

BIBLICAL RECORDER.

THE ORGAN OF THE NORTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS—DEVOTED TO BIBLE RELIGION, EDUCATION, LITERATURE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

Volume 88.

RALEIGH, N. C., WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 1893.

Number 46.

The Biblical Recorder.

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY.

OFFICE:

113 (up stairs) Fayetteville Street, Raleigh, N. C.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION:

One copy, one year.....\$ 2.00
One copy, six months..... 1.00
Clubs of ten (copy extra to sender)..... 20.00

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A Discourse on the Apostolic Ministry.

BY REV. DR. FRANCIS WATLAND.

Delivered in Rochester, N. Y., before the New York Baptist Union for Ministerial Education on July 12th, 1893.

Text, Mark 16: 15—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

[CONTINUED.]

III. But who is thus to preach the gospel? What would be the answer to this question, if we listened to the voice of common humanity! When the brazen serpent was lifted up, who was to carry the good news throughout the camp? When the glad tidings of peace arrived in the city, who was to proclaim it to his fellow-citizens? When the news of peace with God, through the blood of the covenant, is proclaimed to us, who shall make it known to those perishing in sin? The answer in each case is, every one. Were no command given, the common principles of our nature would teach us that nothing but the grossest selfishness would claim to be exempted from the joyful duty of extending to others the blessing which we have received ourselves.

But, besides this, we have in the text the command of Christ. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world." The command is as universal as discipleship, and it is to

continue obligatory till the Son of man shall come.

Does any one say that this command was given only to the apostles? It may or may not have been so; but were they alone included in the obligation which it imposes? The address at the last supper was given to them alone, as were many other of the instructions of our Lord; but were they the only persons to whom the words spoken apply? Is it affirmed that they and those whom they should appoint are alone to preach the word? I answer that Jesus Christ never said so, and we have no right to add to this any more than to any other of his commandments.

But let us see how the apostles themselves understood the precept. Their own narrative shall inform us. "At that time there was a great persecution against the church that was at Jerusalem, and they were scattered abroad throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." "Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."—Acts 8: 1, 4. "Then they that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake also to the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." These men were not apostles, nor even original disciples of Christ, for they were men of Cyprus and Cyrene. Yet they went everywhere preaching the word, and in so doing they pleased the Master, for the Holy Spirit accompanied their labors with the blessing from on high. The ascended Saviour thus approved of their conduct, and testified that their understanding of his last command was correct.

If we need any farther confirmation of the interpretation which we have given of the precept in the text, we find it in other portions of our Lord's teaching. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened." The words here indicate the manner in which the kingdom of Christ is to extend itself. Leaven assimilates the whole mass to itself by the contact of particle with particle—each particle, as soon as it is leavened, communicating its own virtue to all the particles surrounding it. So every disciple of Christ is bound, by proclaiming Christ to those near to him, to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer; and every one who becomes a disciple is bound to make it his chief business to disciple others.

Again, our Lord declares that every one who believes in him shall be the means of imparting salvation to others. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This he spake of the Spirit which, not the apostles, but they that believe on him should receive. Thus, as our Lord is the living fountain from which every believer drinks; so every one who has drunk of this fountain becomes, in this secondary sense, a fountain to all who are about him.

So, in the message to the churches, delivered by the ascended Saviour to the Apostle John, we find these remarkable words: "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

You see, then, brethren, the nature and duty of the church of Christ. It consists of the whole company of penitent sinners, united to Christ by faith, animated by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, every one partaking with Christ in that love of souls which moved him to offer up himself, and every one laboring after his example for the salvation of the world. This is the object for which the believer lives, as it was the object for which Christ lived. This consecration of himself to Christ for this purpose is a matter of personal obligation. It cannot be done by deputy. It must be done by the man himself. He can no more delegate it to another, than he can delegate faith, or repentance, or prayer, or holy living. Every disciple must be a discipler. Every individual is leaven, and he must assimilate to himself all that comes into contact with him. As he himself drinks of the fountain, he must become a fountain to his fellowmen; otherwise, he has not drunk of the fountain himself. If he bear not fruit, he is cut off as a branch, and is withered.

This is the first and primary duty of a disciple, and to it his whole life must be conformed. He may enter upon no calling, he may occupy no station, he may indulge in no amusement inconsistent with this elementary duty of discipleship. A revival of religion represents a church in its normal condition, the condition which Christ always intended it to maintain. Then every believer makes it his great concern to call men to repentance, not as a matter of form, but with earnest and moving persuasion. Every convert is inviting his former companions to turn unto the Lord. But, if this manner of life is appropriate to a revival, it is appropriate to all times; for men are everywhere and at all times sinners hastening to the judgment seat, and they all must perish unless they be redeemed by the blood of Christ.

It would be easy to show that it is by in-

volving this obligation in the very elementary idea of discipleship, that Christ has provided for the universal triumph of his church. On this depends the vitality of personal religion. We can never in earnest call men to repentance, unless we are living holy and penitent lives ourselves. Hence, also arises the separation of the church from the world, and hence the antagonism which Christ declares must always exist between them. "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." It is under these circumstances that the church has always gained its most signal victories, and when these principles of duty exercise an abiding influence over the life of every disciple, the kingdoms of this world will soon become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

Such, then, is the privilege, and such the duty of every disciple of Christ. It enters into the elementary idea of discipleship. With this every other subsequent idea must be in harmony. No ecclesiastical system which we form can either liberate a disciple from this obligation, or take away his privilege of thus laboring for Christ. Whatever offices are created in the church, are created for the purpose of enabling the disciple the better to discharge this duty. They are made for the church, the church is not made for them; and it becomes us ever to be watchful, lest by any error the church of Christ be deprived of this, the mainspring of all its efficiency.

I have thus far spoken of the gifts which are common to every man of a sane mind. But almost every man has some peculiar gift, that is, some naturally bestowed means of usefulness. This also he is bound in the same manner to consecrate to the service of the Master. A brief allusion to some of these will sufficiently illustrate my meaning. One man may be endowed with uncommon conversational ability, so that in the ordinary intercourse of society he readily leads the minds of men in any direction he chooses. The disciple of Christ is not at liberty to use this talent for the purpose of attaining to social pre-eminence, or for the gratification of personal vanity; he must use it as a means of winning souls to Christ. Beautiful illustrations of this form of consecration of talent were seen in the lives of the late William Wilberforce and Joseph John Gurney. Another disciple may be endowed with skill in the conduct of mercantile affairs, so that, with ease, he can accumulate a fortune, when other men would merely earn a subsistence. This talent he has no right to employ for the purpose of hoarding up wealth for himself, or for his children, or of procuring the means of luxurious extravagance, or fashionable display. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are not of the Father, but of the world." He must consecrate this gift to God, and remember that he will be called to account for this as for every other talent. And while such a man should abound in almsgiving, let him be his own almoner, laboring with his own hands, and not the hands of others in the work of benevolence. Another may have been gifted with skill in managing affairs, in arranging and carrying forward plans for the labor of others, and in guiding masses of men to right conclusions in all matters of public concernment. This talent should be given to the cause of religion and benevolence. Such men, instead of leaving the charge of all our benevolent institutions to the ministry, should assume it themselves. They can do it better than we, and the gift was granted to them for this very purpose. It belongs to Christ, and to him must it be cheerfully rendered.

These gifts to which I have referred, are bestowed upon Christians for the general service of the church of Christ. There are very few men who are not endowed with some one of them, which it is their duty faithfully to improve. I must, however, turn to those gifts which have special reference to the ministry of the word.

It frequently happens that a brother engaged in secular business is endowed with a talent for public speaking. On matters of general interest he is heard by his fellow-citizens with pleasure and profit. This talent is more largely bestowed than we commonly suppose; and it would be more frequently observed if we desired to cultivate and develop it. Now, a disciple who is able successfully to address men on secular subjects is surely competent to address them on the subject in which he takes an immeasurably greater interest. This talent should especially be offered up in sacrifice to Christ. The voice of such brethren should be heard in the conference room and in the prayer-meeting. They have no right to lay up this talent, more than any other, in a napkin. And still more is it incumbent on the churches to foster and improve gifts of this kind. Thus we arrive at the order of lay preachers, formerly a most efficient aid in the work of spreading the gospel. I believe that there are but few churches among us, in the ordinary enjoyment of religion, who have not much of this talent undiscovered and unemployed. Let them search out and improve it. Every church would thus be able to maintain out-stations, where small congregations might be gathered, which would shortly grow up into churches, able themselves to become lights to the surrounding neighborhood. I know of but few means by which the efficiency of our denomination could be so much increased as by a return to our former practice in this respect.

