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### The Story of a Twenty-Three Years' Pastorate

F. D. Power

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THE STORY  
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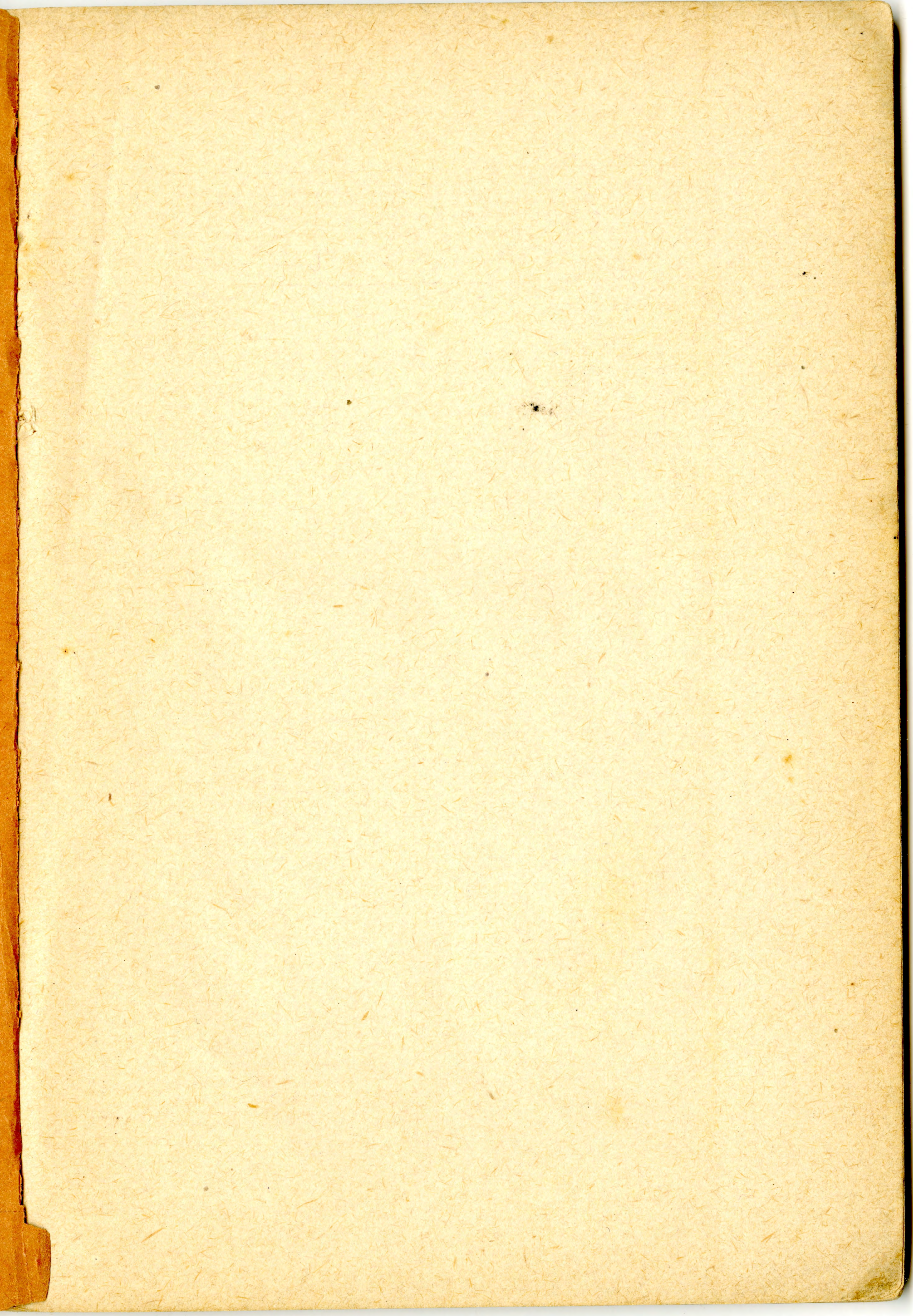
..... BY .....

F. D. POWER.



























# THE STORY OF A TWENTY-THREE YEARS' PASTORATE.

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## AN ADDRESS

Delivered before the Conference on City Evangelization,  
Disciples of Christ, Pittsburg, Pa.,  
April 26, 1898.

BY  
F. D. POWER.

CINCINNATI, O.  
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## STORY OF A TWENTY-THREE YEARS' PASTORATE.

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In treating the subject on which I am asked to speak, I bring to you nothing that is original or striking. My ministry has no unusual features. I appear here among my brethren as Paul at Corinth, "in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling." Our trials we all have in common, our triumphs we can not deem worthy of record, but our methods of work we may mention for mutual profit, and our joys in the gospel we may recount one to another for inspiration and encouragement.

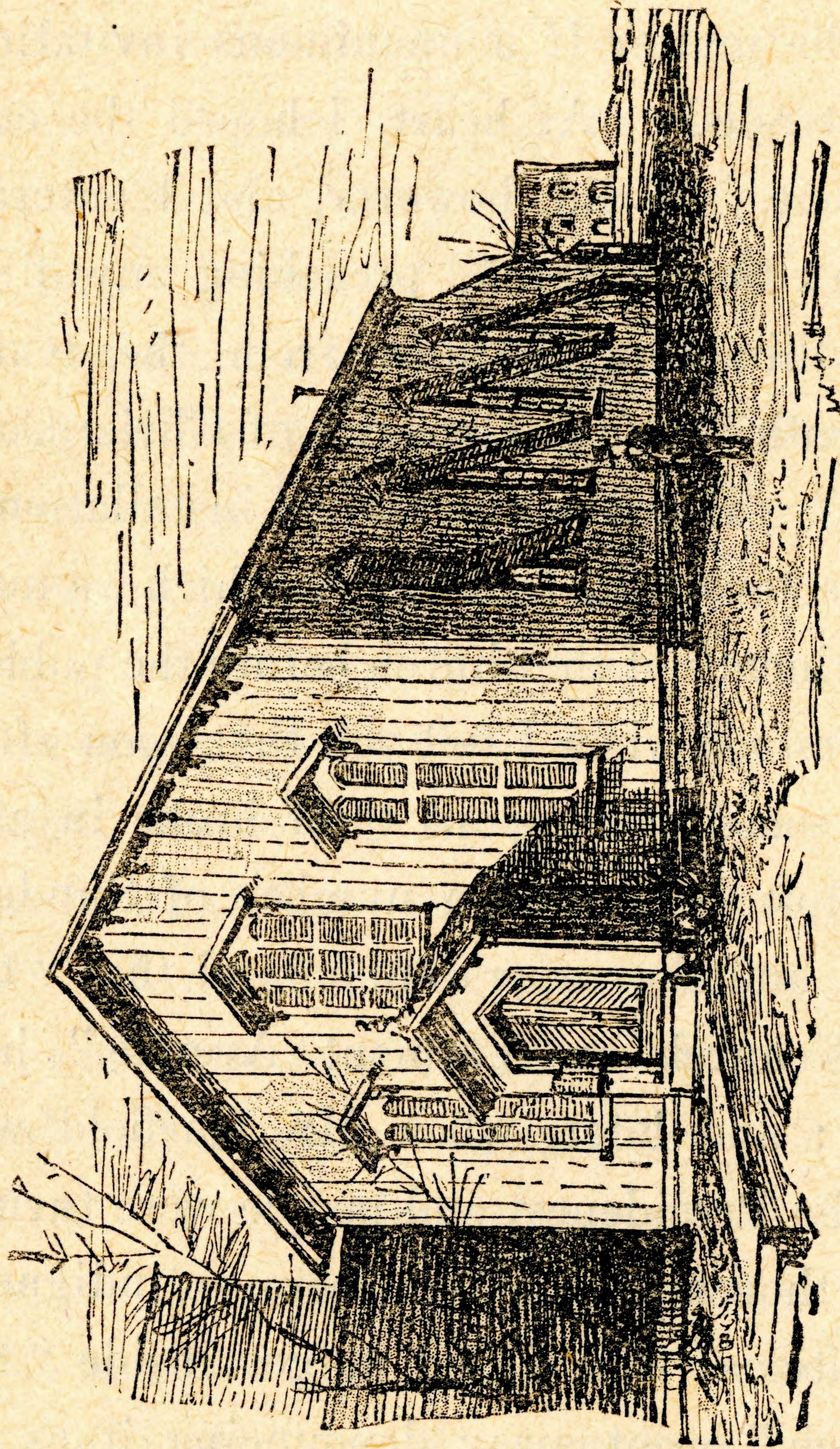
Noblest of all callings is that of the preacher of the gospel. "I thank him that enabled me," says Paul, "even Christ Jesus, our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his ministry." "I have passed through many places of honor and trust, both in Church and State," declared Archbishop Williams, "more than any man



