

*The Attractions
of the Ministry*

James H. Snowden

BV
660
.S6



BV 660 .S6
Snowden, James Henry, 1852
1936.
The attractions of the

Sn 64



THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

LIBRARY OF THE WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
NOV 19 1931

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

by *James H. Snowden*

*Professor of Systematic Theology in the
Western Theological Seminary
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*



Philadelphia
The Westminster Press
1921

Copyright, 1921
By F. M. Braselman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY TO THE MINISTRY | 15 |
| 1. Not a Money-Making Business..... | 15 |
| 2. Not a Place in Which to Gratify Ambition | 20 |
| 3. Not Easy Work..... | 22 |
| II. GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY..... | 29 |
| 1. Based on Truth..... | 29 |
| 2. Based on Right..... | 30 |
| 3. A Useful Work..... | 31 |
| 4. An Unselfish Work..... | 33 |
| 5. A Permanent Calling..... | 35 |
| 6. A Great Work..... | 37 |
| III. SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY..... | 43 |
| 1. A Comfortable Living..... | 43 |
| 2. A Fine Social Position..... | 45 |
| 3. An Intellectual Calling | 48 |
| 4. A Teaching Vocation..... | 55 |
| 5. A Speaking Vocation..... | 62 |
| 6. A Soul-Winning Vocation..... | 66 |
| 7. Building a Brotherhood..... | 70 |
| 8. The Salvation of Society..... | 76 |
| 9. Establishing the Kingdom of God in the World | 82 |
| 10. Leadership | 85 |
| 11. Heroism | 87 |
| 12. A Great Fellowship | 91 |
| 13. Coworking with God and Christ..... | 94 |
| 14. Great and Fine Rewards..... | 97 |
| IV. SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS..... | 107 |
| 1. What Constitutes a Call to the Ministry? | 107 |
| 2. What Preparation is Necessary for a Successful Ministry? | 110 |
| 3. Is There Any Special Call for Ministers of Ability To-Day?..... | 114 |

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. (A. V.)

—*Paul.*

DOCTOR GEORGE F. PENTECOST, who attained eminence in the ministry both in England and America, and whose death occurred on August 7, 1920, at the age of nearly eighty years, when in prospect of his eightieth birthday wrote: "Should my Lord come to me now and say: 'My son, I have decided to put you back into your twenty-second year and give you another life's opportunity. What line of service for me will you choose—merchant, lawyer, doctor, or politician?' I would say, 'My Lord, let me be a minister of the gospel or a pastor of thy churches; I know what it all means, and I would gladly live the life and do the work of the ministry all over again; only give me more grace that I may better live my life and do my work.'"

I glorify my ministry.

—*Paul.*

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

WE are God's fellow-workers." This fact dignifies and glorifies all true toil. All worthy work is working together with God, whether it be done in the home or school, field or factory, down in the mine or up on the mast, at the plow or in the pulpit. Jehovah "called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: . . . and . . . filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship." Ex. 31:1-5. The analogy of this instance extends the divine call to and breathes divine inspiration into all artisans and workers engaged in worthy service. Whatever contributes to the good will and welfare of men manifests the glory of God and helps to build his Kingdom in the

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

world. This fact obliterates the distinction between the sacred and the secular by turning all toil into coworking with God and transfiguring work into worship. This does not lower the sacred to the level of the secular, but it lifts the secular to the height of the sacred and makes all service divine.

The theory is therefore no longer held, if it ever was held, that a young man in order to serve the Lord must enter the ministry. He may be as divinely called and as truly serve the Lord in any other field for which he is fitted and into which it is his duty to enter. All true workers are thus "God's fellow-workers."

Nevertheless there are degrees and ranks in the fields of service and some of them are higher and nobler and are more directly related to the Kingdom of God than others; and it is still true that in a special sense men are called of God to enter the Christian ministry. The prophets and apostles were specially endowed for and called to their work, and Paul thanked Christ Jesus who "enabled

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

me, . . . for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service.” He also declared, “I glorify my ministry,” showing that he appreciated and emphasized the special honor of a call to the ministry. This sense of the special dignity and value of a call to this service should not be lost but should be intensified in our life.

It is proper, then, that young men who are looking out upon the varied fields of service with a view to selecting their life work should consider the Christian ministry and decide whether there are reasons why they should choose this vocation. Such a choice should be determined by proper motives, and it is the aim of this study to set forth the attractions of the ministry as a help to those who are facing this decision.

I

**MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY
TO THE MINISTRY**

I

MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY TO THE MINISTRY

THERE are some motives which may appeal strongly to young men to enter some other fields of service which do not apply to the ministry and should be ruled out of the decision of this question.

NOT A MONEY-MAKING BUSINESS

1. Young men should not enter the ministry to make money. Though this motive should always be secondary, yet it is a legitimate one in considering many other callings. Wealth is a necessary condition of social welfare and it is therefore needful that some men should make it and even devote their lives to it. But there are other lines of service which are not engaged in the production of wealth and offer little pecuniary attraction. This is generally true of the teaching profession and of philanthropic fields of serv-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ice, but it is especially true of the ministry. While it is rightly ordained that they that preach the gospel shall live of the gospel, yet only a plain living is promised and often only a meager living is realized. A few ministers receive generous and even large salaries, but these are exceptional and rare and even these salaries are not relatively large and would not permit the recipients to accumulate wealth.

If a young man were to enter the ministry with a mercenary motive he would not only be bitterly disappointed, but he would vitiate the very root of his ministry. An English art critic has recently lamented the injurious effect of the commercial spirit upon art. "It is difficult," he says, "to maintain an ideal in a deal." The painter who keeps one eye on his canvas and another on the price he hopes to get for it is not likely to do good work. He is not with a single heart intent on producing noble art, but rather on making money, and his mercenary spirit will debase his artist soul. The same principle applies

MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY

in a still greater degree to the ministry. Nothing else more surely blights the spirit and power of a minister than a keen scent for money. His soul is divided between two diverse and incongruous things. It would be hard to associate with Jesus the idea that he was a money-maker. He had not where to lay his head, and in sending out the Twelve he bade them to go unburdened with any money or anxiety about it and charged them, "Freely ye received, freely give." No thought of charging for the grace of God was ever to sully and poison their minds, and they were to dispense it without money and without price. The retribution that fell upon Simon the sorcerer, who wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit that he might make money out of it, is a grave warning to any mercenary minister.

Not only should the minister not attempt to turn his preaching to profit, but he should devote himself exclusively to his work and not try to mix business with it. If he endeavors to do this he may succeed in making

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

money, but he is not likely to succeed in saving souls. A man may be called to preach the gospel, or he may be called to accumulate wealth, but he is not called to do both at the same time. Peter and Andrew, hearing the call of Jesus, "straightway . . . left the nets, and followed him." Too many ministers are still burdened with their old boats and tangled up in their old fishing nets. In entering the ministry we should leave boats and nets behind.

The young man, then, who is bent on making money should not enter the ministry; and everyone choosing this calling should renounce all effort and thought of getting rich, and devote himself exclusively to it. However, the sacrifice is not a serious deterrent, for the loss may be small compared with the gain, and this low motive may be submerged and lost in higher ones. To the ministry in a still greater degree applies the principle which Robert Louis Stevenson applied to the profession of literature in his "Letter to a Young Gentleman Who Proposes to Embrace

MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY

the Career of Art” in the following words: “The direct returns—the wages of the trade—are small, but the indirect—the wages of life—are infinitely great. No other business offers a man his daily bread upon such joyful terms. . . . Suppose it ill paid; the wonder is it should be paid at all. Other men pay, and pay dearly, for pleasures less desirable.”

William James, the eminent psychologist, took the same view. At the age of twenty-one, in a letter to his mother, he wrote: “I feel very much the importance of making soon a final choice of my business in life. I stand now at the place where the road forks. One branch leads to material comfort, the fleshpots, but it seems a kind of selling of one’s soul. The other to mental dignity and independence, combined, however, with physical penury. . . . I fear there might be some anguish in looking back from the pinnacle of prosperity (necessarily reached, if not by eating dirt, at least by renouncing some divine ambrosia) over the life you might have

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

led in the pure pursuit of truth. It seems as if one could not afford to give that up for any bribe, however great.”

These considerations that were decisive with these eminent literary men should appeal to young men contemplating the ministry as one of its attractions.

NOT A PLACE IN WHICH TO GRATIFY AMBITION

2. In the same line, the ministry is not a place in which to gratify the ambition for position and fame. It is true that there are prizes of this kind in this field. Some pulpits are strategic points of national and even international publicity and influence and afford a man of commanding ability and genius a conspicuous and splendid position and opportunity as a religious and social leader and platform orator; and in every age there have been great preachers who have won brilliant fame and even lasting renown. It is right, also, that a minister should endeavor to develop his powers to their utmost and fill his field with the largest measure of efficiency and

MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY

influence. It is as much his duty as it is of any other man to make the most of himself and of his opportunities. Inevitably also his eye will sweep his horizon and he will be attracted to positions of the highest usefulness.