But, besides this, it seems plainly to be the will of Christ that some of his disciples should addict themselves exclusively to the

ministry of the gospel. Such men are called elders, presbyters, bishops, ministers of the word, or stewards of the mysteries of God. If it be asked, under what circumstances may a believer undertake this service? I answer, the New Testament, as it seems to me, always refers to it as a calling to which a man is moved by the Holy Ghost. No one may therefore enter the ministry, except from the motive of solemn, conscientious duty. If he chooses it as a profession, for the sake of worldly advantage, or that he may enjoy a life of leisure, or be enabled the better to pursue some favorite studies, he has mistaken his calling. No man will ever succeed in any undertaking, who pursues it as a means to the attainment of something else; least of all, when he makes a convenience of the service of God in the ministry of reconciliation.

If it be asked how a man may know that he is called of God to this work, I answer, the evidence seems to me to be two-fold. In the first place, he must be conscious of a love for the work itself, not for what in other respects he may gain by it; and also, there must be impressed on his soul an abiding conviction, that, unless he devote himself to this service, he can in no wise answer a good conscience towards God. With the Apostle, he must be conscious that a necessity is laid upon him, yea, that a woe rests upon him if he preach not the gospel. He who is impressed by no such convictions had, I think, better pursue some other vocation.

This is the first indication of the man's duty. In the next place, he must exhibit such evidences of his call to this work as shall secure for him the approbation of his brethren. Of his own feelings, he must be the judge; of his qualifications, they must be the judges. When both he and they, after prayerful deliberation, unite in the same opinion, then he may conclude that he is called of God to the ministerial office. Neither of these evidences alone is sufficient; the union of them alone is satisfactory.

The New Testament, I think, recognizes two forms of ministerial labor; that of evangelists and that of pastors. Evangelists are specially preachers or missionaries. Men called to this office are endowed with peculiar gifts for awakening the careless, arousing the secure, directing the attention of men to the subject of religion, and thus planting churches where Christ has not been named. The particular value of such an order of ministers, in such a country as our own, is, I think, apparent. Many of the fathers of the ministry in all this region, the men who laid the foundations of your present prosperity, were for much of their time evangelists; and worthily did they fulfil the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus.

Besides evangelists, the New Testament authorizes the appointment of pastors, that is, of ministers of the gospel placed over particular churches. The calling of such a man is not to the cure of souls generally; but, first of all, of the souls of that particular people. He believes that Christ has placed him over a separate church; from that church he receives his support; and, for both reasons, he is bound to devote to them his whole service. It is his duty "to warn every man and teach every man, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto he is to labor according to the working that worketh in him mightily." It is his duty to make known clearly and explicitly, and with tears, the danger and guilt of the impenitent, to arouse the conscience, to point the inquiring soul to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, to unfold the riches of divine love to the believing, to guard the disciples against conformity to the world, to stimulate them by every holy motive to higher attainments in piety and closer conformity to Christ, to reclaim the backslider, to counsel the tempted, to caution the unwary, to comfort the sick, to speak peace to the dying believer, to suggest to his brethren means of usefulness, to watch over the discipline of the church, in all things showing himself a pattern of good works, and ever doing the same work which he urges upon them. He is to labor publicly, holding up the cross of Christ before his people on the Sabbath, and on all occasions when he can collect them to hear his message. Wherever he calls them to assemble, he should meet with them. He will accomplish but little by urging them to leave their secular business for a meeting for prayer, while he is too much occupied in miscellaneous business to attend it himself. But, besides this, he must follow them to their homes, and press upon them individually the claims of the Most High. With Paul, he must "teach publicly, and from house to house, testifying repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," if he would finish his "course with joy," and at the close of his life take his people to witness "that he is pure from the blood of all men." My brethren, is not this a work great enough for any man? Can any duty vie with it in importance? Doth it not then become us "to give ourselves wholly to it, that our profiting may appear to all"? Can we have any excuse before God if we fritter away our lives in miscellaneous business, and give to the work of God the mere shreds and clippings of our time?