of my order in England for seventy years before, but were I assured that by my preaching I had converted but one soul unto God, I should herein take more comfort than in all the honors and offices that have been bestowed upon me." "I do not wish for any heaven upon earth," said Henry Martyn, "besides that of preaching the precious gospel of Jesus Christ to immortal souls. I wish for no service but the service of God in laboring for souls." "There is nothing out of heaven next to Christ dearer to me than my ministry," testifies Dr. Doddridge. "After nearly four years preaching Christ," exclaimed Rutherford, "I think I would rather beg my bread all the laboring-days of the week for an opportunity of publishing the gospel on the Lord's Day than without such a privilege to enjoy the richest possessions on earth!" "I would think it a greater happiness," said Matthew Henry, "to gain one soul to Christ than millions of gold and silver to myself."

The dignity of this high office is shown clearly in the Scripture terms applied to it: ambassador, herald, steward, watchman, teacher, angel, evan-





ORIGINAL WASHINGTON CHURCH.

WHERE F. D. POWER BEGAN HIS MINISTRY IN WASHINGTON, D. C., AND WHERE PRESIDENT  
GARFIELD WORSHIPED.



Though small and poor, the church had many blessed people. I look over my first visiting-list, and happy pictures rise before me. Characters of marvelous beauty throng the halls of memory. Vision of ransomed ones are revealed before the throne—heroic men, noble women, sweet children, most of whom have fulfilled their mission and fallen asleep. Only a handful are left of the original flock. Three times, at least, the congregation has changed. Three times the preacher has been able to turn the barrel, and some of the packages of *dried tongue* have become so exceedingly dry that he has “gathered them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

I took hold of my task with but one thought—to make things go. As there had been some dissension, I decided to keep every one so busy with the Lord's work there would be no time for anything else. A deaf ear was turned to all references to past differences. Old things were done away; behold, all things became new. The people soon realized what was intended, and stood faithfully by their leader. Every week souls were born into



the kingdom. A mission was started the first year, and a dozen added through that agency. It is possible to get every member to do something when a church is small. They know and love each other, and grasp and enjoy the work as no large congregation can possibly do. Three hundred members should be the maximum for the average church. I believe in the Melbourne plan for all our cities.

Those early years of my pastorate were years of struggle. Often the salary was behind, but I shared with the people, and it won for me their confidence and affection. I early made up my mind that if I expected my church to be liberal, I myself must lead them. Like priest, like people. As a member of the church I set apart one-tenth of all I received, and I have found it easy to give one-fifth to the Lord. If your people see in you a grasping, self-seeking, money-loving disposition, they will be slow to cultivate the grace of giving. The preacher must himself be a pattern of unselfish benevolence. To his preachers, Christ said: "Freely ye have received, freely give." The pastor must be able to say: "I seek not yours, but



you ;” “ I covet no man’s silver or gold.” Be to the flock a shepherd, not a wolf ; feed them, devour them not. I have always refused to leave my people for an offer of increased salary, and I have declined to receive a larger stipend at their hands. When I know how much of the revenue of the church comes from poor sewing-women and self-denying laboring-men that love me, I can not take more than is absolutely necessary. So I have been able to get magnificent gifts from the church for all the great causes that claim their benevolence. I have taught that faithful and proportionate giving is rewarded with abundant spiritual blessings and abundant temporal prosperity, and the people believe it. “ The liberal soul shall wax fat, and he that watereth shall be watered himself.” And equally true is it, he that withereth shall be withered himself. “ He that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully, and he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.” “ I have prayed,” said a saintly preacher, “ that I might be kept from being selfish and proud, for all my value consists in sacrificing for God and his cause.” “ All the doors that



lead inward to the secret place of the Most High," wrote George Macdonald, "are doors outward—out of self, out of smallness, out of all wrong." Think of John the Baptist. Be warned of Judas and Demas. Consider the wrestler in the Olympic games, whom Paul uses as an illustration of his own ministerial exercises, his habitual temperance, his steadfastness. Look at the missionary Eliot, who is said to have become so nailed to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ that the grandeur of this world was unto him just what it would be to a dying man. Remember the One who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. In nine cases out of ten, failure in the Christian ministry comes from ignorance of the cross.

I think I may say my first work, then, in my service as a pastor, has been, as far as I could, to be an example of the things I preach to others. You, my brethren, will permit me to speak of this. In all things we must study to approve ourselves unto God. Personal holiness is vital. He that controls not himself, how shall he take care of the



church of God? No preacher can long satisfy any people who is not himself a pattern of good works. We must study the Scriptures to find lessons, not for the people, but for our own life. In this sense the Bible must be the *liber sacerdotalis*. We must pray first for the grace of God for ourselves. Our sufficiency is of God. The greatest and hardest preparation is within; and faith and patience and self-mastery come by prayer. You must keep yourself at the feet of the great Teacher, if you would bring men to him and present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. You must seek, by personal application of the means of grace, to be filled with the Spirit of God, if through you the Spirit is to convince men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. “*Utilis lectio, utilis eruditio, sed magis necessaria unctio, quippe qua docet de omnibus.*” It is said of Barnabas: “He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.”

