

# BIBLICAL RECORDER.

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

Volume 58.

RALEIGH, N. C., WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 1893.

Number 48.

## 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 WAYLAND.

Delivered in Rochester, N. Y., before the New York Baptist Union for Ministerial Education on July 12th, 1853.

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

[CONCLUDED.]

But, secondly, God sometimes bestows upon individuals particular talents, which may be made the means of special usefulness. One has a remarkable capacity for managing affairs, another for mechanical invention, another for philological research, and another for the pursuit of abstract science. In such a case, it would seem that such talent is to be cultivated with special care. It is a means of usefulness which has not been created in vain, and is not to be recklessly thrown away. On the same principle, if a man has been endowed with a talent for public speaking, though employed in a secular calling, he must embrace every opportunity in his power to render this talent serviceable to Christ. Besides availing himself of every means of general culture, he should devote particular attention to the improvement of this special gift. He should give himself to the study of the Word of God, and should labor as much as may be in his power to render his instructions profitable to his fellowmen.

But, now, suppose it manifest that God

has called a man to devote his whole time to the ministry of the Word; it is obvious that the obligation to improve his talent to the utmost, is specially imperative. It is by means of his intellectual faculties that he attempts to influence the minds of his fellowmen. This is the service to which they are exclusively devoted. He is laboring in the cause which employed all the faculties of the Son of man while on earth. For the use and the improvement of his intellectual powers, he must render a specially solemn account. The means of improvement which God has placed in the power of those whom he calls to the ministry, may be very dissimilar; inasmuch as they may vary with age, domestic relations, pecuniary ability, and degree of talent for acquisition. God assigns these conditions as he pleases; all that he requires is, that all he has given should be faithfully improved and consecrated to his service. From the views which we entertain respecting the ministry, it is evident that a large portion of our candidates for the sacred office must have attained to some maturity of age. It must certainly be difficult to ascertain whether or not a person in mere youth possesses the qualifications which the Apostle Paul teaches us must be required in a candidate.

If it be then our purpose to provide the means of improvement for those among us who are called to the ministry, it has seemed to me that we should bear in mind these elementary ideas of our denomination on this subject. If we are willing to follow, and not to lead, the Spirit of God—that is, if we educate no man for the ministry until we are satisfied, not that he may be, but that he has been, called of God to the work of preaching the gospel—we shall always have among our candidates a large number of those who have passed the period of youth, and for whom the studies of youth would be unsuitable, if not useless. Yet these are the very men to whom appropriate culture would be specially valuable. Others, in various degrees have been more favored with preparatory education, and the means for more extended discipline. The means and advantages of our candidates must, therefore, be exceedingly dissimilar. If, then, we would labor to give to the ministry the means of improvement, we must provide those means for them all. A system of ministerial education, adapted to the condition of but one in twenty of our candidates, commences with the avowed intention of doing but one-twentieth part of its work, and of helping those only who have the least need of its assistance. We should, therefore, provide for all our brethren whom God has called to this service, the best instruction in our power; adapted, as far as possible, not to any theoretical view, but to the actual condition of the mass of our candidates, leaving each individual, in the exercise of a sound and pious discretion, to determine the extent to which he is able to avail himself of our services. While means should be fully provided for pursuing an extended course of education, we must never lose sight of the large number of our brethren to whom an extended course would be impossible.

But in what way soever a candidate pursues his studies, whether by himself, or under the instruction of an elder brother in the ministry, or in a seminary devoted to this purpose, the question remains to be considered, to what points shall his efforts be directed. In attempting to answer this question, it is important to determine, in the first place, what object he has in view. His object is to prepare himself to be, not a teacher, or a professor, or an agent, or a philological scholar, or a popular writer, but an evangelist or a pastor. It is not by any means asserted that these various gifts are not useful, or are not to be cultivated. What I say is, that they are not particularly connected with the ministry, and therefore should be cultivated elsewhere. Least of all should a course of education for the Christian ministry be modified for the sake of preparing men for other and different pursuits. His calling is to persuade men to be reconciled to God, and to build up those who are reconciled in their most holy faith. His studies, then, must all bear directly upon this object, for which "it has pleased God to put him into the ministry." The means which he is to use in accomplishing this object are simple. He is to make known the will of God as it has been revealed in the New Testament, and to urge men to obey it.

