

sermonizing, into contact with Scripture—you will know your subject at once, and be able to begin to read on it. The text of the other discourse should be got by the middle of the week at latest, and the more elaborate of the two finished on Friday. This makes a hard week; but it has its reward. There are few moods more splendid than a preacher's when, after a hard week's work, during which his mind has been incessantly active on the truth of God, and his spirit exalted by communion with the divine Spirit, he appears before his congregation on Sabbath, knowing he has an honestly-gotten message to lavish on them; just as there can be no coward and craven more abject than a minister with any conscience who appears in the pulpit after an idle, dishonest week, to cheat his congregation with a diet of fragments seasoned with counterfeit fervour.

But, besides being an interpreter of Scripture, a true minister fills the still higher position of a prophet. This congregation has asked you to become their spiritual overseer. But a minister is no minister unless he come to his sphere of labour under a far higher sanction; unless he be sent from God, with a message in his heart which he is burning to pour forth upon men. An apostle (that is, a messenger sent from God) and a prophet (that is, a man whose lips are impatient to speak the divine message which his heart is full of) every true minister must be. I trust you have such a message, the substance of which you could at this moment, if called upon, speak out in very few words. There is something wrong if from a man's preaching his hearers do not gather by degrees a scheme of doctrine—a message which the plainest of them could give account of.

What this message should be there exists no doubt at all in the Church of which you have to-day been ordained a minister. It can be nothing else than the evangelical scheme, as it has been understood and expounded by the greatest and most godly minds in all generations of the Church, and preached with fresh power in this country since the beginning of the present century. It has proved itself the power of God, to the revival of the Church and the conversion of souls, wherever it has been faithfully proclaimed; and it is a great trust which is committed to your hands to-day to be one of its heralds and conservators.

Not that we in this generation are to pledge ourselves to preach nothing except what was preached last generation. That would be a poor way of following in the footsteps of men who thought so independently and so faithfully fulfilled their own task. The area of topics introduced in the pulpit is widening, I think. Why should it not? The Bible is far greater and wider than any school or any generation; and we will fearlessly commit ourselves to it and go wherever it carries us, even though it should be far beyond the range of topics within which we are expected to confine ourselves. Your congregation will put one utterance side by side with another; and if you are a truly evangelical man, there will be no fear of their mistaking your standpoint. There is no kind of preaching so wearisome and unprofitable as an anxious, constrained, and formal repetition of the most prominent points of evangelical doctrine. The only cure for this is to keep in close contact with both human nature and the Bible, and be absolutely faithful to the impressions which they make on us.

Yet, take heed that your doctrine be such as will save them that hear you. What saving doctrine is has been determined in this land by a grand experiment; and it is only faithfulness to the history of Scotland, as well as to God and your people, to make it the sum and substance and the very breath of life of all your preaching. Our calling is emphatically "the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is the glorious message of the gospel, which alone can meet the deep spiritual wants of men.

Preach it out of a living experience. Bunyan, in his autobiography, gives an account of his own preaching, telling how, for the first two years of his ministry, he dwelt continually on the terrors of the law, because he was then quailing himself beneath them; how for the next two years he discoursed chiefly on Christ in

his offices, because he was then enjoying the comfort of these doctrines; and then, for a third couple of years, the mystery of union to Christ was the centre both of his preaching and his experience; and so on. That appears to me the very model of a true ministry—to be always preaching the truth one is experiencing oneself at the time, and so giving it out fresh like a discovery just made; while at the same time the centre of gravity, so to speak, of one's doctrine is constantly in motion, passing from one section of the sphere of evangelical truth to another, till it has in succession, passed through them all.

III. TAKE HEED TO THEM THAT HEAR YOU.

I almost envy you the new joy that will fill your heart soon, when you fairly get connected with your congregation. The first love of a minister for his own flock is as original and peculiar a blossom of the heart as any other that could be named. And the bond that unites him to those whom he has been the means of converting or raising to higher levels of life is one of the tenderest in existence.

You have come to a hearty people, who will be quite disposed to put a good construction on all you do. This is a busy community, that appreciates a man who works hard. If you do your work faithfully, and preach with the heart and the head, they will come to hear you. It is wonderful how lenient those who hear us are. You will wonder, I dare say, some Sabbaths, that they sit to hear you at all, or that, having heard you, they ever come back again. But if a man is really true, he is not condemned for a single poor sermon. Honesty and thorough work and good thinking are not so easily found in the world that a man who generally exhibits them can be neglected. If we fail it must surely generally be our own fault.