Yet all this is to be sharply discriminated and kept free from the worldly ambition to seek a high place as a means of personal aggrandizement and gratification. When the ambition to reach position and power becomes the dominant motive of a minister, it not only tempts him to use improper means to this end, but it is also so inconsistent with the true calling and spirit of the ministry that it will blight it at the root. "No man," says Dr. James Denny, "can give the impression that he himself is clever and also that Christ is mighty to save." He may do one or the other, but he cannot do both at the same time because the two things are mutually incompatible. The minister of Jesus Christ like his Master comes not to be "ministered unto, but to minister" and he should forget himself in his mission and his message.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

Like John the Baptist he should be only a voice proclaiming him the latchet of whose shoes he is not worthy to unloose. If position and influence come to him, he should welcome them, but only as a means of further service. The way to get an influential place in the ministry is to forget it, and let it come, if it will, of its own accord, not sought, but seeking him who by faithful service has shown his fitness for it.

NOT EASY WORK

3. A third motive that should not attract anyone into the ministry is the desire for a soft place and easy work. This is not a very worthy motive for entering any field of service, but it does appeal to and draws many young men into various callings. The lure of "the white collar" has an attraction for many who are crowding into clerkships where they can dress like gentlemen and have unsoiled hands, but where they may also doom themselves to ill-paid work all their lives.

The ministry looks like a "soft snap" and

MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY

an easy and almost idle life, as it may seem to an onlooker to be coddled in comfort, flattered by admiring parishioners, and fanned with perfumed air by adorers of the gentler and more sentimental sex. "Pat," said one Irish hodcarrier to another, "if you had your choice, what would you be?" "Well, Mike," said Pat, "I believe for a nice, clean, easy job, I would choose to be a bishop." A good many think the way of Pat, and some young men may be cherishing this delusion. For a delusion it certainly is that will surely work its own disillusionment and revenge.

While the ministry has its pleasant features and comfortable aspects, yet it is verily a strenuous life. It knows nothing of short hours and scarcely has a rest day, as it is subject to calls and service the week through and at almost any hour of the day or night. It puts a severe strain and tax on all a man's powers, physical, mental, and emotional; and it is burdened with responsibilities and anxieties that are exhausting to the nervous system and trying to the soul. Whoever is hunt-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ing a soft place and easy work had better give the ministry a wide berth.

Closely akin to this view is the notion that the ministry is easy in that it does not call for ability equal to that demanded by business and other professions. Tradition ascribes to parents the disposition to direct their ablest sons into the law and medicine and business and send their least competent son into the ministry. It is doubtful whether this was ever consciously done, and the average ability of ministers compared with that of other professions does not lend confirmation or color to such a practice. But any such view is without the shadow of foundation and would quickly disprove itself if it were tried. The ministry is as exacting in its demands for ability as any other calling and is as successful in attracting able men as other fields. The task of the modern minister is growing increasingly difficult and instead of lowering is raising its standard of service. To use a current phrase, the ministry is "a man's job," and only strong men should enter it.

MOTIVES WHICH DO NOT APPLY

It is already evident that the ministry is not all roses and rainbows and has its thorns and dark days like other callings. There are others of these apparently deterrent features of the ministry, such as the uncertain tenure of the pastorate, the meager support that is often given to it, the exacting and unreasonable people that it must try to please and satisfy, the petty faultfinding and unjust and unkind criticism that it is subject to, the many irritations and annoyances that it must bear, and so on. Paul desired the brethren to pray for him that he might be delivered from "unreasonable . . . men," and this tribe has not yet all passed out of the world and church, and the modern minister is still plagued with his share of them. There are unpleasant and trying aspects of the ministry and it is right that they should be presented along with its attractions and even painted in their darkest colors.

If any young man can be turned back by such discouragements it would appear that he is not made of the right stuff for this call-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ing and had better not go on. Gideon sifted out his men until he had only three hundred brave and stalwart soldiers, but with them he won a signal victory. The ministry wants sifted men of tried souls and true who are not afraid of an enemy and a hard fight. Every field of labor has its hardships and discouragements, and if a young man is trying to escape these things and wants to be carried on flowery beds of ease, he will not find work to suit him anywhere in this world.

The ministry is a strenuous life calling for men of ability and virility and of whole-hearted consecration, and the avaricious man, the ambitious man, and the lazy or incompetent man had better keep out of it. Its call is for "a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

II

**GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE
MINISTRY**

II

GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

THERE are some general attractions of the ministry which it has in common with some other worthy callings, which will now be considered.

BASED ON TRUTH

1. The ministry is based on truth. It proclaims the gospel of Him who said, "I am the truth"; and however the human understanding and presentation of this truth may be mixed with human error, yet his gospel stands through the ages as an embodiment of the essential truth concerning God and man in their mutual relations. Any system of teaching and life calling not based on truth cannot be a worthy vocation and cannot last because it is out of gear with the world and refuses to fit into the universe. The stars are fighting against it. No young man should choose a calling that is not founded on fact,

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

for in so doing he is following a delusion that will surely lead to disappointment and failure; but in following the Lord Jesus Christ he shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life and will not be afraid to face any fact or to come into the light of any truth in any field of the universe.

BASED ON RIGHT

2. The ministry is based on right. The right is that which is straight as the word means, as opposed to that which is wrong or wrung, for the two forms are only different spellings of the same word. Anything that is not right is crooked, and again it refuses to fit into the facts of reality. The integrity of the universe will not tolerate it. No crooked business is respectable, and every such vocation is doomed, and every young man should shun it. But the gospel of Christ is as straight as a beam of sunlight and as just as the character of God, and no one will ever be ashamed of it or fear to have it tested by the highest and finest standards of ethical integrity.

GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

A USEFUL WORK

3. The ministry is good or useful. This is another standard by which we evaluate the worth of things. Any thought or deed that is not good is evil and is a seed of decay and death. Any business that is not useful is worthless and wasteful and is likely to be wicked. The liquor traffic fell under condemnation on the ground of its being a vast waste and damage to society, and so it had to go. There are still other businesses, such as gambling, that are wholly harmful and contain no atom of good. Young men in choosing a calling should test it by this standard, and if it fulfills no useful end, if it renders no worthy service in the world, it is a bad business and should be avoided.

The ministry is good and useful in the highest sense and degree, as it preaches and applies the gospel that is profitable for all things and has in it the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. It is ever the higher that lifts the lower, the soul that transforms and transfig-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ures the body, and knowledge raises the level of all life. Ideas rule the world; science secretes civilization. The gospel proclaims the most practical and powerful truth in relation to human welfare, and wherever this truth shines there the world is brightest and life rises to the highest forms and bears the finest fruit.

Some misguided or prejudiced minds may look on the minister as a nonproducer and parasite in society, but any such view and charge is wholly unfounded and false. The thinker is a producer as certainly as the farmer and the manufacturer, and the artist not less than the artisan. Indeed, it is the thinker that fertilizes the world with pregnant ideas which are the seeds of all our progress, without which the world would be a barren soil. Newton did not leave any money or magic machine to the world, but he left it ideas that have enormously increased all its wealth. The minister has no cause to fear this charge and need not be ashamed to look the physical toiler in the face, for he himself is a

GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

producer of the richest goods of life and of the most essential health and wealth of the soul, the very bread of life; and therefore his calling bears upon it the justification of the supremely useful and good.

AN UNSELFISH WORK

4. Again, the ministry is an altruistic or unselfish work. All worthy work has in it an element of altruism, as it not only ministers to the worker but also to the world. A man can turn any business, however good, to a selfish end as he tries to build it up at the expense of other men's interests and devotes its profits wholly to his own gratification. But any selfish life is at war with fundamental, psychological, and ethical laws and will work out its own retribution.

Even among worthy vocations some are primarily gainful occupations. The manufacturer or the merchant has his eye on profits and his first thought is for himself, though he may also use his means and turn his whole business to an altruistic end. But

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

there are callings that in their very nature are altruistic and have little regard for personal gain. The teacher, the Y. M. C. A. secretary, the welfare worker, and the philanthropist in any field are not thinking of profit for themselves but of service to others. There is a growing number of these socialized vocations in our modern world and they are a hopeful sign of ethical and spiritual progress.

The ministry stands preëminent among these altruistic callings. As the Master came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" and took a towel and girded himself with it and began to wash his disciples' feet, so should all Christians and especially ministers follow in his steps. The minister's work consists in serving the people as he preaches to them in the pulpit, visits them in their homes, and performs all the duties of his office; and in all his work he seldom and generally not at all has any thought of any kind of gain or reward in his mind. Service is his daily round of work. Other men may wonder that he turns away from fields in which he might

GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

make a large income and achieve some distinction in order that he may do such work, but he has meat to eat that they know not of.

His work therefore is raised to a high level of service and sacrifice, nobility and beauty. "Let us not be weary in well-doing," says Paul, or in beautiful doing, as the word means. Unselfishness adorns any deed with beauty, imparting to it a grace more splendid than flashing gems. The ministry is devoted to such work and it ought to be and often is the most beautiful service in the world.

A PERMANENT CALLING

5. The ministry is a permanent calling. Some kinds of work are temporary in their nature and, having fulfilled their use, pass away. Munition makers reaped a golden harvest during the War, but when the War stopped their work stopped with it. In choosing a calling young men would do well to consider this point of permanency. If they fit themselves for a kind of work that will presently cease to be in demand, they will be out

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

of employment and be left with a kind of skill which has cost them much preparation but for which they can find no use.

The ministry is permanent by its nature. It is rooted down in the religious nature of man, and this is as constitutional and in-eradicable and abiding as his mental and physical nature and needs. The work of the priest is one of the oldest callings in the world, being more ancient and universal than raising food and weaving cloth for clothes; and there is no sign of its becoming obsolete in our modern world through a decline in the demand for it and the passing of its market. Men always have had and always will have religious needs which they will demand shall be supplied; and the prophet is the man that can meet this necessity. Never was there a greater need and a more urgent demand for a competent ministry that can satisfy the religious needs of men than there is to-day. Young men that are thinking of preparing for this service need not fear that if they enter it they will find that they have chosen

GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

a narrowing field and vanishing profession. The matter of the particular field is not now being considered, but the general need of the ministry is rooted in the essential nature of man and will last as long as man himself lasts in this world.

A GREAT WORK

6. The ministry is a great work. It is great in its subject-matter or ideas which deal with God and man and sweep the whole field of being, so that as a system of thought, theology is a universal science and nothing in the universe is foreign or uninteresting to it. It is great in its motives as all the interests of time and eternity are behind it to give it responsibility and urgency. It is great in its plan and program, for it proposes a radical regeneration of the individual in heart and character and life and an equally radical reconstruction of society in its spirit and order, and then it sweeps its circle around the world that it may rebuild it into the Kingdom of God on earth.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

Vocations differ greatly in this point of magnitude, and it should have large place and weight in choosing a calling in life. A great work tends to make us great, and a small work tends to make us small. The mind insensibly expands or contracts to the size of the field it works in. This is the mischief of a minute division of labor that tethers a man to a small and insignificant mechanical task that repeats its endless round of drudgery and allows no play of mind in initiative and variety. Even to devote one's life to mere money making, while it sharpens the acquisitive wits, may narrow the mind and wither the heart. The man that would give his whole time and thought to carving heads on cherry seeds would presently have a cherry-seed head. But a work of great importance and responsibility inspires us with a sense of its magnitude and calls out our ambition and power. When we are shut in, down in a narrow valley or in the confines of a walled inclosure, not only is our vision contracted, but our whole nature is cramped and tends to

GENERAL ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

shrink; but when we climb a mountain it puts its giant shoulder under us and lifts us into the blue, where we have a vaster dome over us and a far-flung horizon around us and a splendid and inspiring vision. While we climb the mountain the mountain lifts us and imparts to us some of its majesty and mystery; and it is impossible to stand on the summit of a lofty mountain and not swell with a new sense of the mystic greatness and grandeur of the world and of life.

Many a person is leading a narrow, shriveled, morbid life, eating his own heart out, because he has no wide outlook and worthy objective to take him out of himself and cause him to lose his sour self-consciousness and be absorbed in a greater and nobler life. Let us get out of the low ideas and ideals of a self-centered and selfish life and climb some great mountain of vision and service. Such an elevation of thought and aim will lift us out of the ruts and holes of our life and especially out of our morbid grievances and our mental and physical aches and complaints,

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

which are so largely subjective and will simply vanish if we forget them, and will catch us up into the inspiration of a great life.

The ministry is the greatest calling in the world from the point of view of great ideas and ideals. It is true that a few exceptional men, by reason of their genius and great station, the supreme thinker and poet and artist, or the great statesman or general, wield a power exceeding that of any other class of men and cast the shadow of their fame far down the centuries. But so also may the preacher of great genius command wide power and acquire enduring fame. Yet among ordinary men the minister has a work that handles the greatest ideas of the human mind, that allies him with the best men and the greatest souls and with God himself in the greatest dream and enterprise of all the ages, the rebuilding of the whole world into the Kingdom of God. This work will lift a minister out of low interests and aims into a lofty life that will expand his vision and stir his energies and tend to make him great.

III

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

III

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

THERE are some attractions that specially belong to or inhere in the ministry that will now be mentioned.

A COMFORTABLE LIVING

1. The ministry is assured of a comfortable living. This statement may elicit some surprise as not being in accordance with popular understanding and the personal and painful experience of many ministers. Is not the ministry notoriously one of the most poorly paid callings in the modern world? Do not even day laborers receive more? Some common laborers under the exceptional circumstances of the War did receive more than the average minister, but this was only a temporary condition.

The average salary of all ministers is distressingly low, but for the better educated ministry required by the leading denomina-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

tions the average is higher and compares favorably with the teaching profession generally. The writer does not maintain, however, that the ministry is a profitable or money-making vocation compared with some other professions and with business. On the contrary, he has already denied this point and emphasized the denial.

Yet it remains true that the minister of the gospel does and must live of the gospel in accordance with New Testament teaching. This living is also on an average scale of comfort. Ministers generally receive a salary that is on a level with the average income of their people, neither being pressed down to the poverty of the poorest nor raised to the affluence of the richest members of their congregations. This salary usually enables a minister to support his family comfortably and to educate his children properly.

The minister can also depend on his salary with a degree of assurance that is not enjoyed by all other professional classes. Beginners in other professions, such as law and

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

medicine, must usually pass through a period of meager earnings and precarious subsistence while becoming established in their professions and fields, whereas the young minister generally starts off with a sufficient assured income.

Ministers' salaries have been far too low, owing to the great rise in prices, but there is now a general movement to raise them. It is also true in the ministry, as in other callings, that superior ability and increased efficiency sooner or later bring higher remuneration.

While no one should enter the ministry wholly or mainly because of this attraction, yet the fact that this calling offers an assured income and fair living from the start is a subordinate inducement which a young man in contemplating the ministry has a right to take into account.

A FINE SOCIAL POSITION

2. The minister enjoys a fine social position. Again this fact is only mentioned with-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

out unduly stressing it as one of the subordinate attractions of this calling. The minister, by reason of his ability and education and especially of his position as a preacher and pastor, at once steps into the esteem of his people and is accorded a respected and influential place in the community. Due deference is paid to his person and opinions, character and dignity, by all classes, and he and his family are the recipients of social attentions and favors that are as enjoyable as they are honorable. Often he is the most conspicuous and influential man in his community or city. It is true that a minister is no longer regarded as a sacrosanct being and paid almost divine honors on the ground of his sacred calling. That kind of fictitious dignity and divinity is gone, and it is well that it is so. The minister is now judged as a man among men, and if he is unworthy of respect he will soon forfeit it and be stripped of the honor that attaches to his office. If a minister is not a genuine gentleman, he will soon be found out and no artificial veneer and polish

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

will save him in the hour of his exposure. No longer will "the cloth" cover and hide unworthy ministerial character and conduct. Nevertheless the minister starts with all things in his favor, with the public presumption that he is a scholar and gentleman and man of pure character worthy of all respect and honor. This honor will be freely accorded him, and unless he justly forfeits it, he will keep it and grow in social esteem and public influence.

Let no one jeeringly say that Peter and Paul and other great preachers never once thought of such things as a comfortable living and a fine social position, but counted all worldly considerations but loss and did not even count their lives dear that they might preach the gospel. This was their call to service and sacrifice in their exceptional day and circumstances, and nobly did they respond to it; and did such critical circumstances and dangers confront them, ministers would meet them with equal consecration and heroism to-day. But the case is different

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

with the normal call that now comes to our young men, and it is proper that these secondary considerations, while being kept in due subordination, should yet be taken into account and permitted to add their attractions to the ministry.

AN INTELLECTUAL CALLING

3. The ministry has the attraction of being an intellectual calling. By the very nature and requirement of his work the minister is a scholar and student, with a trained and richly stored mind. He goes through a long course of education, passing through common school, high school, college, and theological seminary, so that he enters upon his work as a disciplined thinker with a large stock of knowledge. But his education, so far from being finished at graduation, runs on in a broadening and deepening stream through all his work and life.

His primary study is the Bible, together with general religious literature, and into this unique and supreme Book he ever digs

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

deeper, studying its languages and history and customs and teachings and assimilating its ideas and spirit. This is in itself a constant education, as the Bible is a mass of the finest and richest literature in the world. These prophets and poets and apostles were men of religious genius who were sensitive to every breath of the Spirit, lofty mountain peaks that early caught the light of God's face and reflected it down upon their fellow men. To live in their companionship and learn to see their visions and throb with their aspirations is a high privilege and inspiration. The most purely distilled and highly spiritualized and supremely precious heart blood of the race has been poured into these pages, and the minister by constant study and meditation absorbs it into his own soul.

But the minister is a student of no single book, though that book be as profound and inexhaustible as the Bible. He is a universal student, a citizen of the whole world of knowledge. Theology, like philosophy, is a universal science, exploring all fields and rifling

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

them of their infinitely varied treasures and making them all its own. God is in all things, and all things run up to God for their final completion and explanation; and so all things reveal something of his wisdom and will. Every common bush is afire with God, every fact has diamond-like facets that reflect his light and glory. All things, from the center to the outmost circumference of the universe, are related and bound together in a system of perfect harmony and exquisite sympathy, so that invisible motes and mighty systems, sorrowing souls and starry constellations work together for good. Any fact in any quarter of the universe is a thread that will unravel its whole web, for it exemplifies some principle or truth that runs to its center and wraps itself around God.

The minister, along with the philosopher and the poet, should be a man of insight and imagination to see this unity of all things. He should know that

“No lily-muffled hum of summer bee,
But finds some coupling with the spinning stars;

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

No pebble at your feet but proves a sphere;
No chaffinch but implies the cherubim."

And he should

"See that each blade of grass
Has roots that grope about eternity,
And see in each drop of dew upon each blade
A mirror of the inseparable All."

The minister, therefore, perhaps more than any other professional man, should send out a decree that all the world shall be taxed to furnish him with materials for his sermons. All sciences, astronomy, geology, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology, physics, and metaphysics, bring grist to his mill. No fact, however remote and unrelated it may seem, is really foreign to him, but may yield unexpected confirmation and illustration to his theme. Literature and poetry and art are especially rich mines of truth for him. He stands in his watchtower and surveys the whole field of human history and learning and progress and makes it subservient to his ends. He returns from all his studies, as a bee from many flowers which it has rifled of

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

their sweets, laden with golden treasure. All the streams of his growing knowledge pour into the reservoir of his mind from which he draws his sermons. This raw material goes into his mind as the coal and coke and ore go into the top of the blast furnace in due time to gush out at the bottom in a molten stream of metal. All that a minister reads and sees and experiences sooner or later will enter into his sermons, weaving threads into their webs or flashing out in them as jewels of illustration.

Every sermon springs out of the whole life of the man that preaches it. As every seed draws on the soil and the shower and the sun so that it takes the whole solar system to make a single grain of wheat or blade of grass, so every sermon sinks its roots down through all the years of the preacher and is the outgrowth of his total experience. Or as a river is composed of drops that have fallen out of the sky over many thousands of square miles, so a preacher's sermon is composed of multitudinous drops that have been distilled

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

out of his entire life. Henry Ward Beecher was right when he said it took him forty years to make a certain sermon, though he spent only a few hours on its special preparation. Ruskin said that he would use the Devil himself, if he could catch him, for black pigment; and so the preacher can use everything, however unrelated and unpromising it may seem, in his sermons; for every sermon he preaches will be the precipitate of his personality, the outgrowth and harvest of his whole experience. Hence the importance to the minister of that broader culture out of which good sermons can grow. A barren soil is sure to raise poor sermons. A small man cannot preach a big sermon because he does not have the breadth and depth of experience out of which a great sermon can come.

The preacher, then, must have a full mind to furnish him with abundant and varied material, and a logical mind to digest it and imagination to illuminate it. Such a mind is the secret and source of endless fertility and variety in sermons, and the only way a min-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ister can have such a mind is to keep filling it up in constant study. A preacher should never be a mere pipe tapping other men's reservoirs and draining off the distilled essence of their thinking, but he should have within himself an original spring of ideas ever welling up and brimming over in perennial fullness and sparkling freshness. Such a preacher will never run dry and his sermons never grow stale.

Now the acquisition of truth for its own sake is one of the highest occupations and noblest pleasures of the human mind. Truth is the natural sustenance and exhilarating wine of the mind, eliciting and developing all its faculties and interests and luring them on into ever larger fields and fuller and finer satisfactions. The pursuit of knowledge is a quest attended with ever fresh variety and picturesqueness, adventure and surprise, and wonder akin to worship. It constantly opens up new horizons and ushers us into an ever vaster world. It pays its own way at every step and is its own pure and satisfying re-

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ward. It enlarges and ennobles the soul and enormously increases its wisdom and wealth as it possesses and grows into mystic unity with the world, so that we can say: All things are ours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or Plato, or Shakspeare, or Tennyson, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are ours, and we are "owners of the sphere, the seven stars, and the solar year."

It was of such pursuit and possession that Stevenson said that "Other men pay, and pay dearly, for pleasures less desirable," and James said that "It seems as if one could not afford to give that up for any bribe, however great." The minister enjoys this privilege and pleasure of intellectual pursuit in a rare degree and it is one of the finest attractions of the ministry.

A TEACHING VOCATION

4. The ministry has the attraction of being a teaching vocation. One may pursue knowledge as a mere end in itself and as a personal

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

and even selfish enjoyment. Scholarly men of wealth and leisure may devote themselves to the gratification of their literary tastes in a spirit of detachment and aloofness from any practical use and service. The minister, however, while enjoying the pursuit of knowledge as an intellectual life, also acquires it as a means to a higher end. He is a teacher and he gets it that he may give it. Every sermon is instruction and he is constantly imparting to his people the knowledge he has gained in all his studies.

Such use of knowledge, like mercy, is twice blessed: "It blesseth him that gives and him that takes." Giving knowledge is one of the most effective ways of getting it. When we transfer to another any material possession we have that much less left. But this is not true of mental possessions: when we impart truth to another we do not have less in our own minds but more; for the act of imparting truth to other minds clarifies and intensifies, broadens and deepens it in our own mind. We do not know a thing clearly and

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

firmly until we tell it; for the very act of telling it requires us to cast it in the sharp molds of definite words and this clears it of confusion and vagueness and gives it clean-cut outlines and edges. We do not really know more than we can say. An Armenian student in one of our theological seminaries, who was slow in the use of English, had a habit of saying in answer to a question, "Professor, I have that in my mind, but I cannot express it." One day the question was, "What is a vacuum?" and after meditating a moment he answered, "Professor, I have that in my mind, but I cannot express it." When we think that we have an idea which we cannot express, we probably have a vacuum in the very place where the idea is supposed to be.

Because the teacher is constantly forced to explain himself in definite and clear terms he is learning more than anyone else and is the best scholar in the class. Every time he goes over a lesson, however often he may have done so and however familiar it may be to

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

him, yet he understands it better, gains some new insight into it, and catches some new angle or analogy of its truth. New mental associations cluster around it, or new illustrations flash their light upon it, and thus he sees it more clearly and feels it more deeply and his mind grows and glows with the new experience.

The minister in teaching others is also teaching himself and gaining broader views and fresh illustrations and deeper convictions in the very act of preaching. Every preacher knows how his own sermon while in process of delivery reacts upon his mind so as to vitalize and fertilize it and cause it to sprout and bloom with thoughts and emotions that may be a surprise and wonder to himself. The pulpit may thus be an anvil on which he forges his thoughts at white heat into new and finer shapes; or it may be a glowing furnace in which the materials in his mind are fused into unity and sent out in molten streams of thought and emotion. Ministers often feel, after delivering a sermon the first

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

time, that they can make a much better sermon of it the next time: the reason is that by imparting its truth they have gained a better understanding of it and the next time they can pour into it their fresh experience. While teaching others they have taught themselves. The minister enjoys this privilege and means of growth in personality and power in a high degree, and it is one of the attractions of his calling.

But teaching is also a privilege and joy in that it imparts truth to other minds and thereby contributes to their growth. It is interesting to see anything grow and it is a joy to have a part in cultivating and stimulating its growth. How wonderful is the process by which a tiny seed becomes a blooming plant or a strong oak or a giant redwood pushing its crown up three or four hundred feet into the sun; or by which a slow-crawling, shaggy caterpillar becomes a swift-winged, gorgeous butterfly; or by which a dainty, fragile egg becomes a beautiful songbird: for all the silken, bejeweled wings of that butterfly were

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

packed away in that repulsive caterpillar, and all the sweet music of that songster was sleeping in that plain shell. Just to watch such a process is one of the most interesting things in nature.

Even more wonderful is the process by which the human mind unfolds from unconscious infancy, which has "never thought that this is I," into a mature mind and full-grown personality and perhaps the philosopher's intellect that enables him to weigh the earth and unwrap the secrets of the sun and sift the stars through his fingers. To watch this process and especially to develop and direct, to stimulate and inspire it, to lead and lure it on into new fields and wider horizons and loftier visions and thus to have part in cultivating and ripening minds into maturity and power is one of the highest privileges and purest joys of life. This is the special privilege and work of parents in the home and the teacher in the school and the preacher in the pulpit.

The minister is doing this work on a large

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

scale as he speaks to his congregation. His sermons and addresses cover a wide field of subjects and are comparable to a college or university course of lectures. The preacher addresses the same general audience year after year and thus is able to give them a systematic course of instruction on the largest and most inspiring themes. He is often the chief educator in the community and more than any other man in it guides the thinking and molds the minds of his people. He imparts his own mental processes, his clearness and candor and honesty of thought, to them and builds himself into their minds so that they often bear the common stamp of his method and type of thought. It is a peculiar pleasure he enjoys as he sees his people grow and advance under his teaching. No teacher in a school or professor in a college or university chair has a greater and more inspiring opportunity to educate people than has the preacher in his pulpit, and this privilege and joy is one of the attractions of his calling.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

A SPEAKING VOCATION

5. In the same line the ministry has the attraction of being a speaking vocation. Truth may be imparted and minds educated through the printed page, and this is the work and joy of the author. But there is a special joy in imparting truth through the voice to a present, visible audience. Speaking is an exercise that arouses the speaker's whole personality—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Under its inspiration the heart beats with a quicker bound, the blood rushes in a ruddy, glowing stream through the arteries and veins, and every organ and nerve is quickened into a keener and fuller life. The mind also is aroused and its mental associations come flocking around the theme under discussion and pour their light upon it, the logical faculties grow more alert to see relations, and thought finds readier and more forcible expression in speech. The emotions are kindled and begin to glow and fuse the whole soul into fervency and fire. The imagination spreads its wings and soars

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

to loftier heights where the mind can see with broader vision and utter more eloquent speech and deliver more powerful strokes of thought. The will arouses its energy and mounts into mastery and bends all thought and passion and speech to its own purpose.

Speaker and audience also react on each other and put fuel on each other's fire. While the speaker magnetizes the audience, the audience inspires the speaker. The fire in his eyes kindles their souls, and their gleaming eyes are flaming torches to his soul. His eloquence puts a kind of hypnotic spell upon them, and their eager faces and rapt attention excite him to still greater efforts and effects. The interest and especially the passion of speaker and audience are mutually contagious; they catch and kindle each other's emotions. A great orator may become transfigured before his audience and his face may shine with a supernal light, as did the face of Moses. Of Daniel Webster it is recorded that for several hours after his great oration at the dedication of Bunker Hill Monument

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

his face wore an indescribably grand expression that awed those who came into his presence.

The orator thus rises to heights of thought and emotion that he never could attain in the calmness and coolness of private study and meditation. By a process of electric induction the audience charges him with power by which his total soul down to its unconscious deeps is aroused into action and he transcends his ordinary ability and may be a revelation and wonder to himself.

Such an experience is one of the greatest triumphs and joys of the human soul. The whole soul is then alive and alert in all its powers of thought and passion and pours forth its total self in a flood of spontaneity and abandon as a bird discharges its soul in a gush of song. All disharmony in the soul is unified, all distracting and troublous thoughts and feelings are submerged, and the soul loses itself in perfect expression and pure joy. This is probably the highest state of the human soul and it is only approached

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

by the great artist in the act of giving birth to some child of his genius.

Now the minister's work is in this field. He is a speaker, and two or three times a week he stands before an audience and speaks to them face to face and soul to soul. His audience is one of intelligence, and it is interested in his subject and has some general acquaintance with it. It understands his general line of reasoning and his personal purpose, and it is quick to appreciate his good points, and is also able and keen to note his defects. His audience is sympathetic, it usually is *en rapport* with him and wants and waits to be instructed and stirred to action. It waits for him as an instrument waits for the musician to sweep its keys or strings.

On the whole, Christian people furnish the best average audience that could be gathered in its community. The preacher has his chance with it, and if he has any spark of the oratoric instinct he will catch and hold its attention and kindle its interest. He may not be a great orator such as Beecher

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

or Spurgeon, for such men of genius are as rare in the pulpit as they are in any other field; but he has some ability as a speaker and he has about the best opportunity that any man can have to cultivate the art of speaking and achieve efficiency if not mastery in it. With themes appealing to human souls on the greatest issues of time and eternity, he can arouse himself to his fullest power and fervency and he can arouse his hearers to some realization of the mighty motives that should move them to Christian faith and action. This privilege is a joy compared with which many of the pleasures for which other men pay dearly are not worthy to be considered, and this will ever be one of the highest attractions of the ministry.

A SOUL-WINNING VOCATION

6. The ministry has the attraction of being a soul-winning vocation. Personal interest in a work makes it a delight, and its absence kills enjoyment and turns work into drudgery. The mere artisan may be set to tread

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

the round of some mechanical routine in which he can have little or no interest, but the artist has an ideal that sets his soul on fire and kindles his intense interest and enthusiasm. The physician in a considerable degree has this interest in treating a patient, and the attorney in conducting a case. The lawyer in addressing a jury is trying not simply to make a fine speech and gain applause, but to persuade them of the truth and justice of his case; and he may have the tremendous incentive of trying to save his client's life.

The minister has this motive of personal interest and responsibility in the highest degree. He, too, is trying to win a case and heal a patient and save a soul. His aim is the practical one of persuading his hearers of their lost condition in sin and need of a Saviour and of convincing them that Jesus Christ is mighty to save. This practical and immensely responsible aim shapes the logic of his sermon and suffuses it with fervency and urgency from beginning to end. He is

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

not rendering a performance before his hearers for their entertainment or even for their instruction, but he is at close grips with them in a personal contest in which he is endeavoring by every means in his power to enlighten their minds, remove their difficulties and doubts, conquer their prejudices, break up their indifference, break down their opposition, and melt and move them to faith and action. When he succeeds in his endeavor and knows that he has led souls to Christ, he has a sense of holy satisfaction and even of triumph which is like that of the physician who has delivered a patient from death, or of a lawyer who has secured justice for his client or has even saved his life.

The minister is engaged in saving souls not only in his preaching but also in his more private, personal relations with his people. Jesus not only preached to great multitudes that thronged the amphitheater of the seashore or the mountain side, but he also engaged in private interviews with solitary individuals, such as Nicodemus, who came to

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

him alone by night, or the woman with whom he talked at Jacob's well. With him a single soul was a great audience. We do not read of anyone's being converted by his public sermons, but in these personal interviews he won his individual hearer every time. The minister is carrying on this private work, as he gets into close, sympathetic touch with individuals and by his personal influence and tactful, tender words leads them to Christ. This personal work is often the most effective means of gathering souls into the Kingdom; and such converts are usually the most stable, as hand-picked apples are always the best.

The minister's office also includes the work of guiding and developing his people in their growth in Christian character and conduct; and in sustaining and comforting them in all the circumstances, temptations, trials, and sorrows of life. This brings him into the most intimate, confidential relations with them in both their joys and their sorrows and binds them to his heart with the strongest and most tender ties. As "friendship is

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

three fourths of life," the minister has opportunities enjoyed by few other men of forming precious friendships that are among his greatest treasures and richest joys.

There is a peculiar joy in winning and helping souls that rises far above the mere satisfaction of success in one's work. It was for this joy that was set before him that Jesus "endured the cross, despising shame"; and his ministers in following him may go forth with weeping, sowing precious seed, but they also shall return with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. He that is wise winneth souls, and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever." Such joy should surpass that of the artist in carving marble or painting pictures, for the minister is an artist and creator working in the imperishable material of the human soul.

BUILDING A BROTHERHOOD

7. The ministry has the attraction of being engaged in the work of building the brother-

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

hood of the Christian Church. Conversion is only the first step in salvation, which covers the whole growth and fruitage of the Christian life. And so the minister is not done with converts when he has preached them through the door of conversion into the Church; rather his work has only begun. He is to build them up in salvation and service into a full-grown Christian life; and he is to build them together into the brotherhood of the Church. Building the Church was a fundamental fact in the teaching and purpose of Jesus. "I will build my church," he declared. Paul was constantly insisting on building believers into a temple and into the body of Christ and into brotherhood. All the saints are to be "fitly framed together" as polished stones which thus grow "into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." "Seek that ye may abound in the work of building up." "Brethren" is a common title with which Paul addresses believers. "Love the brotherhood" is the ad-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

monition of Peter, and the brotherhood of believers in Christ is the central fact in the New Testament idea of the Church.

The minister is the architect and master builder in this work. He supplies the plans and specifications out of the Word of God and the perfect Pattern in the person of the Lord Jesus, and he is to guide and inspire his people so as to eliminate divided plans and purposes, waste and friction, and fit his people together with close joints and cement them into solid union with love, and thus build them into unity and brotherhood, a temple of the Holy Spirit full of truth and light.

One of the dangers of the pulpit is that the minister may think that his main business and the measure of his success is just to preach striking and brilliant sermons and draw an audience. He is apt to measure himself and be measured by others by the size of his crowd. He is then tempted to count his hearers instead of considering their Christian character and spirit. This is a fallacious standard and a false aim. "An audi-

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ence," says Dr. Charles E. Jefferson, in his book on "The Building of the Church," "is not worth working for. An audience is a set of unrelated people drawn together by a short-lived attraction, an agglomeration of individuals finding themselves together for a brief time. It is a fortuitous concourse of human atoms, scattering as soon as a certain performance is ended. It is a pile of leaves to be blown away by the wind, a handful of sand lacking consistency and cohesion, a number of human filings drawn into position by a pulpit magnet, and which will drop away as soon as the magnet is removed. An audience is a crowd, a church is a family." A crowd can make an audience, but only Christians can make a church. Jesus did not care for crowds and rather avoided them, and there is no record that when he preached to crowds he got a single soul, but when he talked with Nicodemus or with the woman of Samaria he got that one. He was not seeking to attract a throng, but was building a brotherhood.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

If the minister should think of his church as a brotherhood, it is equally important that the church also should think of itself under this concept. Very suggestive and subtle is the influence of a name as it insinuates its meaning into the consciousness of those who use it. If a church thinks of itself as the wealthiest and most important church in the town or city it may next think of itself as a social club and then it will insensibly be based upon and governed by the artificial distinctions and conventional rules of a social club. It will then have doors constructed of wire netting that will sift out its members and let in only those that belong to its social class, and when others get in through the wires they will be made to feel in subtle ways or be told in brusque terms that they are not wanted; and very likely it will have members that do not know one another and do not want to, and other members that do know one another and are sorry that they do. But if a church thinks of itself as a brotherhood and really cherishes this idea, the caste spirit will be

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

cleared out of its consciousness and it will grow toward this ideal.

Now it is the business of the minister to set up this ideal and strive to realize it. To knit his congregation into a family, to build his church with all its open or hidden factions and social distinctions and childish alienations and petty meannesses into a brotherhood of mutual unselfishness and harmony and love, is a hard task, calling for infinite tact and patience and love, but it is the true mission and measure of a minister. If he is simply delivering brilliant sermons and attracting crowds he may flatter himself and be flattered by his members as a great preacher, but he may be only sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal and may be really only playing an actor's part and be guilty of folly. He is a great preacher who can attract large numbers of people to Christ and make them brothers in him. To stand in the center of a congregation and knit it into fine and strong brotherhood by filaments that are spun from his own soul, and vitalize it by arteries that

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

run from his own heart is the true work and the rare privilege of a minister, and it is one of the great attractions of his calling.

THE SALVATION OF SOCIETY

8. The ministry has the attraction of being a much broader work than the salvation of the individual soul and building the individual church: it widens beyond the church walls into the salvation of society. The individual is the unit of society, and personal salvation is the primary work of the minister. All life starts with a cell, and the soul is the cell of society and of the world. But life also builds its cells into an organism and out of the organism generates cells. The two aspects of salvation, the individual and the social, are never to be put into competition, as though either were antagonistic to the other. The two are complementary and must go together as must the center and the circle, the seed and the fruit, the leaven and the whole lump. The minister, while placing the center of his circle in the individual soul, also

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

from this center sweeps the whole horizon and encircles the globe. He is not simply saving individual units but organized units, he is building the Kingdom of God in the world.

