

THE BENEFITS WHICH MAY ARISE FROM CONFERENCES ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH OUR WORK AS MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.

We will not attempt to enumerate all the benefits which may arise from conferences on subjects immediately connected with our work as ministers of the Gospel.

It may be sufficient to point out some of the benefits which are likely to arise from a prayerful consideration of the many important subjects which might be brought before us. We have long felt persuaded that such conferences are required in order to obtain more of each other's minds on the various features of the chief work in which we are engaged from January to December. Some of us feel ourselves isolated and seldom have an opportunity for brotherly conference on many important matters connected with our work, which matters may not be regarded subjects of judicial investigation by the Presbytery, as have been nearly all, which have formed the substance of our business in the past. I believe all of us have felt that, however necessary it has been to consider and discuss the things which have come under our consideration in Presbytery. The discussion of them, generally, has not been efficient, in sending us home highly stimulated to greater developments in winning souls to Christ. They generally have been the outside things of the Church—the scaffolding—which have occupied our attention, and though closely connected with the spiritual, they are apt to be secular in their influences on minds not entirely holy, harmless, and undefiled. So we return to our respective fields of work, it may be a little sharpened in logic and dialectics, but not feeling the warm glow which should arise from the contact of Christian Soldiers, who have met for consultation regarding the best way to advance our Lord's Kingdom.

We do not disparage discussion regarding the external things of the Church—the internal. We believe them healthy, and well fitted in helping us to feel that all things are God's, and in delivering us from the delusion, that Christianity consists in a simpering modification, and a professed despite of all things earthly. Yet there may be a danger of running to the opposite extreme, when the only opportunities we have of meeting together are occupied almost exclusively with the externals. We have had our to-go-machines of longer duration, and the sharp rapier thrust with more deadly intent, than the importance of the occasion demanded, and a brother wounded in, rather than strengthened for his work; these have something of a secularizing influence on the mind, and to keep the thoughts from the matters more immediately bearing on the spiritual. Were we to have a larger infusion of the spiritual in our meetings, the external would suffer no loss, and we might be great gainers, in a variety of ways by the Conferences proposed.

We might have intellectual gain. It may be thought we have a sufficient intellectual stimulant in the study of the sermons we have to prepare for the people of our respective charges, and in the books where many different kinds of subjects are discussed by men of the highest talent and greatest learning. We believe that the study of the Word is well fitted to keep the students mind healthy, and that it shall ever be the source whence the intellect of man has its most powerful stimulus and strength in presenting old truths with spring like freshness and youthful vigor. Yet we are persuaded there is an intellectual stimulant in personal contact with living minds which cannot be obtained in any other way than by personal contact.

The information and mental culture to be gained by the study of books are very important in furnishing the mind with fresh thought and argument regarding the truths most surely believed among us; but which of us does not feel that, the amount of travel, of visiting, of public speaking, is physically exhausting, so that when we sit down to get the contents of a book into our mind the strongest impulse we are sensible of is a desire to have a physical rest. We feel it needful to enter upon a process of preliminary mental discipline in order to get the mind into a state capable of receiving the contents of a book, and after before this preliminary process is completed some other duty calls for attention, and the book has to be laid aside before the argument has got a place among our mental furniture.

If we have not some pressure from without; if we have not some definite object to push us to strenuous exertion, the inward desire of improving our gifts may be too feeble to lift us up from our physical languor. In personal contact with living men there is a stimulus which is not to be found in a book, and a more powerful

lover to lift us out of a "brown study" than is to be found in volumes of profound learning. That solitary effort has accomplished much is abundantly evidenced by the achievements of those who have labored, and those who will not stop, the earth, but the men have been few compared with those who have been pushed to do great things by being habitually brought in contact with their fellowmen. Biographies of modern times indicate that many of those who have risen from the ranks of the common laborer and mechanic to places of influence in the Church and State, found much of their stimulus to intellectual attainment in the Young Men's Christian Association, Literary Society or Debating Club. There they were brought into frequent contact with living minds, with congenial spirits, having aims similar to their own, where a mutual impulse was felt by all constraining and cheering them on to further effort in order to reach a higher point than they had yet attained. In their experience they have proved the truth of the proverb, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," Prov. xvii. 17.

Everywhere a similar argument is used for gathering young men together for study into our Colleges and Universities. On the grounds of economy some may plead for this; but the weighty argument for this we believe, is to be found in the mutual influence of numbers pursuing together similar branches of study. Satisfaction with one's own attainments is diminished when those of others are found to be at least equal. The spirit of emulation receives an impulse when placed side by side with a company of students. The narrow views common to the private student give place to those which are broader and more comprehensive, so that he becomes more cosmopolitan and better fitted to act more harmoniously with others in general pursuits of the human family.

