

THE MASTER'S TRUMPET

Issue 1 (May 2004)

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Cover: Thomas Chalmers about 1843, from a collection of calotypes by D. O. Hill and R. Adamson. Reproduced by permission of Glasgow University Library, Department of Special Collections.

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From the Editors

THE NAME CHOSEN FOR THIS PERIODICAL is drawn from John Knox's testimony, "I love to blow my Master's trumpet." It is our humble desire to blow loud the trumpet of the Lord Jesus.

This issue opens with a contemporary restatement of the spiritual heritage which we believe is received from the Scriptures and which is embodied in the constitution and life of the Free Church of Scotland.

The sermon on Christian resignation amidst trials is from the pulpit of Andrew Thomson (1779–1831), who led the resurgence of the evangelical Reformed faith in the Church of Scotland, preparatory to the Disruption of 1843, when the Free Church was formed.

The next piece is a charge to a congregation at the induction of its minister. John Macdonald (1807–1847) was the namesake of his father, the Scottish Highland evangelist who was known as "the apostle of the North." The son, after a compelling ministry in one of the Scots congregations in London, gave himself to missionary endeavor at Calcutta, India. His entire ministry was characterized by a boldness for Christ, and eminent personal consecration to the Savior.

Horatius Bonar (1808–1889), John Milne (1807–1868) and Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813–1843) were fellow laborers in the religious awakening enjoyed by many Scottish parishes during the period just before and after the Disruption. Bonar, in his memoir of Milne, delineates the spirituality of that remarkable generation.

Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) appears on the cover of this issue in one of several calotypes of Free Church ministers which were made about 1843 in preparation for the painting of a vast canvas depicting the Disruption Assembly. This issue concludes with a lecture from Chalmers' classroom at Edinburgh University. James Begg testified, "The theological course of Dr. Chalmers was extremely well worth attending, not only for the eloquence and power with which he expounded theological truth, and the deep interest which he took in all his students, but for the immense impulse which he gave to all who were capable of receiving it. The enthusiastic and unflagging action of the mind of Dr. Chalmers was something marvelous, and it was a most wholesome action to which to subject the minds of students. Immense good resulted from his class."

The Spiritual Heritage of the Free Church

THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND IS A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH adhering in its worship and doctrine to the position adopted by the Church of Scotland at the Reformation. At the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, the Free Church carried forward the spiritual identity and succession of the Reformation in Scotland.

At the heart of the Free Church heritage is the gospel of Jehovah's love in saving fallen creatures from their sin—a salvation arising from God's eternal election of a particular people, and pursued through redemption purchased by Christ alone and applied only at divine initiative, so that all the praise for the sinner's deliverance is reserved for the originating, procuring and efficacious love of God.

This salvation is publicly offered to the world through the commission which Christ has given to his church to preach the gospel to every creature. Every one who embraces the Lord's invitation to receive his freely-bestowed salvation, by placing his confidence in Christ as Mediator, will enter into reconciliation and everlasting communion with his Maker and Judge.

The institution of the church has as its first concern the worship of God. The Lord in his Word has explicitly reserved to himself the prerogative to determine the form of action to be used in his worship. Our faith and obedience towards him are to be visibly expressed by observing the worship forms he has sanctioned. The Lord has given us the canonical text of Scripture for public reading and for singing his praise, and has appointed the symbolic actions of baptism and the Lord's Supper, always to be accompanied by a verbal proclamation of the gospel through the exposition of Scripture. The prayer of faith is to underlie every act of worship. In the simplicity of these ordinances, the worshipper is to look by faith to the ascended Savior, the glory of whose priesthood lies not in the outward pomp of the Old Testament temple, but in the efficacy of his once-for-all sacrifice to take away our sin and to bring us into the kingdom of heaven.

The believer's experience of salvation is more than a mere acceptance of biblical doctrine. The Reformation age was marked by entire societies

committed to a Christian view of the world and life. But the Reformers knew that this intellectual and cultural posture was no indication that the multitudes had experienced the new birth, or found personal contrition for sin or fled to the Savior for deliverance. It is not enough that children be raised in the church or be educated in biblical principles. Preaching to the Congregation must show the way to Christ, discriminate between the converted and the unconverted, fence the Lord's table against the admission of all who are in scandalous sin, and warn professing Christians of the danger of eternal destruction if they are not in saving union with Christ. Preaching should delineate from the Scriptures what it means to experience the power of the truth, providing guidance to the believer for his self-examination, mortification of sin, pursuit of full assurance, patient submission to trouble, and fervent love to Christ.

The foundation for activity in every department of man's life is to be the acknowledgment of God's glory and the recognition of that true religion revealed in the Scriptures. Civil government and the social life of the nation are no exception to this universal obligation. Not only in the individual conscience of the believer, but also in the constitution and public policy of our corporate existence as a society, there must be commitment to the honor and authority of the true God. It belongs exclusively to the church to preach and administer the ordinances of worship and discipline. But in the civil ruler's administration of specifically civil matters, it is incumbent on him to recognize and promote the true religion. The departure of modern nations from this Reformation principle is the consequence of Enlightenment philosophy, as well as of fear among evangelicals that the privileges of an established religion would be abused and the spirituality of the church compromised. Two hundred years later, the consequences are manifest in the moral and spiritual waywardness of societies whose original populations were personally committed to biblical principles but who devised civil constitutions that eschewed commitment to biblical religion.

In every age the doctrines and practices known and loved by the parents must be taught to a new generation. There is no way around this necessity to train the successors, giving them a thorough grounding in the biblical truth and godly living which captured the hearts of a previous generation. Will we hold these things fast and learn to love them as dearly in our generation?

Christian Resignation

Andrew Thomson

“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.” Psalm 39:9.

WHEN DAVID COMPOSED THIS PSALM, he was evidently labouring under some heavy affliction. What that was, we are not informed. But whatever it may have been, it seems to have borne hard upon his spirit; for he says respecting it, “I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.” Nevertheless, he did not murmur or complain under the pressure of his distress. He thought of the character, and the providence, and the purposes of that great Being, to whose appointment he traced it, and under whose government he suffered. And influenced by the considerations which these suggested, as well as upheld by the grace for which he earnestly prayed, he repressed every mutinous feeling, and cherished the sentiments, and uttered the language, of a becoming resignation. He looked up to God and said “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

This was the conduct of David. But it is to be feared that there are many of us, who, though placed in his circumstances, do not imitate his example; that with some, the virtue which he thus exhibited is not maintained at all; and that with others, it is maintained but partially and reluctantly; that where the words of impatience are restrained from considerations of decency, the feeling of it is allowed to predominate; and that even where there is a cordial desire, and an earnest endeavour, to submit to the will of God, this submission is not practised with that cheerfulness, nor attended with that satisfaction which every true Christian will be anxious to experience.

To provide against this evil, there are two things that must be principally attended to. In the first place, we must study to be the real disciples of Christ. For if we be only nominally so, we are destitute of those principles, without which, we can neither see the reasonableness, nor feel the workings of resignation. This grace has, on that supposition, nothing either to produce or to support it in our hearts. When all goes well with us, we may talk about it, and inculcate it upon others, and

blame or pity those by whom it is not displayed. But when the day of our own probation comes, we have nothing to hold by or lean upon: We have no sense of an interest in the favour of Him by whom we are tried, no habitual confidence in the wisdom and mercy of his dealings with us, no well grounded expectation of being compensated for the possessions and enjoyments of which we are deprived; and therefore, we cannot freely or sincerely say that we are resigned, because the Lord has done it.

And, in the second place, if we be the real disciples of Christ, we must have our minds turned to those doctrines, and habituated to those exercises of religion, which may be considered as affording the appropriate grounds of submission amidst the calamities of life. Unless we have frequent recourse to these—unless we live under their perpetual influence—unless we wear them constantly as defensive armour against the adversities by which we are assailed—it is obvious that when these come upon us, as they often do, unexpectedly and severely, we are not prepared to meet them; our fortitude is apt to fail; and though we have then, as we have always, access to the throne of grace, yet our application there cannot be supposed to have the same fervency, or the same effect, as if we had gone with those pious impressions, rivetted on our minds, and familiar to our thoughts, by which we are constrained to say in the words and spirit of the text, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

Let us now attend shortly to some of those considerations which should encourage us to adopt this language in its full and genuine import.

1. In the first place, when God visits us with painful bereavements, we ought to be resigned, because he only takes away what is his own.

He is sole and absolute proprietor of the universe. It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that he should alienate any, the minutest, part of it. And, consequently, if he has bestowed any blessing upon us, there is necessarily attached to the gift this condition, that being still his own, he may recall it, at whatever time, and in whatever way he pleases. Accordingly, there is not a moment that we can say justly of any of the comforts of life, “This is ours,” without admitting at the same time that, in perfect rectitude, it may be taken from us, whenever it seems good to Him by whom it was originally given. He might indeed promise the

perpetuity of the boon which he confers; and in that case his faithfulness would be a sure and unfailing guarantee, that we should not be deprived of it. But this does not apply to any of the good things of a present world. Every one of these is, unquestionably, limited. It is conveyed to us for a particular purpose; and whenever it has fulfilled that purpose, or when, through our perversity, it has ceased to answer its purpose, or when the removal of it would accomplish a wiser or a better purpose, it can be no longer continued with us. Not that God will act from any arbitrary or capricious motive. His conduct must be always dictated and governed by the laws of infinite perfection. But it is still true that all our temporal mercies are at his sovereign disposal; and that, without any violation of the greatness and glory of his character, he may give them, and take them away, and restore them, and resume them again, according to his good pleasure.

In all this there is no injustice on his part; for may He not “do what he will with his own”? and there should be no disappointment on ours; for had we reflected, as we ought, on the nature of our condition as his dependent creatures, we must have perceived that all the blessings we enjoy are revocable and uncertain, and we should, therefore, have been prepared to part with them, whenever it might be so ordered by the inscrutable counsels of his providence. Instead, therefore, of feeling that any injury has been done us, when we are deprived even of those comforts which are dearest to us, and on whose continuance and security we reckoned with most confidence—instead of thus sinning and charging God foolishly—it becomes us to be grateful to him that we have possessed them so long, and in such measure—to condemn ourselves for having regarded them too much as our own absolute property—and, henceforward, to receive, and to hold, every blessing that may be put into our lot, with the conviction that it is still the Lord’s, and that he will do nothing but what is right, when he sees proper to recall it either in part or altogether.