Next to my watchfulness over my personal character, perhaps, I have given attention to my pulpit service. Paul exhorts, “Give attention to



reading;" and the aged apostle sends for his "books and parchments" that he may refresh himself. Habits of study are indispensable, and everything that is read, from Gibbon or Shakespeare to the daily newspaper, should be made to contribute to the sermon. I knew a good man who was accustomed to say he thought nothing of going into the pulpit without even choosing a text, and it is useless to say the people thought nothing of the sermon when they heard him; and another good man informed me he had reached a point when he no longer needed to study, but the Spirit gave him utterance, and it is useless to say, in this case, his congregation soon reached a point where they no longer needed his preaching. In this age an ignorant preacher deserves only contempt, and to be dull in the pulpit is the unpardonable sin. The pastor according to God's heart will feed the people with knowledge and understanding. The oil for the sanctuary must be beaten oil. "Many ministers," says Dr. Alexander, "are enthusiastic about other things, such as art, piety, authorship, or politics, but their Sunday sermon is like a



sponge from which all the moisture is squeezed out. Live for your sermons; live in your sermons. Get some starling to cry, 'Sermons, sermons, sermons!' "

I had few books, and I have not multiplied them. I made it a rule to be in my study from nine to one o'clock. I prepared my discourses with great care, laying the foundations on Tuesday morning, writing a great deal, making everything pay tribute to my sermons, finishing them on Saturday, though some of them have been the work of months and years, and are not yet finished. Chiefly, I have aimed to discuss practical themes; and always to give to every sermon a great purpose. Invariably I have closed with an invitation to the unsaved. All science I have sought to make subservient to the *gnosis soteria*, the science of salvation. I have been in the habit of preaching two distinctly doctrinal sermons a month, one in the morning and one in the evening on different Sundays. I believe it is the Old Jerusalem gospel which is the dynamite of God. My themes I gathered among the people more than from books. T



sought to make my teaching cover the needs of all classes. Christ might have said to Peter: "If you love me, fast, lie on the bare ground, clothe yourself with sackcloth, be in watches and self-denials, defend the oppressed, be a father to the orphan, a husband to the widow," but, passing by all these, what does he say? "*Feed my sheep.*"

My time for a sermon has usually been forty minutes, though I sometimes have the hardihood to preach an hour. I never preached very much on Evidences. I do not try to save the truth. The truth will take care of itself; I try to save men. I never gave large attention to the Higher Criticism, international law, or the latest things in science. I have found the Bible a good text-book, and I believe, with Pastor Robinson, that the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy word. Do you think you know all there is in the Bible? I have a Sunday-school scholar in my mission school who is ninety-four years old, and has been a Christian seventy-one years, and is still studying the Sunday-school lesson. Do you think you know all about Burns? I will take you into



a library in Glasgow, with eleven hundred volumes that are editions of Burns, and different works on Burns. Do you think you know all about Shakespeare? I will take you to a library in London with ten thousand books about Shakespeare. Do you think you know all about the Bible? Do you think the people know all there is in the word of God? "Pa, who was Shylock?" asked a little fellow of his father. "Great goodness, boy! You attend church and Sunday-school every week, and do n't know who Shylock is! Go and read your Bible." Thomas Benton, in the United States Senate, spoke feelingly of the man out of whom Christ cast seven devils. Even so eminent a teacher as Talmage describes in one of his sermons a group of horsemen journeying to Damascus, and the horse on which Paul rode lathered with foam, and the apostle, urging on his steed, which shies and plunges, throws him and then bounds away! I never preached funny sermons. Preaching I esteem a serious business. I never delivered a sermon on dancing. One talk on Jesus, presenting him in his majesty and his humiliation. in his



earnestness, in his condescension, in his poverty and self-renunciation, is worth a score of sermons on popular amusements.

Series of sermons I have found especially useful. One of ten sermons on "Prayer," another of a dozen on "Representative Christians of All Ages," another of fourteen on "Christ as a Workingman, as a Preacher, as a Friend, as a Citizen," etc.; another on "Beacon Lights of Old Testament History," and another on "Bible Astronomy," and others on "The Glory of God in Nature," on "The Model Prayer," on "Paul in the Cities," on "The Seven Sins of Washington," and on "The Holy Spirit," I found of value. I have always preached special sermons, on anniversaries, on Christmas and New Year's, and have not been unmindful of Washington's Birthday and the glorious Fourth. It is a good thing to turn to account any matter that may be prominent in the public mind. I have not discussed sensational themes. Newspaper notoriety I never coveted. Only one of my sermons was ever published by the press from Maine to California, and while some of them



praised the deliverance, others said of it, "Since the shooting of President Garfield all the idiots in the land have broken loose. The last idiot is the Rev. Mr. Power," and that was the only sermon to my knowledge any one ever thought worth stealing, and the New England clergyman guilty of this act of petit larceny was tried by a Congregational council, as he richly deserved to be. I have always preached what I thought needful, without asking permission of the press or of the center pews. Paul asked his brethren to pray that he might be enabled to speak boldly. To be progressive we must be aggressive, advance by attack. Going ahead is the result of pushing on. World forces, flesh forces, devil forces, yield only to *forces*. I would not give a snap for a sermon that had no snap in it.

I have always responded when asked to preach funerals, and I have spoken on hundreds of such occasions, especially for little children. It is a blessed way to do good. My most trying discourse, probably, in the twenty-three years, was that in the Capitol, at the death of Mr. Garfield. One of my people a plain man, asked: "Are you nervous



over that funeral sermon?" "No, I think not. I generally make up my mind to meet any duty that comes as best I can, and do n't stop to think of myself." "Well," he said, "remember you have preached scores of times before the dead man, and he was greater than all the living who will be there." It was a help to think of this before that great audience, with the three living Presidents, the Senate and House, the Supreme Court, and diplomats, and heads of departments, the Army and Navy, and the waiting multitudes. Better, however, was the reason of old Father Shelburne, of Virginia, who, when asked if he was n't afraid to preach before Alexander Campbell, answered: "Why should I be? I have preached before Almighty God many a time. Why should I be afraid to preach before Alexander Campbell?"

Some of my hardest experiences have been these funerals. What a tax on a man's sympathies! What a responsibility he owes then to the living! I buried two suicides the same week. I have put away all sorts of characters that go to make up a great city. Under all circumstances I have



sought to be kind. I love men. I believe in the love of Christ for men. I am satisfied that without holiness no man shall see God, but I am certain

“There is a wideness in God’s mercy  
Like the wideness of the sea;  
There is a kindness in his justice  
Which is more than liberty.  
For the love of God is broader  
Than the measures of man’s mind  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.  
But we make his love too narrow.  
By the limits of our own,  
And we magnify his strictness  
With a zeal he will not own.”