It is obvious then, first of all, that the minister of the gospel must be, as thoroughly as possible, acquainted with the teachings of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. These contain the precise truth inspired by the Holy Ghost, which he is to communicate to others. He is authorized to make known to men as the commandment of God the whole of this revelation, and nothing whatever beyond it. It is precisely this truth, and nothing else, that the Spirit of God has promised to accompany with his almighty power. Now, I think that a man may be materially assisted to understand the New Testament by improved mental discipline. He needs to acquire the habit of continuous and abstract thought, the power of concentrating his mind upon a subject, and keeping it steady to its work. He must think through the thoughts of the Bible, that he may be able to present them clearly to others. But let me say that this is far from being a merely intellectual process. Simply intellectual power can never attain to it. There is needed, besides this, a devout and holy temper of mind, without which mere mental strength can do but little. These things are "hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed

unto babes." Of all this you are fully aware from your own experience. When you have been desirous of ascertaining the meaning of any particular passage of the Scriptures, in order to impress it more deeply on your fellowmen, in what manner have you been most successful, by turning over the works of men, or by the earnest thinking of a soul lying in lowly prostration before the Spirit of infinite wisdom? I do not stand here to disparage either human learning, or logical acuteness, but I say that these, without the aid of a holy temper of mind, will enable us but imperfectly to understand the mind of the Spirit. What we need is, to know, not the thoughts of man, but the thoughts of God, and these will be best understood by the soul illumined by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Here I may however remark, in passing, that the revelation given to us consists of ideas, and not of words. These ideas may be expressed in our own language, or in the languages in which they were written. If a man have the opportunity of reading the Bible in its original languages, let him by all means learn to do it, and do it thoroughly. Let him embrace this and every other opportunity of generous intellectual culture. No man may innocently reject any means by which he may add to the accuracy of his knowledge of the Word of God. But if such opportunity as he may desire have not been given him, let him not despair, or think himself set aside as a vessel in whom the Master has no pleasure. Let him study the Scriptures more earnestly, and pray more devoutly, using every means which God has placed in his power; and the Spirit will assuredly lead him into all necessary truth.

But suppose this truth to have been arrived at; it is then to be presented to the human heart, so as to produce the effect of persuasion. Here is required a knowledge of the human mind, its moral condition, its opposition to God, its subjection to earthly affections, and of all the phases which it assumes when its chambers of imagery are illuminated by the light of divine truth. In order to acquire this knowledge, the man must become acquainted, first of all, with his own moral nature, and the modes of its operation. When he tells what he has himself experienced, he may be assured that in general he speaks the language of humanity. Here also he needs to be in the habit of personal conversation with his fellowmen on the subject of religion. Hence, it is that no man is ever an effective preacher, who does not visit his people for the sake of urging upon them personally the claims of religion. Have you never observed how pungent the preaching of a minister becomes who has spent a few weeks in the midst of a revival of religion, where his whole time is occupied in intercourse with awakened souls, and how such a minister carries everywhere with him the spirit of a revival? It is thus that we learn to apply the truths of the gospel to the minds of men.

But a minister is to teach publicly, and from house to house.

Under the first of these divisions of his duty must be placed the composition of a sermon. He whose weekly business it is to address men publicly should, if possible, understand the nature and objects of a discourse, and should learn to construct a discourse correctly. He should acquire the ability to think out a train of thought, which embodies one idea revealed by the Spirit of truth, and to lead the minds of men in the direction which he intends. Thorough, faithful and honest dealing with a candidate, may here be of eminent advantage to his future ministry.

But suppose this train of thought to be thus prepared, shall it be written or unwritten? Each has its advantages, but I am constrained to believe that the value of written discourses has been in this country greatly overrated. Speaking an unwritten train of thought is by far the noblest and most effective exercise of mind, provided the labor of preparation in both cases be the same. I cannot but think that we have been the losers by cultivating too exclusively the habit of written discourses.

But the discourse having been prepared, it has yet to be delivered. The cultivation of a clear and impressive delivery, free from awkwardness, vulgarity and oddity, and deeply imbued with the tones expressive of natural feeling, is of the greatest importance to a public speaker. It has surprised me that in seminaries, of which the object is to educate preachers, so little time should be devoted to the art of delivery. From want of attention to this subject, good and able men frequently attain to very moderate success, and are shoved aside by men, in other respects, very greatly their inferiors.