We cannot help, indeed, forming attachments to earthly objects: this is not only natural, but subservient to our duty, and conducive to our happiness. And there is nothing, either in reason or in religion, which forbids us to feel and to cherish such attachments, when we do not thereby devote to the creature what should be devoted to the Creator, and lay up for ourselves a store of future disappointment and pain. But

surely it is wise to have them qualified and subdued, by the habitual persuasion, that they are liable to be dissolved, not by what is called accident—not by the malice or violence of our fellow-men—not by the power of a blind and irresistible fate, but by the will of Him who “ruleth over all”; and who, when he takes from us the objects of our affection, only takes from us what belongs to himself by divine inalienable right. And if we be accustomed to take this view of the subject, if we not only speculatively assent to it as an abstract truth, but have it as a part of our practical creed, and constantly realize its truth, and lay our account with its exemplification, in our personal experience, it will, without impairing one generous or useful sentiment, prevent us from indulging in fretfulness, or murmuring under our privations, and will lead us to surrender any comfort whatever, and to make the surrender with patience and readiness into the hands of God, from whom we at first received it, who in kindness has lent it to us for the passing day, or for the passing year, and who is as righteous in taking back, as he was merciful in bestowing the gift whose loss we deplore.

2. In the second place, we should not open our mouth with complaints when we are visited with painful bereavements, but observe the silence of resignation, because it is God who inflicts them, and the same God accompanies them with consolation and support.

In our very darkest and deepest afflictions of a temporal kind, it is seldom, if indeed ever, that we are abandoned to unmixed, and unalleviated suffering. To whatever deprivations we are subjected, there are always some comforts left behind, or some new comforts conveyed to us; which, if they do not compensate what has been taken from us, tend at least to diminish the extent and severity of the loss. This, indeed, may not be perceived or felt at the very moment that any calamity has overtaken us. But when our grief has so far subsided, as to allow us to form a calm and correct estimate of our situation, we shall be sensible that there remains to us much more of the good things of this life, than we at first imagined or were willing to allow. We may have lost a friend, but some are still left to cheer us, or others are raised up for our comfort in adversity. Our worldly substance may have failed; but health is still spared, and opportunities are still provided, by which we may recover our independence and renew our usefulness. One favourite speculation may have come to nothing, but another has succeeded. Our good name

may have been injured by the tongue of slander, but we have the means of vindicating what has been thus traduced, and of either living down the calumny, or exposing its injustice and malevolence.

We look on the one hand, and we see the darkness of adversity approaching us: but we look on the other, and behold the light of joy is springing up to cheer our hearts, and chase away our sorrows. And has it not often actually happened in the case of the afflicted, that “their latter end,” like that of Job, has been “much more than their beginning”? In all this there is something that is well fitted to inspire us with patience and contentment. Whatever we suffer is much less, and whatever we enjoy is much more, than we deserve. Considering that we are sinners, and that the best of us are great sinners, we may well ask, “shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also”? And we may well wonder that he has given us so much of the one, and laid upon us so little of the other. Nor is there a blessing of which we are allowed to partake, that does not intimate to us the benignity of Him by whom we are afflicted, and give us the assurance that, notwithstanding all that he is causing us to suffer, he has not abandoned us to destitution and pain, but has much kindness in store for us, if we will but listen to his warning voice, and “turn our feet unto his testimonies.”

But He gives us consolation and support of a spiritual kind, far more precious and far more efficacious still. Let our temporal privations be as numerous and as severe as they may, still there are sources of comfort which are not only accessible to us, but to which we are invited, and from which we may derive all that is needful to sustain our minds. We have the Bible, containing doctrines that make us acquainted with that system of administration under which we are placed, and promises to excite and animate our hopes, and counsels to direct our steps in the most rugged paths that we have to tread, and examples to bring before us in all its excellence and all its power the virtue of suffering patience. We have “the throne of grace,” where we may go, in the confidence of faith, to unbosom our griefs to our heavenly Father, to commit ourselves to his mercy and protection, and to obtain “the help” that he has promised to send us in “our time of need.” We have the Holy Spirit, who is the comforter of the people of God in the season of distress, and who will communicate to us those secret, but real and powerful influences, which must avail to enlighten us in our thickest darkness, and to give us that

fortitude which no dangers can appal, and no calamities subdue. And we have all the various ordinances of religion, by mingling in which our thoughts are solemnly directed to the glad tidings of the gospel; and our spirits refreshed from time to time with the exercises of devotion; and our sorrows soothed by the sympathies of the church; and our souls brought near to him who is the “Father of mercies,” and the “God of all consolation”; and our views carried forward to the rest and peace and sinlessness and joy of that kingdom which He “has prepared for us from the foundation of the world.”

And having such alleviations and such comforts as these, it would ill become us to allow our feelings to rebel against their compassionate author, because he is pleased in his wise and inscrutable providence to deprive us of blessings which we have no title to retain, and to inflict upon us sufferings, which it must be our interest to bear. Let us rather praise him that he touches us with such a lenient hand; let us sing of his mercy, while we are enduring his judgments; let our meditations be upon the blessings that are left us, while our hearts are troubled by the departure of what was dear to us; and looking to the consolations which God imparts, as well as to the sorrows which we feel, and regarding him as the fountain from which both proceed, let our feelings, our language, and our conduct, be those of the Psalmist, as expressed in the words of our text, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

3. In the third place, we should be resigned to the will of God when he afflicts us, because affliction is for our good.

To mere worldly persons there is nothing good but that which gives them much pleasure, unaccompanied by pain; which gratifies their senses; which advances their temporal prosperity; which raises them to honour, to wealth, to influence; and which permits them to enjoy all these without interruption or annoyance. But to true Christians, that, and that alone is good, whatever it may be, which promotes their spiritual and immortal interests; which tends to make them wiser and better; which strengthens their religious principles, and improves their moral character; which renders them faithful servants of God here, and prepares them for the glories of his presence hereafter. And in this view, we must be satisfied, from many considerations, that the trials and distresses in which we are involved, have for their great and ultimate object, our essential welfare. What is the character of that Being who

appoints them, or who permits them to befall us? He is a God of infinite mercy—who can have no pleasure in our sufferings—who therefore does not “afflict us willingly”—and whose only design must be to render us more holy and more happy. And while his goodness prompts him to form and to pursue this purpose respecting us, he prosecutes and accomplishes it by means of affliction, because his unerring wisdom selects that as the fittest, and most powerful, and most efficient, method of securing what he benevolently intends.

Nor is it difficult to see the propriety and suitableness of this part of his plan, which, however, must be perfect, whether we can comprehend it or not. It is evidently called for by the state of our nature, and the circumstances of our condition. Our nature is corrupted; and, under the influence of this corruption, we are prone to indulge in sin and to forget the obligations of duty—apt to be intoxicated with prosperity, and to consider this world, when all our wishes are gratified, and all our dreams of joy are undisturbed, not as our temporary residence, but as our everlasting rest. And our outward circumstances engage so much of our attention, and present so many things to occupy our thoughts and fascinate our hearts, that, if unmingled with any thing that is harsh and distasteful to our feelings, we insensibly become the very slaves of worldly pursuits and pleasures, and continue to live as if we were never to die; as if we had no account to render, no immortality to hope for, and no spiritual work to perform. Now, this miserable and fatal enchantment is broken by affliction. When the comforts which we idolized, or on which we doated, are taken from us, this demonstrates them to be unsubstantial and uncertain, and unworthy of all the fond regard we paid them. We see more than ever the necessity of seeking for happiness in the favour of an unchangeable God, in the faith of a never-failing Redeemer, in the hope of an immortal inheritance. And “setting our affections on things above,” we are led to cultivate, with greater diligence, that pious and holy character which it is the grand object of the gospel to form, and by which we are to be prepared for everlasting life.

And while we draw this conclusion from reasoning on the character of God, and from the nature and circumstances of fallen man, it is expressly taught and declared in the sacred scriptures. There, God is represented as our Father, who, all-wise and all-affectionate, does not correct his children from caprice, nor from malignity, nor for purposes

of vengeance—but for their reformation and advantage, that they may be “partakers of his holiness.” “No chastening for the present seemeth joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.” And “our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal, weight of glory.”

The truth of these Scriptures has been realized in the experience of thousands. When David said, “it is good for me that I have been afflicted,” he spoke in the name of all the people of God who have been rebuked of Him, and have not despised his chastening. They have been chosen, perhaps, “in the furnace of affliction.” They have come out of it, purified from the dross of sin. They have had their affections detached from the world. They have become more heavenly-minded. They have been brought back from their wanderings after vanity; restored to a more intimate communion with God; and taught to love, and to keep, and to delight in, his commandments. He has taken from them the children whom they had suffered to usurp the throne of their hearts; and they have been instructed by this painful and salutary rebuke to give back to Him that devotedness of affection which they had hitherto lavished on the creatures of a day, and to be more anxious that they and theirs should be inheritors of that “kingdom which cannot be moved,” than that they should continue to be united to one another by those ties which, however strong and however tender, bind them only to the earth and keep them far from heaven. He has deprived them of their riches: and they have learned, in the school of poverty, to lift, to the better and more enduring treasures that are on high, that soul which had been meanly and ingloriously wedded to the paltry treasures of the dust. He has blasted their health; and on the bed of sickness and languishing, during wearisome days and nights of restlessness and pain, they are feeling the emptiness of those vain amusements in which they had too long and too fondly indulged, and are reading, in this leaf of the book of providence, those lessons of humility and sobriety and patience which the theatre of gay life was but ill calculated to afford, and are gradually ripening either for a closer walk with God in this weary wilderness, or for the full enjoyment of his presence in the promised land. He has permitted their reputation to be tarnished by the breath of calumny; and, no longer elevated by the applauses of erring and deceitful mortals, they are now

candidates for the honour and the praise that come from God, for the testimony of a good conscience, and for the approving sentence of their Judge at last.

It is thus that God appoints, or overrules, the adversities of life for the benefit of his people, converts their afflictions into blessings, and makes them at once the tokens of present love, and the pledges of future glory. And shall we repine, with this great truth pressed upon us, by every view of his character, and by all that his word has told us; and by the uniform experience of those who have put their trust in him—shall we repine when he disappoints our earthly hopes, and puts the cup of sorrow into our hand, and even makes us drink it to the very dregs? Shall not we rather kiss the rod with which he smites us? Shall not we be disposed to receive all his corrections with patience and submission? And, when the feelings of feeble and afflicted nature would prompt us to deprecate the sorrows he is laying upon us, shall not we still say, “nevertheless, O Lord, not my will, but thine be done.” “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

4. There is still another consideration by which we ought to be influenced when involved in affliction. God who sends it, is entitled to our patient acquiescence, our cheerful submission, because at the very time that we are suffering under his hand, he has in reserve, and is preparing for us, the happiness of heaven and immortality.

I need not, my friends, attempt to expatiate on the exquisite nature, the absolute certainty, the infinite value, and the eternal duration of that happiness. We have no adequate description of it to give you; and you are not able to form any adequate conception of it. Yet you are surely so far acquainted with it as to know that it is an attainment with a view to which no labour, no suffering, no discipline can be deemed disproportioned. And scripture has expressly said, that “the sufferings of a present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.”

Now, with such a prospect before us, would it not be foolish, and unbecoming, and inconsistent, to murmur at any evils we may have to endure in our passage to heaven—to grudge the hardships of the wilderness through which our covenant God is leading us to the land of promise—to be impatient amidst the darkness which shall ere long be succeeded by the dawn and by the brightness of an eternal day? Do

not the soldier, and the mariner, and the man of business, submit to many anxieties and pains, borne up and animated by the anticipations of successful enterprise, and rewarded perseverance? And shall we be less contented, or less resigned to the privations of our lot—we, who look forward with a hope resting on the promise of a faithful and unchangeable God, to “the crown of life, which fadeth not away”? Every thing in our case contributes to inspire us with the temper of the Psalmist in its highest and its noblest exercise. Be our tribulations what they may, they must soon come to a perpetual end, and be succeeded by a joy that is ineffable. And not only shall they be succeeded by a joy that is ineffable, but they are an essential part of that course of discipline which our heavenly Father employs to prepare us for entering into glory. So that to be disquieted, and cast down, and made impatient, by our afflictions, is to undervalue the happiness of the heavenly state—to prefer our present ease to our future salvation, and to arraign the wisdom of that plan by which God is training us up for the exercises and the enjoyments of the celestial world. Only let us think of our ultimate and eternal destiny, as “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” and of the connexion which it has with our sufferings and our conduct in this our scene of probation; and we shall see abundant reason to cast ourselves upon the good pleasure of him who gives to us, and who takes away from us, as the God of earth and of heaven, of time and of eternity; and to say, in the words of our text, even though we have had sorrow upon sorrow, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

Those of you who have been visited with severe afflictions, would do well to consider how you carried yourselves in those trying circumstances. If you were fretful, and impatient, and complained that you were hardly dealt with, this was unworthy of your Christian profession, because it was arraigning the goodness, the wisdom, the justice of God; and you have much reason, therefore, to humble yourselves before him, to ask his forgiveness, and to be vigilant against the return of such a discontented, unsubmitive spirit, when you are again subjected to disappointment and distress. And, even though you have not gone the length of uttering the language of complaint—though you have been literally silent, and appeared to bow before the dispensations which befell you,—yet, if this were owing merely to constitutional apathy—or if it were produced by engaging either in the business or amusements of the world—or if it

proceeded from causes unconnected with the faith of the gospel,—on any of these suppositions, there was no real resignation to the divine will—nothing of the gracious sentiment which is intimated in the text—nothing, in short, but a substitution of something of your own for that which acknowledges God; and, therefore, you have, in this case also, reason to confess your unworthiness to him, and to pray for remission, and to be solicitous that your mind may be so renewed, and so regulated, and so influenced, as that, in every future time of trouble, your submission may result from Christian principle and be quickened by Christian hope, and that you may feel what the Psalmist felt, when you say what he said,—“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

Let me now address myself more particularly to the younger part of my audience. You have not yet, perhaps, had many trials to distress you; but the Bible tells you, that “man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward”; and though every thing wear a gay and smiling aspect around you, you know not how soon the gloom of sorrow may overcast all your prospects. “Remember, then, your Creator in the days of your youth, before the years draw nigh in which you shall say that you have no pleasure in them.” Prepare, even now, for the difficulties, and misfortunes, and evils of advancing life. And recollect, that your best and only preparation consists in your being at peace with God—in acquainting yourselves with him—in having a deep-seated faith in all the truths and promises of his word—in cultivating an experimental recognition of the perfect excellence of every part of his character and his administration—and in holding habitual communion with him, both as the hearer of prayer, and as the God of comfort. If you thus live by faith in God and in Christ, you are ready for whatever trials and tribulations await you. And being “reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” and confiding in his paternal management of all that concerns you, and tracing every event that befalls you to his will and to his doing, and satisfied that he orders all things wisely and well, and will make them work together for your present and your eternal good,—resignation will become the prevailing temper of your souls. You will not only be patient when adversity comes, but you will be enabled to rejoice in it. And thus, while it will secure your peace amidst the most formidable ills of life, it will fit you for encountering the agonies and the terrors of death, and be

instrumental in preparing you for entering that happy world where those dwell who have “come through much tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

And, as it is the gospel which not only inculcates this grace, but holds out the comforts and the views by which it is formed and cherished, let the gospel be precious in our regard. Let us cling to it in every dark and distressful hour, for our own support. And let us be anxious that it may go forth, in all its blessings, and in all its power, among the sinful and sorrowing children of mortality.

Andrew Thomson, *Sermons and Sacramental Exhortations*, Edinburgh 1831.

Hints to a Congregation

John Macdonald (of Calcutta)

“A charge given at the induction of a minister to the Scotch Church, Swallow Street, London, 1831,” *A Pastor’s Memorial to His Former Flock*, London 1842.

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, you have been witnesses this day of one of the most solemn scenes presented to view on this sinful earth—the ministerial induction of a servant of Jesus Christ into a congregation of his church. Nay more, ye yourselves have been this day parties in this very transaction, and sharers in all its awful responsibilities. Even as your pastor, so ye also will have to give account in this matter; and as he has received the usual address, stirring him up to the diligent fulfilment of his duties, so do ye now receive the word of exhortation, which, by the appointment of my presbyters, I am delegated to address unto you. May the Lord help us all to improve this solemn occasion!

With what, or with whom, shall I begin? with the pastor, or with the flock? nay, with neither; but with him who is the Head of both, and more glorious than all. There has been present here this day, as witness, judge, and president, One whom the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the hearts of many once thought of; One most deeply interested in this day’s work; and One whose glory is inseparably connected with its results. Need I mention his honoured name? the Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom shall an ambassador speak first, save of his sovereign?

I. First, I would exhort you concerning the *Lord Jesus Christ*. Realize him as the Head of the church, the source of all spiritual life to all the members of the body. In him dwells salvation, from him proceeds the Holy Spirit, through him alone all church acts find acceptance, and only by his mind and character in you can you be known as Christians. Faith in him constitutes you a church, and the confession of his name in ordinances is the outward seal of your inward character. The very calling of a minister of the Gospel, as an ambassador of Christ to abide amongst you, is a solemn recognition of him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Ye have this day entered into a league and covenant with the Lord

and his Anointed: see that ye fulfil it honestly, by seeking supremely not your own honour, but that of your Head.

The Lord is represented as walking among the “golden candle-sticks,” and as “holding the seven stars” in his hand, “searching the hearts and trying the reins” of all, and of every one: no minister, no elder, no member, no hearer, is free from his inspection and judgment. Honour him then in this solemn relationship, and set him continually before you in all your church services. We doubt not that one cause of that deafness which has overspread our churches, is the want of this habitual and determined recognition of the Lord Jesus in all church matters, as the great end of our exertions. Worldly speculation, mercantile transaction, have entered into the house of God—usury and mortgage have seated themselves in the pews of charity and self-denial; men ask not, “What should I give to maintain the honour and worship of *Him* who died for my salvation?” but, “What do others give? what is expected from *me*? what will be considered handsome? what interest can I have on my loan?” Were all done for Christ, and were he the object of our gifts, acts, and efforts, how lively, active, devoted, free, would all our churches be! Let us in our several congregations recognize Christ more, and we shall have to mourn less; let us have less of the world in our sessions and committees, and we shall have more of Christ in our pulpits and desks!

In your chambers, in your families, in your prayer meetings, in your public assemblies, plead more for the manifestation of the Lord Jesus, and for the outpouring of his Spirit, the Comforter; pant for the converting grace and the quickening power of him who raiseth the dead, and stir up yourselves to lay hold of him who, otherwise, may be to you as “a mighty man astonished, as a wayfaring man that turneth aside for a night to tarry!” The church that most honours the name, person, work, and Gospel of Christ, will be the most honoured by him in all that is divine and heavenly. Strengthen, therefore, the things that remain and are ready to die amongst you; remember your first love to Christ, as many of you as ever felt his love, and cleave unto him with your whole heart; so shall you be in deed and in truth a Christian church, a temple of Christ!

II. Let me exhort you, next, concerning your newly-appointed *Pastor*; yet, not so much concerning the *person* as the office: the one is human,

and may vary; the other is divine, and is unchangeable. I proceed on the supposition that he will endeavour, by the grace of God, faithfully to execute those engagements, on the strength of which he has this day been inducted your chosen pastor, and so will prove himself to be a true minister of Jesus Christ. Remember that he is commissioned to preach the truth as God has revealed it; not to be a revealer, or inventor, in his own person. Seek not the novelty, but seek the antiquity of grace; desire not invention, but illustration or enforcement of the old Gospel. If he preach to you the “truth as it is in Jesus,” and you believe it, you shall be saved; if you believe it not, you must be damned—so the Master hath said. The ministry is a saving or a damning office to every one that waits upon it; and those who will not attend upon it must also be damned for its rejection. To sit under a Gospel ministry is the most awfully serious thing, of an external kind, that a man can do in this world; to invite a minister, is to call to you a saviour or an executioner for eternity. Be serious then, my friends, and trifle not with an office whose effects you may feel for ever!

