

live in hope of seeing the day when neither of the Sacraments, least of both that of the Holy Communion, will be ever spoken of in a merely statistical way—when they will be identified with nothing but the spiritual purposes for which they were instituted by Christ, and when heart-desire, voluntarily manifested, will be the only passport to their privileges. Let me not, however, be misunderstood. When I speak of greater freedom of access to sacramental rites, less hedging round of these by mere ecclesiastical regulations, I do not mean to belittle the importance of the helps which Ministers are enjoined or expected, by private interviews or in meetings for the purpose, to render to Candidates for admission to the Lord's table. I would be utterly misrepresenting my own deepest convictions and feelings if I did. I do not believe in, I never have, what go by the name of preparatory examinations, and I utterly abhor the very idea of taking advantage of such a time to impart instruction or awake enthusiasm about particular forms of Church government or pet theories touching ritual or doctrine. But I should be sorry to say anything which would have the effect of preventing those who have longings after the virtue and nourishment of the Holy Communion from coming to me to exchange, with all frankness and confidence, thoughts and sentiments upon what so intimately concerns the higher life. The thousands of conversations which I have had in these circumstances are among the most pleasing of the memories which gather around my entire ministry in both Scotland and Canada, and I cannot speak too warmly of the times of refreshing which they have been, if not to others, at least to myself. Instead of discouraging these, I wish I could find terms in which to more strongly commend them.

A reference to pastoral visitation is here naturally suggested. The vocabulary of language fails to supply words in which to fittingly acknowledge my indebtedness to this part of my parochial work. Some one once observed, that "next to the Word of God the best book Clergymen can read is the Book of human nature." I exceedingly regret that, with calls on the sick of such a large and scattered congregation, so numerous and often urgent, little time is left for general visitation. I cannot say I have much faith in the value of that kind of it which is more like the rounds of a census-taker, or, still more objectionable, is pursued with the design of recruiting for the observance of an approaching Holy Communion. I should like to have a greater amount of leisure for the cultivation of more kindly and social, less professional and formal, intercourse with my people. Ministers, quite as much as other men, are too apt to get into a rut in both ideas and habits; and many, in trying to escape from what they are accustomed to denounce as "the world," sacrifice much of wholesome influence for good which they might wield, and, living in a world too narrow as perhaps the other is too broad, become separate in aim and sympathy from the great majority of those to whom they minister. I have endeavoured to avoid this, in my humble judgment, great error; and I do not care who or how many know that there should be no place to which my parishioners go where I could not consistently be, nor any entertainment they have which I could not share with them. Some of you may have thought that there has been too little of the systematic, house-to-house and street-by-street visitation, such as prevailed in olden time when it was heralded by imposing announcements from the pulpit and accompanied by catechising and exhortation or hurried exposition of Scripture and as hurried prayer. I am so constituted that I cannot, comfortably or profitably, do any duty for form's sake or go through a cold routine of set tasks or services, while I am always ready and happy, when special circumstances call for it or a request to that effect is made, to offer such counsel as I can give or be the mouth-piece of families or persons at the footstool of the heavenly throne. Besides, it is simply impossible, even leaving out of view the tax of public engagements, to devote the same proportion of time to both the sick and healthful, the sad and glad, without neglecting those who are the most needful of comfort or guidance; and I am satisfied that the common sense and Christian feeling of the Congregation will recognise the force of this remark and approve of my, for the most part, confining my regular visits to those who are invalided or in distress. For the rest, may I flatter myself that there are few, if any, houses to which I go, in which my presence is looked upon as an intrusion to be dreaded or a bugbear and bar to rational enjoyment? I should be sorry if it should ever or anywhere be so.