In matters affecting the public good and general interests of the cause of Christ, I have sought to take an active part. A servant I have made myself unto all that I might gain the more. Y. M. C. A., W. C. T. U., Y. P. S. C. E., and kindred movements, have had my hearty sympathy and cooperation. Of the cause of temperance I have been an earnest advocate. My church is called “The White Ribbon Church” of Washington. If the ravages of rum, according to Mr. Gladstone, are greater than those of war,



famine and pestilence combined, once a year at least it may be appropriate to mention the matter in the pulpit!

Then I would not for the world lose the fellowship that has come to me through these general movements with other Christians, friends and brethren I have found among the preachers of other religious bodies. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." "I am the companion of all them that fear thee." "They helped every one his neighbor, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage." The first gathering of ministers I entered after I went to Washington received me graciously, but one who knew me said, "Here comes Bro. Power; he is the only Christian in town." "Oh, no, Doctor," I answered, "you are a Presbyterian Christian, and my brother here is a Baptist Christian, and Dr. Blank is a Methodist Christian, while I am content to be simply a *Christian*. That is all there is of it." And more recently, at a big Presbyterian celebration, I told the German story of the happy family of animals—the dog, the cat, the



raven and the rat—that dwelt together in unity, and remarked, if these could live at peace with each other, I thought a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist and a plain, ordinary New Testament Christian ought not to be discordant. “Yes,” said Dr. Sunderland, “but you are extraordinary Christians!” And so we ought to be—we disciples—models of Christianity in both teaching and practice to all men.

Yes, I love all men who love Christ and hate sin. Any human being, who is loyal to Jesus Christ as he understands Christ, is my brother. “I am sick,” said Wesley, “of mere opinions. Give me a man full of faith, good works and mercy, without partiality—a man who will lay himself out in work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope. Let my soul be with all such Christians, wheresoever they may be, and whatsoever opinions they may hold.” “Martin Luther would have stood no more chance of receiving unanimous ordination from our New York Presbytery,” said Dr. Parkhurst, “than of being elected to the papacy by the Roman Catholic Cardinalate; and still the old



heretic, with his ragged Bible, out of which he had fiercely torn the Epistle of James, did more to precipitate the kingdom of heaven than our whole synod could do, conservatives and progressives all pulling together."

A "loyal" brother preached a sermon in my pulpit, in which he declared Wesley and Luther and Calvin were all good men, but none of them were in the kingdom. Think of it!

I have an inheritance in all good men and women. I claim a share in all the great ongoing of the gospel in this land and in all lands, in this age and in every age. I reckon among my treasures not only Campbell and Errett, not only Wesley and Calvin and Luther, but Seneca and Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus and Socrates. To me belong all the experience and all the noble thought of all that have gloriously lived and loved and wrought and fallen asleep; for "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."



gelist, overseer, pastor. The office of fellow worker with God is no mean honor for the archangel nearest the throne. The man called of God to proclaim the gospel of salvation to a lost world, who would leave the pulpit for the throne of Great Britain, or the Presidency of the United States, would stoop. What wonder that the "chiefest of apostles" should exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

I am to speak of my pastorate. I accept the title "pastor" with great hesitancy. The pastor combines in himself watchman and evangelist. He watches for souls as one that must give account. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." There are preachers who would find it very difficult to call their sheep *by name*.

Paul was a model pastor. He tells us of his three years' pastorate of a church, how he taught his people publicly and from house to house, and ceased not to warn every one day and night with tears. And in his epistles he sends salutations to men and women by name, showing that he recalled



every one personally. Calvin reports fruitful harvests at Geneva when the ministers and elders went from house to house and dealt closely and individually with the consciences of the people. Baxter went to Kidderminster, which, before his coming, was like a piece of dry and barren earth, but by the blessing of Heaven upon his labors the face of paradise appeared there in all the fruits of righteousness. When he came, scarcely a worshipping family was known in the place. When he left it, but few families were living without this daily acknowledgment of God. Six hundred communicants attended the Lord's table. Cotton Mather declares that while he looked upon this work as laborious as any in all his ministry, yet he set a great value upon his pastoral visits. He not only did, but got, good in his conversations with all sorts of persons, and thought he never walked more in the Spirit than when thus walking to his flock to serve and to seek their best interests. Dr. Doddridge, in the midst of his ministry, declared: "I have many cares and troubles. May God forgive



In point of importance, next to my pulpit work, I have estimated my duties as pastor. The hours from one to five o'clock have been given each day to this service, and frequently the evenings from six to nine as well. Not less than thirty-five thousand visits have been made. Soundness of body and freshness of preaching alike depend upon this ministry, and, paradoxical as it may appear, if a man would save souls, he must lose *soles*. I have been out of my pulpit but few Sundays in twenty-three years on account of ill-health, and this I attribute largely to my constant exercise in looking after the people. I do not ride a wheel, though the preacher had better ride wheels than get them in his head. The word is "Go, go, making disciples."

Now, to the true pastor, the service from house to house is unceasing; it is never done. Are you shepherd, watchman, overseer, steward? Would you make personal application of your pulpit teaching to individual cases? Do you desire to develop the talents, enlist the services, and secure the affections of your people? You may preach like Paul, through an endless pastorate, and never do it.



You may be a commonplace orator, and yet a faithful pastor, and succeed in a marvelous way. "Take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseer;" that is, take every man, every woman, every child by himself, and go to him; watch over him, pray for him, be a helper to him, have him constantly under your oversight. "What thinkest thou? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

Representatives of every class present themselves in the experience of twenty-three years. I will name a few I recall as typical. Here is an atheist. Paul, preaching at Athens, teaches us to meet unbelievers of every school with Christ. One day a Presbyterian lady came to my study, and said, "Will you go to see a dying man?" "Certainly." "But he is an atheist." "Does he wish to see me?" "Yes." "Then I'll go." The man and his family, until that morning, had loudly proclaimed themselves atheists, Ingersoll people, and scorned all ideas of religion. Preachers were



an abomination to them. I entered the sick chamber. It was clear to me the man had but little time to live. He was rational, and recognized me. I leaned over him and said, "Do you believe in God, sir?" "Yes." "And are you willing to trust to his mercy, through Jesus Christ as your Saviour?" "I think—I think—I am." "Shall I pray with you?" "If you please." And I knelt and prayed. I never witnessed a more distressing scene. The wife threw herself on the bed and cried, "O husband, pray for yourself! Pray with the minister!" I have never believed, since then, in the sincerity of men who deny the existence of God.

Here is an instance of an ordinary infidel. A woman attended our meetings who seemed deeply interested. One day, with tears, she thanked me for the sermon. "Are you a Christian?" I asked. "No, sir, I am an infidel." "Can I call to see you?" "Yes." I did so. I found her an honest skeptic, living with a brother who was a blatant unbeliever. I had a number of long talks with her, on the subject of Christianity. I spent hours in-



structing her. Finally she came to me and said, "I am ready to become a disciple of Christ." "You know your duty," I answered; "confess and obey him." She did so. The brother was greatly excited over it. A year later she died. When I next met the young man, he said with a trembling voice, "I want to tell you our folks were very glad of my sister's action, when she joined your church." A few weeks later I baptized him and his wife.