The more we put ourselves on a level with the people the better. We stoop to conquer. It is better to feel that we belong to the congregation than that it belongs to us. I like to think of the minister as only one of the congregation set apart by the rest for a particular purpose. A congregation is a number of people associated for their moral and spiritual improvement. And they say to one of their number, Look, brother, we are busy with our daily toils, and confused with domestic and worldly cares. We live in confusion and darkness. But we eagerly long for peace and light to cheer and illuminate our life; and we have heard there is a land where these are to be found—a land of repose and joy, full of thoughts that breathe and words that burn. But we cannot go thither ourselves; we are too embroiled in daily cares. Come, we will elect you, and set you free from our toils, and you shall go thither for us, and week by week trade with that land and bring us its treasures and its spoils. Oh, woe to him who accepts this election, and yet, failing through idleness to carry on the noble merchandise, appears week by week empty-handed, or with merely counterfeit treasure in his hands! Woe to him, too, if going to that land he forgets those who sent him, and spends his time there in selfish enjoyment of the delights of knowledge! Woe to him if he does not week by week return laden, and ever more richly laden, and saying, Yes, brothers, I have been to the land; and it is a land of light, and peace and nobleness. But I have never forgotten you and your needs, and the dear bonds of brotherhood. And look, I have brought you this, and this, and this, back. Take it to gladden and purify your life!

I esteem it one of the chief rewards of our profession that it makes us respect our fellow-men. It makes us continually think of even the most degraded of them as immortal souls, with magnificent undeveloped possibilities in them—as possible sons of God, and brethren of Christ, and heirs of heaven. Some men, by their profession, are continually tempted to take low views of human nature. But we are forced to think worthily of it. A minister is no minister who does not see wonder in the child in the cradle, and in the peasant in the field—relations with all time behind and before, and all eternity above and beneath. Not but that we see the seamy side too—the depths as well as the heights. We get glimpses of the awful sin of the heart, we are made to feel the force of corrupt nature's mere inert resistance to good influences, we have to feel the pain of the slowness of the movement of goodness, as perhaps no other men do. Yet love and undying faith in the value of the soul and hope for all men are the mainsprings of our activity.

For the end we always aim at is to save those who

hear us. Think what that is! What a magnificent life work! It is to fight against sin; to destroy the works of the devil, to make human souls gentle, noble, and Godlike, to help on the progress of the world, to sow the seed of the future, to prepare the population of heaven, to be fellow-sufferers and fellow-workers with Christ, and to glorify God.

This is your true work; and the only true measure of ministerial success is how many souls you save—save in every sense, in the sense of regeneration, and sanctification, and redemption.

SCIENTIFIC RATIONALITY.

The great Author of our being did not develop man out of any of the lower animals. He did not make him simply the most respectable brute, such as our "Scientists" seem to claim that they are, and avow themselves contented with the animal character; but he created him an incarnated soul, endowed with reason and conscience, and never required him to believe anything confounding to the one or in conflict with the other. Our "Scientists," as they call themselves, affect to put contempt upon this, gravely informing us that reason is nothing but a development of matter, common to men and beasts, and conscience a thing of educational instinct.

Darwin says: "Prof. Huxley, in the opinion of most competent judges, has conclusively shown that in every single visible character man differs less from the higher apes than these do from the lower members of the same order of primates." "The conclusion that man is the co-descendant with other species of some ancient, lower, and extinct form is not in any degree new. Lamarck long ago came to this conclusion, which has lately been maintained by several eminent naturalists and philosophers; for instance, Wallace, Huxley, Lyell, Vogt, Buchner, Rolle, and especially by Haeckel."—*The Descent of Man*, vol. i., pp. 3, 4. Their volumes, stuffed with such ineffable balderdash, are offered as proof of a position so intensely absurd that it defies the resources of rationality to do more in the way of an answer than express its indignation, pointing to such theorists as the most conspicuous examples of what infidelity can do for besotting the intellect. The assumption that this is the result of science, is a joke at their own expense.

Viewing man, as he everywhere recognizes himself, and as the Scriptures describe him, an original being from the start, endowed with an intellectual and moral nature, we must see that he is a creature of necessities which grow out of that nature, which can alone be met out of the storehouse of divine benevolence, and which are not included in the wants of the brute creation. If God, who is repudiated by our learned authors, aforesaid, has given man to know a class of facts and doctrines answering to these necessities of his mental and moral being, but impossible to be known in any other way than that of supernatural revelation, He must have given therewith certain infallible proofs of it whenever and wherever made. If we now show that this is just what has been done, by a line of facts infinitely more reliable than those depended upon by our "scientists" for their enormous conclusions, and that the evidence is just what is befitting, and, so far as we can see, imparted by the best possible methods, we may fairly claim a triumph so absolute as to drive all gainsayers into the position, not merely of atheists, but of anti-theists, whose only remaining excuse for their opposition to Revealed Truth will be a dogged assertion that there cannot possibly be a God to reveal it. To this position our more advanced "scientists" have already come. Bruno has thus expressed it: "A spirit exists in all things, and no body is so small but contains a part of the divine substance by which it is animated." In quoting this amazing sentence, Haeckel calls it "a noble idea of God!" Drunkenness then must be a divine virtue, since it is produced by imbibing God distilled from vegetable matter!—*Science of Revealed Truth*.

THE great ends of life are best gained by him who, in all his conduct, is animated by the love of Christ.

TO acknowledge that we have done wrong to a following-being is to give evidence of growth in wisdom and grace, if the wrong was consciously done.

POLISHED steel will not shine in the dark; no more can human reason, however refined and cultivated, shine efficaciously but it reflects the light of divine truth from heaven.—*Josh Foster*.