

it will not unfrequently be found that this is a *cultivated grace*. (Hear, hear.) Reverently do I recognise the operations of the Holy Spirit, who 'helps our infirmities.' But I need hardly remind my ministerial brethren that the very word which Paul uses in that phrase implies a necessary effort on our part, in the way of preparation, which is as essential as the aid of the Divine agent. I believe it will be found that those who hold men almost spellbound by their fervent and wonderfully appropriate petitions are they who have, by reflection and observation, made themselves familiar with the topics which their prayers should embrace, and try to give order and lucidity to their petitions, which are thus made incisive and pertinent; and, if offered in the true spirit of devotion, not only prevail with God, but enlist the attention and sympathy of men whose hearts silently ascend with the uttered words to the throne of grace."

Ministers, too, he says, should control the *psalmody* of the church. "We ought always to choose our own hymns, never delegating that duty to any organist or leader, however competent. (Hear, hear.) We know the thoughts that are likely to be in our minds in the sermon and prayer, and should so arrange that there shall be a harmony between the psalmody and the preaching—an integral unity. If I am told God does not draw or save men by exquisite singing, I would venture to ask, with due humility, 'How do you know this?' If you reply, it is by 'the foolishness of preaching He saves them that believe,' I answer, there may be a powerful sermon in a solemn psalm—that 'a song may catch him who a sermon flies,'—that as the lilies of the field, in their beauty, may be made instrumental in illustrating a great truth, so the melody of sweet sounds may be the vehicle in which some glorious gospel doctrine may be carried to a thoughtless heart. Certainly, no one will venture to assert that God wants us to drive people away by execrable singing; and if that be allowed, my point is gained."

On the *length of the sermon*, he remarks: "Some people seem to think that the end of a pulpit discourse is getting quickly to the end—(laughter)—with the smallest possible demand upon the hearers' mental powers. Apparently these complainers do not want the instruction afforded, but are eager to get the exercise over, as if it were a species of punishment, or a dose of unpalatable medicine. If our congregations were composed chiefly of children, whose attention cannot be long sustained, and who must be 'fed with milk, and not with strong meat,' we could understand this. Brethren, "in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." (Laughter.)

So of public religious services generally, he says: "The cry is for a still *further shortening* of them, and this is asked of us by men who do not find their business hours *long enough* for business purposes." Already the demand is, in some places, for only one service a day. "One hour and a half out of the one hundred and sixty-eight of the week, is all that these Christians can spare for public worship. Is this keeping holy the Sabbath day, when only a fragment of the morning is all that is devoted to God's ordinances? Is it a wonder that so little Scriptural knowledge is possessed, and that the piety of the Churches is so feeble?"

Then, after referring to the want of *regularity and of punctuality* on the part of many church members in their attendance on public worship, and at the Communion, he says: "There is, I fear, a great deal of looseness in the notions of some amongst us as to the nature and obligations of membership. It may be sometimes assumed with too little thought, but it is certainly laid aside with far less. Every church of any size—especially in London—knows that the word '*withdrawn*' is written against the names of many on the roll of members, to indicate the retirement of such persons from fellowship, generally without one word of explanation or regret; so that whether they be living or dead, in communion with other churches, or again in the world, we know not. This state of things I am aware is not so likely to exist in country places, because the members are under easier and closer supervision; but it is a great and sore evil in our large towns, for which one would be glad to find a remedy."

Upon the subject of the *Sunday School* he utters these emphatic and weighty words:—