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ICONOCLASTS.

BY J. W. LAPSLEY.

“YE shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves.” This was the divine command to Israel as they invaded Canaan. Policy as well as reverence for the divine authority demanded strict obedience to the command. But it was not so obeyed as to put out of sight the temptations to idolatry; and again and again Israel sinned after the example of the heathen they had supplanted, became image worshippers, and suffered grievously for their apostasy. Hence image breaking was accounted a sign of devotion to Jehovah. Jehu said, “Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord,” and he went and broke down the image of Baal, and the house of Baal, burnt his images with fire, and slew his priests and votaries with the sword. But this was as far as Jehu’s zeal for the Lord carried him. While he had no real devotion to God, and, in fact, renewed the idol worship at Dan and Bethel, he made the divine commission an excuse for pursuing with lavish bloodshed his own schemes of worldly ambition. And there have been others besides Jehu in other ages who have trod in his steps. “Mohammed,” says Dr. Schaff, “started as a religious reformer fired by the great idea of the unity of the Godhead, and filled with horror of idolatry.” And he and his Caliphs, long after they became world-wide conquerors, full of ambition and given up to every cruel and sensual passion, continued to proclaim, “There is but one God,” and continued to the last their warfare on image and image worship. They made their professed zeal for the one God a cover and ex-

A MESSAGE TO THE YOUNG MINISTER.

BY REV. FRANCIS R. BEATTIE, D. D., LOUISVILLE, KY.

THIS is intended to be a simple message to the young minister as he leaves the halls of the Seminary and enters upon the life-work which lies before him.

Your apprenticeship is now at an end, and you are about to become a master workman. Some time at school, four years at college, and three years at the Seminary made up the outward aspects of that apprenticeship, while a good Christian nurture, your personal experience of God's grace, and his call to the ministry form its inward aspect.

But now you go forth as a master-workman, fitted in some measure for your work. Your teachers and friends bid you God-speed, and they pray that he who has led you thus far may ever guide you in all your life-work, and give you blessing and comfort all your days.

You enter on a great work in restless and almost perilous times. This great work is varied in its nature, wide in its scope, and of immense responsibility. You do well, my young brother, to seriously consider it, and to enter on it with a grave and hopeful heart. Let the Scriptures speak to you concerning some of its aspects first of all.

You are to be a *fisherman*, going forth with the sure Gospel net, and casting it wisely and patiently, so as to catch men and save them unto life eternal.

You are to be a *shepherd*, caring for, feeding, and protecting the flock, not forgetful of the erring ones, nor of the lame and weak, and ever showing especial interest in the lambs of the fold.

You are to be an *husbandman*, going forth, at times it may be with tears, to sow the precious seed of the kingdom, and to till and tend and water it for the happy harvest home, with its many shocks of golden sheaves safely gathered in.

You are to be a *steward*, entrusted with the mysteries and treasures of the Gospel, and enjoined to be very faithful in dispensing these to men, in the name of the Master you seek to serve.

You are to be a *banker*, trading in all markets with the many talents or few which the Lord may have given you, and ever most anxious to have every investment yield a good return to his glory who gives all.

You are to be a *physician*, attending diligently to the cure of souls, pouring in the oil of divine grace, and applying the ointment of the Gospel to the wounds sin has made, not forgetting to bind up the broken hearts with the balm of the divine promises.

You are to be a *soldier*, devotedly loyal to the Captain of your salvation, and ever ready to fight in the cause of truth and righteousness, and always confident of victory in the end in the name of the King.

Thus the Scriptures open up before you the wide vista of your future work, as the far-reaching landscape stretches before the eye of the traveller who climbs some lofty hill. It is no easy work or simple task you undertake, and you cannot, my brother, save at your peril, take narrow views or have trivial thoughts in regard to its intense import.

In relation to your work you should possess both the spiritual microscope and telescope, and you must ever be sure that you use them right. If you turn that microscope, as you should, on your own unfitness, be sure you lift the telescope, as you may, towards the Sun of Righteousness, shining in all his glory. If you scan with the microscope the difficulties of your mission, as well you may, be sure you let the telescope sweep the whole wide range of the Redeemer's gracious purpose, and thereby discern the wide horizon of the mission of the church in the world. In this way you will take the correct measure of your high calling, alike in its microscopic intension and in its telescopic extension. And you will thereby surely catch the momentum of God's splendid purpose of redeeming grace, and its impulse will sweep your aspirations heavenward many a time in the midst of all your toils and trials.

Then, too, my young brother, may I not commend to you a mid-day optimism in all your work? Let me counsel you to shun the midnight pessimism which is almost sure to creep in on us at times. Yes, my young brother, be soberly optimistic, not sceptically pessimistic. The former is the genius of the faith of the Gospel, the latter is a miasma from the kingdom of darkness.

Optimism cheers, elevates and strengthens; pessimism chills, depresses and weakens. Pessimism has its face ever towards the failures of yesterday, and hence it stumbles under the burdens of to-day; optimism, with brave heart and open eye, looks towards the triumphs of to-morrow, and, amid the duties of to-day, one presses onward towards the mark for the prize.

Banish, then, at the very threshold of your life-work that sickly pessimism which will surely make your whole ministry like a gloomy sunset in the late autumn, and ever cherish that healthy optimism which will gild your whole life-service with the brightness of a glorious noonday in the early spring-time. Root out, therefore, my young brother, the barren fig-tree of despairing pessimism, and always cultivate the fruitful vine of Christian optimism. By so doing you will have true joy, and high hopes, and sure success in your noble calling.