Here is a case of sickness. I sometimes go to the hospitals. I found a young man from the far West down with typhoid fever. He had been a wild, worldly fellow, and had gotten far away from the teachings of a Christian home. I watched him patiently. I said nothing until he was well enough, and then called his attention to his condition, his nearness to eternity without preparation, and the goodness of God in his restoration to health. The soil was ready to receive the good seed. He accepted the gospel with great readiness, and is devoted to the cause of the Master.

Here is an example of the indifferent Christian. He was a man of wealth and position, a statesman



of high rank. His influence would have been mighty, but the light was hidden under a bushel. He had long been a careless and useless professor. I felt great timidity in approaching him, but duty demanded it. When I first suggested that he was not doing his part as a member of the body of Christ, he looked at me with an expression that said: "Well, this is presumption! Mind your own business, sir." But that was just what I was doing, and it was but a little time before that man was at the Lord's table. He was one of my staunchest friends and supporters ever afterwards. He would drive often to my house in his carriage and say, "Come, young theologian, let us ride. A talk with you will do me good," and I can say of him, as Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare, "I loved the man, and do honor to his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any."

Take another case. A backslider. A. B. came to us *on a postal card*; that is, he was a young man from the country, and his church letter was written on a postal card. He became a cab-driver. For awhile he was all right, but by and by I



missed him. Bad companions were ruining him. Again and again, and again and again I went after him, left messages and religious papers for him, wrote letters to him, sought him at his home and on his cab, followed him up when he changed his boarding-place, worked for months to recover him; and at last he was seen at church. He would not take the Lord's Supper because he thought himself unworthy. After awhile he was himself again, and for years it has not been necessary for me to call upon him. He is always in his place with two or three young men with him, and has brought a dozen others into the church.

Take an instance of chronic absenteeism. This is a woman. For five years before I took charge of the church she had not darkened the doors of the house of worship. I visited her and said nothing. I kept going, and talked in general about church interests. I showed her that she was remembered and loved by the church, though she made no sign of reciprocity. I kept it up for years. My elders said over and over again, "Drop her from the church roll." I said, "No; it is a case which only



calls for patience. She will return, and with her we will get the children." She did return. The children, now grown, are among the most faithful members of the church. I have not felt there was any necessity for my visits at that house for years. You could not lift the woman out of the church now with a derrick. The pastor's perseverance has been rewarded a hundred-fold.

Still another case—the stranger. One day, at a slimly attended Thanksgiving service, I saw a lady in the congregation whom I had never seen before. I greeted her and learned she had recently come to the city and was not connected with any church. I called. She frequently attended our services, and often said to me, "I have no way of reaching the needy. You take this money and distribute it," and would place in my hands a hundred dollars for the poor. When, a year after, she died confessing Christ, she gave me three thousand dollars for my work, and through my influence left forty thousand dollars for charities.

And so I might go on for hours. And this pastoral service has been no trial. When a young



preacher, my first church had many poor people who lived in cabins in the pines, and wove their own clothing. They had never had a preacher who was a pastor to them. I was so timid that I felt I could never go where I was not invited, and these poor people felt themselves too humble to ask my visits. I used to ride horseback through the country, and many a time would pass by a house over and over again, before I could summon up courage to enter. When I did, the simple folks looked as if they could n't understand it; but soon the sunlight was not more welcome in those cabins, and to this day they will still speak with kindness of the young preacher who first entered their homes. There is no power under heaven like it, and there are no sermons like the sermons that have been inspired by such conversations in the cabins.

If there is one class above others I have sought, in my work as a pastor, it has been the children. "Give me the children," said Cardinal Manning, "and England shall be Catholic in twenty years." "I have a profounder reverence for a boy than for a man," said General Garfield. "My first and





PRESENT VERMONT AVENUE CHURCH.  
GARFIELD MEMORIAL.



greatest success," says Baxter, "was upon the youth; and so it was that, when God had touched the hearts of the young with the love of goodness and delight of obedience to the truth, in various instances their friends, their fathers and their grandfathers, who had grown old in an ignorant and worldly state, did many of them fall into a liking and loving of piety, induced by their love to their children, who now appeared so much wiser and better, and more dutiful to them." "I often make it my humble prayer," said Dr. Doddridge, "that God will teach me to speak to children in such a manner as may make early impressions of religion upon their hearts." After the last public service he attended in his own church, Henry Ward Beecher, we are told, fatigued, sat down, and the organist played for him an air which he loved, connected with the words: "I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Come unto me and rest.' " Two poor street boys, passing the church and hearing the music, stopped and stood listening at the open door. As the tired, grand old man passed out he saw them, and, tenderly laying his hand upon their



heads, stooped and kissed their foreheads, and, with an arm around each of them, left the scene of his trials and triumphs forever. Who knows what power a smile or a word or a friendly handgrasp has in it for the making of manhood or womanhood! Daniel Webster went to Boston a poor, unknown boy, to study law. He was met by Rufus King, who shook him kindly by the hand, and said: "I know your father. Study hard and you will win." Sixty years after, when at the summit of his fame, Webster said: "I still feel the pressure of that hand."

We are guilty if we do not believe in, and labor for, the early conversion of children. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "Eli perceived that the Lord called Samuel the child," and Josiah, when eight years old, began to seek after the Lord. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." "Who-soever shall receive a little child in my name, receiveth me." "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." Pastors, parents, Christian workers generally, are perplexed to know at what



age children should come to Christ. Our Saviour, at twelve years, was about his Father's business. This was the time when the Jewish child assumed religious responsibility. So much depends upon the nature of the child, its training and environment, no general rule can be given. Some are as ready at nine years as others at twenty. We have one daughter. At eight she wished to become a Christian. She had known nothing but the church, and had only a step to take—the open confession and obedience. I said: "Wait until you are ten, and if you then desire to obey Christ you may." She was evidently disappointed. At ten she said nothing about the matter. Her health was precarious, and we feared she might not be spared to us. One Saturday evening her mother said to me: "If Abbie is to be taken, I should feel much happier about her if she were in the church." I said: "I will speak to her about it to-morrow morning." Some way, the child got off to Sunday-school without my seeing her. When the invitation was given at the close of the sermon, her mother whispered: "Would you like to go forward this morning?"



"Will papa be willing?" she asked eagerly. "Yes," said my wife; "but if you have not been thinking about it, perhaps you had better wait." "Just as you say, mamma," said the little one, with a sigh. This was too much. My wife could not assume the responsibility. "Go, if you wish," she said; and the little girl came eagerly forward, and intelligently confessed her faith in Christ. So small was she, I took her down into the water in my arms to baptize her. She has been a faithful Christian for eleven years, and a great help to me in the church. She could just as well have started two years earlier.

"Feed my lambs," is Christ's word to his ministers. The Christ pastor is the child's pastor. Keep your young people. Win the children and train the children for the King.

