

PASTORAL VISITATION.

Pastoral visitation is to be widely discriminated from social. The latter is often the antipodes of religious visiting, often selfish, fleshly, dissipating, a great consumer of time, of good eating, and of character. Pastoral visiting is official without officiality. As pastor he comes. His visit is limited, guarded, sweetened by the pastoral relation, which makes it direct, but not stiff; which gives it point and edge, but bandages the keen edge and sharp point with love. The pastoral visit is not to kill time, pay a call, talk gossip; but it means business—the highest business—the Master's business.

Nothing can substitute faithful pastoral visiting. The organizations which are flooding the Church are the rich outgrowth from the decaying pastorate, but they cannot be its substitutes; no invented Church machinery can do this work. It is the personal work of the preacher, and no vicious or friendly proxy can be substituted for his work. Books and their study cannot atone for the neglect of pastoral visiting. The study of his people is a better study for the pastor of souls than the study of books. Preaching of the best order will not do, but preaching of the best order the preacher cannot give without this pastoral visiting. His best sermons are learned in the homes of his people. The preacher can no more dispense and divide the word of God without visiting the homes of his people and feeling their spiritual pulse, than the doctor can prescribe without being by the bedside of his patient looking at his tongue and feeling his pulse. The visiting makes the Church aggressive and powerful.

"It is no longer a matter of opinion," says Dr. Strong, "that the Church has lost its hold on the masses." Pastoral care, pastoral work, pastoral visitation, will bridge the chasm and bind the masses to the Church with rivets stronger than steel. All the discussion about the preacher's influence declining would be hushed if pastoral visiting were the practice of the pulpit. The power of the preacher will decline, the masses will be alienated from the Church, if the ministry for any cause neglects pastoral visiting.—*Christian Advocate*.

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