We believe these associations have been good for us in our student days. We believe something like them would be good for us yet, though we have grown gray in the work of the Gospel ministry. With the vigour, the buoyance and the poetry of youth, healthy emulation is apt to pass away when we are placed without the range of that intellectual impulse which arises from habitual contact with fellow students. Isolation is apt to put us out of sympathy with other minds, and naturally we get more limited in our views regarding the general claims and necessities of our race.

We believe that frequent conference on subjects connected with our work would tend much to keep our intellectual powers in more vigorous exercise, and help to make the composition of our sermons—shall I say brilliant, no—fresh as in the days of youth, so that the young would find in our sermons, composed in advanced life, the same geniality of thought which found a response in the hearts of the young, like to that which met us in the early days of our ministry.

We might gain spiritually. We believe comparatively few, on this side the river, reach that spiritual purity which enables a man to feel a sacred reverence to all external things, as things of God, similar to the reverence commonly felt regarding the Word and the ordinance of prayer. They are few who can feel themselves as naturally drawn to the Saviour in thought, when they speak about the external things of the Church, or when they are receiving or disposing of dollars and cents, as they feel drawn in thought to Him when they hear of His love and suffering. The most of Christian men are apt to think and speak about outward things of the Church, exhortations, and prayer. Of the one class we are apt to feel and speak as the man of the world. Of the other we feel and speak as the devout Christian. Of the one we feel as if they belonged to man. Of the other as if belonged to God. When speaking of the one, all the feebleness incident to our fallen race may be allowed to intermingle without any consciousness of incongruity. We do not now say anything regarding the propriety of this distinction so often made. Of it we only say, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." It is on the fact we found an argument for Conferences on subjects bearing on the internal things of God's house.

We claim not to be among those already perfect—but would follow after. We confess to a tendency towards secularism when dealing with outward things. We acknowledge a power in them which draws us towards themselves, and away from reverential thoughts of God, or rather a weakness in us which keeps us from making them rounds in the ladder on which to get nearer to Him who has been lifted up to draw all men unto him. In other words, they have not the same direct and powerful influence in leading us to suppress the activities of the old man as have the considerations of those things connected, more specially, with the internal things of the Christian faith.

We are persuaded that these things, more powerful in lifting us spiritually,

should have a larger share of our attention when we meet together as members of Presbytery. It would tend to fill our minds with clearer views concerning the nature of Church machinery, and our heart with more fervent feelings regarding things sacred, which are often treated as secular. The man who objected to take a collection for the edification of a church, because it was bringing the secular into too close connection with the Gospel, had need to learn that making the collection should have been an act of worship as sacred, as singing and prayer. More frequent and sincere contact with the things of God, in praise and prayer, would have done much to have stripped the collection of that profane covering, his forgetfulness and ignorance of the value of silver and gold, had led him to throw over it.

More mutual contact will the deeper things of the Gospel might be useful in abridging discussion regarding minor points, and in making us feel more the gravity of outward things as well as inward. We are persuaded that not having such conferences as is proposed, we lack one of the valuable means by which a deeper state of spirituality might be obtained. We sometimes hear complaints that all which is commonly done at our meetings, as done by a few and the rest sit as dumb spectators. This has been given as a reason for non-attendance on meetings.

We have not much sympathy with this complaint. Whether we be the individuals who initiate, or execute the resolutions of Presbytery, or only give a silent consent, we should all be interested in that which is designed to advance the cause of our common Master. Surely our hearts should be large enough to feel interested in that which concerns any brother in Christ, even though we may not see any personal advantage arising to ourselves from the resolution.

We have not much hope of silencing such complaints by instituting the Conferences proposed; but they will afford opportunities of getting and giving personal benefits to all who will attend and take interest in them.

We might gain ministerially. However well qualified any one of us may be for the work of the ministry, all of us are capable of improvement, and we think if we learned under the teaching of men of like passions, with ourselves when young men we are capable of doing so still, perhaps some of us would be more apt students now, than we were then, at least we know our ignorance better. The younger may learn of the more experienced, and the older may learn of the less experienced regarding many things closely bearing on our work, such as how shall we best deal with the young who are hearers but delay decision for Christ.

How shall we best deal with backsliders?

The necessity of personal dealing with parents regarding their making efforts for the salvation of their children. The propriety of lecturing in order through a book of Scripture. The propriety of giving a series of sermons on the same or cognate subjects. The best time and method of preparing discourses. The propriety of keeping up a system of critical study of the scripture. Is the study of science needful to give freedom and breadth to the mind?

How may the knowledge of modern science help us to preach the Gospel better? A brotherly conference on such subjects might be accompanied with profit. We have felt with many that our early education did not bear sufficiently close upon the difficulties of our work as preachers and pastors. The work was entered and difficulties met for which we had no preparation. Having no hint of the experience of others in like circumstances, the difficulties were met, sometimes they were overcome, sometimes we were overcome, but in most cases there have been many blunders which a little experience might have avoided. The men of experience have possessions which they have acquired in the pastoral work, and which, we believe, they not only should be ready, but are standing willing to bestow them all on their brethren. The acquisition of it by many of us would be valuable, and we do not know any better way in which it could be given and obtained than in conference.

The officers of an army are not satisfied with the training of the military school, nor with the individual training they get in the field of conflict. They consult at every opportunity how they may most successfully meet the enemy. If we may so speak, they cast their experience into a common treasury of which all may become sharers, so that the end they all have at heart may be reached.

From this wisdom of the men of the world the office-bearers of the Church may learn much. Were the example more followed, there would be more unity of purpose and more success against the cunning of the foe.

Consultation regarding the duties of our office would be a power by increasing our knowledge of things connected with our work which are not to be learned in books, by making us feel more interested in one another by binding us more closely together as brethren,

and cheering those who labour under a sense of their isolation.

Such conferences would do much to send us home from our meetings of Presbytery to our respective fields of work with renewed zeal and increased hope of attaining great success in all the branches of his duties. They should be honestly tried.

OPINIONS OF GREAT MEN ON THE SABBATH.

"If Sunday had not been observed as a day of rest during the last three centuries, I have not the smallest doubt that we should have been at this moment a poor and less civilized people than we are."—Lord Macaulay.

"There is no religion without worship, and no worship without the Sabbath."—Comte Montalambert.

"The more faithfully he applied himself to the duties of the Lord's day, the more happy and successful was his business during the week."—Sir Matthew Hale.

"A corruption of morals usually follows the profanation of the Sabbath."—Blackstone.

"The Sabbath, as a political institution, is of inestimable value, independently of its claims to divine authority."—Adam Smith.

"Sunday is a day of account, and a candid account every seventh day is the best preparation for the great day of account."—Lord Kaimes.

"Give to the world one half of the Sunday, and you will find that religion has no strong hold of the other. Pass the morning at church, and the evening, according to your taste or rank, in the cricket field or the opera, and you will soon find thoughts of the evening hazards and bets intrude themselves on the sermon, and the recollections of the popular melody interfere with the Psalms."—Sir Walter Scott.

"I feel as if God had, by giving the Sabbath, given fifty-two springs in the year."—S. T. Coleridge.

"A Sunday given to the soul is the best of all means of refreshment to the mere intellect."—Isaac Taylor.

"Where there is no Christian Sabbath, there is no Christian morality; and without this, free institutions cannot long be sustained."—Justice McLean.

"The religious character of an institution so ancient, so sacred, so lawful, and so necessary to the peace, the comfort and the respectability of society, ought alone be sufficient for its protection; but, that failing, surely the laws of the land, made for its account, ought to be as strictly enforced as the laws for the protection of person and property. If the Sunday laws be neglected or despised, the laws of person and property will soon share their fate, and be equally disregarded."—Attorney General Bates.

"We are to account the sanctification of one day in seven a duty which God's immutable law doth exact forever."—Richard Hooker.

"The very life of religion doth much depend upon the solemn observance of the Sabbath; consider, if we should but intermit the keeping of it for one year, what a height of profaneness would ensue, in those that fear not God!"—Archbishop Leighton.

"We never, in the whole course of our recollections, met with a Christian friend, who bore upon his character every other evidence of the Spirit's operation, who did not remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."—Dr. Chalmers.

"The Sabbath must be observed as a day of rest. This I do not state as an opinion, but knowing that it has its foundation upon a law in man's nature as fixed as that he must take food or die."—Willard Parker, M.D.

"As a day of rest, I view the Sabbath as a day of compensation for the inadequate restorative power of the body under continued labour and excitement. One day in seven, by the bounty of Providence, is thrown in as a day of compensation, to perfect by its repose the animal system."—John Richard Parre, M.D.

