

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

ANOTHER WORD FOR PASTORS.

BY J. B. H., OTTAWA.

It was in good season giving your readers the extract from a New York paper, and appropriately termed "A Word for the Pastors."

We all know the tendency to belittle the minister's efforts. How often is the string of supposed inattention in visiting harped upon; such a remark as "the minister has not entered my doors for months" frequently made? As a son of the manse, and knowing somewhat of the life peculiar to a faithful pastor, the writer has no sympathy with the utterance. On the contrary, when heard he wonders more and more why a reason never accompanies the observation to show cause for change in the ministerial course. Is it that the grumbler is not living up to his profession, or perchance neglects the ordinances of the Church? Ask him and we imagine he would feel insulted, and would call, in such a case, a visit an unwarrantable intrusion. Has he sickness either himself or in his family and the minister never goes near his house? The answer will be in the negative, for every one knows this charge cannot be brought against the ministers. Why then selfishly require time which the pastor can so profitably employ elsewhere? We are well aware ministers endeavour to visit every member once a year, but often that is impossible, simply from the magnitude of the undertaking. Surely then, some charity might be extended, and the will taken for the deed. It requires but a moment's reflection for a reasonable person to assent to the proposition. Referring more particularly to the work of a city clergyman, while at the same time not presuming to vindicate his thousand and one engagements, we imagine it would not be difficult to fully occupy the six days from Sabbath to Sabbath. For instance, considering the mental labour which must attend the preparation of two sermons a week for a critical and highly intelligent congregation, three days for study is meagre allowance, but even that limit is liable to be broken in upon by this one or that wishing advice, oftentimes assistance, in one way or another. Oh! but says some one, "It is an easy thing to write a sermon." Yes, just try and prepare a paper to take half an hour in delivery and then answer. In addition to the three days we add two for visiting the sick and burying the dead, perhaps the most trying portion of a minister's life, of which a layman has but a faint conception, and there only remain twelve hours out of the week for much needed rest or recreation, for, bear in mind, a minister is but human after all, though many are prone to think he is impervious to fatigue, and has no business to be occasionally out of sorts.

Now, would it not be a better state of affairs to exorcise this fault-finding spirit and in its place put forth a real earnest endeavour to strengthen the pastor in his great work by reaching out the helping hand; saying a kindly word for him; cease to be so very exacting; give him a good vacation once a year, cheerfully putting up with his absence; pay him well and promptly, and in other ways show his services are appreciated? We opine the conscientious verdict must be in the affirmative, and that not until it is reached will the grumbler cease his grumbling, and the minister, however faithful, be properly understood.

In any case let us make the attempt to kill off this no-visitation cry.

THE JOYFUL SPIRIT.

The religion of the Saviour, when properly understood, is always felt to be one of gladness. It gives freedom to the prisoner, health to the sick, eyes to the blind, food to the hungry, hope to the despairing—all kinds of blessing to men in all situations. God advertises it to us as that which He means shall make us happy and thus, lightening our hearts, take away some of the darkness that broods over the world because of sin. It is a good thing for us if we are saved by it, even if we do go to heaven in sackcloth; but it is a better thing to be saved so as to have real Christian joy in feeling the triumph of our redemption. There is a disposition in many persons to take a dark view of everything, and, curiously enough, they have their religion help them do so. They wear it as a kind of mask and shadow, and then declare the world as dark as their own hooded countenances.

The joyful life is the more hopeful one, and hence the more agreeable. It is a miserable experience which one indulges when he sees all things going wrong. Not only a cloud, but the heavens full of clouds, and not one with a silver lining, will make a dreary day for anybody. But with the spirit full of the happiness of the gospel it is different, and life can become, and does become, as bright as the morning. Although Christ was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, He had an abiding spring of joy within, and under its influence He looked to the joy set before Him, and thus endured the cross and bore the load of human shame. Only once He let it shine through in its splendour. When He became

transfigured, it filled all about Him with bewildering joy, and even attracted Moses and Elias to meet Him and share His joyful company.

Religion is always recommended most forcibly by the cheerfulness of those who profess it. A frequent notion is that it is gloomy, dreary, shadowy, leading by an easy transition into thorough mental and moral night. Sometimes it has that air and the judgment people then get of it cannot be blamed. Such an air is, however, only a caricature. The house of prayer is a joyful place; the Christian's noblest inspiration is that of joy in the Lord. He who accepts Christ may expect to have his soul filled with the most fruitful happiness, and to be crowned at last with the blessings of a kingdom in which the inhabitants are not only joyful, but whence sorrow and sighing have fled away. — *United Presbyterian.*

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CONSIDER THE LILIES. — Luke xii. 27.

BY MARGARET MONCRIFF, ST. MARY'S.

Behold the lilies of the field,
They neither toil nor spin;
They have no fear of future want,
They never knew of sin.

God gave to them their pure white dress,
That makes them look so fair;
Their roots are fed, their leaves expand
With sunshine and with air.

This lesson sweet, Christ gives us meet,
To ease the troubled mind;
It speaks to us of power, of love,
Of willingness combined.

Behold, I stand, reach out thy hand,
Thy friend, I'll then come in;
I will supply thy every need
And cleanse thee from all sin.

I'll give to thee that peace of mind
Which care cannot destroy;
I'll fill thy heart with thankfulness,
And thou shalt sing for joy.

I'll walk beside thee all the way,
And all thy foes overcome;
I'll give thee victory over death,
And Heaven shall be thy home.

I'll wipe the tears from off thine eyes,
Give thee a mansion fair,
And clothe thee with My righteousness,
More pure than lilies are.