While this work has had a prominent place with me, however, I have never felt called upon to teach in the Sunday-school. The most successful pastor is he who can get the most work out of others. It is a great disadvantage to any church to have a preacher who will do everything, and a preacher's



wife who thinks it necessary for her to do all that her husband fails to do. To serve in an office that can just as well be filled by one of your people, is an injury to somebody who is thus left with empty hands. Map out the work for others. Give every one a task. Do n't imagine you have the only talent in the congregation. I knew a pastor with a church of six hundred people who had this foolish notion. He did all the preaching. He offered all the public prayers. He gave lectures at the prayer-meeting service. He instructed the big Bible-class. He was the entire program at the church entertainments. He pulled the whole wagon up the hill with the elders in it and the deacons in it, and the whole of the noble six hundred; and what was the result? He went to heaven and left an ecclesiastical infant asylum, with six hundred babes for somebody else to nurse.

Moses was assisted by seventy elders. How many helpers Paul names in the New Testament! We have "my helper," the beloved Persis; Clement Andronicus and Junia; Tryphena and Tryphosa; Timotheus, "my work-fellow," and glorious



Phœbe—a great host! We read how Saul went to Gilead, and “there went with him a band of men whose hearts God had touched.” Here was a young men’s praying band. We have Paul’s account of certain ones in Corinth, of the house of Stephanas and others, who set themselves to minister unto the saints, and to help and refresh the apostle, and supply certain things that were lacking—an apostolic Y. P. S. C. E., of which Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were the Mercy Committee. Develop the people, command the pews, make the humblest to feel that they are partners in the concern. Do n’t lean all the time on Aaron and Hur, and overburden those good souls, and spoil all the rest of Israel. That is not a healthy church where all the work, all the giving, all the praying is done by half a dozen Calebs and Tabithas. It is the pull of the whole congregation that brings the blessing. Peter’s powerful sermon on Pentecost was preceded by a powerful prayer-meeting, and the mightiest of all ministers said humbly, “Brethren, pray for us.” A recent painting, representing a little girl with a thoughtful face shaded



by an old-fashioned sun-bonnet, sitting on a rude seat in a country church, her hands demurely folded, and her eyes intently looking forward, is called "Helping the Pastor." So the weakest may save; and a church thoroughly organized, which is not a fold, but a force, which has the discipline of a regiment in which every one counts, where every talent is utilized, all hearts are united, and like one man come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, must be felt in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation as a great center of power for good.

I can not say that in my pastorate I have achieved such results; far from it. Discouragements that come to all my brethren have been encountered from the beginning: sleepless nights, tears of bitter mortification and sorrow, despair itself, distresses such as come to every soul that seeks to be faithful. Elijah, under the juniper tree, has more than once represented my feeling, if not my condition. Every pastorate has its early trials of whooping-cough, measles and mumps, and hundreds fail to pull through this vexatious period of in-



fancy, and so dissolve after a year or two; but even if the child survive to mature manhood, there is peril of a grave attack of pneumonia or typhoid fever that may carry it off. Careful nursing alone will save the patient. "Both experience and long observation of all denominations," says a pastor of forty years' service over the same church, "satisfy me that, as a general fact, the original sources of ministerial troubles can be traced back to ministers themselves. They will be found to have arisen from our not doing in the right way, and at the right time, what we ought to have done, or in doing what ought never to have been done, from our not saying frankly and kindly what we ought to have said at the right time, or from our saying what we ought never to have said. Of all men, pastors need practical wisdom." "I have lost a great battle, and it was all my own fault," said Frederick the Great. "His confession showed more greatness than his victories," said Goldsmith. Now, all these experiences common to pastors have come in my twenty-three years at the Capital, and some that are not met with in other cities.



me that I am so apt to forget those of the pastoral office. I now resolve to take a more particular account of the souls committed to my care; to visit as soon as possible the whole congregation; to learn more particularly the circumstances of them, their children and servants; to make as exact a list as I can of those that I have reason to believe are unconverted, awakened, converted, fit for communion, or already in it. I will especially be careful to visit the sick. I will begin immediately with inspection over those under my own roof, that I may with greater freedom urge other families to the like care. Oh, my soul, thy account is great; it is high time that it be got into better order. Lord, I hope thou knowest I am desirous of approving myself a faithful servant of thee and of souls. Oh, watch over me that I may watch over them, then all will be well."

When I read such testimonies; when I hear the great apostle ask, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" "My little children, I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you"; when I see the need to transplant the confessional, that mighty



engine of power, most harmlessly and most beneficially into our Protestant ministrations; when I look at such examples as Bishop Wilson in the Isle of Man, Eliot among the red men of North America, John Frederick Oberlin in Ban de la Roche, "the father of his people," and Felix Neff, the apostolic pastor of the High Alps—I tremble to be called a "pastor," or to speak of my poor service as a "pastorate."

The work with which I have been identified for twenty-three years I entered upon in September, 1875. I was then a young man of twenty-four. I began preaching at eighteen. When a student, I was accustomed to ride twenty miles every Saturday on horseback to my appointment, and twenty miles back on Sunday afternoon; forty miles over mountain roads, often covered with snow. They paid me ten dollars a Sunday, and kindly asked if I wanted more, and I said, "No; it is all the preaching is worth." After my graduation, at Bethany, in 1871, I began work in eastern Virginia. I was offered \$1,200 to take charge of a city church. I was poor, much in debt, without



books, but I refused the tempting offer, and accepted five hundred dollars to preach for three churches in the country. I never regretted my choice. I would not exchange the experience for any sum of sound money, or unlimited coinage at 16 to 1. I would say to every young preacher, "Go thou and do likewise." Three years later I married. I borrowed the money which I paid the preacher—and I paid him well—and I went in debt for the wedding-suit. I never regretted that, either, and I would say again to every young preacher, "Go thou and do likewise." I returned to Bethany in September, 1874, as a professor in the college, and in May following I received the call to Washington. I refused, without question, to entertain it. Later a member of the Official Board visited me, and urged me to accept the charge.

After some persuasion, I consented to spend a Sunday with them. The president of the college sought to dissuade me. "You may go there for a year, and they may not want you longer," he said. "Here you can remain as long



as you desire. You may find it a fossil church, and no room for growth. Here you have a great and ever-widening field." Judge Jerry Black said to me: "They will starve you, young man. I know them. They are not able to sustain you." A dozen preachers had declined. One declared he could not rent a house on the salary. I never in my life cared for money, but it has always come to me when I needed it. I never yet put a price upon my work as pastor, but my brethren have always dealt generously by me. I found a congregation of one hundred and fifty people, somewhat divided, worshiping in a small frame chapel, well out in what then seemed to be the outskirts of the city. I never had a trial sermon, so I preached the one I had used the previous Sunday, and which, curiously enough, was on the text, "*Thou Art the Man.*" I was told afterward the sermon did not get me the call. I saw that before any preacher who accepted this field, there was a hard struggle—the building up of a cause in a great city, with a small congregation, little means, and an obscure and unattractive building, while other religious



bodies were well established and equipped. Again I was asked if I would accept a call, and I agreed to consider the matter if a unanimous invitation should be extended. At heart, I hoped the call would not come. It did, however, and I entered upon my work September 5, preaching my first sermons to thin congregations from the texts, "What is Truth?" and "The Love of Christ Constraineth Us." There was no formal installation.