Remember, too, that your pastor, in himself, is but a man, a weak and sinful man. His only hope is this, “By the grace of God, I am what I am.” Should you sometimes have to say, “Our minister is but a man after all!” then you have only uttered a truth which ought to have been anticipated. Yet do not despise him because he is weak and imperfect. God hath done great things by such, when men looked not for it; and those very imperfections which may have formed a theme of condemnation, hath God overruled for the sanctification of his servants, and the consequent revival of his people. Neither do ye idolize your minister, trusting in him to do what God only can do; or offering to him that praise and homage which belong to the Saviour alone. This hath been the sin of many churches, for which God hath given them up to judgment, that they have made a “golden calf” of the ministry, prostrating their souls before the servant or his ministrations, instead of him who is Lord of all. “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord; for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh!” Pray earnestly on his behalf, that he may ever stand before the Lord, and carry tidings to you, day by day, from the eternal throne; that Christ may ever employ him, and speak by him to sinners and to saints

in such a manner, that whilst man may receive affectionate thanks, the Lord alone may receive the whole glory. In all your supplications let your pastor have a place; and this alone will prove a tie of affection, and a preparation of heart which will enable you to feed when others starve, because they ask not.

See to it that ye uphold your minister, in all his “works of faith and labours of love.” Mingle your hearts and your hands with his, and be ever as wheels and pinions moving easily and freely amongst yourselves, impelled by the mainspring of your minister’s affectionate call. He is set apart for the express purpose of guiding you in work, as well as in word; and whilst he acts the part of a faithful pastor, let those words be present to you; “Remember them which have the rule over you, which have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever.”

Show kindness to your pastor in his private intercourse. Promote the pious conversation which he would maintain, and present to him the family-bible, as his chief entertainment. Clog him not with uninteresting, unprofitable gossip; but seek to enliven him by introducing the most important and, to him, the dearest of all concerns. Be not finding fault, or cavilling about every trifle in which you may disagree with him, neither let others indulge in this strain at his expense; but cover his infirmities and defend his virtues. Remember that his time is his master’s time, and not his own; therefore do not draw much upon it. When you visit him, let your call be short; and when he visits you, measure not his friendship by the moments he may give. Let not the few expect the sacrifice of the many; neither let any grudge, if their minister should seem more intimate with some other families than with theirs, for even Jesus frequented the home of Lazarus and his sisters beyond all other homes in Judea. In affliction, let instant notice be given to your pastor, that he may counsel and comfort; and in the sickness that deepens towards death, O grant him every facility of intercourse, that he may, as the minister of salvation, aid the spirit that is hastening to eternity, and bring a rich blessing to the surviving members of a bereaved family. Thus do ye forward the public and private work of the Lord amongst you, and so will the ministry be as gentle rains and sweet dews from heaven, descending richly on your happy souls!

III. The *ordinances* of the sanctuary must not be forgotten in this day's exhortation. These are especially the worship and the word of God. In both these is your minister to preside; in the one as your voice to God, in the other as the voice of God to you: both these have you engaged to uphold by the ministry this day. Brethren, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." With such neglect does apostacy commence; and how many apostates, aye, and Scotch apostates too, do our London streets and highways present every Lord's day! The empty pew is generally the first plague-spot of the most virulent backsliding; it is Demas' first open step backwards to hell.

Attend in the sanctuary *regularly*—let such self-presentation become habit; for habit is strength. The excuse which is contrived by a wish to be absent is hypocrisy; the reason which flows from regretted inability must be sustained. Let not the Lord's day be selected as a day of medical treatment; neither let the counting-house on Monday say to the Sabbath-invalid, "Thou didst lie!" That distance of residence which is no hindrance to daily business, but rather chosen as an additional pleasure, will rise up in judgment against those who plead it as a ground of absence on the Lord's own day. Let not that fatigue, which is not increased by week-day parties, be assigned as the reason for absence from the worship of God.

Oh, how many, like Ananias, "lie against the Holy Ghost" in matters of the sanctuary, saying, when they are asked—"Is this all the attendance you *can* give?" "Yea, so much is all the attendance we can give!" God knoweth, and the judgment will show it all! Let not the afternoon or evening absence, bear testimony that the forenoon attendance was an act of pretence, an effort of convenience, a shred of artificial character; but let full attendance be the proof of an honest heart. The day may come when many will say, in the agony of their souls, "Oh, would to God that we could now hear but one of those sermons which we would not hear when we might!"

Let *punctuality* mark your attendance on the sanctuary. To be late without necessity, is a libel on yourselves, as indicating spiritual sloth; a robbery of others, interrupting their devotion, and taking from them their thoughts; a dishonour to God, showing indifference to his presence, and worship, and communion. A devotional, spiritual people, will generally be a waiting people, and will seek to have their minds

composed and prepared for service; instead of hurrying in, breathless in body, and confused in spirit, to the most solemn duty in the world.

Reverentially join in all parts of the service. Sing with melody the praises of God, according to your ability; join mentally in the prayers of the sanctuary, shutting out the world from your senses. When the Scriptures are read, despise not this simple but important exercise, but also read attentively; and when the Gospel is preached, honour it, as an ordinance, by close and respectful listening. Tempt not one another to wandering eyes by the follies of dress and gesture; let simplicity and purity mark everything in the house of God.

Be *spiritual* in your attendance on divine ordinances; and let your spirituality be exercised in such forms as these:—

(1.) Let a strain of inward prayer for the operation of God's Holy Spirit, run parallel with the whole service. (2.) Carry on a comparison of what is preached to you with the word of God as quoted by the minister, or as remembered by yourself. (3.) Apply everything for your own edification to the utmost; and you will be surprised how much may be gathered from every sermon. In practising these things you will find a great reward; and the sermon, the sacrament, the prayer, will ever be to you a source of profit and pleasure, an inlet of grace and glory.

IV. Let me exhort you further to your duty in your corporate capacity as a Christian *church*. As ye are all one in Christ, love one another, and co-operate with each other. A church without unity, is like a dismembered body; a church without love, is like a lifeless frame; a church without active co-operation, is like a slumbering sluggard. Let every one abide in Christ, let every one love Christ, let every one work for Christ; so shall ye find yourselves united in spirit, in operation, and in end. There is much profession of unity, love, and fellowship working in our times; but, alas! how much of it is mere conventional slang of the platform! how much of it is only to turn an acceptable sentence to gain an assembly's cheer! We must have the image of Christ before others can love us; others must exhibit the image of Christ before we can love them; so that the more of individual piety there is, the more will there be of social charity.

Elders of the church, remember your place in this congregation. Be diligent in knowing and inspecting the flock. Be ensamples to them of all godliness and purity. Love them as your own families. Visit the sick in your neighbourhood. Encourage the young; bring them to your

houses, and let them know you as fathers in Christ. Heal differences as peace-makers; and warn in private the unruly. Strengthen your pastor in counsel and in action; and let him ever feel that he can always reckon upon your aid.

Members of the church, behave not unseemly to those who are over you in the Lord. Speak not lightly of them, neither hastily accuse them. Take counsel with them when you can, and reject not their kind visits when rendered to you in love. By your communion vows ye are sworn to love one another: see then that ye indulge not in strife, or jealousy, or evil speaking, private or public; but that in all things ye deem yourselves brethren in Christ Jesus. So may the Lord unite you.

V. Finally, brethren, let us remember that the *end* of all things approacheth. Today, we are full of bustle, and activity, and joys, and hopes, and fears. But another scene is approaching rapidly. One by one we shall pass out of this life; ministers, elders, people, we shall be as though we had never been. Our bodies shall have passed into the grave, and our souls returned to God who gave them, and not one of us shall be left. Thus shall we be, until the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven, to judge the quick and the dead. Then shall we all stand before him in judgment for the matters of this day, and the whole weight of eternity shall be cast into every affair of time. Oh, how solemn will every day's work in this life then seem! and how awfully solemn what we have this day done! Friends and brethren, realize the judgment day by day! try everything by it, for it will be the ultimate test! Oh, what silly trifling is it to pass muster amongst men, if we shall be cast in the great judgment of God! yet, alas, this is all that many seek! The Lord pardon all the sins of indifference, vanity, insincerity, worldliness, and unbelief that may have mingled with the solemn services of this day! and may the blessing of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon this flock and their pastor! and may the work of the Lord prosper amongst them, even until the end! Amen.

John Milne and Robert M'Cheyne

Horatius Bonar

Life of the Rev. John Milne of Perth, London 1869.

BETWEEN MR. MILNE AND MR. M'CHEYNE there were points of likeness, yet of great unlikeness also. In appearance they were dissimilar. Both, indeed, were short-sighted, and generally wore spectacles; they both walked nimbly and erectly, moving with an agility that spoke of inward joy; but the former was dark, the latter rather fair; the former was under the middle size, the latter considerably above it, which gave him a commanding appearance, especially on one occasion, when not thinking himself high enough to overlook the audience, he mounted the stool which the minister used for kneeling, and on this elevation poured out one of his most energetic sermons to a congregation of some 1200 people. Both had a pleasant smile; but there was more of severity about the latter than the former, though the laughter of Mr. M'Cheyne was louder and more ringing than that of Mr. Milne. In both there was great plainness of speech, and indifference as to polish and ornament. Illustrations were to them not flowers for the fancy, but arrows for the conscience. In both there was an unearthly elevation of spirit, alike in prayer and preaching, which lifted up the hearer unconsciously along with the speaker. In both there was deep solemnity of voice, though in Mr. Milne there was more of the natural,—we might almost say the conversational,—tone than in Mr. M'Cheyne. Both were vehement in denouncing sin, the latter never pausing to smooth down his words, as if afraid of calling things by too strong names; the former uttering the same denunciations more courteously, and with less liability to be misunderstood or to call up opposition.

Both of them were, at first, long preachers; both, like our Reformers, used homely illustrations; both spoke without manuscript or note before them, easily and plainly, right into their people's eyes; both thoroughly believed the creed which they had subscribed; and both preached the good news concerning the work finished on the cross in all their unconditional freeness. No man ever mistook their calling, or supposed

them to be anything but ambassadors for Christ. In public and in private they were felt to be men of God, on the watch for souls.

Mr. Milne kept back nothing from his people, but spoke freely and boldly of all current events and controversies. He was one of the few who could, without awkwardness or difficulty, introduce any subject into the pulpit, either in prayer or discourse. His first morning prayer in church was always very remarkable for the minute fulness with which it entered into the various cases that had come before him; it might be sickness, or pain, or losses, or bereavements, or anxieties, or spiritual trouble; every one was specially indicated and prayed for. This was one of the tenderest and closest of his pastoral bonds; for thus, while his affections were flowing out towards his flock, theirs were drawn towards each other. In many other ways did his ready sympathies get vent to themselves, far beyond his own people. Wherever he heard of sorrow, thither a note from him found its way, or a call was made; and if the parties could not be seen, his card was sent in with John 14:1, or some such text, pencilled on it, and "love and sympathy" written above or below his name.