"So far as my observation extends, those who are in the habit of avoiding worldly cares on the Sabbath are the most remarkable for the perfect performance of their duties during the week. I have a firm belief that such persons are able to do more work, and do it in a better manner, in six days, than if they worked the whole seven."—John C. Warren, M.D.

INDUSTRY.

Man must have occupation or be miserable. Toil is the price of sleep and appetite, of health and enjoyment. The very necessity which overcomes our natural sloth is a blessing. The world does not contain a briar or a thorn which divine mercy could have spared. We are happier with the sterility, which we can overcome by industry, than we could have been with spontaneous plenty and unbounded profusion. The body and the mind are improved by the toil that fatigues them. The toil is a thousand times rewarded by the pleasure which it bestows. Its enjoyments are peculiar. No wealth can purchase them. No indulgence can last them. They flow only from the exertions which they repay.

THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

The *Allgemeine Zeitung* gives some interesting particulars as to the dispersion of the Jews over the world. In Palestine they have long been reduced to a very small proportion of their former number. They are now most numerous in the northern part of Africa, between Morocco and Egypt (where, especially in the Barbary States, they form the chief element of the population), and in that strip of Europe which extends from the Lower Danube to the Baltic. In the latter region there are about 1,000,000 Jews, most of whom are of the middle class among the Slavonic nationalities, while in the whole of Western Europe there are not 100,000 of them. In consequence of European migrations, descendants of these Jews have settled in America and Australia, where they are already multiplying in the large commercial towns in the same manner as in Europe, and much more rapidly than the Christian population. The Jewish settlers in Northern Africa are also increasing so much that they constantly spread farther to the South. Timbuctoo has, since 1858, been inhabited by a Jewish colony of traders. The other Jews in Africa are the Falashas, or Abyssinian black Jews, and a few European Jews at the Cape of Good Hope. There are numerous Jewish colonies in Yemen and Nedjran in Western Arabia. It has long been known that there are Jews in Persia and the countries on the Euphrates; in the Turcoman countries they inhabit the four fortresses of Scheresebs, Kitab, Sonamatan, and Urta Kur-an, and thirty small villages, residing in a separate quarter, but treated on an equal footing with the other inhabitants, though they have to pay higher taxes. There are also Jews in China, and in Cochin China there are both white and black Jews. The white Jews have a tradition, according to which in the year 70 A. D., their ancestors were 10,000 Jews who settled at Cranganore, on the coast of Malabar, after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. The Jews remained at Cranganore until 1565, when they were driven into the interior by the Portuguese. The black settlers are supposed to be native proselytes, and have a special synagogue of their own.

SIGHT FOR THE BLIND.

A blind man once applied to an eminent oculist to inquire concerning an operation upon his eyes. He had been blind from birth. The oculist, after a careful examination, said to him that if he would submit to a critical surgical operation, there was a bare possibility that for an instant he might see; it would be only for an instant—a gleam—and then all power of vision would be destroyed. He would never see again.

The blind man desired that the oculist should undertake the operation. The question now to be decided was, what objects should he place before him, so that if that thrilling moment came, he might gain his first and last view of them. He could at once decide. He desired that the dear friends who ministered to him in all those years of darkness should be seated in chairs while the oculist was engaged in the operation.

For a long time the blind man submitted, in the patience of hope. At length that moment came! it was only for a moment; but he saw his dear friends! What a look that must have been! Now their image would be indelibly impressed upon his heart; and that thrilling moment's view would be his constant solace in all his remaining life of darkness!

Look at another fact which the above illustrates. If you are still without Christ, you also are in darkness. Your soul is blind. You have never seen Christ as your Redeemer, "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." He is able and willing to open the blind eyes of your soul. Yes, the Divine oculist is himself your dearest friend, whom you have never seen. He offers to dispel your darkness and heal your blindness.—*American Messenger*.

THE REASON WHY.

Infidels should never talk of our giving up Christianity till they can propose something superior. Lord Chesterfield's answer, therefore, to an infidel lady, was very just. When at Brussels, he was invited by Voltaire to sup with him and Madame C—. The conversation happened to turn upon the affairs of England. "I think, my lord," said Madame C—, "that the Parliament of England consists of five or six hundred of the best-informed, and the most sensible men in the kingdom." "True, Madame, they are generally supposed to be so." "What, then, my lord, can be the reason they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?" "I suppose, Madame," replied his lordship, "it is because they have not been able to establish anything better in its stead. When they can, I do not doubt that in their wisdom they will readily adopt it."