The character of the building in which we met, and the prominence of the church before the public, may be understood when I tell you that, soon after my coming, some sacrilegious thief broke in and stole the pulpit Bible and a number of Sunday-school books, and the papers announced that "the little colored church on Vermont Avenue" had been robbed; and later, when Mr. Garfield was elevated to the Presidency, and people were turned away by the thousand from our doors, an indignant American citizen, who failed to get inside "the Court Church," went away denouncing it as an outrage that the President of the United States should worship in that little "Campbellite shanty!"



Washington has peculiar conditions, as have all legislative centers. People come and go; thousands are transients, and the pastor has more than ordinary labor. There is a lack of that feeling of permanency which leads people to put their best affections and efforts and means in the work, and there are vast numbers who use this uncertainty of continuous residence as an excuse for not identifying themselves with the churches. One of this sort, when asked the reason of his delinquency, answered: "My stay here may be very brief; so I hold my membership with the old home church out in Ohio." "How long have you lived in Washington?" "Well—er—er; when I come to think of it, it is about *twenty-three years!*" All cities present this problem more or less. Church letters need often to be followed up by a tracer. There are enough scattered, concealed, uncatalogued, unproductive disciples in our great cities to make hundreds of churches. The transient feeling, however, which so often causes this state of things, is unusual at the Capital. Sound-money folks may come in to-day, and "free silverites" to-morrow,



and Prohibitionists *are coming after awhile*, and unless an office-holder is a sort of patent, adjustable invertebrate he can not tell what a day may bring forth. This very condition of constant change, however, makes our city a missionary center, and hundreds have been gained to our cause, and have gone out from us bearing the gospel to other regions.

Another special difficulty arises from the influence of official life upon our society. Members of Congress, heads of departments, political leaders, are not, as a rule, devoutly religious. The science of politics absorbs them. Away from home and family restraints, they too often fall into habits that are demoralizing. Thousands go down before the temptations of Washington life. They are not easy to approach. They seem to feel that there is a lack of consistency between politics and religion. They are a powerful factor in Washington life. But, while hard to reach, such characters all the more need the religion of Christ. Examples like James A. Garfield, Jeremiah S. Black, W. D. Owen and Thomas W. Phillips are immensely



potent when enlisted for Christ and the church. The fountains of national life must be purified by the gospel. The call to us to-day—more imperative than ever before in our nation's history; more certain of advancing the solution of the grave problems that now confront us than all the skill of statesmanship; more interesting and vital than all the vagaries of finance, all the theories of sociology, all the intricacies of industrial science and political economy—the trumpet-call to us is to save the people, and not only the poor and lowly and neglected, but the wealthy and learned, the so-called “higher classes.” Dives needs Christ as well as Lazarus; Cæsar no less than Cæsar's slave.

Another trying service demanded of the Washington pastor, more than any other, grows out of the dependence of the people on the Government for support, the throwing of men and women out of employment with the changes of political administration, and the constant appeal for influence and intercession with the powers that be. It is worth the salary of a member of Congress to look after



these cases. It is an immense tax on one's time and patience and sympathies. It often entails the most annoying and laborious effort without any sort of return. And not only are these daily encroachments made on the pastor's time in the city itself, but thousands all over the land think they have "a pull" on him. A preacher writes that he wants to be Minister to Brazil; a colored brother desires the position of Librarian to Congress; a young woman would like to do some sweeping and dusting in the Treasury Department; a good sister sends a cloth block for a missionary quilt, and wants the autographs of the President and Cabinet, with ten cents apiece! These are genuine cases, and thousands of others on all sorts of business, many of them with requests that it would require the work of days to comply with, pour in upon the busy preacher, an average of ten a week, five hundred a year, 11,500 in twenty-three years, with stamp enclosed in one letter in a hundred, or a tax on his slender income of 11,385 stamps!

But this work also has its compensations. While some requests are unreasonable, thousands



of them are entirely proper, and it is a delight to do good to all men, but especially to them of the household of faith. What are we here for? What sort of need is there in the world for people if they never serve? Preachers who are unwilling to be used by their brethren are a good deal like the little girl's prohibitionists. "We are all prohibitionists at our house," she said to a visitor, "but it do n't do anybody any good or any harm." When asked to explain this strange state of affairs, she said: "Mamma is a prohibitionist, and can not vote for it; and papa is a prohibitionist, and won't vote for it; and so it do n't do anybody any good or any harm."

Of the difficulties that belong to all pastorates this has had its share. There is the universal difficulty of church finance. Republicans, Democrats, Prohibitionists and Populists, in the agonies of platform-building, are not "in it" for a moment with a board of church officers in wrestling with this question. It "bobs up" every quarter, and is an unceasing source of worry. What is the solution? Not grab-bags and oyster suppers, nor



fidelity to the gold standard, nor the free, unlimited and independent coinage of silver at any ratio, but faithful instruction in the apostolic principle: "Every one according to his ability." Eternal vigilance is the price of successful church financiering.

There is the difficulty that invariably comes up with the building of a new house of worship. First, there is the selection of a site for the meeting-house, and that brings vexation of spirit; then there is the choosing of a Building Committee, and that is another occasion of vexation of spirit; then the plan for the building must be adopted, and here is still another cause for vexation of spirit; then there is the matter of material for the structure, and again there must be vexation of spirit; then at frequent stages in the erection of the building there comes a painful lack of funds to pay the workmen, and with this comes more vexation of spirit; then there is the finishing and the dedication, and probably the assignment of pews in the new sanctuary, and these are a fruitful source of more vexation of spirit still. It is said



a pastor who builds a house never preaches in it. Twice I have had this trial to face. What is the solution here? *Oh, trust in the divine mercy!*

Then, again, there is the old, never-downed difficulty of the church prayer-meeting. In these twenty-three years I have led fifteen hundred prayer-meetings, and not one has reached my ideal. A successful pastor of one church for forty-six years, when asked the secret of his success, said: "Come to my prayer-meetings and see." "Those that loved the Lord spoke often to one another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard them." The Christian Church began in a prayer-meeting. The early Christians assembled at an appointed time to pray and sing, alternately, the praises of "Christ as a divine being," writes Pliny to Trajan. But for some reason, while people still regard the prayer-meeting as a means of grace, they feel about as Beecher said, "As I did when a boy, and was washed mornings, and had my hair combed. It was better than going indecent, but it was an exercise I never enjoyed, and was heartily glad when it was over." How to make the



prayer-meeting bright and breezy and social and helpful; how to keep out the hackneyed leaders, and hackneyed themes, and hackneyed speeches, and hackneyed prayers, and hackneyed hymns; how to spoil the prayer-meeting spoilers, and help the prayer-meeting helpers; how to develop the service into a meeting where people are glad to come, feel that they have lost something if they stay away, and bring their neighbors as to a little treat during the toil and struggle of the week, a Jacob's well for refreshment by the wayside; how to make it beautiful to children and young people, until they say we would rather go to prayer-meeting than to a play, or a ball game, or a feast; how to get it and keep it so blessed that it is a service for renewal of the faith and hope and love and fellowship of the saints, and the conversion of sinners. This is a problem for every pastor. How is it met? Well, you can't settle it by feeling about it, "It's just the prayer-meeting. I have n't much on hand to-day—only a prayer-meeting." The service calls for the preacher's best thought and best labor, and I have concluded to work at it



twenty years longer before I undertake to tell you how to run a prayer-meeting.