Formerly the Church was too individualistic and self-contained, largely shut up within its own walls and saving its own members and children, conserving its orthodoxy and respectability, with little conscience or consciousness as to the great world with all its social problems and perils surging around its doors.

Jesus, while he preached and applied an individualistic gospel, as to Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria, also preached and applied a broadly social gospel. He was transfigured on the mountain until he was steeped in splendor and the disciples were entranced and wanted to stay. But that was no place to stay. Jesus quickly hurried down to the plain where was a poor demoniac boy to be healed and many troubled folk to be helped and much work to be done. He turned

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

that great white splendor on the mountain top, that was not for the private delectation of his disciples or for his own exaltation, into a shining stream of mercy to heal and bless the social world, even as mountains transmute the great glaciers and dazzling snowdrifts on their summits into rivulets and rivers that sow wheat fields and orchards out over the plain and make them blossom as the rose.

Jesus applied his principles and spirit to all the social problems of his day: to politics and taxes, poverty and wealth, to employer and employee, to strikes and lockouts, to public and private morals. The parable of the Good Samaritan is the social gospel and so is The Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount. The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is full of the social gospel. The prophets were great preachers of it and dealt with the very same problems in Judea that we have to-day in America and Europe.

The minister of to-day is called to the same work in his community, and this field is now opening out before him in many ways. He

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

no longer stands in his pulpit preaching a denominational theology and self-regarding message to his people: he is a minister or servant of the community and his pulpit is only a vantage ground and point of outlook whence he surveys the whole social complex, and mystic chords connect him like sensitive feelers and vital nerves with every aspect and problem and peril of this field. He sees whether the young people in his community have adequate and proper places and means of social recreation and companionship; whether there are dens of iniquity with their bottom in hell that are luring them to danger and destruction; whether the streets are sanitary, and the jails decent, and the schools well housed and equipped with proper appliances and competent teachers, and the hospitals in good condition and amply sustained. Of course he is not only on friendly terms but in active coöperation with all other Christian churches. He is a friend and helper of the Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A. and the Salvation Army and of every worthy means of

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

social welfare. He may found and build a community house or club or public library or men's or boys' organization that will be a new center of social life in the community. Many a minister has thus revolutionized his town and neighborhood. He knows the policeman on his beat and the letter carrier on his route. He is hand in hand with business men on the one side and equally so with laboring men on the other, having the confidence and good will of both and seeking in every practical way to mediate between these classes and to secure and maintain mutual justice and brotherhood among them. He is a citizen as well as a minister, interested in politics without being a partisan and preaching its essential principles and duties. Without being an offensive agitator he is yet in the foreground or at least in the background of every work and movement of reform in his community. At times he may boldly attack social evils in low or in high places and drive men out of iniquitous business as Jesus drove the thieves and robbers out of the Temple.

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

Perhaps he must even take his ministerial life in his hands and be crucified on a cross as the price of his devotion to civic duty. He is to be preëminently the salt and the light of his community, a living gospel bound up in flesh and blood, read and known of all men.

The minister is no longer an isolated and peculiar man, shut up within his own narrow calling or monkish cell, separated and aloof from his fellow men by his clerical garb and odor of sanctity, but he is emphatically a man among men, a man's man, being all things to all men, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, an altogether human being of good fellowship and humor, sweetness and light, binding himself by ties of kindly interest and sympathy to everyone in his community of whatever class or condition and endeavoring to lead all into the common life of the Kingdom of God.

John saw the golden city coming down out of heaven to earth with its twelve gates, open on every side day and night, opening inward to the vision and fellowship of the glorified

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

Christ and then swinging outward into paths of service that run in every direction to the ends of the earth. We have been thinking too exclusively of that city as being located in the glory land above; but we are also building a copy of it down on this earth. Already its jeweled walls and gates are rising around our horizon and we are laying its golden pavements right under our feet. This is the meaning of all worship and work, sanitation, education, social and civic reform, home missions and foreign missions, national and international affairs. This is the minister's mission and program, and no grander call and opportunity now appeals to men. It should draw young men with a great attraction.

ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE WORLD

9. There is a still wider attraction at this point. The writer has already referred to foreign missions, and this work opens our vision into the Kingdom of God as it sweeps

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

its horizon beyond our local community out across the country and continent around the world. The minister is committed to this work also. His pulpit can be no local and cramped field and opportunity, but it is as big as the globe, and he is a true cosmopolite, a citizen of the world. The little arc of his pulpit, after all, is a great circle and runs around the equator. He is just as near to the center of the earth and to the stars, standing in his pulpit, however obscure it may be, as he would be if he were in a conspicuous pulpit in New York or London. He is thus a man of planetary proportions and power. He is helping to shape the moral and political, educational and social, and the religious and spiritual life of the country; and through the agencies of foreign missions he is reaching his hands around the globe and helping to lift and roll it into the light and love of God. The touch of his hand and the thrill of his voice really reach every human being on the earth: for humanity is one web or a vital, sensitive organism, so that whatever touches

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

it at one point is propagated through the whole vast body. No other man is handling such a big business as the minister. We are always impressed with the statement that the sun never sets on the British Empire; yet this empire is only a few red patches on the map, while the Kingdom of God encircles the globe around the equator and from pole to pole, and the Christian minister is ever presenting this business to his people and instructing and inspiring them in it. He is in touch with the geography of all continents and islands; he knows something of their lands and languages, races and customs, governments and religions. His brain is a telegraphic or telephonic exchange where messages arrive from and go out to all the earth. He has a vision of a world redeemed and unified in common brotherhood, peace, and prosperity. He is laboring to build the true League of Nations, which will never be realized as the prophets foresaw it and the poets dreamed it as "the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world" until it comes un-

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

der the rule of Him whose right it is to reign, and the kingdoms of this world “become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ.” This inspiring, world-wide work is a splendid attraction of the ministry, and young men of vision and courage should leap to its call and opportunity.

LEADERSHIP

10. At this point the writer wishes to emphasize specially as one of the attractions of the ministry the fact of its leadership. Leadership is one of the most powerful magnets that attract men in all fields. In science, literature, and art, and especially in business, government, and war, men aspire to rise to positions where they are intrusted with great responsibilities and command or lead others. In every city and village men are measured by public opinion very much by the degree of prominence and leadership which they attain; and as a rough, external standard the measurement is approximately correct. It is also a true, human instinct which prompts men to aspire to and to appreciate and re-

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

joice in such leadership, provided it is not unworthily gained and used.

The minister steps almost at once into such a position, and if he proves competent and worthy he grows in it until very often he becomes the most influential man in his community or even in a large city. He is a leader of his people in thought, as he molds them into his way of thinking and often guides them to his own conclusions. He is a leader in planning and carrying out all the activities of his church. He is a leader in the life of his community, as he holds up civic and ethical and religious ideals and builds them into its social structure. He is a leader in great crises of thought and life when momentous questions of faith or government or national affairs or war come up for practical decision. And he is a leader in the broad field of the nation and the world, as he shapes programs and pushes campaigns in home and foreign missionary work. No business man or lawyer or civic officer or statesman is handling plans and programs of more far-

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

reaching scope and influence, no other man in the ordinary places of life has such lines of leadership committed to his hands. The minister comes to feel the dignity and honor and the magnitude and significance of the interests he is guiding, and this position of responsibility and leadership is a worthy attraction of his calling.

HEROISM

11. In the same line the ministry has the attraction of heroism. Men crave the adventurous, they hunger for the heroic. A life of undisturbed security and ease and pleasure soon loses its relish and then palls upon and satiates all the senses. An American millionaire, recently deceased, once made a pathetic plaint. He was never destined to be quite happy, he said, because his inherited wealth destroyed the necessity for and incentive to action and killed ambition. From such a life men will break away and answer the call of the wild that they may rough it in the forest or wilderness or on the sea, or that

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

they may climb the most dangerous mountain tops or conquer the icy caps of the globe. Men cannot stand it to be coddled in comfort; they instinctively and imperiously crave adventure and danger, fortitude and valor. One of the attractions of war is the very relief from the security and comforts of peace which it brings and the tremendous hazards and splendid heroism with which it abounds.

The ministry, far from being immune from hardship and swathed in comfort, as some people may think it is and as some ministers may even try to make it, is really a heroic calling. It ordinarily has enough physical trials to call for some grit as well as grace. It demands great patience and courage in dealing with many of its problems, especially as they are rendered complicated and vexatious by the irritation and opposition of petty-minded and unreasonable people that so pestered Paul and have not yet learned to leave the preacher alone. The minister's very program calls for heroism. It is often

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

an arduous and adventurous one as he tries to build up a divided, visionless church into unity and service, or tries to reform and transform a backward community or city. His program looks impossible when he puts it up against the terribly disjointed, sin-stricken world. But the impossible is our challenge and opportunity, an occasion to measure ourselves with splendid insolence and defiant audacity against every opposing force. It may inspire us with such faith and bravery and resolution as are the highest heroism. Jesus Christ was the most superbly heroic figure of all the ages, as he faced soldiers at the Garden gate so calmly and majestically that they went backward and fell upon the ground, and then with equal calmness and courage went to his cross and then dared to close and crown all his teaching with the sublime declaration: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

teaching them to do all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Paul followed in the same path of heroism when he stepped from Asia to Europe and dared to preach the gospel of the resurrection in skeptical Athens, and then was not ashamed to preach it in Rome also, for it was everywhere the power of God unto salvation. Martyrs caught up the same torch of the light of the world and carried it forward.