Times of waiting on God

For several years a few brethren in different parts of the country had been in the habit of observing some day in each month (generally, though not always, the first Monday), as a day of special private prayer, that they might seek help and wisdom in "taking heed to themselves and to their ministry." The practice was suggested and begun by Robert M'Cheyne; and each of us in turn wrote the monthly letter, reminding the brethren of the day, and noting thoughts and subjects that might seem particularly suitable. It was a happy bond; very pleasant to look back on, though many links are now broken, and nearly one half of the original members have left us to be with the Lord.

The following is Mr. Milne's circular, of date February 29, 1844:—

"My dear Andrew,—I have been requested by Mr. Smeaton to write the circular for this month, putting the brethren in remembrance of our special season of prayer and fasting, on Tuesday the 5th of March. It is said, 'When the poor and needy seek water, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them.' I do not think we have yet been brought to this. Let us therefore next Tuesday meditate on the terribleness of a barren ministry, till our hearts are wrung

and broken. See how Jeremiah speaks (Lam. 3:49) of his feelings during the withdrawal of God's power and favour. 'Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not.' And again, 'Mine eye affecteth mine heart.' Oh, is it not affecting to see the people flocking to ordinances, and waiting so earnestly on the word, and yet so little of the power being present to heal them! I think I feel it beginning to humble me. The apostles gave themselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, and that continually. Is it so with us? Let us examine if there is anything wanting in our prayers for the blessing. Are we frequent, constant, fervent, importunate, special, believing, humble in prayer? Is there anything defective in our ministry of the word? Do we seek the conversion of souls? Do we seek messages from God? Do we speak with authority, in the name and through the power of God? Do we set forth tremblingly, yet affectionately, the awful condition of unbelieving, unregenerate men? Do we in Christ's stead beseech them, 'Be ye reconciled to God?'

A ministry of the Spirit

When brought face to face with human evil, we feel our helplessness. It is too great for us. Outward remedies do not reach the seat of the disease. Laws restrain it; walls hide it; prisons silence it; civilisation refines it; education teaches it to keep within bounds. But there it is, notwithstanding all these appliances, its real nature untouched by either magistrate or minister. We are helpless before the evil of "this present evil world."

Be it so. We fall back on God. We ask Him to energize the word; to clothe the speaker of it with superhuman power; to do the work which He alone can do, and for the doing of which He will be entreated of us. Sword and spear and armour may have been in vain. We have still the sling and the stone.

What Mr. Milne felt so strongly, both at this time and afterwards, was the need of the Holy Spirit for the ministry and the minister, and the certain failure of all work in the Church without Him; the uselessness of the best ecclesiastical organizations or congregational machinery, or even pastoral work, apart from the direct divine energy of that mighty Spirit that wrought wonders at Pentecost, and is ready still to work wonders as great in these latter days. "Wells without water" will furnish no refreshment; and lamps without oil will give out no light. The Church's

danger ever has been to substitute a ministry of the intellect for a ministry of the Spirit; to confide in the human instead of the superhuman; and the indication that she is entangled in this snare is the feeling, conscious or unconscious, that she can do with less prayer now than formerly, on account of the progress of the age,—an age which is supposed not to require the supernatural helps that other ages did.

Thus Mr. Milne wrote to a friend some years after:—"I suspect that much of the religion you will meet with has more of the flesh than of the spirit; more of self than of Christ; more of the world than of the closet; more of working than what is more humbling—meek, patient, waiting on the Lord." And at another time he says: "Perhaps *working* is more dangerous than waiting, though both have their snares."

He undertook nothing without prayer. He never went out or came in without prayer. Whatever he spoke or wrote, it was with prayer. He felt that the greatest favour he could do for a friend was to pray for him. His desire was to stir up the Church of God to prayer. He understood more than most of us these words of the prophet (Hosea 12:3-4)—"He had *power* with God! Yea, he had *power* over the angel; yea, he prevailed, he wept and made supplication unto Him."

The following letter, written in his later years, will show how he maintained the same spirit of intercession throughout his ministry; that as he had begun, so he went on; going constantly, and exhorting others to go with him to the one fountainhead of blessing, the one source of ministerial strength. It is dated, "Free St. Leonard's Manse, Perth, 22^d Feb. 1863." It was printed and circulated largely:—

"My dear friend,—We are arranging, God willing, for a short series of evangelistic meetings in the City Hall here, from Sabbath 8th to Tuesday 17th February inclusive, that is, ten successive nights. We expect to have some of those with us whom God has used and honoured in this kind of work. But our hope is in the Lord Himself, who alone can give the increase, and who, we have reason to believe from several indications, is at this time very near at hand. We earnestly solicit your prayers, both before the meetings and during their continuance. Pray that those employed may be endued with power from on high, that they may forget themselves, and care only for the things of Christ. Pray that there may be a wide, deep interest excited, and that many may at this time pass into the kingdom of God. Pray that our town may at this season be

blessed, and that, through it, the blessing may spread all around. Look at Ezek. 34:26. Take hold of the Lord and constrain Him. You know that He loves holy, filial boldness and importunity, and complains of the want of it. Think of the preciousness of souls, their imminent danger, the Lord's joy when poor, heavy laden ones come to Him. Think of the influence it would have on the whole year, if there were at this time a very marked, decided work of God; and as you think, let your heart burn, let your desires be stirred, and so let fervent, effectual supplication flow forth.—Believe me very affectionately yours,—J. M.”

It was *power* that he sought; power with God for the sake of men. He desired *influence*; but it was influence with God, and, as the result of that, influence with the souls of men. Other power and other influence he cared nothing for. “I think,” he says, “I feel the want of *power* to speak to men as sinners, to convince them of their lost estate. O my Lord, let not my ministry be a useless, ineffectual one! Let me not be the dumb dog that cannot bark.” And again: “I see that *useful power* in dealing with souls can only be through the Holy Ghost operating upon them. O Peace of our peace, Life of our life, Light of our light, *be with me!*” It was thus that these men, in that critical time, waited on God for His Spirit.

I find, some years after this, the following prayer in one of Mr. Milne's diaries:—

“I pray for a far more energetic thankfulness; to be a whole and a continual burnt-offering. Let all false fire die; but let the flame of love, through the Holy Ghost, keep me spending and being spent. Renew my spiritual strength, O Lord. I see some whose heart seems to be right with God, and yet they do not receive much blessing on their work. Perhaps they are not seeking themselves; but are they honouring the Lord by faith? The soul that is lifted up is not upright; it is cleaving to self instead of God; it is trying to rise by building a Babel instead of taking hold of the Almighty. But there is a dishonouring of the Lord by the want of a large, joyful, practical expectation that goes on in His strength, and surely prevails. Moses had not this at the commencement of his enterprise, but got it afterwards. Many seem never to get it, and to drudge on in an unprofitable routine.”

It may not be out of place to mention here that it was by this waiting on God that both Mr. Burns and Mr. Milne became what they were. Up till the memorable Kilsyth Communion in 1839, Mr. Burns had not been

remarkable as a preacher. But those who knew him can tell how, like the disciples before Pentecost, he continued in prayer; and so he “received the power” which was afterwards so striking in his ministry; the power described by a contemporary writer as possessed by old Henry Venn when “men fell before him like slaked lime.” So was it with Mr. Milne. His first sermons showed nothing remarkable. But when the great work began in 1839, he himself was brought under its power; he rose up to another level both in life and service. From that time he started on a new course, in which he held on to the last. Other ministers at such times have been stirred, and then gone back. He never from that day looked back. His whole after life took its tone from the first months of his ministry.

Generosity

“June 21 [1853].—Tuesday morning.—I see some difficulty before me in money matters. I have been too unheedful of my matters. But, Lord, Thou knowest that I have done this in simplicity; and if there is a net here, in which I am caught, I feel sure that Thou wilt bring me out. My eyes are ever toward Thee, and Thou wilt bring my feet out of the net.”

Such an entry as the above is quite characteristic, and just what we should have expected. Both in Perth and in Calcutta he showed great heedlessness in money matters. It would not be wise to give details; but the instances of his liberality, his generosity, his putting away money when it came to him, of his refusing to be rich, would, if we were at liberty to give them, make some, who think themselves liberal, ashamed of their covetousness.

It is now nearly thirty years ago that a friend was making inquiries about Robert M’Cheyne, of whom he had heard somewhat, but whom he had not seen. “They tell me,” he said, “that he is immensely generous; that he cares nothing for money, but gives away all he has.” It was a true report, and it added not a little to the influence exercised by that man of God during his brief course among us, that he was known to be so open-handed in all things; for nothing so destroys ministerial weight, either in the pulpit or out of it, as covetousness or penuriousness. Mr. Milne was no less known for his liberality than his early friend. His hand was always open; and it was to him “more blessed to give than to receive.”

Love not the world

As he had himself come out from the world, so did he seek with all earnestness to draw others out. Like Noah, he “condemned the world” (Heb. 11:7).

Robert M’Cheyne’s life and ministry formed a very decided testimony against the world and worldly pleasures. In his private conversations, in his dealings with young people, in his sermons, in his “fencing the tables,” in his after-communion addresses, he spoke out with decision; and some of the most vehement things we ever heard from his lips were in condemnation of the “lovers of pleasure.” He spoke out against the theatre, the ball-room, the card-table, “sparing no arrows.” In his younger days he had tasted the world’s pleasures, but found them poor. In the beginning of 1838 he had some striking sermons on 1 Pet. 1:14–19, the notes of which are now before us. Thus he spoke, and thus he speaks still: “My dear friends, if you wish to obey the word of God here laid before you, flee from all circumstances, from all places or companies, where you know you may be tempted to sin. Are there not some of you who appear to be awakened and to rejoice in Christ, who yet go, with a bold and daring countenance, into idle companies and places where you know you will meet with temptation? Is this fearing to sin? ‘Do you wish us to be hermits?’ you will say. No such thing. But do you know a company where holy things are slighted, where things are spoken that should not be named, where late, unholy hours are kept, where you have already been tempted to sin? Then, child of God, I charge you not to cross that threshold again, no, not once. I charge you, flee temptation; pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. And here I cannot but allude to an awful provocation of God, which, I have reason to fear, is carried on amongst us. I mean young persons, after the holiest exercises, plunging into the unholy companies; praying in the house of God, or in a class for religious instruction one hour, and entering into ungodly company the very next. I beseech the unconverted among you to leave off this practice, if you would not have God send some sore judgment on your soul. I charge the children of God among you to leave off this practice, now and for ever. Ah, fear to sin! Flee the world! Flee company! Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”

There were few things that Mr. M’Cheyne more dreaded than “worldly amusements” in the families of professing Christians, especially of ministers.

