

insisting upon a close imitation of the apostolic model, should have so generally acquiesced in the establishment of the *individual* pastorate. We seem to have settled down to the belief that a plurality of bishops is impracticable. There is not a pastor among us, I am persuaded, who would have nothing to learn, and nothing to unlearn, in becoming one of a New Testament eldership; and yet we are often oppressed with the variety and multiplicity of pastoral duty, and are living in the practice of an ill-concealed antagonism or an acquired indifference to what we regard as the unreasonable exactions of our people. This remark applies almost equally to the ministry of all evangelical denominations. Personal observation satisfies your retiring Chairman of the almost universal existence of a chronic dissatisfaction with the ministry in the performance of pastoral duties; and he is firmly convinced that an unscriptural practice in regard to Church oversight is responsible for the evil. The remedy is within the reach of the Churches of our order, if, with the concurrence of their pastors they will put into requisition all available gifts, and set apart a sufficient number of suitable persons to the oversight of the flock, who will not only assume but actually share the responsibilities of government. Then there will be some meaning in the exhortation, "Obey *them* that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for *they* watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief." Why should the sickness or absence of one person intermit public worship, deplete the prayer meeting, suspend the administration of comfort to the sick, impair all the machinery of the Church, except perhaps the Sabbath School and possibly the Bible Class? And how can we in the pastoral office under such circumstances "give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word?" Brethren, if the Apostles said to the assembled Church in Jerusalem, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables," it was because they felt that the claims of the ministry of the word were paramount. Let us do what we can in pastoral oversight; afford ready access to all who come inquiring, "What must we do to be saved?" or seeking counsel in difficulties, or comfort in trials; let us prayerfully decide how much time can be devoted to domiciliary visitation, and in going from house to house let the frequency and character of our visits be determined to a considerable degree by our convictions of the necessity of the persons visited, carefully avoiding the self-deception that our duty is performed by making so many visits to each household within a specified period, a plan which has the recommendation of being methodical, and (if all private friendships are sacrificed, and every visit is pastoral) the further recommendation of impartiality, since all receive similar treatment—but a plan which is open to the fatal objection of being in the highest degree unnatural, and defeating the object of pastoral visitation by making the special treatment of peculiar cases impossible. Let us do what we can, I repeat, in pastoral oversight, but let nothing tempt us to superficial preparation for the pulpit. The Apostolic injunctions already quoted demand a prayerful study of the word. We cannot be workmen needing not to be ashamed; we cannot rightly divide the word of truth; we cannot make full proof of our ministry; we cannot show ourselves approved unto God; we cannot properly do the work of an evangelist, without devoting a very considerable portion of our time to the study of God's truth. It is a part of our duty to exhort and to convince gainsayers; and this can only be done, as Paul recommends that it should be done, by sound doctrine, by a holding fast of the faithful word. We are called to preach the Gospel that we may