A thousand and one other difficulties come to mind. There are tramps and bummers, the lovers who wish to be reconciled and the married people who want to be put asunder, the cranks and the kickers, the fusses in the choir and the jars in the business meeting, the sore-heads and the sensitives, the tattlers and the mischief-makers, the schemers and the hobby-riders and the prayer-meeting killers, the bores and bosses and the busy-bodies, and the weak brother. "What is the funniest thing that has happened in your pastorate?" I asked the other day of a Baptist brother in Washington, who has presided over the same church for more than forty years. "The funniest thing? Why, one of my members bought three eggs of a grocer. One was bad, and she sent it back; and the thing raised a rumpus which nearly split the congregation." I would n't dare to tell the funniest thing that has occurred in my pastorate of twenty-three years, but often the most trifling matter brings the preacher his greatest misery. I could spend hours in re-



counting these things. You give me the whole creation to touch upon in giving me this single theme.

But I must be merciful, and I must say a word about my helps as well as my hindrances. What shall I say of the forces that have aided me? What shall I say of the men, the noble brethren, that make the pastor's yoke easy and his burden light; the faithful ones who in every prayer remember the preacher; who are ever ready with the word of cheer, and never a harsh criticism; who are always showing a helpful hand in a new suit at the tailor's, or a check for two weeks' stay at the seaside; who are brothers indeed in the likeness of the Elder Brother?

What shall I say of the good women--the Marys and Marthas of the church; the unselfish ones who "labor in the Lord," who "labor much in the Lord"; who go cheerfully on a thousand errands to the poor, the sorrowing, the careless, the sinful; who come constantly asking, "Have you anything for the Board of Deaconesses?" "Any work for the Ladies' Aid Society?" "Anything you



wish *me* to do?" who are ready to spend themselves and be spent for the Master?

What shall I say of my Board of Officers, of their self-sacrificing services, of days and nights given without money and without price to the consideration and furtherance of the interests of the King's business, of the generous readiness to take any burden from the pastor's shoulders—cares of finance, cares of discipline, cares of souls?

What shall I say of my young people—"true-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal"—who by prayer and service and joyous enthusiasm have so lightened the preacher's labors in these better days?

What shall I say of the preachers—glorious men like Errett and Hobbs and Chase and Lucas—who have passed beyond, and scores and hundreds yet living, whose words and deeds and appreciation and love have been a mighty inspiration? And how can I ever be sufficiently grateful to that larger circle all over the land, which we lovingly name "our brotherhood," to whom, in a peculiar way, different from that of any other



pastor among us, I have been indebted during my term of service at the nation's Capital?

What shall I say of my teachers, of my debt to the faithful ones who have left their blood, their brains, their spirits, their lives, in precious volumes to give me light; who furnish the best society, the wisest, wittiest, tenderest, purest in every period of the world's history; who refresh me with their great thoughts, and guide me by their noblest counsels, a select host from Homer and Marcus Aurelius to Alexander Campbell and Alfred Tennyson?

What shall I render for all the benefits that my very failures have brought me, my conflicts with self, the discipline that has called forth the best that was in me, and led me to throw myself more fully upon divine grace? It is a mistake to suppose that men succeed through success; they much oftener succeed through failure. Trials are conditions of progress. Disappointments bring reward in increased usefulness and happiness. As the storm roots the oak more surely; as fire and hammer and file give the metal form; as the



broken rock sends forth living water in the wilderness, and the broken soil receives the seed and quickens it, and the broken wheat crowns our tables with loaves of beauty and life, so it is the broken spirit that blossoms and bears fruit unto holiness and life eternal. Yes, even failures may be helps. Look up; take your measure by the stars; climb; make stepping-stones of your mistakes; trust; endure hardness. It is work that wins. Christianity is a battle, not a dream.

“Only in dreams is a ladder thrown  
From the weary earth to the sapphire walls;  
But the dreams depart, and the vision falls,  
And the sleeper wakes on his pillow of stone.

“Heaven is not reached at a single bound;  
But we build the ladder by which we rise  
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,  
And we mount to its summit round by round.”

What shall I say of my wife, whose loving ministry, not only in the home, but in the church, has been so much to me? Her price is above rubies. Celibacy is an evil. “It is not good for man to be alone.” “He that findeth a wife,” says Solomon, “findeth a good thing.” “A prudent wife is of the Lord.” “Ought a minister to marry?” asks Baxter. “I answer Yes, but *let him*



*think, and think, and think again before he does it.*" "It is scarcely to be calculated," says Cecil, "what an influence the spirit of a minister's wife will have on his own and on all his ministerial affairs. If she comes not up to the full standard, she will so far impede him, derange him, unsanctify him." From the beginning of my ministry I have been blessed with a wife who has been a steadfast comforter and helper, second only to the Master I have sought to serve. Her counsel has always been safe, her influence has been exalting, her faith has braced my soul.

Finally, what testimony shall I give as to the gospel of God's grace in its personal blessing in my ministry? One of long experience in the service of the church declared: "At thirty, after examining as best I could the philosophies and religions of the world, I said, 'Nothing is better than the gospel of Christ.' At forty, when burdens began to press heavily and years seemed to hasten, I said, 'Nothing is so good as the gospel.' At fifty, when there were empty chairs in my home and the Mound Builders had done me service, I said,



‘There is nothing to be compared with the gospel.’ At sixty, when my second sight saw through the illusions of vanity and earthly things, I said, ‘There is nothing but the gospel.’” Little as I know of Christ—and I am ashamed that I know so little—I would not give it up for the learning of a thousand universities. Most of all, the gospel I have preached to others has saved me and kept me. I trust the promise: “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.” Had I a thousand lives I would spend them all in the ministry of the Word; had I a thousand sons I would gladly devote them to this service. “I have striven,” said Dean Stanley, “amid many frailties and weaknesses, with all charitableness, to make Westminster Abbey a great center of religious life.” I would be very reluctant to invite comparison between my work and that of such a servant of Christ, but I have had this one steadfast purpose in twenty-three years, to make the church I preach for a fountain of blessing at the nation’s Capital. God lead us all in the footsteps of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls.