

the matter in them, lovers of their Lord, as eager for the work as a horse was for the battle, counting nothing too dear to lay on the altar, what more is necessary? A great deal—much training—years of practice and hundreds of failures; all of which will take time and patience. I shall say a word or two about preparation of *body* and *mind*, and then throw out a few suggestions about the *spirit* in which you should look forward to the work.

What about the body? Let it not be abused or neglected, for much depends on it for efficient work; in a certain sense all depends on it, for nothing can be done without it. How sad to see a young man who has, after years of labour, fitted himself for the work, dropping into the grave before he preaches a sermon. But though nothing so bad as this should happen, there may be a low health which will tell on every sermon preached. Uninteresting preaching—preaching that wants buoyancy—is often the result of weak health. The good man thinks that his faith is failing when the root of the trouble is nervous depression, when all that he needs is a month on the mountains, or a bath in the ocean brine. Heaven itself cannot stir the heart of a man who by ill-health has lost the power of being stirred. If you wish to speak with interest, if you wish to be able to look an audience in the face, and strike chords in the young and strong, as well as in the weak, you must keep the juices of your body sweet, and build your soul on a solid physical basis.

Passing from the body to the mind, I shall say little about the training of the intellect, because both here and in the university you have been under teachers better qualified than I to instruct you. And I know you are being prepared to meet the enemies of our faith who will spring up here and there, and obstruct your path. As a rule you will let these men alone, believing that the truth itself is the best defence, but you are ready when the worst comes to the worst to slay the enemy. And I trust to some of you it will be given to strike a sword in the very heart of some of those false systems of philosophy which teach that man is absolutely a product of the past, that he is what he is by forces over which he has no control, that the conformation of his brain determines his character, and that he is no more responsible for his moral state than the pigeon is for the colour of its feathers, or the fish for the shape of its fins.

But it was not this that I intended to say about the intellect. I wished to say that you are to be careful not to be too friendly with doubts in your student days. I know you cannot entirely avoid them, nor would it be wise, for you must know their faces in order to warn people against them. But, to use a Scotch phrase, do not let them "too far ben." "Never ask them to sit down or to spend a night with you." If

you do there is trouble ahead. If you make yourself familiar with doubts regarding the essential truths of Christianity, if you turn them over and over in your heart till you fall in love with them, and find it easier to think of *them* than the fair face of your Lord, you are sowing the seeds of a spiritual disease which will make you weak in the day of battle. Some day when you are climbing the pulpit stairs they will come back. In vain you will try to keep them out. They will enter and take the heart out of you. What I say is true, for I knew a man fourteen years ago and more, who was not lifted up to the third heavens, but dragged down to the confines of hell, and the memory of that time comes back at seasons with a strange trembling fear. Take warning, and do not make doubt your bosom companion.

At one time of my life I was greatly enamoured of the maxim: "believe nothing till you have proved it." I had learned it in the school of science, and it commended itself to my young judgment. I began to apply it to various Christian doctrines in the following manner: "I am told that the Bible is inspired but I cannot prove it for myself, and I must suspend my judgment. In regard to miracles there are learned men for them and learned men against them. I cannot settle the matter for myself and so I must suspend my judgment. With respect to the Resurrection of our Lord there is a dispute among the ablest men, and as I have not the means at present of examining the evidence, I must hold my mind in suspense." And thus I went on suspending till all the comforting companions of my soul were suspended. What a fool I was. Instead of the maxim: "believe nothing till you can prove it to be true," I would much rather have this: "doubt nothing in Christian faith till you can prove it to be false." Christian faith is a gift which has come to us from our forefathers, and which made them strong to do the right; it is wise for us to take it home to our souls, and to give it our generous confidence. Suspense of judgment is a proper attitude of mind in relation to many questions which ask for a solution, but if carried to an extreme it becomes ruinous. In my time I have read of many kinds of spiritual food, but among them all the poorest fare for an immortal soul is I-don't-know. He who feeds on this colourless gruel will do little either for God or man.

And now, leaving the intellect, let me say a word or two regarding the proper spirit of theological students.

I trust you value your classes, even that part of the work which you are in the habit of calling dry. But if you value it now you will value it more highly by-and-bye. Speaking for myself, I say with shame that I did not fully appreciate my classes till I was nearly done with them. In my first year when I was humbler I was receptive; but in the second and third I was impatient on account of the spirit of the age,