the power of God to them. The very leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

This essential truth has been misunderstood and misrepresented. As being the very citadel of the Gospel fortress, where all the armoury of her spiritual conquests are kept, the legions of unbelief have beleaguered and assaulted it for many a day. Ridicule has shot her envenomed shafts at it. Philosophy, falsely so called, has sought to undermine it; heresy has poured her vials of wrath upon it; but still it remains as true and precious as ever. The Apostles preached it, wrote it, reasoned it, exulted in it, put it into their ascriptions of praise; it was the very fire and ecstasy of their apostleship. And the last voices we hear, as the sublime strain of Revelation ends, and the Apocalyptic vision of ages sweeps away before us, are the voices of the redeemed multitudes in songs of triumph before the throne, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," etc. "It behoved Christ to suffer." This is the centre truth of Christianity, against which the waves of unbelief have long been chafing, only to wash away the detritus which error has built around it, to reveal the truth so precious to every child of God.

Christ giving Himself a ransom for many, becomes the inmost and grandest power of the Gospel; it is its peculiar characteristic and crowning glory. In the light of the Cross the law becomes more sacred, truth more venerable, love more heavenly, and salvation more precious.

Christ crucified changes the very scenes and songs of heaven, and establishes a new form of worship, and inspires a new anthem of adoration, and diffuses a new joy through the shining ranks, and bathes the city in a sunshine which even heaven had never known, had it not been for the Cross which we preach. This

is the worship of the Lamb that was slain, and the song of praise unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

It is the truth—the substitution of the righteous for the guilty—that hangs a new glory around the Throne of the Almighty, and brings out into bolder relief the deepening glory of that heavenly country, and throws a new effulgence over yon celestial scenery, as the sun obscures the stars by spreading over them the glorious garments that clothe morning, when she steps forth from her pillar of cloud.

Let us, then, as the ministers of Jesus Christ, gird ourselves for this great argument, and lay our best sacrifices on this altar. Pray that the priests may be clothed with salvation, that the saints of God may shout for joy.

The realities of the Gospel with which you are charged are at once grand and solemn—Man's fall, and redemption through God's purpose of grace; His depravity of heart, and the Spirit's cleansing power through the blood of Jesus; the wages of sin, and the gift of God; the awful judgments and sweet promises; heaven and hell; everlasting shame and contempt, and endless blessedness amid the glories of God's love. With such a message, who need be weak in the pulpit? For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Don't conceal its edge in flowery oratory. Let it find an entrance, for "it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And when the truth comes home to the conscience, it becomes the power of God unto salvation. What work on earth so well deserves the offering of ourselves on the altar, as this work of the Christian ministry? To study God's word through and through, and hold its sacred truths in solution in your heart; to have a grasp of Christian doctrine in all its relations; and then to study the human soul that needs its saving grace, is not a thing that comes by accident. It must be through the baptism of the Spirit, consecrating you to the blessed work of the Christian ministry.

As one has said, when Paul was leaving Ephesus, where he had laboured three years, he did not feel confident that he was free from the blood of all men because he had kept the pulpit regularly supplied, had attended all the prayer meetings, had done all that his congregation expected of him; and that they in turn had paid his salary regularly, and in advance, in quarterly payments; and had honoured him with several donation parties. "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia," etc., etc.—Acts xx. 18-21. Such a spirit, and such labour, will be powerful anywhere and always, and will never lose its commanding influence amid the busiest scenes of human life. To men who sit in darkness, might not such a presentation of God be made them, as the breaking of the morning after a long night of trouble? Might it not be as the coming in of spring, when the icy indifference melts away amid golden sunshine, and song of birds, and May blossoms? Might not the Gospel be made a spiritual ozone, a breath of mountain air, pure and inspiring to thousands who are stifling in the hot-beds of iniquity?

How solemn to stand before our congregation in all the variety of their life! It is a subduing sight! What an overpowering sense of their manifold wants! So many concealed burdens; so many doubts and fears; so many hidden sorrows! There are so many perils on every hand; so many sad, sad histories, that love seeks to cover over; so many wrecks cast up amid the surf of society! What can we do in the face of all this evil! We point our people to the "Rock of Ages" cleft for them; and at no time does Jesus seem more precious, so crowned with glory and honour, as when we are permitted to preach His unsearchable riches, and commit our people to His holy keeping.

### IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM.

The following is an extract from an earnest appeal recently issued in pamphlet form by the Rev. W. A. McKay, M.A., of Woodstock, with the title, "Baptism Improved; or, Parents and Baptized Children Solemnly Reminded of their Obligations."

Will my brethren in the ministry suffer a word of exhortation on this matter? It is the humble but earnest appeal of a fellow-labourer in Christ. "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." Why should we not treat the sacrament of Baptism with as much reverence as we do the other sacrament—that of the Supper—giving it as much prominence in our teaching, and as much solemnity in the observance? Are both sacraments not equally important? The