

THE DANGERS OF THE ITINERANCY.

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WE have indicated some of the advantages of the itinerant plan of ministerial supply. That the system has *inconveniences* we cannot deny.—What system has not? It has its parallel in military tactics, where officers change their posts periodically, and regiments every few months. Our Methodist people often complain of this part of our economy, when one whom they deeply love is removed, when but for the system they might never have seen the minister of their affection. We may not like this or that in the system, but neither ministers or people have a right to look merely at what is most agreeable, or pleasant, or convenient, but rather at what is most efficient and successful,—for all personal preferences and feelings must be subordinated to the prosperity and extension of the Church. That the system is fraught with dangers we cannot deny. Let us notice a few of these dangers:—

1. One danger to the church is the loss of the pastorate. The pastorate is God's order. The pastoral functions embrace elements which mingle in the relationships of neighborhood, and home, and family. Time and diligence are needed to learn the necessities of a neighborhood or congregation, and often before this knowledge is acquired, the minister is removed to a new field of labor. This is felt chiefly in the great centres of industry and trade, where to gather in successfully a men should plant himself firmly, and watch the successive waves of population as they come. Is not here a reason why our city churches do not grow in membership as they should, and that we have to make such efforts to supply the loss and waste from the wear and tear of constant change? The system breaks down just where it should be most efficient. And does not this suggest the necessity of making some change which, while it will not impair itinerancy in general, will more eminently qualify for the responsible and sacred duties of the pastoral office. Itinerancy is at the foundation of our church government; but is the inexorable rule of change at the end of the third year essential to the itinerancy? Does it necessarily follow that a man must remain no longer than three years in one place, in order to constitute him an itinerant minister? Does the system consist in an arbitrary displacement of men at the end of an appointed time, rather than in sending men where they will best subserve the interests of the church? Would it not be better to remove those rules of limitation, and instead of lengthening the term of pastorate from three years to five years, as contemplated by some, take away all such trammels and restrictions, and leave the ministry wholly in the hands of the constituted authorities, to use them to the greatest advantage to the entire church? Certainly some modification of the system is needed if we would increase our pastoral power.