Let those who think that he was narrow-minded and too rigid, test his views by our Lord's words concerning the world, or by the epistles of His apostles afterwards, especially those of the beloved disciple. "The extent to which novel-reading, dancing parties, private theatricals, card-playing, luxurious feasting and dressing, loose, frivolous, and profane song-singing, with other exhibitions of utter worldliness, prevail even in professedly Christian families, with the sanction and under the eye of office-bearers in the Church, would hardly be believed. Can we wonder at so many of the children of apparently good men turning out ill, when we know that 'Love not the world' was no maxim in their training?" Such is the statement of one who knew something about the ways of "Christian families." It was no Puritan who called the world "an infinite masquerade."

Of the same spirit was John Milne. Of the same tone was his ministry. And "love not the world" came well from his lips; for he lived what he preached. No man could suspect him of loving the world, or caring for its pleasures, or its gold, or its literature, or its company.

It is by being filled with the love of God, and admiration of "the world to come," that we are made impervious to this world and its attractions. Nothing else will do. Hence the folly of asceticism. It is only before heavenly love and beauty that earthly love and beauty will give way. The world's pleasures: can they co-exist with the love of the Father? The world's religion: is it not poorer even than its pleasures? The world's polish: is it not tinsel, if not rust? Yet an effort is being made by some to reconcile the two worlds and their two masters; nay, to make the religion of Christ in part consist of an enjoyment of the pleasures of life. The construction of a worldly religion, and the enjoyment of religious worldliness, are marked features of the age.

Both these men of God understood "the world," and recognised in it the adversary of God and His Church, alike in its persecutions and its blandishments. It was not to them a thing of the first century, but of the nineteenth as truly. The theology that teaches men not "to come out and be separate," but to enjoy the world and its pleasures, did not fit in to their system. Worldliness, however refined, was still worldliness in their eyes, because inconsistent with the love of the Father. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Religious worldliness, or worldly religiousness, seemed to them of all things most opposed to the spirit of Christ.

God and the world cannot find room in the same heart now, any more than in former ages. The “reproach of Christ” (Heb. 11:26) is now much the same in England as it was in Egypt once; and “without the camp” (Heb. 13:13) cannot mean “within.” The attempt to efface the line that separates “within” from “without” can only succeed by the creation of a new Christianity, from which some of the great features of the old are struck out. The world and the Church have been found at times not unwilling to patronize each other. The world has undertaken to be religious, provided the Church will consent to be worldly. The basis of the proposed compromise is the mutual understanding that a man may be worldly, and yet a good man; that a man may be a Christian, and yet not a very bad man after all.

There was nothing of this compromise in the preaching or the lives of these two men of God. Separation from the world was what they taught and lived. No amount of supposed progress, or refinement, or elevation could make the world less the world, or remove its hatred of Christ (John 15:18), or produce the love of holiness, or supersede the necessity of cleansing by the blood, or regeneration from above. Certain modern philosophers and poets, in evolving what they have called the human side of Christianity, proceed upon the defence or consecration of “worldliness.” They also assume that old Christianity, whether of the first or the seventeenth century, is not suited to an age of progress and intellect like ours :

“Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
Your social order, too;
Where tarries He, the power who said,
‘See, I make all things new?’
The millions suffer still and grieve;
And what can helpers heal?
With old-world cures men half believe
For woes they wholly feel.”

The ministry of these two men showed that they had not so learned Christ. They believed that what man needed was *salvation*; that the gospel for humanity in all ages is that gospel which is “the power of God unto *salvation*”; and that this salvation comes not through philosophy, or science, or sacramental grace, or connection with a church, but through the cross of Christ and the Spirit of the living God. Thus they preached, and thus multitudes believed.

Making opportunities of doing good

Mr. Milne's consistency was as marked as his separation from the world. His conformity to "the world to come" was as decided as his non-conformity to "this present evil world." His relish for it had long passed away, ever since he had tasted the love that passeth knowledge, and known the grace of God in truth. And this disrelish for lower things, and relish for the higher, is our great preservative against worldly conformity. Place Mr. Milne anywhere, in any company, his unworldliness showed itself. Place him next a worldly man in a room, in a railway carriage, on the highway, in the course of two minutes' conversation his character came out. It could not be hid. Exceedingly well-informed, gifted with great powers of conversation, and with a most versatile mind, he could take up any topic; and, ere his neighbour was aware, he would imperceptibly give the conversation a higher turn, and, in the gentlest of words and tones, introduce the great question of personal relationship to God. He might meet a mourner in the street; he would go up and speak words of consolation. He might see a sickly person passing; he would go and offer his arm, for the purpose of bringing to him the glad tidings. He could hardly pass any one without making use of the opportunity of speaking a word, or giving a leaflet or book. In season and out of season he preached, and spoke, and acted. The full heart could not but flow out; and, strange to say, almost invariably without offence being taken, so courteous, so gentlemanly, so kind, so unobtrusive was his manner.

No one could *mistake* him at any time, or not discover in the course of five minutes "whose he was and whom he served." Some of us, when thrown into unpleasant company, prefer remaining silent rather than risk unpleasant collision. Not so Mr. Milne. He did not fear being affronted. He did not hesitate to speak, and he had always a word in season,—a mild word too; no sharpness, no dogmatism, no resentment. He seemed incapable of being provoked or ruffled by any amount of opposition; and the "My friend," or "My dear friend," with which he prefaced each reply, disarmed and won the opposer.

Some are more ready at missing than at making opportunities of doing good. Seldom did Mr. Milne let slip an opportunity; often did he make it. He seemed constantly on the watch for some one on whom to let fall a word of wisdom or love. Of the Master it was said, "This man receiveth (is on the outlook, lies in wait for, προσδεχεται) sinners":

Luke 15:2. So was it with the servant in the present case. Before he went out he prayed, in going along he prayed, on coming home he prayed. In answer to these prayers, opportunities, often of the most unexpected kind, were given him.

Avoiding religious bustle

He was afraid of too much *religious work*, too many religious engagements, too much religious bustle. Societies, committees, "social meetings," Bible-readings, are good things, but they may be unduly multiplied. "I should like to get nearer the Lord," he says. "I feel the danger of becoming absorbed by religious as well as worldly work. Nothing can make up for the withdrawal of God's gracious presence. His favour is life. How kind is it of the Lord to restore us from time to time! Without this we should go down altogether. I am quite sure that it is indispensable to spiritual health to maintain a thankful, hopeful, cheerful spirit in all circumstances." And again, "I should like to shut the eyes of sense, and to cut the sinews of carnal feeling, and try to be wholly the Lord's. Why do we allow *anything to vex us that would not vex Him, or to please us that would not please Him?*"

"Be more concerned to be really good than to do great things. It is the greatest of mercies when our house on the sand topples down, and we escape, naked, bruised, covered with shame, from its ruins. The Lord sometimes sensibly delivers men up to the devil for a season, that they may grow in grace. He did it to Job; He sent His people into captivity that they might know the difference between His kingdom and the yoke of the enemy. I have long felt the duty of laying aside every weight, of cutting off the right hand; but I have delayed and procrastinated. But now the Lord has done it for me. May I get grace to see God's loving, wise hand in this, and embrace the opportunity of entering on a new and higher life. Clear the way, and let me start fair; let me run for the crown; let me wrestle, watch, labour; and let none come between me and the crown. Let me never forget for a moment how unstable I am, or how strong is the hold of the power of darkness. Pride and self-will are like the law; they drive on without mercy, and give no help nor support. Christ leads gently, and supports.

"There is a fulness of time and ripeness in all God's ways; and happy are they who patiently wait for it. But this is very hard. We are doing

nothing; perhaps see no progress; and our heart sinks. Soldiers find it the hardest part of the battle just to stand still and do nothing. Our hasty soul cries, 'What shall I do?' and the answer is, 'Be quiet and wait.' This is the trial of trials. Abraham knew it; Christ knew it. But look to the Lord; expect from Him; search the promises; in due time they will speak, and not tarry."

Teaching Theology from the Pulpit

Thomas Chalmers

“On the Distinction Between the Mode in which Theology Should Be Learned at the Hall and the Mode in which It Should Be Taught from the Pulpit,” *Institutes of Theology*, Edinburgh 1849.

ONE PRIME OBJECT OF YOUR STUDIES HERE is to fix and ascertain what the doctrines of Christianity really are. For this purpose you have to take a comprehensive survey of the words of revelation—you have to compare Scripture with Scripture—you have to penetrate the meaning of obscure or doubtful texts—you have to reconcile apparent contrarieties, and from a crowd of kindred and consistent testimonies on any given topic, you have to elicit some general proposition as one of the articles of our faith. Perhaps ere the conclusion was fully made out a long and laborious proof had to be gone through; and as the final result of the process, you at length came to a thorough and well-grounded belief that the doctrine in question has the sure and authentic seal of heaven’s divine authority set upon it.

Now, though this be the way in which you have received your argumentative conviction of some certain truth in theology, it follows not that this is the very way in which you should deal it forth again among the people. The very utterance of your text will generally be enough for gaining their assent to the doctrine which it enunciates, or, at most, the concurrence of a few decisive testimonies from other parts of Scripture will abundantly suffice in the way of argument. This is not because I look upon the people as less of reasonable beings than ourselves, and that therefore less of reasoning should serve them. But I would curtail the formal proof of a doctrine, that room might be left for an object ulterior to that, and in which the mere verifying of the proof terminates. The ultimatum of a proof is conviction, the end of what I have already called the first process. But beyond this there is a second process to stimulate and set forward, which should be the main object of every sermon. Now the danger of lengthening out the first process, is, that it may leave less than enough of room for the second process. And

really there is no practical necessity for lengthening out the formal proof of a doctrine in the pulpit, in the same way that it is in the classroom; because, generally speaking, in the obviousness of the many Scripture testimonies, and the manifestation of the truth itself to the conscience, the people are abundantly possessed with what may be called the effective proof of it.