You see, then, the means which the Saviour has provided for the universal triumph of his kingdom upon earth. He requires every disciple, as soon as he becomes a partaker of divine grace, to become a herald of salvation to his fellowmen. He is a fountain from which is to flow a river of living water. The doing of this is the test of his

discipleship. If he is a branch that beareth not fruit, his end is to be cut off. He is "the salt of the earth, and if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." Secondly, every disciple is bound to employ for Christ every peculiar gift with which he may have been endowed. Thirdly, every man possessed of the gifts for the ministry, mentioned in the New Testament, is bound to consecrate them to Christ, either in connection with his secular pursuits or by devoting his whole time to this particular service.

If this be so, you see that in the church of Christ there is no ministerial caste; no class elevated in rank above their brethren, on whom devolves the discharge of the more dignified or more honorable portions of Christian labor, while the rest of the disciples are to do nothing but raise the funds necessary for their support. The minister does the same work that is to be done by every other member of the body of Christ; but, since he does it exclusively, he may be expected to do it more to edification. It is his business to labor for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of the body of Christ, so is it theirs. In everything which they do as disciples, he is to be their example. I know that we now restrict to the ministry the administration of the ordinances, and to this rule I think there can be no objection. But we all know that for this restriction we have no example in the New Testament. In other respects, it is difficult to discover, in principle, the difference between the labors of a minister and those of any other disciple, in conversation, or in a Sabbath-school, or a Bible class, or in a conference room. All are laboring to produce the same result, the conversion of men, and by the same means the inculcation of the teachings of Christ and his apostles. The ministry is made for the church, and not the church for the ministry. We are not Buddhist priests, or Mahomedan dervishes, or members of a papal or any other hierarchy, or a class above or aside from our brethren, but simply ambassadors of Christ, your servant for Jesus' sake. The chiefest of the apostles desired no higher rank, and with it we are abundantly satisfied.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Some Lincoln Dots.

Some Charlotte boys have invaded our town and carried off two of our most accomplished girls, which has played sad havoc with our choir. First, came Mr. Tyler D. Haynes, and after a brilliant wedding in the Baptist church, carried away Miss Bettie Wilkie, daughter of our senior deacon; and just a week later came Mr. J. J. Manning, and took away our organist, Miss Lucy Canale, and left us in great distress.

A GREAT FARCE.

I have just returned from our Union Meeting, which is fitly described by my sub head above. There was not a pastor or preacher in the Association present at the meeting except the writer, and he was sick, but notwithstanding our ministering brethren gave us the go-by, we had a great meeting. Brethren D. W. Thomason and J. L. Sams came to my rescue and did valiant service.

On Sunday, Dr. R. H. Griffith of South Carolina preached the dedication sermon of our new house at Lowell, and it was a great sermon to a thousand people. We had built one of the very best houses in the county at this mission station of the State Board, and we had engaged Bro. C. Durham to preach the sermon, but he was forced to disappoint us, and so we were very fortunate to get Bro. Griffith.

We had a debt of \$250 on the house, and when I asked the people to please to take it off, they came up and in fifteen minutes they gave me \$275. These Gaston county folks are great folks any way. This is the second house I have built for them; the other at Mt. Holly now has one of the best churches in it in the country.

This was the time appointed to bring up the Centennial funds. Only two churches outside of my own reported anything, but I sent Bro. Boushall \$101 on Friday night.

While it was a great meeting, it was a great farce as a Union Meeting. I now give my fellow-pastors in the Association notice that I am done with Union Meetings. I have never raised a meeting since I came to the Association, while some of our leaders have not been present in fifteen months. So far as my churches are concerned, they don't need it, and if the others do not want it I shall not force it on them.

Let me say to any Baptist people wanting to attend the World's Fair, that I expect to start with a party about the 20th of June and spend days in Chicago. Having lived there, I know the city and can show them the sights at the least possible cost. I have already provided lodging for fifty, which is all I want. I will give any one the benefit of lowest rates and make no charge for my trouble. If you want to go, write me.

I leave next week for the Convention, thence up to my old home above Nashville.

M. P. MANNING.

Very few people have any definite notions of their own sins. They do not see them clearly enough in others. It is profitable to change identities sometimes.—Methodist Protestant.

Recount merits, and...