

HOW TO CHEER THE PASTORS. I

D. CHARLES STAMFORD, D.D.

The first thing I shall say is, "Let those who are not pastors, let the chapels filled." You say, "This is the pastor's business." I say, "No!" The common theory is, "First, build a good chapel; next, get a good pastor to fill it." Against this I most cordially protest. The pastors to fill the chapels! How? You may perhaps remember the plan adopted by the holy Will am Grimshaw for filling Haworth Church. It is said that when he had read the Morning Service, he would give out a long psalm, then slipping away, armed with a horsewhip of uttermost virtue, he would visit all the public-houses, where he would apply it with swift, lively, and startling vigour, and so would drive out the astonished clowns before him to help fill the church. But though I admire his evangelic ecstasy, and confess to feeling a certain charm in his modus of expressing it, I fear that even if sanctioned by law, it was hardly accordant with the genius of the gospel. Besides, we are not all Grimshaws.

Dismissing this plan as inadequate, shew me "a more excellent way." The general answer to my demand is sure to be this, "You have only to preach the gospel, and every chapel will be filled." Will it? "Good preachers are sure to get good congregations" *Are they?* An eminent writer in another land, speaking about universities, and of the importance of getting the chairs filled by the best men, says, if you do so, students will be sure to come, for "you have no need to advertise the squirrels where the best nuts are to be found." Ah! but men are not squirrels. Squirrels know what is good for them. The little ants know where to get their grains. The birds never make any mistake about the berries. "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord." If men were what they ought to be, that is, if they were *right*, they would soon find out the good preachers and fill the chapels, but our very reason for preaching the gospel to them is that they are *not* right. Recollect that.

What is a pastor? Some Christians really seem to think that the word *pastor* means *evangelist*. No! every Christian here should be an evangelist, and "every one that heareth" is to say "Come." It is no gain, but a great loss, to turn a pastor into an evangelist only, instead of prizing him for what he is. A pastor after God's own heart is a man who feeds the people with knowledge and understanding. A pastor is a man who "feeds the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." A pastor is a man who answers to the description in Christ's charge to Peter. John Newton wisely says in "Eclectic Notes," "That charge is about feeding rather than gathering. It is not *gather*, but *feed* My sheep, *feed* My lambs." Among the methods of teaching and nurturing souls so as to feed them, I give the primacy to exposition; that is, to patient, plodding, unceasing labour to pray out, think out, and speak out what God really means in His Word, and this, in the first instance, is not likely to gather the multitude. It is for the pastor to feed; it is for you to gather. It is for him to clear away the stones and the veiling leaves from the waters; it is for *you* to say, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come to the waters and drink." It is for him "to give everyone a portion of meat in due season;" it is for *you* to "go into the streets and lanes of the city," and by such sweet and loving compulsion as the Holy Spirit prompts, to compel strangers to come in. Evangelize, evangelize, evangelize! but aim first at filling your own "place of solemnities," and then, with God's blessing, your own pastor's work there will make more evangelists.

To cheer the pastor, let everyone be careful as to what he thinks and says on the subject of pastoral success. This is a fast age, when men are inclined to think that the lightning is too slow, and the thunder not loud enough. It is a commercial age, when "perpetual commerce is creating a stockbroking habit, the habit of asking each man, thing, and institution, "Well what have you done since I saw you last?"

It is at the same time an age of excitement, when people crave for the stimulus of a spasmodic, sensational religion, and are ready to imagine that in religious affairs at any rate the engine is doing most work when the steam is most blowing off. The best pastors are great sufferers from these tendencies of the age. Some members of our churches discourage the man who edifies, by leaving him for the man who only shouts the gospel A B C, and in doing so they actually think that they show all the rarer spirituality and the higher life. They discourage the pastor by holding up to him the true standard some preacher who preaches to the nerves, and who therefore, to use a theatrical phrase, "fills the house." They discourage the pastor by expecting him to shew, in proof of his success, the kind of immediate effects that are very likely to follow the work of an evangelist—such as many clear and definite cases of conversion under his ministry. Conversions is all they understand by success. The good man longs for it more than they do. He is ready to say to his people in Rutherford's language, "My witness is in heaven that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two salvations to me." He is right to feel this, yet it must be remembered that conversion is not the stopping point but the starting point of the Christian life, that the pastor was specially to deal with that life *after* that starting point, and that success in this kind of dealing never can be tabulated. The common idea of success is, that it is something countable, and something that vitally includes sensation. But all success is not the same success; we may apply to its glory the principle expressed in the words, "One glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and one star differeth from another star in glory." Let us be sure that we mean what God means by success. Somewhere, I cannot now tell where, I have heard of a case like this. A deacon was speaking to a visitor about his pastor's want of success. No doubt he had often reminded his pastor of the same, with much condolence. "Well," said the visitor, "what is the proof?" "Proof? why, last year only one person joined the church." "Sir, who was that one?" "I don't know." "You must know—what was his name?" He looks into the church book, and finds that the name of the man who was the only one added is "Robert Moffatt." Then said the other, "Sir, when you added that man to the church, you added generations upon generations, and yet you have been making your pastor's life bitter by the dismal toll of that statistical complaint—'Only one'." Do you know what they once rang the bells of heaven for? It was over the conversion of *one* sinner, *only one*, and it was there reckoned to be such a great success that it made joy in the presence of the angels.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON 1 SAMUEL VI. 18, 19, AND HEBREWS XII. 24-25.