“A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour’s throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed:
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain:
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train.”

Seizing the same banner of the gospel, the minister dares to set his feet undaunted in the same perilous path, follow the same impossible program and go with Christ toward the same vision and victory that overcometh the world. Jesus came to bring, not peace,

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

but a sword, and wherever he has gone there has been a fight; a fight against slavery, against the degradation of woman, against the liquor traffic, against all the hosts of wickedness, and the Christian ministry will be a war to the end. In such a campaign the minister will never have reason to complain that he lacks the incentive of adventure and heroic bravery, for he will ever be called upon to fight the good fight of faith and carry the cross while he wins the crown.

A GREAT FELLOWSHIP

12. The ministry has the attraction of a great fellowship. Every vocation has the fellowship of those engaged in it, and this is a strong bond of union and means of encouragement and may be a source of great honor and pride. Laboring men have their unions and are generally loyal to them and often glory in them. Business men, lawyers, physicians, scientists, educators, all have their associations by which they promote their mutual interests and advance their objectives.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

The Christian minister belongs to one of the oldest and most honorable associations in the world. It dates back to Hebrew prophets and to Christ and his disciples and has come down through apostles, martyrs, missionaries, reformers, theologians, and preachers, who have helped to shape the Christian centuries; and it stands to-day as one of the strongest organizations and finest fellowships among men.

It is true that the ministry has its share of unworthy members who have cast discredit and even dishonor on their calling, but this fact has not lowered its essential nature and level. There are dishonorable members in every profession, black sheep in every flock. But as a class, ministers stand high in the estimation of the world, and of their calling they may be justly proud.

And now, if men gather strength and inspiration from their membership in a labor union or in a professional association, if they thrill with pride in their membership in the Grand Army of the Republic and glory in the

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

American Legion, shall not the minister swell with some sense of pride as he realizes his membership in the noble army of those who through all the ages have proclaimed the gospel of the Son of God and have fought the good fight of faith against spiritual hosts of wickedness? The minister enjoys a rare privilege in the fellowship of his brethren, for they are men of pure hearts and purposes and of optimistic faith and good cheer, who probably have a happier time together than any other class of men; and he also feels the mystic ties that bind him to all the men through all the ages of the spiritual fellowship to which he belongs, so that he can repeat, with a fullness of meaning that few men can appreciate, the worn but wonderful words, "I believe in the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints." Every minister in a measure is uplifted and strengthened and inspired and made a more honorable and a greater man by this fellowship, and this is one of the attractions of his calling.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

COWORKING WITH GOD AND CHRIST

13. But the ministry has the attraction of an infinitely greater fellowship: the minister is a coworker with God and a fellow worker with Christ. "We are God's fellow-workers," said Paul; and Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work," meaning that God is ever at work. Medieval artists painted God as resting at ease on a gorgeous couch amidst golden clouds, and we have not yet gotten altogether rid of the impression that God, having finished his creation, has nothing to do. Work is an unpleasant suggestion to us and we think that it must be a degradation to God. But God is a laborer now as much as he was in the beginning. The heavens are still his mighty workshop in which suns are flying off the anvil of his creation like sparks of fire. And he is equally still at work in the human world, indwelling in the minds of men, immanent in all human history and activities and working out his eternal plan and purpose. So also Christ is still working in the world through his Spirit

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

and disciples and Church and all the channels and agencies of providence as he is building his Kingdom among men. All men live and move and have their being in the immanent God, who is present and active in every operation of nature and event of our human world.

The minister in a special sense is coworking with God and Christ in the service of preaching the gospel and building the Kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men. His mission has been planned and his message shaped for him in the divine mind, and in a sense he is the voice of God speaking to men, and the hands and feet of Christ doing his work among men; doing not only the same, but greater works than Jesus himself did, because he lives in a greater world, more unified and open and responsive to the gospel message. The minister is the ambassador of God, as though God did beseech men through him, however imperfectly and unworthily he may fulfill this office. The preacher is a prophet of God, the divinely appointed successor of the ancient Hebrew

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

prophets and Christian apostles, who stands in Christ's place and speaks in God's name. He sees all things in a divine light and applies eternal principles to temporal conditions. The prophet has ever been the foremost and most important man in the world, standing above the world and judging righteous judgment based upon eternal standards and exalting inner worth above outer wealth and the spirit above the flesh, and the Christian minister is the prophet of to-day. He stands with his hands joined to God's hands and is a fellow laborer with him in all his work. It is because of this divine partnership that the minister knows that the gospel is the dynamite of God unto salvation. Sin can never be cleansed from human souls by sociology or science, education or art, however valuable these and other like human agencies may be as aids in this work. Only the Spirit of God can eradicate this terrible malady. The minister has the assurance that God in Christ is working with him to give saving efficacy to the truth he preaches. The very idea of such

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

a gigantic task as the redemption of this world staggering under all its weight of sin and woe would overwhelm and crush him were it not for his faith that it is God's work and he will carry it through. If God be with the minister, who can be against him? No other man in a greater or possibly in an equal degree has this supreme assurance and attraction in his life work.

GREAT AND FINE REWARDS

14. Finally, the ministry has the attraction of great and fine rewards. There are two kinds of reward in life, external and internal. External rewards, such as wages and wealth, are the end—product and remuneration of service and stand apart from the service itself. Men are usually most eager for these material rewards, and the division of them is one of the great causes of competition and strife among them. The minister receives a modest share of these material goods.

But there is another kind of reward that

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

is much richer and nobler. This is the inherent reward that grows right out of the service itself. Work which is congenial and delightful is its own reward. This is eminently true of artistic work. The sculptor's chisel and the painter's brush, the poet's flights of imagination and the musician's song—these forms of activity may be intense toil and cost sweat and even the agony of the soul, but they are also the soul's finest satisfaction and fullest joy. These activities are not weights that load and drag the soul down into slavery, but wings that set it free in glorious liberty. Such work is not drudgery but delight, and in such service duty and desire coincide and make one music. These inherent joys are ever the highest and richest rewards of service.

All men, even those that are primarily working for external, material rewards, may in some degree attain to this reward and joy inherent in their work. Not only the business man or the professional man may have such interest in his work that it becomes its own

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

satisfaction and delight, but even the common laborer at the humblest and hardest physical toil may learn to love his work and strive to do it better for its own sake; and this process of humanizing the common labor and all the work of the world and opening the eyes of men so that they will see its inherent dignity and worth and reward is the line along which we must hope and work for the improvement of the condition and the contentment of the industrial toilers.

Now the minister is engaged in work that carries its reward in its own bosom. All the attractions of the ministry that have been considered, with the single exception of the salary, are of this nature. Its social position and intellectual life and teaching and speaking activities and soul-winning and building the brotherhood of the Church and community service and establishing the world-wide Kingdom and its leadership and heroism and cworking with God and Christ, are rewards and joys in themselves. They pay their own way at every step. The minister does not

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

need to wait till the end of the day's work or of the month's service to receive his real pay: his work is his wage. In a supreme degree he has the wage and joy "of going on." Like the artist working in marble or paint or poetry or music he is carving souls and painting portraits of human character and expressing the poetry of life and helping to set

"This inharmonious world in tune and cause
Our jarring lives to grow to mellow music."

His soul takes flight on these wings and rises above drudgery into liberty. Often his duty and his desire and his delight coincide and flow in one smooth channel; he does just what he wants to do and he wants to do just what he ought to do, and this is life without friction or fret and is the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Of course this ideal is not always or constantly realized. The minister, like other men, has his days of disillusionment and discouragement bordering at times on despair; many are his trials; but through them all and

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

in spite of them all he is living the life he has chosen and would choose above any other life, and is ordinarily happy in it and at times rises into the victorious life. He realizes in a peculiar degree the gospel of cheer and the promises of blessing that he preaches, and would not exchange the grace of God in his calling for all the gold in the world.

The great preachers have gloried in the rewards of the ministry and in its very trials and crosses. The Hebrew prophets were men of great disappointments and sorrows, but they caught golden visions and lived lives of triumphant faith and joy. Paul rejoiced in his calling amidst all his unparalleled sufferings, and when the grace of God struck the thorn in his flesh it blazed up in glory as the electric current when it encounters the resistance of the filament in the lamp flashes into light. The supreme example of reward and joy in the ministry is the Master himself, who, notwithstanding all his sorrows, was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, the happiest man and most jubilant

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

optimist that ever lived; and “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame.”

The glorious company of the apostles and martyrs, who counted not their lives dear, rejoiced in their sufferings and would not have exchanged the martyr's flames that enveloped them for purple robes or jeweled crowns. The minister belongs to this company and has his share of these inherent rewards and joys. He also sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied. This is a reward that is independent of wages and position and all the vicissitudes of the world and is within his soul a well of water springing up into pure and fresh life. He ever carries his reward with him, he reaps as he sows, his work is his constant wage. At the end of his day's work comes his final reward, when he can exclaim with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me

SPECIFIC ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.”

These manifold and various aspects of the Christian ministry present only its attractions and magnify its office, for this is our present purpose. No doubt other aspects can be presented and even painted in dark colors, though these have not been wholly overlooked in this study. The ministry is subject to the ordinary disappointments and trials of life and also has vexations and battles of its own. The minister's crown is attended with a cross, and there are plenty of thorns concealed in the roses in his garden. We have no disposition to deny or minimize this aspect of this calling. They furnish occasions when the minister is to exercise his faith and patience and bravery and heroism, and without such trials and tests he could scarcely be a strong and virile man. The battle field is the correlative of the soldier's calling and courage, and it is so with the good soldier of Jesus Christ. He expects the march and trench and firing line and the leap

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

over the top. He asks for no soft life and flowery beds of ease, but girds himself up for service and genuine sacrifice, if needs be even unto death.

