

the New Testament: (1) Assembly, orderly or disorderly (Acts 19: 31, 39, 41); (2) A local Christian assembly, as the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1: 4) and those to which the epistles are addressed, which sometimes met in a private house (Rom. 16: 5; Col. 4: 15; Phil. 23); (3) The "assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven" (Heb. 12: 23); (4) The assembly of Jews in the wilderness. Acts (7: 38).

1. There are only two classes of Christ's churches—one local and visible, the other universal, spiritual and invisible. The invisible church will never all assemble until all the redeemed are gathered together in heaven.

2. A local church of Christ is an assembly of Christians, organized by themselves, after their conversion and baptism, for the stated work and service of God, according to the New Testament examples. It is an independent body, governed by the laws of Christ, as understood by the members and administered by themselves.

(1) A true church has only two classes of officers—ministers and deacons. The titles, bishop, elder, pastor and minister are applied to the same officer in different senses and relations. Ministers and deacons are ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands of a presbytery of ordained ministers, chosen by the church of which they are members, and by which they are set aside to that office. Ministers who are bishops or elders serve as pastors of churches and preachers of the Gospel; deacons serve in secular matters.

(2) There are only two church ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper, or communion. Baptism is the immersion in water of a professed, converted believer in Christ in the name of the Persons of the Trinity, by an ordained minister, as described above. Communion is the partaking by members of a church or churches of the same faith and order of broken bread and poured out wine, emblems of the broken body and shed blood of Christ, in memory of him, and is administered by a like ordained minister.

(3) The only true candidates for baptism, for church membership and for communion are such persons as have been "born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

(4) All true churches, as all true Christians, are missionaries, having regard to Christ's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." At death, "The wicked are turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God," the righteous go into life eternal. Christ will come the second time "in his glory and all the Holy angels with him?" then there will be a resurrection of all the dead and a general judgment as described in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

What the Ministry Offers a Man Today.

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Advent is the time for the revision of personal views and of personal ambitions. Our ambitions should never issue from our lower or ordinary moods. They should be set toward righteous ends, and the greatest foe to righteousness is any feeling of its impracticability. The spirit of Advent is the spirit of hope and courage. The coming of Christ more manifestly into our generation means the assurance on the part of good men that righteousness is practicable in our cities, in business and in personal life. The danger to society is not from the successes of men who wish ill to the world, but from the failures of men who wish to do well by the world. Power, efficient power, is a part of the birthright of all righteous souls. This is what Christ would have his disciples and followers believe concerning themselves individually and of one another. This is what the spirit of Advent tries to declare with joyful emphasis. Advent is the recurring protest of Christianity against the sense of powerlessness among men who really wish to do well by the world.

Therefore we ought to take account at this time of the shortcomings of the ambitions, and organized forces and personal faith of righteous men, righteous at least in their disposition towards God and their fellowmen. I shall try to make plain to you our own shortcomings, and those of like-minded men of our own time, at three points—as seen:

First, In the evasion of certain great callings.

Second, In the indifference of organized wealth to the public good.

Third, In the insufficiency of applied faith—faith in its application to duty.

I begin with that shortcoming which is nearest to our own personal lives, and to the life of our colleges and universities—the evasion of certain great callings, of which the chief illustration is the decline of interest on the part of college men in the ministry.

The authority for this charge of the evasion of the ministry by educated young men is from two sources—the statistics from the older colleges showing a marked decline within the last twenty-five years in the number of those entering the ministry; and the testimony of those who are best informed in regard to the standing of the ministry in some of the most intelligent religious denominations that the proportion of uneducated, and even untrained men is increasing. I do not care to discuss the reasons for this change. Showing how a given state of affairs has come

about does not justify its continuance. None of the reasons which have been given, in recent public conferences, for the decline of interest in the ministry are sufficient to show that it cannot be, and ought not to be arrested.

I turn at once to the reasons which ought to make the ministry attractive today to the strongest men in our colleges.

The ministry has resumed its place among the truth-seeking callings. Truth seeking was a large part of its original business. Jesus never allowed his disciples to believe that it was an easy matter to gain the truth. They were to seek for it as "hid treasure"; they were to see all and buy it. The search for truth was like walking the narrow way and making the strait gate. Nothing on the intellectual side of Christianity can be compared with the spirit of search after truth. Here lies the contrast religiously between the intellectual spirit of my generation and that of your generation. The intellectual spirit of my generation was culture, culminating in theological training. The intellectual spirit of your generation is search, culminating in the personal holding of acquired truth. There is very little of "delivered" truth in the modern school of theology. Men are taught how to find it.

It is a magnificent challenge which the spirit of search offer to-day to an honest and brave soul in the name of religious truth.

I do not see how a profoundly truth-loving man can pass it by unless he seeks intellectual satisfaction in some other part of the wide field of truth.

But you ask, Will the church listen to the truth thus sought out and acquired? Do not for a moment doubt it, provided the truth has kindled your own soul. Nobody wants criticism in the pulpit. Everybody wants truth as fresh as a man can bring it from the sources. The day of the preacher who thinks on a level with the unstudied thought of the churches is over. The churches want, as much as they need, ministers who will think under them, and far enough down, to lift them. Have faith in the integrity of your own soul. Only be sure that the truth you hold in mind has found its home in your soul.

