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THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL DEALING WITH THEIR PEOPLE, BY MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.—"A PASTOR'S SKETCHES."

The great work of the Minister is, without doubt, the preaching of the gospel. The pulpit is his arena where he has to do battle with the enemies of the King, and whence he has to tender messages of reconciliation on the part of his master to those who have hitherto been fighting against him. Nothing should interfere with the Minister's preparation for the work of the pulpit—Rather than go to the pulpit without due preparation, he must, if necessary, abridge even his time for family visitation. But while he is to look to the work of the pulpit as his peculiar work, he must not overlook other opportunities of obtaining access to his people; and while he addresses direct earnest appeals to his congregation from the pulpit, he must avail himself of opportunities—yea he must seek opportunities, of holding direct intercourse with his people individually. Unless this is done, he will find individuals who may have listened to his public ministrations year after year without ever having distinct views of their responsibility in the matter of personal religion. It is indeed no easy matter to engage successfully in this direct individual dealing with souls. Many do not like dealing of the kind; they will even parry attempts to lead them to converse on the things which belong to their eternal salvation. They do not like to deal faithfully with themselves, and they like still less to allow others to come to close quarters with them. Then again, not a few ministers are sensitive, and backward in dealing personally with their people. They may be sincerely desirous of being faithful, and of seeking the spiritual good of those for whose souls they are appointed to watch. But they may be at the same time constitutionally timid, and shrinking, and lack that self-possession which is required in seeking to hold direct intercourse with men, and striving to discover the various refuges of lies in which they may be fortifying themselves. But although there may be difficulties on both sides, ministers should stir themselves up to this duty, and their people should encourage their advances and open their hearts more to their spiritual teachers.

Indeed it may be regarded as one of the sad signs of a low state of religion, that there is so little direct intercourse on spiritual things between minister and people. People consult their physician when in sickness, and their lawyer when they meet with any difficulty in the management of their temporal affairs. But they seldom or never go to consult their pastor, to unfold to him their spiritual difficulties and perplexities, and ask counsel in regard to such difficulties. It would be well if both ministers and people sought more to cultivate this spiritual intercourse. Assuredly he will, in general, be one of the most successful ministers of the gospel, who labours most to come home to the hearts and consciences of his people, both by preaching and by his individual dealing with them.

We have been led to think of this subject by reading "*A Pastor's Sketches, or Conversations with Anxious Inquirers respecting the Way of Salvation*." By Ichabod S. Spencer D. D., Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York." Dr. Spencer, who died about nine months ago, was one of the most successful and honoured ministers of the gospel of these times. He was born in Vermont, in 1798, and after having been engaged in various charges, was settled in Brooklyn, in 1832. In connexion with his charge, he held for some years the Professorship extraordinary of Biblical History in Union College, New York, and was frequently invited to accept Professorships in various Theological Seminaries. Dr. Spencer was a man of high attainments and of sound learning. His published sermons sufficiently prove his intellectual and literary qualifications. "Few ministers of the everlasting gospel," says Dr. Spring, his Biographer, "if any, are more industrious and few have less occasion to lament mispent and wasted hours. The result was, he became one of the best and most effective preachers of the age—Few habitually spoke like him in discourses of such instructiveness, such attractive persuasion, such withering rebuke of wickedness, or such happy efforts upon the minds of men." But it was as a Pastor, that Dr. Spencer especially excelled. The duties of the pastoral office he discharged most diligently and methodically.—He carried, we are told, a book containing the names and places of abode of all the members of his congregation in which he made such entries as might serve to help his memory and guide him in his visits and conversations. He had a happy faculty of gaining the confidence of his people, and leading them to speak without reserve on spiritual things. The volumes entitled "*A Pastor's Sketches*" which have been published for some years, and which are extensively circulated, contain the substance of conversations which he held with individuals in the course of his ministry. We take this opportunity of recommending these volumes both to ministers and to people. They are fitted to be useful to both. Ministers may learn the importance of individual dealing with the souls entrusted to their care, and may gain experience in dealing with the various classes of persons they may meet with, while people generally may profit

by the perusal of these sketches, in which are set forth various difficulties which perplex anxious enquirers, and the way of salvation clearly pointed out. We observe that an English Edition of these sketches has been published, with an introduction by Rev. J. Angell James, on the great end of preaching. Few can be expected to excel like Dr. Spencer in this department of pastoral work. Few have that knowledge of human nature, that insight into character, and that readiness in meeting difficulties, and repelling objections which he possessed. Nor indeed would we recommend the frequent publication of such conversations, because this would tend to alter their character, and lessen confidence between ministers and people. But we do recommend more frequent attempts on the part of Pastors, in a spirit of love and faithfulness, to have close personal dealing with their people. We would urge them to look on this, more than they generally do, as part of their special work, imitating in this respect the great apostle of the Gentiles who could say, "remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one, day and night, with tears," and imitating the great Missionary, whom repeatedly, as at the well of Samaria, we find quietly and unostentatiously engaged in dealing with individual souls.

PRESBYTERIAN LITURGIES

It used to be generally supposed that the use of a liturgy, or set form of prayer and sacramental services, was one of the principal characteristics of Episcopacy as distinguished from Presbytery. But, for some time past, the use of a liturgy has been advocated, and in some instances, practised by members of various communions, in which forms of prayer have not been heretofore used. The question, we understand, is taken up by the English Independents, and is favoured by some of their leading men. Dr. Cumming, of London, one of the most popular preachers in the English metropolis uses, we have heard, something of the nature of a liturgy. The Congregationalists of New England it is said, are also discussing the expediency of the forms of prayer. Thus, it would appear, that in many quarters, the subject is occupying the attention of individuals in various communions.

It would appear to be engaging the attention of Presbyterian ministers on this continent. In the July number of the *Princeton Review*, we find an article on the subject of Liturgies, being a review of a work entitled "Eutaxia; or the Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches: by a minister of the Presbyterian Church." The writer of this article admits that the compulsory use of liturgies is inconsistent with that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free,—he even admits that the theory of Presbyterianism is opposed to the use of liturgies. He admits, indeed, the force of most of the objections which are usually urged against the use of set forms of prayer, but while he grants the expediency of compulsory forms, he thinks the Presbyterian Church has gone to the other extreme in giving up forms altogether. He states