But when the account is cast up the attractions of the ministry overwhelmingly outweigh its trials, and it makes a superb appeal to strong young men with faith in their hearts and courage in their souls to enlist in this service.

IV

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

IV

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

SEVERAL subsidiary questions of importance remain to be answered.

A CALL TO THE MINISTRY

1. What constitutes a call to the ministry? Answers formerly given to this question seemed to say or to imply that the minister must receive a special call of a supernatural nature from the Lord. There is an element of truth in this view, but it may make a misleading impression. All men engaged in worthy service are called to their work by the Lord. God's plan extends to everyone's work, but each one can and must find out what is the Lord's will for him, not by any supernatural voice or sign, but by the use of the ordinary means for discovering the divine will.

If we study the calls to enter the Lord's

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

service that are recorded in the Scriptures, such as to Moses, Ex. 3:1-12; Bezalel, Ex. 31:1-5; Gideon, Judg. 6:11-18; Samuel, I Sam. 3:1-14; David, I Sam. 16:11-13; Isaiah, Isa. 6:1-13; Amos, Amos 1:1; Peter and Andrew, James and John, Mark 1:16-20; the twelve disciples, Mark 3:13-19; Paul, Acts 9:1-12; and many others, we discover that no two received a call in just the same way, and so no one need be surprised if his call is peculiar to himself and conforms to no other one's experience or even to any Scripture example.

In some instances apparently accidental or trivial circumstances have turned young men into the ministry. Frederick W. Robertson in his youth had his heart set on the career of a soldier, but, an expected commission failing to arrive, he went to Oxford University to study for the ministry. When the belated commission turned up within five days, he accepted the circumstance as an indication of the divine will, continued in his course and became one of the greatest preachers of his

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

century. In other cases a quiet conviction is born in the soul and a young man feels he is called to the ministry as Wordsworth was called to be a poet. He was returning home in the early, dewy hours of a day when "Magnificent the morning rose, in memorable pomp," and then, he says in the Prelude:

My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit.

Back of such a call to the ministry may be a mother's prayers or a father's desire, the memory of a sermon or some special providence. Many are the ways in which God makes known his will. The wind bloweth where it will; so is everyone that is born or called of the Spirit.

The call to the ministry is indicated by means, and these primarily include the Christian experience, prayer, and the spirit of obedience, but they also include one's ability and aptitude and temperament and taste for the work and his opportunity for entering it.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

One may be fitted for the ministry and not have an opportunity of preparing for it; and he may have the opportunity and not be fitted for it. When physical health and mental ability and spiritual temperament and opportunity for preparation and a sense of the appeal of its work combine into a conviction of duty to enter it, such a combination and conviction constitute a clear call to the ministry. Let no young man set up impossible conditions or erect unreasonable barriers to exclude or excuse him from this calling, but having a reasonable measure of ability and a sense of duty he should make his decision and commit his way to the Lord.

PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY

2. What preparation is necessary or needful for a successful ministry? Of course it is assumed that the primary preparation and essential qualification for this service is faith in God and in the gospel of Christ and a Christian experience and spirit. But our question relates to the special training for

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

this calling, and the answer to it would vary with different denominations and is subject to modifications in exceptional circumstances and cases. Everyone, however, entering this field should get the largest preparation possible for him. This should include a regular college course and seminary training. These terms may be exacting for some, but they are the necessary price that must be paid for competency for this vocation. The standard of preparation has been greatly raised for all professions and even for mechanical trades, and the minister must rise in his equipment with this general rise in the level of intelligence and trained ability. The pulpit calls for greater general talent and more thorough specialized training in our day than ever before. Formerly the minister was the most highly, if not the only, specially educated man in the community, standing head and shoulders above his people and speaking to them in terms and tones of authority. But this day has passed, and now the preacher is only one among many, and he is speaking to

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

many who stand on the same general level with him, and usually to a few who are his equals or his superiors in intellectual attainments. Even to hold his own with his people he must stand with them if not above them. The minister must be a man of universal education and culture, knowing everything about one or a few things, and something about everything. Without this large background of knowledge he may at any moment blunder into statements disclosing some ignorance or bigotry on his part that will excite the criticism or ridicule or contempt of his people and damage his usefulness.

The ministry has become a much larger and more complex work than formerly, and the minister must be an organizer and administrator and promoter and must know how to handle men and people of all types and temperaments, and this calls for a richly developed personality, a full-grown man.

The young man entering the ministry to-day should take time to get ready. The service may be short, but the preparation for it

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

must be long. The harvest may ripen in a day and be gathered in an hour, but through weeks and months it slowly absorbed juicy sweets and ripening influences out of the soil and the shower and the sun for that golden wheat and rosy apple. A meteor burns itself out in the twinkling of an eye, but through how many millions of invisible miles did it accumulate momentum for that brief flash of splendor! A great surgeon said that if he had only three minutes for a critical operation he would take two to get ready. Jesus took thirty years of preparation for just three years of work. Young men are often impatient to get to work and take a short-cut and rush into action before they have been drilled into skill and efficiency. Many a minister has greatly lowered and injured, if not ruined, his usefulness by hurrying into the pulpit instead of going patiently through a thorough course of training. Take time and get ready. Pay the price of preparation. Lay deep foundations on which to build the structure of after years; prepare a rich soil out

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

of which good sermons can grow. Develop a personality of poise and power that will be a perennial fountain of fresh force. The minister, above every other man, ought to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed, and such a workman must serve a full apprenticeship.

THE SPECIAL NEED FOR MINISTERS TO-DAY

3. A third question is, Is there any special need and call for ministers of superior ability to-day? There has been for several years and is now in nearly all denominations and theological seminaries a serious decline in the number of candidates for the ministry. The reasons for this fact are various. For one thing, the pulpit now has more competition even in Christian work than it had formerly. Young men once went to college for one of the three learned professions: law, medicine, and the ministry. Now they go with many professions and technical callings in view, and these alluring fields draw off some men from the ministry; and there are

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

also allied lines of Christian work, such as Y. M. C. A. secretaryships, that call for educated men. The pulpit no longer stands out in solitary glory as the one place for trained Christian work. The meager support offered the ministry, the disinclination of churches to call, as settled pastors, ministers who are approaching advanced age, and the attractions of business are other causes furthering this decline.

But there are yet deeper reasons operating at this point, and one of these is the decline of the pulpit itself. The Church is not now everywhere the central and supreme community institution that it once was. It has lost the support if not the respect of not a few people, even of some thoughtful and good people. The laboring men have come in considerable numbers to view it as a rich people's club, if not an avowedly capitalistic institution. Many men have also come to look on it as a feminine, if not a child's, affair and not a man's place. To them it does not seem worth while. Religious doubt and the

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

materialism of the age are also causes tending to reduce the relative standing and power of the Church and pulpit. In view of all these conditions it is not surprising that many young men have grown shy of the Church and the ministry. They do not want to board what they may suspect is an antiquated and obsolete or a leaking and sinking ship, when they are ambitious "to sail beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western stars."

On the other hand, the Church stands for a deep and permanent constitutional need in human nature and can no more be outgrown and left behind than can wheat fields and orchards. Religious doubt and faith fluctuate and the tide of faith now appears to be rising. The Church is being reconstructed in its teaching and work and spirit to meet the new conditions of the new age more directly and fully. Men's Bible classes, brotherhoods, and other forms of men's work are drawing men back into the Church and making it a man's institution as well as an insti-

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

tution for women and children. The religious needs and problems and perils of the world are just as great and urgent to-day as ever and even greater and more clamant. The world, as it still lies broken and bleeding by the Great War, now presents a supreme, religious crisis and call. Never has it been so pliant and plastic since the Reformation, and possibly it can be rebuilt and reshaped by the men of this generation as no other generation could have remolded it since the first century. It spells opportunity for the men of to-day.

The pulpit appears to be rising to this opportunity and is bound to regain some if not all of its former leadership and power. The able preacher and masterful leader of to-day has a great call and a splendid opportunity to fulfill the ministry of a prophet. He proclaims and interprets and applies the gospel of Christ so as to prove it the power of God unto salvation. Other men have wounded and crushed the world with destructive agents of war: it is now his mission to heal

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

it and restore it to peace and brotherhood by the grace of God. He is to rebuild the world into the Kingdom of God on earth.

This is a challenge and a call to our ablest and choicest young men of vision and adventurous, heroic spirit. No other calling can so appeal to them as supremely worth while in this great time. No young man is choosing a small or discredited or declining cause in entering the Christian ministry to-day. The pulpit has great days behind it, but its greatest days are yet to come. It is right now the most strategic point and platform for a man to occupy and make himself count for most in the world. There is a special call for strong young men in the ministry at this time. Young men should be glad they are alive in this great hour, when the plastic world is rounding into form and rolling through the shadows of the night into the better day; and no other man has such an opportunity to put and leave the impress of his hand upon it as the Christian minister.

These considerations have been presented

SOME SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

in the hope that they will attract the attention of many of our ablest young men and be the means of leading them to dedicate themselves to the Christian ministry. It is a glorious calling and it is crowned with a glorious reward both in this present world and in that which is to come.









Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01028 3820