It really is not half, it is not a tenth part the business of a sermon to establish any proposition in Christianity as a mere dogma, and leave it thus. Only imagine this done with the doctrine of the universal judgment, and that the preacher gave over, as if acquitted of his task, after that by arguments from Scripture and arguments from reason he had fully made out and settled it as the article of a creed. It would have been far better, we say, if instead of proving the doctrine at all, he had from the outset of his address proceeded upon the doctrine, or, at most, if he had taken up the length of the introduction on the statement of the truth with a few decisive testimonies in its favour, and then given the great bulk both of his strength and of his space, not to the establishment, but to the enforcement of the truth. It is an appalling doctrine, and fitted in the pulpit to be an effective weapon for the pulling down of strongholds. But what we say is, that instead of first fabricating the weapon before the eyes of his people, or showing the process of its fabrication, he should proceed immediately to use it. Instead of a doctrine to be proved argumentatively, he should regard it as a doctrine to be instantly taken up and wielded executively. Knowing the terrors of the law, he should therewith persuade men. The awfulness of that coming day—the speed and certainty of its arrival—its searching examinations into the recesses of every heart, and the now unknown deeds of every history—its fearful exposures in the presence of an assembled world, calling down the awful sentence and the everlasting contempt which are to follow—these with powerful and urgent and awakening appeals to the consciences of your hearers, accompanied by entreaties to flee from the coming wrath, and the denunciations of a heavier doom on those who reject the offers of the gospel, should form the burden of every sermon on this article of our faith—not a formal demonstration of its truth like that given by a professor in his classroom, but a persuasion founded upon its truth, and by which the minister plies the hearts of his people with the calls and the considerations of practical earnestness. The proof of the doctrine being that

which is chiefly exhibited in the one—the practical uses of the doctrine being that which is chiefly expounded and enforced in the other.

We say, that even in reference to the plainest and most unquestioned doctrines of religion, there is to be observed a difference of treatment between the congregation and the classroom; but there is a still wider difference to be observed when, from the generally admitted truths of the simply and purely didactic, you pass to the much agitated truths of the controversial theology. For the mere conviction of a general audience, either a lengthened formal proof or an elaborate vindication may be as little called for in a controverted doctrine as in those that are uncontroverted, there being often the same obviousness of Scripture testimony for the latter as for the former, and often the same or a superiorly vivid manifestation of the truth of them to the conscience. The Atonement is such a doctrine. The Divinity of our Saviour is another. Both of these have passed through the fiercest conflict of the theological warfare, so that if in the pulpit a polemic discussion was super-added to the didactic or the Scriptural derivation of them, that process were still more lengthened out whose terminating result after all were but the conviction of the understanding that the articles in question were doctrinally true. This in itself is to be deprecated as an evil, seeing that it interdicts the space and liberty which the preacher otherwise might have for the outgoings of the second process, and there are special and distinct reasons besides, why, unless there be an obvious practical necessity, controversy should be refrained from in the pulpit. It may lead you to exchange the Scriptural for the scholastic nomenclature, so that instead of propounding a doctrine in those words which were devised by God for the direct instruction of the teachable, you may propound it in those words which have been devised by men for putting down the heresies of the gainsayer. Now this last, however well adapted for its special object, is not adapted for the object of the pulpit, which is not so much to vindicate truth, as to bring men under its power. That language and that mode of putting which are best fitted for the one end, may not be the best fitted for the other end; and so under this translation from the style of a Scriptural to that of a polemic theology, the proper work of the pulpit may suffer in efficiency.

Moreover, the attention of the people is turned the wrong way. Instead of being led to entertain the message as announced directly to them by

God, they are led to hold parley with men contending for their own interpretations, and engaged in debate on the terms of the message. The minister may triumph in the debate, and the people in kindred sympathy may triumph along with him. The controversy, to the satisfaction of all, may be settled; but to avail ourselves of a familiar phrase, what is held to be settled is often set by. There is a delusive feeling as if their concern with the matter was now ended, when in fact it ought to be only beginning. They may think it enough to have been made intellectually right, as it seems the great ado to bring about that—whereas, mainly and generally speaking, they were all intellectually right at the outset, and the great ado should be to make this intellectual rightness germinate into the morally right and the spiritually right. If this latter be not accomplished, the kingdom of God may have come to them in word, or come to them in reason, ἐν τῷ λόγῳ being significant of both; but it comes not ἐν τῷ δύνάμει, it comes not in power: and there is great hazard of such a result if the decision of the controversy be the achievement which they rest in. Just as in mathematics, the feat is perfected if you make out the proposition—so in theology, there is a subtle imagination, too, that you have reached the great and desirable ultimatum by making out the proposition. Now what is the end in mathematics is but a mean in theology. The Christian revelation does not end with the intellect, but begins with it. The intellect is but a medium through which to reach the religious influence to the heart and the character, and its design is utterly frustrated and perverted by those who make orthodoxy the landing-place instead of the outset of their Christianity. Now we think it is the part of a sermon not to conduct the people to orthodoxy as a landing-place, but to start along with them from orthodoxy as the outset; and that therefore it may well keep clear of the controversies—they lying in the way of the first and not in the way of the second process.

The truth is, that with very few exceptions indeed, the orthodoxy may with all safety be assumed and proceeded on, from the commencement of your address, or at most a statement, with a few of the best Scriptural corroborations, will suffice to put the whole auditory intellectually right on the doctrine of the text. The great business should be to enforce the doctrine on the susceptibilities of their moral and practical nature; to present the truth in such connexions or with such applications as might best awaken the right and correspondent emotions in their heart; to make

it bear on their own personal condition, so as that it shall powerfully tell on their feelings and purposes; to press it not so much upon their conviction by proofs, as to press it upon their consideration by the earnest representations which you make of its importance as well as of its verity; to conquer not the oppositions of heresy by argument for the doctrine, but to conquer by means of the doctrine itself, the indifference, and the irreligion, and the death-like torpor, and the earthly affections of the people who are before you.

It were the strong and universal feeling, we believe, that a preacher had not done enough with the doctrine of the universal judgment, who, instead of taking it up and wielding it as an engine of moral and practical influence, had merely reasoned it on the understandings of his people, and so put them in possession of it merely as a dogma. Yet we fear that there is no correspondent feeling to this in reference to another doctrine, we mean the Divinity of Christ. In regard to the latter, we doubt it to be the more prevalent impression, that our great concern is with the truth of the dogma, and not with its practical influences. The great ado is all about making out and settling the orthodoxy of the question. In as far as the one doctrine is concerned, that is, of the universal judgment, we do not make the truth of the doctrine our resting-place, but carry it forward to its practical outgoings. In as far as the other doctrine is concerned, we are very apt to take up our resting place in the truth of it, to stop there and terminate there. The only way in which I can explain this difference of treatment between the two doctrines, is, that the one has been much controverted and the other not. When the great point to be contended for is the truth of the doctrine, then let the point be gained, and the heart is satisfied. The one follows as naturally upon the other, as that repose should come after victory—and more particularly if it be victory at the close of a perilous and prolonged warfare. If *for* the acquisition of any object the mind had to go forth on the work of inquiry, and to fight its way through many obstacles, then *in* the acquisition of that object will it as naturally sink into a state of quiescence, as if it had now reached the ultimatum of its wishes, or gotten all it laboured and all it aspired after.

We feel quite sure that the controversies have aggravated this tendency on the part of Christian students and inquirers to regard sound doctrine as the end, instead of being what it in truth is, but the commencement of their labours. And in as far as they have this tendency, they lead to a

pernicious deviation from the sense and the design of Scripture. When a doctrine is introduced there, it is for a moral and a practical effect. The ultimate design even of its most peculiar, and hence its most controverted revelations, is not to inform the understanding, but through the understanding to effect a salutary and transforming influence upon the character. The doctrine is not brought forward for its own sake, but for the sake of a something ulterior. The credenda are not the landing-place, they are only a stepping-stone to the agenda. And this is true of its most peculiar, or what has been styled the very highest of its doctrines.

The Divinity of Christ, instead of being regularly chronicled in the Bible as one of the articles in a system of well-arranged orthodoxy, is brought forth not as the principle of a theory, but as a persuasion to moral conduct. It is employed by the Apostle as an argument to enforce the virtue of mutual condescension. With the exception perhaps of the first chapter of John, which, by the way, seems, in accordance with the historical account of its composition, to have been framed for the special object of presenting the Church with an authoritative manifesto against the heresies of the time, the Godhead of Christ is nowhere proposed in the shape of a mere dictatorial article, or as a naked dogma for the understanding alone, and at one place it is introduced as an episode for the enforcement of a moral virtue. In this famous passage, the practical lesson occupies the station of principal, as the main or capital figure of the piece, and the doctrine on which so many would effervesce all their zeal, even to exhaustion, stands to it but in the relation of a subsidiary. The lesson is, "Let nothing be done through strife or wrangling, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"; and the doctrine, (here noticed by the Apostle, not to the end that he may rectify the opinion of his disciples, but primarily and obviously to the end that he may rectify their conduct), the doctrine for the enforcement of the lesson is, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."—(Phil. 2:5–8.) In these verses there is a collateral lesson for our faith; but the chief, the

direct lesson, is a lesson of charity, which is greater than faith. Scripture is profitable for doctrine; but ulterior to this there is another end, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works.

You will understand that it is not our object to banish the didactic, nor yet wholly to banish the controversial theology from our pulpits. In reference to the former, there must be a statement of the truth expressed or implied in your text, and that, too, accompanied by enough of argument for gaining the intellectual assent of the hearers; and in reference to the latter, I can imagine times and occasions when, to ward off some menacing heresy, the polemic arm must be lifted even in the house of God to quell the mischief, and the work of exposing it be the burden of many a Sabbath ministrant. Whatever the ulterior services of the truth may be, it is an indispensable preliminary that the people shall believe it. Until you have secured this vantage-ground nothing can be effected. But what we affirm is, that without an extended demonstration, and without the full and finished controversial treatment which are proper here in the business of training students for all the services of the Church, you may, by a far shorter process, enlist the understandings of a congregation on the side of all that is most important and influential in the truths of Christianity. In the vast majority of instances, that is done already before you have begun your sermon, or if not, a few suitable texts will suffice to recall the doctrine of the day to their conscience and memory, or to impress it on their convictions. It is not necessary to expend time in the establishment of a doctrine, if their minds be already established in the truth of it.

