

Messenger and Visitor

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Ability, Opportunity, Responsibility.

These three words sustain vital relations to each other. There is no opportunity where there is no ability, and no responsibility where there is no opportunity. To the Christian they are most significant. He who has the ability for service, or who may be able to acquire it by study and service, will find ample opportunity for the use of all his ransomed powers. If there be ability and opportunity then there is responsibility. Only those who have no ability, and consequently no opportunity, are free from the responsibility of Christian service. Who then are freed from this service? Only the helpless, infirm or foolish. It is not the strong or rich or wise only who can do efficient work for Christ. The young, even a little child, may help another. The ignorant, the poor, the very weak may, by kind words and deeds, comfort some troubled one or give a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. Whoever will, may, by cheery word, kindly deed or helpful act, bless some life, gladden some home or be a benediction to some community. Almost everybody can do one or more of these acts. If he *can*, there is the *ability*.

Opportunities for practical help to others are abundant. And it does not require special gifts or graces for this work. Those whom God has blessed with ability, small or large, can do it. The man who had the two talents and used them had the same thing said to him that was said to the man of five talents. We often forget that, and so often sigh for ability to do some great thing. We do not bear in mind that it is the men of small gifts rightly used who do the work of the world. Where there is one man of commanding ability there are one hundred of ordinary gifts. And to these there are opportunities everywhere. If these things are so responsibility rests somewhere. The man who is able to do and does not do anything to benefit and bless his fellows and so honor his Lord, is not only a failure but a criminal. He has committed three wrongs,—to himself, to his fellow-man and to his God.

Who is responsible if the Lord's work is not done? Why, those who have ability and opportunity. If souls are not saved, if believers are not built up, if a life of service is not rendered to God, why the men who knew the Master's will and did it not are responsible. It cannot well be otherwise. If our Home Mission work is not done, if men are not sent to tell the heathen of their lost condition and give them a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, if our educational institutions are not sustained, if our infirm ministers and their widows and orphan children are not cared for, if the poor are not fed and clothed, if the sick are not visited and comforted, and if the fallen are not reclaimed, somebody is responsible for the lack. Who can these be but those who have both ability and opportunity. Each man is responsible for himself, and as far as his influence goes. No one can do the work of another, and if each did his best how the cause of Christ would flourish both at home and abroad.

We are living in marvellous times. Our schools and churches and newspapers and books furnish splendid facilities for equipment for service. Some one has well said, "The next twenty years present the most glorious opportunity for work and results which the church has ever had." Better, far better to live today than to die and go to heaven. Bishop Taylor has said that he would rather spend the next twenty years in Africa than in heaven. Let the young men and maidens in all our churches feel the throbbings of a noble ambition and seize their glorious opportunity.

Editorial Notes.

—The Christian Intelligencer speaks of "Christian Science, as it is sometimes called, or Faith Cure, as it is more correctly termed." This confusion of two sects radically opposed to each other might be avoided by remembering Mr. Charles Dudley Warner's saying that to practice the mind cure you need no faith, and to practice the faith cure you need no mind.

—God is bounteously rewarding the labors of the United Presbyterian missions in Nyassaland, Africa. In a land where 20 years ago missionaries entered at the peril of their lives, 4,000 converts recently gathered, spent five days in meditation, prayer and song, and one day 284 converts were baptized.

—Rev. A. B. Simpson and his associates of the Christian Alliance secured cash and pledges amounting to \$112,000 from attendants at their meetings in Carnegie Hall, New York city, last Sunday. The event is an object lesson to all mission workers. It is evident that there are some people who believe in missions, and believe in them to such an extent as to give unreservedly for their support. Some of this money ought to have gone to denominational Boards struggling with debt and unable to meet the constantly increasing needs of the work under their control. Baptists especially will see that their own work does not suffer by gifts bestowed upon other organizations in the management of which they have nothing to say.

—"They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another." They could not help doing so. It gave them great satisfaction to know that they had something of eternal moment to talk about. They could not keep silent if they would, they would not if they could. It was good for those who spoke as well as for those who were spoken to. Would that Christian men spoke more of their hope and trust to others. If we say nothing, it looks as if we had nothing to say. "I hope your master has gone to heaven," said some one to a Southern slave in the old-time days of slavery. "I'm afraid he has not gone dare," replied Ben, "for I never heard him speak of dat. When he go to de Norf or to de Virginny Springs, he always be gittin' ready for weeks. I never see him gettin' ready for goin' to heaven." That simple negro's words have a weight of wisdom and solemn admonition to us all.