No sin nor death can enter there,
Eternal joy is thine;
To be forever with the Lord
And in His beauty shine.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

In my younger years I tried once and again to solve the problem of the origin of evil. In my later life I have given up the attempt. I have become convinced that no one has cleared up the mystery, which remains as the one dark cloud in our sky.

The great German philosopher, Leibnitz, propounded a grand doctrine of optimism, which asserts that this is the best possible world; and this doctrine was expounded with glowing eloquence by Bolingbroke, and in terse verse by Pope. This style of sentiment prevailed in our literature for more than a century, and people did little to remove the evils in our world or to elevate the great mass of the people, many of whom sank in our great cities to the lowest depths of degradation. But in later times thinkers have been obliged to view the other aspects. Astronomy teaches the generation of worlds out of star dust. Geology tells us that death has reigned over all animated beings from the beginning. In all past ages there has been a struggle for existence.

We have now pessimism, which declares that the world is the worst possible, proclaimed and defended by a few moodish men of genius, and youths are wondering at it, and finding a confirmation of it in the circumstance that they are not meeting with an encouragement suited to their merits and their opinion of themselves.

On two points I have reached assurance: one is, that God is not, and cannot be, the author of evil; and on the other hand, that those intelligent creatures who commit sin are themselves to blame for it. Carrying those two convictions with me, I leave speculative questions with God, of whose existence and goodness I have such abundant proof.

On one other point I have reached assurance—the existence of pain is not inconsistent with the existence of love. Suffering is one of the most potent means of calling forth love. The shepherd left the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness to go after that which was lost. There was a tenderness in the interest which the father took in his returning prodigal son beyond what he felt for the one always with him, and which led him to run out to meet him and embrace him in his arms. There is joy in heaven among the holy angels over one sinner that repenteth.

"Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Man may feel at times as if he were kept at an infinite distance from God; yet if he would but think of it, there is an endearing element in the love of God toward sinful men not found in His love to the holy angels. There is pity. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." That apparent frown which we see at times on the face of God is assumed only because God has to mark His disapprobation of our conduct, His love all the while being ready to burst out. Thus it was that God was led to give up His only begotten Son to suffer and to die for us. It was this affection which led the Son to leave the bosom of the Father, and suffer and die on earth. The highest exercise of love which the universe discloses is the love of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—toward fallen and suffering man. "Herein indeed is love."

The mystery of darkness is swallowed up in the mystery of light, as we "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." — *Dr. McCosh.*

A MINISTRY OF POWER.

Our power in drawing men to Christ springs chiefly from our personal joy in Him, and the nearness of our personal communion with Him. The countenance that reflects most of Christ, and shines most with His love and grace is most fitted to attract the gaze of a careless, giddy world, and win their restless souls from the fascinations of creature-love and creature-beauty.

A ministry of power must be "the fruit of a holy, peaceful, loving itinerancy with the Lord. O how much depends on the holiness of our life, the consistency of our character, the heavenliness of our walk and conversation. Our life cannot be one of harmless obscurity. We must either repel or attract—save or ruin souls! How loud, then, the call; how strong the motive for spirituality of soul and circumspectness of life. How solemn the warning against worldly-mindedness and vanity, against levity and frivolity, negligence, sloth and formality.

Of all men a minister of Christ is especially called to walk with God. Everything depends on this; his own peace and joy, his own future reward at the coming of the Lord. This is the grand secret of ministerial success. One who walks with God reflects the light of His countenance upon a benighted world; and the closer he walks the more of this light does he reflect. One who walks with God carries in his very air and countenance a sweet serenity and holy joy that diffuse tranquility around. One who walks with God receives and imparts life whithersoever he goes, as it is written, "Out of him shall flow rivers of living water." He is not merely the world's light, but the world's fountain; dispersing the water of life on every side, and making the barren wastes blossom as the rose. His life is blessed, his example is blessed, his intercourse is blessed, his words are blessed, his ministry is blessed! Souls are saved, sinners are converted, and many are turned from their iniquity.

OUR OCTOBER WOODS.

Exquisite as are these October days of sunshine and rich colouring, perhaps we should tire of them if they were long continued. The very gorgeousness of the effects would, no doubt, ere long pall upon the eye, which never wearies of the more restful green of the summer woods. As it is, we feel that it is the short-lived beauty of a transient stage, and value it accordingly. Then there is the touch of a pathos which invests the dying glories of the summer with a sorrowful air, even to not over-sensitive minds. The withering of the flower, the fading of the leaf, are too suggestive of the transitory nature of all earthly delights. Happy they whose happiness stands on the firmer basis which "abideth forever!" Yet, if it is a foreshadowing of that one event which awaits all that is fairest and sweetest here below, this autumn season suggests also the complementary truth that through death ever comes life, fast following behind. It is the germinant bud of next year which is pushing off this summer's faded leaf; and nothing can be more interesting than to note how mother nature, even in the season of general death, is busily preparing and nourishing the full tide of life that will burst in with the coming spring. The falling acorn bears the germ that, with favouring conditions, will in a few months be a tiny sprouting oak. Under the soft mould wait the myriads of seeds and rootlets that are ere long to clothe the earth with a fresh mantle of verdure; and the brown leaves that seem to flutter sadly and reluctantly down, when even their autumn glory is over and drear November is at hand, are converted by nature's tender care into a soft and close mantle to protect from the wintry frosts the delicate flower which will be the glory of the spring! And so, even the always saddening season of nature's decay becomes a parable of resurrection to comfort hearts that suffer from a sense of far heavier loss; and that includes nearly all—does it not? — *Fidelis, in Week, Oct. 30.*