And the plain reason why we grudge unnecessary time in arguing the truth of the doctrine, is, that really there is too much else to do with it. You have to urge the truth upon their consciences. You have to open a way for its influence upon their hearts. You have to address it to their hopes or their fears, or their purposes of obedience. If the doctrine, for example, be the Divinity of Christ, you may therefrom expatiate on the worth of the sacrifice, and so hush the alarms of a guilty bosom; or on the enormity of sin that called forth so costly an expiation, and so arouse from the slumbers of their conscience both the ungodly and the backslider; or on the weight of gratitude earned by this illustrious sufferer, and so press on all who believe the devotedness of their whole lives to the Saviour who died for them; or on the power which inherently belongs to Him, of completing the redemption which He hath begun, and so animating

their confidence in the sustaining and sanctifying influences of that grace by which he upholds His disciples in the work and the warfare of their practical Christianity; or, finally, on the danger of rejecting overtures brought to our world by a Divine messenger, and sealed by His blood, and so ground on the very magnitude of the condescension and the mercy a louder appeal of terror to all who shall despise it.

But on this topic I have dwelt longer than I anticipated. What I principally aimed at and had hoped to overtake, was another distinction between the exposition that is usually given of Christianity in the Hall, and the exposition that should be given of Christianity in the pulpit. Here it is propounded as a theory, with a view to your theoretical understanding of it; there, if I may use the expression, it is more practised as an art, with a view to a certain practical fulfilment. So to instruct men as to make them comprehend the scheme of Christianity is one sort of achievement; so to influence men as to make them personally and actually Christians, is another and a very different sort of achievement. The one is the proper achievement of a theological professor, the other the proper achievement of a Christian minister. Their objects are different, and corresponding to this they should go differently to work. In particular, they should begin differently. The dogmatic is essentially different from the hortatory, but not more so than the commencement and the order of your studies in the Hall should differ from the commencement and the order of your sermons in the pulpit.

Very generally in the framing of a theological system, there is first an ascent made to the fountainhead of being, to the primal source as well as object of all religion. The outset is with mysterious and high speculations, and these not about the character alone, but the constitution of the Deity, where, in the prosecution of a sound and a scriptural path, it is difficult to clear one's way through the crudities and the ambitious imaginations of the men of all sects and of all ages. To guide the Christian scholar along this hazardous walk, among what may be called the heights and the transcendentals of his subject, there is need not of the light only of Biblical criticism, but of that sober and cautious philosophy which is observant of its own limits, and which knows how to separate between the findings of experience or Scripture, and the fancies of unauthorized speculation.

After that the question of the Trinity has been laboriously scrutinized throughout the Bible in its original language, and brought safe through

the manifold controversies of the Church in the condition of a leading article in our systematic divinity, the same process has to be repeated successively with the following articles, which are often made to come after each other in the chronological order of the history of the Divine administration. After this recondite speculation on His nature and constitution, there is another equally recondite on the purposes or decrees of a predestinating Deity, whence going forth, as it were, from the darkling recesses of a past eternity, this process of doctrinal exposition goes downward to the creation of the world, if not to the previous creation of angels and higher orders of intelligence, to the original innocence of our nature—to the law of God for the government of the human family—to the fall of man, the introduction of sin, the condemnation and moral ruin of our species—to the undertaking of the great Mediator, who bore in His own person the penalties of heaven's outraged authority, that He might deliver us from the wrath of our offended Lawgiver, and so effect a reconciliation between God and a sinful world—to the repentance and the faith, the calls of which accompanied those overtures of the gospel—to the special provision made for the sanctification of believers, so that they may be delivered from the tyranny of their present evil affections, as well as from the terrors of the wrath that is to come—to their progressive holiness here, and their triumphant preferment hereafter, among the joys and the exercises of heaven's high sanctuary; lastly, to the day of judgment, when this wondrous scheme shall have its full and final development, and all its mysteries shall be opened, to the endless the irrecoverable distance of the good and the evil, the pains of the everlasting hell, the delights and the glories of a blissful immortality.

Now the whole of this progression may be gone through in right synthetic order, beginning with the decrees of the past, and ending with the destinations of the future eternity. Altogether, it may be a perfect theoretical exposition of the science: and we employ the term theoretical, not that it might imply aught of the doubtful or the imaginative in the account that has thus been rendered. Although designed a theory, it may be a just and solid theory notwithstanding, based throughout on the evidence of Scripture, and defensible in all its parts and positions against every opposing heresy. It may be a true exhibition of Christianity, and yet not the exhibition that should be made of it in the work of

Christianisation. But if this be a true exhibition, will not another and a different exhibition be a false one? No; and for this I have to intreat your consideration. In a complicated scheme of doctrine, you may change the whole aspect of the scheme; you may change the order and the apparent locality of all its parts simply by changing the point of view from which it is contemplated. Meanwhile the doctrine itself continues the same, and there is no change whatever upon it. The representation of the mundane system from the centre of the sun is not the same with the representation of the mundane system from the surface of a planet, yet it is the same mundane system notwithstanding. And the same is true of the scriptural, or, if you will, of the spiritual system; of all that part of the moral world which is accessible to us. It may be viewed from the highest and most commanding station of all, from the fountainhead of the Divine mind; and so beginning with the plans and purposes of the Deity, it may pass onward in historical order through the forthgoings of a Divine administration, having for its principle the will and authority of God, and for its subject the aggregate mass of our species; or it may be viewed from another station—from the heart or the homestead of a single individual in that species, whether as sunk in the moral lethargy from which the calls of Christianity might arouse him, or as awakened to a sense of danger, and labouring to realize, in the asylum which Christianity has opened, a place of safety and of enlargement.

What we affirm is, that the representation of Christianity, taken from the one station, is different from the representation of Christianity taken from the other, and yet the thing viewed from both is one and the same Christianity. They differ not as one object does from another, but only as the scheme or projection of an object seen from one point differs from the scheme or projection of the same object seen from another point. The change is not in the truth, the only change is in the perspective. If the representation of the hortatory differs from the representation of the systematic theologian, it is just as one picture of the same landscape differs from another, because of the different sides from which they have been taken, and so different bearings in which the whole and every part stand to the eye of the spectator. It is thus that we may have two different representations of the same Christianity; and if the one is the proper representation to be given from the chair, the other is certainly the proper representation to be given from the pulpit.

The nearest approximation in Scripture to the first of these occurs in the eighth chapter of the Romans: "Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate; whom he did predestinate, them he also called; whom he called, them he also justified; whom he justified, them he also glorified." Paul appears at this place in the character of a systematic theologian; but none was practically more successful than he in the work of the hortatory theologian, in acquitting himself of which he would begin not at the first step of the progression which I have now laid before you—not with God's foreknowledge or God's predestination, but at an intermediate step, with God's calling on all men everywhere to repent, and to do works meet for repentance. It was not so that Peter began: not most assuredly with a dissertation on the Trinity—not with the decrees of a predestinating God, but with other truths that came more nearly home to the personal interest of his hearers, and by which he might arouse them to an immediate practical movement, with the doctrine of a ready-offered forgiveness, and a promised regeneration to all who would, and, grounded upon these, with a call to repent, and be baptized every one of them in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and that they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

In whatever way you may receive the truths of Christianity here, this is the way for conducting the business of pulpits. You should first impress the consciences of men with the demonstration of sinfulness, even as Peter did: you should then exhibit the open door of an accepted Mediatorship, which all are invited to enter, and where they may be admitted to behold their offended Lawgiver in this most winning yet impressive attitude, God waiting to be gracious: and then the promised aids of grace and strength from on high might be made known to them, and intermingled with statements of doctrine as in the voice of a teacher, there should be an urgency, an imperative urgency, in the voice of a commander—"Turn to me, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you"; and there should be a constant enforcement of the new obedience of the gospel with as constant an appliance of the truths and the motives which constrain it; and one doctrine after another should be propounded as they are able to bear it, or as it admits of pertinent and practical application to the actual progress they have made in the moral history and moral experience of a believer; and while all Scripture should be expounded because all Scripture is

profitable, it should never be forgotten that in Scripture doctrinal truth is continually brought forward as a stepping-stone to practical efficiency, and that the ultimate object of all its revelations is, that the man of God might be perfect, and thoroughly furnished to all good works.

There is just one distinction more between the systematic and the hortatory that I have time at present to notice, and which has been suggested by an expression made use of a little while ago. We said that in the systematic theology the administration of God is exhibited as it bears upon the mass of the species, or perhaps rather on two distinct masses, the children of light and the children of this world. It is thus made to assume in a great degree the character of a distant and general speculation. The sense of one's own personal interest is lost among those universalities of statement and doctrine, and theology altogether is in this way more regarded as a thing of intellectual entertainment than as a matter of individual concern. Now for a practical effect it is a mighty object so to shape the representation as to isolate each of your hearers and make him feel that the matters wherewith you are charged are addressed distinctly and specifically to him. Now there are certain terms associated everywhere in the New Testament with God's overtures to the world, and which fully warrant this pointed, this personal direction of them to each individual; and the most important transition is made from the systematic to the hortatory, from the style of a professor in his chair to the style of a minister in his pulpit, when availing yourselves of these terms you pass from a mere general and didactic exhibition of the subject to such an application of it as might lead each individual to take it home to his own case and his own conscience. There is a fine example of this isolation of each hearer given by the Apostle Peter, when he says—Repent every one of you; and, by our Saviour when he says, Come to me all; or when He says, Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man open, I shall enter; or when He says, Whosoever cometh to me shall in no wise be cast out. Ministers still may, after these high examples, charge, or entreat, or hold out the encouragements of the gospel to each and every man within the reach of their voice; and thus the difference between the gospel in its generality and the gospel in its specific bearing on each individual of the great family of man, forms one capital distinction between the didactic and the hortatory management of the subject, between, in short, your present studies as collegians, and your future preparations as ministers of parishes.

CONGREGATIONS

Smiths Falls Reformed Church, Smiths Falls, Ontario

Sabbath services 11 AM and 6 PM, corner of Abbott and Elm Streets.

Minister: Rev. Robert McCurley, 1429 Matheson Drive, Smiths Falls, Ontario K7A 5B8, Canada, telephone 613.284.2269, e-mail rdmccurley@masterstrumpet.org.

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland

Sabbath services 2 PM and 6 PM, 7801 Persimmon Tree Lane.

Minister: Rev. Sherman Isbell, 3155 Lindenwood Lane, Fairfax, VA 22031, U.S.A., telephone 703.359.0192, e-mail rsisbell@masterstrumpet.org.