—In the Sunday School lessons of the past few weeks there have been references to the way the kings of Israel began their reigns. It is recorded of the best of them that *he began right*, and it was not until he had reigned some time that he went astray. And this was true of nearly all of them. They grew worse with the passing years. The possession of influence or power was too strong for them. They do not seem to have had the moral stamina to hold to the right and keep holding to it under all circumstances. Success makes more shipwrecks than failures. The same thing is true today. Sometimes you will find men whose path is a shining one, shining more and more unto the perfect day. The reverse is too often the case. The majority of the men who fill positions of trust and defraud their employers are men who have reached middle life or even old age. Many of them were counted as models of purity and honor. They were trusted and esteemed. They were not inexperienced young men with responsibilities thrust suddenly upon them, but men who had seen something of life and knew of its temptations and difficulties. In the churches a similar experience is found. The first days of a believer are often his best days. How frequently the heart of the pastor is saddened as he sees one after another of those who "began well" forsaking the Sunday School as teachers and the prayer meetings as helpers. Why is this? There must be a cause. The believer is to "grow in grace." And this growth is to be *up and out*,—toward God and man. Instead of being less interested, and less zealous and active, he should become more so. There is no doubt that our environment has much to do with our life. Unless watchful care is maintained, conscience will lose its sensitiveness and moral impulse will grow feeble. The spirit of the world will creep in and there will be less striving against sin. There is such a thing as growing strong in the Lord and the power of his might, and where this obtains nothing is more impressive and beautiful. Old age

which retains the dew of youth upon its head, and the freshness of love and zeal in the heart, and in which truth and righteousness are ever unfolding, is a crown of glory to any church. It is a great thing to see men stand firm and true amid the shocks of time. They are pillars, and give stability and strength to the cause which they represent. Such men are greatly needed. They are always in demand. But it must be confessed that in too many instances the people of today are very much like the Kings of Israel—their first days are their best days. This ought not to be.

Ordinations.

DEAR EDITOR.—While there have been some utterances in reference to ordinations, in the recent issues of MESSENGER AND VISITOR, kindly grant me space for a few thoughts in this connection. When I read the resolution, passed by the N. B. Western Association, I then thought it would cause friction. I am not surprised that some of our churches have rebelled. It did seem like a long stride towards the "assumption of ecclesiastical power" by the body, even while we know that such was not the motive of the brethren. But that our churches need to be cautious, and to be repeatedly cautioned, and that as a denomination we need some safeguards is too apparent to all. The expression, "he never should have been ordained," frequently heard, whether true or not I cannot say, is proof of this. Just what safeguards we shall erect, what standard we shall set up is a question which seems to be demanding the attention of the denomination. The chief thought the associations have had in mind—where I have heard the question discussed—in passing resolutions touching this matter, or appointing committee to be conferred with, seems to have been to guard against an uneducated ministry; emphasizing the fact that he, who comes into the ministry, should avail himself of all possible educational advantages before he seeks or a church asks for his ordination. This is as it should be, yet, at times, one cannot help but feel that education has been unduly magnified, while more important qualifications have been ignored, or at least passed over without so much as an emphasis.

In several instances, where councils have been called to consider the advisability of ordaining a brother, the first question has been, "What have been his educational advantages," *i. e.*, when the brother has not been known to be a B. A. Little groups of ministers and laymen may be seen, about the church grounds or in some corner of the vestry, discussing this matter while scarcely a question is asked about his living or his ability to preach the Word and lead the church. That there are qualifications which stand ahead of education, I think, we all admit. Have we not been passing over them too lightly? Would it not be well for us to put as much emphasis on them as we put on education? I do not mean that less stress should be placed on "mental training," but more, on more important requisites for the work. I have often thought that it would be well if we were to give more attention to the following qualifications:

1. The conversion of the man to be set apart to the work. It would not hurt him to be asked a few questions. Why should a council be satisfied with a mere statement? Any one in this day can give a good clear statement about conversion though he be the greatest sinner who ever lived. The air is full of grand experiences, any one may voice them who will.
2. His call to the ministry. If it is true as we repeatedly hear it said, that there are men in the ministry who were never called of God to this work, it is very important that we move with great care just here. It is boldly stated, by ministers and laymen, that the ministry is fast coming to be a profession, the same as that of a lawyer or physician. If these things are so, is it not time we should call a halt! There rises in the heart of every true child of God a desire to tell others of Christ and to be useful in winning souls to him, but this is far from a call to preach the gospel. He who enters this sacred office should do so only because he feels: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." And before hands are laid upon the head of any man he should give unquestionable proof of his call to the work. If a man thus enters the ministry under the pressure of the Divine hand, and feeling in his very soul that the disapprobation of God must rest upon him unless he give his life to this work, I cannot understand how he can so easily lay aside his sacred calling, after a few years to give his time and ability to some other work, even if it pertain to the extension of Christ's kingdom in the earth. There is surely as distinct a difference between a man called of God to be a preacher of the gospel and a man called of God to be a college professor, an editor, a secretary of a Board, etc., etc., as between a man called of God to preach and one called of God to be a blacksmith. In view of these things and many more which ought to be mentioned the "call to preach" is one of the most important things to be considered before ordination.

3. His ability to preach. His ability to preach, he just work as he calls him to college to obtain ability in his mind that it was so God he heard calling him to preach. Many a college course has no sermon on the most because he was content that a man should be a fully realize that one he learns anything else time he should be able as well show that there 4. He should be known. Ghost. To much st creation of life. Ha h hands for service? Is cymund, "Go ye," salaries, as well as to a year? Does his life o to the Lord prove th truth he preaches to o its level. The people plane of Christian liv the preacher. Theref vital godliness in our pulpit.

5. His knowledge of intelligent idea of the Word, at least. I ha councils, at the great ledge of Bible doct graduates of "our things I should like trespassed on your s thing, Mr. Editor, on this question in th exchange of thought matter of so much im be productive of muc North Brookfield.

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