But the gospel is to be preached not only publicly, but from house to house. In preparing for this part of his duty, a young minister may receive much valuable instruction from an elder brother who has himself been a diligent pastor. The sick are to be visited, the mourners consoled, the thoughtless aroused, the secure alarmed, the convicted urged to decision, the penitent pointed to Christ, the wandering reclaimed, the feeble encouraged; and all this by personal appeal to individuals, and he who has done it successfully, may give much valuable counsel to him who is just entering upon the work. Until a minister has learned not only to perform but to love this part of his labor, he cannot hope to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. I do not know of a more common or a more just ground of complaint against the ministry, than that of the neglect of parochial visitation. It seems strange that a man whose sole calling it is

to urge men to repentance, should refuse to perform this duty, in this particular form, especially when his people themselves invite him to perform it. They desire that he should converse with them individually on the subject of their souls' salvation, and shall he consider such conversation a drudgery and leave his people unwarned? If any one desires to see this subject treated of with great force and eloquence, I ask leave to commend him to the perusal of "Baxter's Reformed Pastor."

Such seem to me, after some reflection, to be the points to which the attention of a candidate for the ministry should be directed. To these I know many others are commonly added, and the number of additions is continually increasing. We, however, seem frequently to forget that the time is rapidly approaching every young man, when, if he would be anything but a retailer of other men's opinions, he must be a teacher unto himself; and, that the sooner he can be induced to put himself under his own instruction, the sooner will he attain to the stature of a full grown man.

It is possible, my brethren, that in the views I have thus frankly suggested, there may seem to you somewhat of strangeness; but let me respectfully request that you will examine them, not in the light of the opinions and practices of men, but in the light of the teachings of Christ and his Apostles. Believe them and put them in practice in just so far as they conform to the revealed will of God, and no farther. This I may reasonably claim of every disciple of Christ, and I have no desire to claim anything more.

At the present moment, a right understanding of the duties of the private disciples of Christ, and of the ministers, and of the relations which they sustain to the Master and to each other, seems to me of incalculable importance. Since the era of the Reformation, Protestantism has made no aggressions upon Popery, and the same geographical lines have for centuries separated the parties from each other. But now it is evident that a contest for the mastery of the world between the powers of light and the powers of darkness is imminent and inevitable. The nations in which the Bible is freely circulated, and the gospel publicly preached, are ranging themselves on the one side; and the nations from which the Bible is prohibited, and where the preaching of Christ is forbidden, are ranging themselves on the other. Within the life-time of men who now hear me, the question will probably be decided, whether the kingdom of Christ is now to proceed to universal victory, or ages of intellectual and moral darkness are again to overspread the earth. It is for such a crisis as this that the disciples of Christ are now called upon to prepare.

But more than this. It is obvious that this question is really to be decided in our own country. So long as the light of true Christianity shines brightly here, the rest of the world cannot be enveloped in darkness. Hence it is that the intention is publicly avowed of overturning our systems of universal education, and thus bringing us under the power of a foreign hierarchy. In aid of this design, immigrants by hundreds of thousands are annually arriving on our shores, who are at once admitted to all the privileges of citizenship, while they are conscientiously bound to obedience to a foreign ecclesiastical potentate. At the same time the press is scattering broadcast over our land the seeds of frivolity and licentiousness. Unbounded prosperity is providing for every class of our people the means of sensual gratification. The rise of prices, consequent upon the increase of the precious metals, is stimulating to yet greater excess the desire of acquisition, already sufficiently rife amongst us. But critical as is our position, there would be nothing to alarm us, if the disciples of Christ, holy and self-denying, were, with one accord, ranging themselves under the banner of their Master, and using every means in their power to prepare for the coming onset; and the ministry, in the van of the Lord's hosts, filled with the power of the Holy Ghost, were by precept and example training their brethren for the approaching conflict.

But what is the condition of our churches of all denominations at this critical moment? The disciples of Christ seem to be fast losing the distinctive marks of their profession. Self-denial for the cause of the Redeemer will soon become the exception rather than the rule. In large districts of our country, the admissions to the churches are not as numerous as the removals by death. In the mean time, the number of candidates for the ministry is diminishing, in all denominations, not only relatively, but absolutely. Nay, it is diminishing more rapidly than the figures indicate, for of the reputed number of candidates a considerable portion never enter the ministry; and of those who enter it a greater and greater number are annually leaving it for other pursuits. And what is the remedy proposed in this unusual crisis? It has been recommended, in order to meet this emergency, to reduce the cost of ministerial education, to extend the term of ministerial study, and to increase the pecuniary emoluments of the ministry. In other words, we are told to address stronger motives to the self-interests of men, that so we may induce them to enter upon a calling essentially self-denying. When the whole power of the adversary is thundering at the gates, and the crisis requires every man to stand to his arms, we content ourselves with offering large bounty to officers, and allow every citizen to retire from the conflict. Was ever a victory gained by strategy such as this?