1 Sam. vi. 18-19. That wonderful ark of the covenant had been manifesting its sacredness among the Philistines, bringing down their idols and plaguing the people, till at last they send it away from them; and now we have to do with it at the great stone in the field of Joshua of Bethshemesh.

There, according to our English translation, God is represented as smiting "fifty thousand three score and ten men" for looking into the ark. The Hebrew reads "And He smote of (or among) the men of Bethshemesh because they looked into the ark of Jehovah—even He smote of (or among) the people seventy men fifty thousand men." Observe not "seventy men and fifty thousand men." Why not suppose the preposition employed twice to be understood and read, seventy men of (or among) fifty thousand men?

The Septuagint reads, "He smote among the people seventy men of fifty thousand men." Men after seventy being "*andras*" (accusative) and after fifty thousand "*andron*" (genitive).

Were this translation adopted we have seventy men slain of the people for looking into the ark of the covenant—an act of presumption and impiety—an act of disobedience to God's commands as enjoined

by his servant Moses. It was a refusal of Him that spake on earth as Mediator of the covenant that then was. An awful judgment and a solemn warning to the people, causing as we are informed great mourning among them. and thus, we conceive, a new name to the stone on which the ark stood—the great *Abel* (mourning) instead of the great *Eben* (stone) of verses 14-15. And if so, hence the words employed "until this day," not that the ark or the stone remain in the field until this day, as the supposition would lead to think, but that the stone was called Abel until this day, a monument of judgment. Thus we find the threshing floor of Atad called *Abel* Mizraim on account of the mourning of the Egyptians, Genesis I. 11. And here also the people mourned greatly owing to the judgment of God, and might well call the stone Abel.

In connection with this subject, I wish to add a thought on Hebrews XII. 24-25. There is a contrast here between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation. At the 18th verse the Apostle says, "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire," etc. But (verse 22) "ye are come unto Mount Zion," etc, and here in verse 24 "To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh" (or literally *speaking*, present participle, dative) "better than Abel" (leaving out the supplemented words). "See that ye refuse not Him speaking." Who is this or what is this speaking? I would say *Jesus the Mediator* of the new covenant; not, as some say, the blood of sprinkling speaking better than the blood of Abel, Cain's brother, or the blood of his sacrifice, for that takes us away from the Mosaic dispensation. But if the party speaking is Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant with His blood of sprinkling, then we would naturally suppose the Abel referred to was something connected with the mediator of the former dispensation and its blood of sprinkling—Moses and the ark of the covenant—and if so, we might at once consider the reference to be to Abel in 1 Samuel vi. 18. There we have the old covenant which undoubtedly speaks of mercy, but also of judgment, as the historical fact solemnly illustrates. If this were the reference we need no supplement, but simply "speaking better than Abel." With this view of Abel we see a reason for the neuter article (*to*) of some old MSS. which has been rejected for the masculine (*ton*). And again with this reference we find at once a connection with the 25th verse: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth (those seventy men at Abel) much more will we turn away from Him who is from heaven." "Speaketh" is a supplement and not so simple as "is." Moses was God's *earthly* messenger, but Jesus is from heaven. Moses earthly; Jesus heavenly—divine—came from heaven, speaks to us on earth; the same whose voice shook Sinai; but now hath He promised, saying: "Yet once more I shake not the earth only but also heaven." Let us take warning by Abel and see that we refuse not the Heavenly Mediator of the new covenant who speaks better things than Abel.

J. R. S.

PRESENTS AND PAY.

One is always well pleased to read of congregations being kind to their ministers, and of their giving them tokens of their affection, now in one way and now in another. But such pleasure will always depend on the condition that what is done in this fashion is not to make up in a partial degree for a deficient and poorly paid salary, but is over and above all that is justly due, or even all which, in the circumstances, could be reasonably expected. In the former case we can scarcely think of anything more humiliating and disagreeable than a fulsome address of praise and patronage, combined with a present, either in cash or in kind. In the latter, even that which in itself, may have little intrinsic value, becomes precious beyond all estimate, and many a time makes the wearied heart rejoice, and the discouraged and depressed labourer address himself with renewed energy to his work, not because he desires a gift, but because he longs for fruit which may