The ministry of today gives direct moral and spiritual approach to men. Men are becoming more and more accessible. The barriers between the minister and other men are down, the barriers, that is, of mere conventionalism whether in thought or manner. If a minister has learned to think, as a straightforward man of his time is in the habit of thinking, he can talk with him on religion out of the pulpit, as he can speak to him of religion from the pulpit. Do not think that the language of the minister is simply the language of pity and compassion; it is also, if he knows his business, the language of authority. The best place to touch a man today is in his conscience. There is where men wait the word of inspiration and quickening, as well as the word of rebuke. You relieve the monotony of duty by giving it place in the imagination and in the heart but its home is in the conscience.

I dwell upon this fact because we have almost come to think that the highest works of the ministry is in the slums. There is no highest work in the ministry. It is all of a grade to the minister who really wants to lift his fellowmen each man to his best. The man with ten talents living at the rate of two is as pitiable an object as the man who has but one talent, and who does not know that he has that, or knows that he has spent it. There is no limit to the power of the truth-loving minister who has an insight into truth. A friend in another profession, and that the profession which is, I think, the most advanced of any today, the profession of medicine, said to me recently, "After all, the most authoritative man in the community is the minister."

The ministry on its personal side offers to a man the joy of simplicity in the midst of the unsatisfying complexity of our time. There are a good many restrictions upon a man who enters the ministry restrictions which a man of many desires and tastes feels. But in these days of excessive wealth, visible in nearly every community, there are restrictions upon the great majority of intelligent and cultured people. The time has come when a man of many desires must train himself to live for money, or train himself to live without a sufficiency of it. Who hesitates before the alternative? But if one chooses the simpler life let him fill it with the greatest joy. Let him outgrow his vexing limitations and live in the larger freedom of some satisfying service. I do not say that the ministry is the only form of satisfying service. I do not say that to the man who lives at the heart of it, there can be none more satisfying.

So I make my appeal to you in these Advent days not to evade the thought of the ministry. I have not said much to the college about the ministry these past ten years. They have been on the whole years for Christian scholars, the engineering corps of the Christian army, rather than for the militant work of the pulpit.

The time of the preacher has come and has come impatiently.

If you listen on the street you can hear the call from men. Listen in your closet and see if you cannot hear the call from God.

I am not speaking simply to the avowed Christian men of the college, I am speaking primarily to fifty among the strongest men of the college. It is you who are wanted first. Later the time will come for men of lesser power, I do not ask if you are

Christians. The best way of which I know for a man to become a Christian is to ask himself, What is the greatest and best thing which I can do with my life? I do not ask if you are what you ought to be morally. The call to service is in itself the sublimest call to repentance.—The Congregationalist.

Lights in the World.

It is an old thought, old as the Sermon on the Mount, but it holds a lesson of responsibility and opportunity which needs to be repeated again and again. A "light in the world," designed to help dispel the darkness of sin and show to others the path of life! It was not spoken to the twelve, but to the multitude of disciples gathered about the Master on the Horns of Hattin, and it applies to every disciple of the Lord, great or small, in all the world. Each one who owns his name at once becomes a light. Some one, writing lately on this subject, used this very beautiful illustration:

"In old New England days the evening meetings of the church were often held at early candlelight. The people came to the place of meeting in the last twilight glimmer, each with a candle, which he lighted as he took his seat. According to the number of the people was the illumination of the room, for every corner added his own share of light. So ought it to be in the illumination of the world, which Christ made the special office of his church. According to the number of disciples should be the shining of the light of life."

But that is only one phase of the truth—the phase which is most often dwelt upon. It is not the candle or the light house which most fully covers the Master's thought; it is rather the lightship anchored off the coast, and serving at once to show the channel and warn of the dangers of the hidden reef. By day the lookouts on the passing ships for mark upon her masts, and by night for the clear white light in her tops. While she is anchored to the solid rock beneath her message tells of safety and harbor and hope. Let her anchor chains part, and she drift from her proper moorings though only a little, and she holds danger and menace for all who meet her. They see her marks; they know where she should be, and, steering by what she tells them, they strike the rocks and sink.

Like the lightship, we bear our marks. Men know for what we stand. Anchored to Christ, the light we give helps them to safety and to God; but when we drift away from that sure mooring, still bearing the name of Christ, we lure them to danger if not to death. We are responsible for the light we show for the message which we give; and O! the opportunity that is ours, by consistent walk and conversation, to help men to salvation!

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—Lutheran Observer.

Perseverance.

The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints includes the doctrine of the faithfulness of the Almighty. It is part of the doctrine of election. Those whom God has chosen and called and justified he will also glorify. Paul put the matter clearly when he wrote: "We are confident that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Of course the Christian has a part in his own perseverance, just as he has in repentance, faith and growth in grace; but the better he does his part, the more fully he realizes that salvation from beginning to end is of the Lord. He obeys the command, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," and accepts the word of caution and encouragement which follows: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

There is no comfort in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints for those who live in sin. The testimony of their lives is that they are not saints. God's purpose to save and uphold any one is known only as he gives evidence that he is saved. The doctrine of election, with all that it involves, is one of comfort to Christian people, but it has no comfort and furnishes no excuse to those who fail to make their calling and election sure. The suggestion that one who is a Christian, being sure of salvation can go on in sin, is utterly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. Paul says: "Shall we continue in sin because grace abounds? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin continue any longer therein?" The doctrine is, that by God's grace Christians will persevere, not that they will give up and live as heathen. Christ said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." It is the mark of saints that they follow Christ. They are "ordained" to this as well as to eternal life. God's grace is sufficient for them both in this life and in that which is to come. They depend not on their own goodness, nor when they fall, on their own repentance, but on God. Their prayer is: "Thou wilt not suffer my foot to be moved." "The Lord will perfect that which [commences] me." Their determination is: "As for me, I will serve the Lord."—Sal.