In our own denomination, it is said that we have 4,000 churches destitute of preachers of the gospel. What is to be done to meet this deficiency? Does all that we are doing furnish us with the shadow of a hope that this demand can be supplied? Nay, multiply our present efforts to any practicable extent, and compared with the work to be done, the discrepancy between the means and the end is such as to awaken the feeling of the ludicrous. Is it not time, then, to examine the whole subject from its foundations? May not some light be derived from considering attentively the doctrine and examples of Christ and his Apostles?

Is it not evident that if we are attempting to do the work of God, we must do it in obedience to his commandments, and in conformity with the principles which he has established? Ministerial gifts have been bestowed upon the church by Christ ever since he ascended on high, and led captivity captive. He has commanded us to pray the Lord of the harvest to bestow these gifts upon men, and thus send forth laborers into the harvest. These gifts, in whatsoever manner bestowed, we are to receive and cherish and improve. By no rules of our own are we to restrict their number, or diminish their usefulness.

We are to accept thankfully all the means which Christ has bestowed upon us for the advancement of his cause. And we are to cultivate a ministry after the example of the Apostles, men relying upon prayer and the Holy Ghost, and in self-denial, crucifixion to the world, its maxims, its amusements and its frivolities, setting an example to the flock, which they devote themselves daily to the work of saving souls. To every one whom Christ has thus called, let us give every intellectual advantage, which the circumstances of his individual case render suitable. Having done this, we have done all in our power for the improvement of the ministry, and we may reasonably expect on our labors the blessing of God.

But when all this has been done, but little will have been accomplished. If you, brethren, would improve the ministry, you must begin by improving yourselves. Ministerial gifts are not bestowed upon a slumbering, lukewarm and worldly church. And suppose they were bestowed, of what value would they be either to you or to others, if you are surrendered up to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? The ministry can only labor successfully as you labor with them. If you, then, really desire to witness the triumph of the cause of the Redeemer, you must begin to live a holy, self-denying life. You men of wealth must cease from accumulation, and devote not only your income but yourselves to the work of the Lord. You men in active business must be content to accumulate less rapidly, that you may have more of your time to consecrate to the salvation of men. Ye who, professing obedience to Christ, are yet living in subjection to the maxims of the world, eagerly chasing its frivolities, and teaching the lesson to your children, must commence a life of godly simplicity and Christian self-denial. Every disciple, by his mode of life, must show that he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. When ministers and people thus begin to labor in earnest for Christ, we shall witness results such as the ages have not yet seen.

The nineteenth century since the advent of Christ is now half completed, and the world still lieth in wickedness. Is it not high time that the heathen were given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession? Never, since the beginning, have the disciples of Christ enjoyed such advantages for the universal dissemination of the gospel as at present. Let us, then, go up and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it. Nothing is now wanting to subdue the world unto Christ, but an universal, earnest, self-sacrificing effort of his disciples, in firm reliance upon the Spirit from on high. Thus far we have failed in just so far as we have trusted to our own wisdom instead of the wisdom of the Master. We mourn over the vices of the land. We invoke the majesty of the law, and laws are not executed. We unite in associations, and our associations are rent asunder. We join hands, now with one, and then with another struggling party, and we are sold in the political shambles like brute beasts. Let us, then, abjure all such vain alliances, and commence the work of reforming the world by obeying the precepts of Jesus. If we can convert men to Christ, his work of reformation will be done. By no other means will the flood of iniquity be stayed.

Do you not believe that if all the disciples of Christ in any of our cities or villages thus labored for Christ, they would soon arrest the progress of iniquity, and make it a garden of the Lord? Suppose that we in the same spirit undertook, in solemn earnestness, the conversion of the world; would it not soon be given unto Christ for his possession? Brethren, on whom does the responsibility for the present state of our cities, of our country, and of the world rest? Awake, then, and shake yourselves from your lethargy! Put ye in the sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

That which is to be done cannot be done too soon, and if it is neglected to be done early, it will frequently happen that it will not be done at all.—Bishop Doane.

When you have a number of things to perform, always do the most important one first.—Josiah Quincy.