Think not, I entreat you, that I am speaking in terms unduly superlative touching the temper of hopefulness which you may cherish as you enter on your divinely appointed mission. If you think rightly of the eternal and immutable God you are to serve, of the infinitude of his unfailing love, of the plenitude of his boundless grace, of the stability of his enduring word, and of the preciousness of his exceeding great promises, you cannot be a pessimist. And if you think, as you always may, of the regal power of the now enthroned Redeemer, of the omnipotence of the promised Spirit of God, and of the irresistible dynamic of the holy evangel you are to preach, then you *must* be an optimist.

Then, hear me further, as I give you these good reasons on which this temple of Christian optimism may calmly and firmly rest, and from which you may rise each returning day with fresh hopefulness for your work.

Think, first, of *your holy calling in its relation to the gracious purpose of God for the sure redemption of all his people.*

You are to play a part in the carrying out of the great purpose of the divine plan in saving men from sin and wrath. You are to share the toils of the campaign, which shall result in the splendid conquests of grace. Satan invaded our fair earth, paradise was lost, and the race was ruined. But God's gracious purpose overruled the partial victory of the great enemy. No hopeless duelism between good and evil was always to hold sway. The

promise of a mighty Redeemer and a great redemption was given. This promise grew brighter and brighter along the ages till its noontide is reached in the fulness of time, while the volume of its gracious blessing has been swelling on and on through the centuries ever since.

Through all these eras and ages God has been pleased to use men as co-workers with himself in making his saving purposes effective. He has put the treasure of his redeeming message in the earthen vessels of the Gospel ministry. These prophets spoke and Psalmists sang in the Old Testament time; and thus, also, the apostles wrote and spoke, and Gospel heralds preached in the New Testament age. And the minister of the Gospel of to-day is but an earthen vessel in his own great weakness; yet he is an ambassador for Christ and a co-worker with God in the dignity and strength of his divine calling.

Think of it, my young brother; you are to be a co-worker with God. As you think of this, surely undying hopefulness will take full possession of your spirits. Go back in thought to the eternal counsels of Almighty God, and forget not that he, with omniscient foreknowledge and omnipotent fore-ordination, foresaw and prearranged the whole fabric of your life, he giving first the warp and you next the woof of it all. By his providence you came into the world, and he called you by his grace into his kingdom, and then he has called you by his Spirit into the ministry; by his providence gave you opportunity to prepare for this calling, and now he sends you forth by the same Spirit to do noble things for him and his cause. Believe! oh! believe in the divine dignity of your calling, and seek to serve your Saviour King in a loyal manner and with a buoyant spirit.

He will not desert you now. The Captain of your salvation leads you on, the promises of the Gospel guide you as you go, and the Spirit of God will ever give you cheer and courage by the way. Christ is in you, the hope of glory; the Holy Spirit dwells in you as in a temple, and God will, by you and through you, promote his great plan, and effect his gracious purpose, touching the salvation of some of the heirs of glory. Let this inspiring thought cheer you amid the burdens and trials of your ministry, that, wherever you may be, you are in a holy and inviolable league with the triune Jehovah, helping to bring his purposes of grace to pass among men.

Then think, secondly, of *your life-work in its relation for whom, and upon whom, it is to be exercised.*

As you are a co-worker with God, you are to deal with the souls of men. The persons of immortal men and women are to come under your care. Each one of these is of more worth than the whole material universe, for this universe shall pass away, but the immortal soul shall never cease to be. Yes, my brother, you are to deal with forms of being which neither the melting of the elements nor the rolling up of the heavens at the last day will destroy. Through the influence of your ministry these candidates for eternity are to be called from the bondage of Satan into the glorious liberty of Christ. It is to be yours to apply the scourge of the law to the souls of men and wound them thereby; and then it will be your supreme joy to pour in the balm of the Gospel, and thus to heal these wounds with an un-failing remedy.

It will be yours, also, to minister the bread and water of life to those thus healed, and to give them cheer and comfort all along their heavenward way. It will be yours, too, to lead them out in lines of active service, to strive to have formed in them Christ the hope of glory, and to seek to build them up as fit temples for the habitation of God through the Spirit. Then, in the end, it will be yours to know the joy of having turned some unto righteousness, and of presenting your quota of the heirs of glory before his throne accepted and faultless.

Is not this, as a task, my young brother, suited at once to humble all your youthful pride, and to inspire in you a quenchless devotion to him who assigns it to you? Above all, it ought to kindle within you a holy ambition to live and labor in a manner in keeping with this splendid vocation.

Such a vocation might well fill even the angels with a sort of envy. We are told that the angels desire to look into the deep and precious things of the Gospel. We sometimes wonder whether they ever wish that the Lord had given them the honor of preaching the Gospel to lost men. Has Michael or Gabriel never ventured to enquire of the Redeemer why men, and not angels, were sent to tell men of the love of God and Saviour of sinners? This we do not know, but we may well, for our part, be both glad and grateful that we have the honor of seeking and finding some of the rough nuggets which are to be made into

his jewels, and of polishing and preparing them, to be set all glorious in his eternal crown. Thus you are to be a divine lapidary, called not to cut and carve with patient labor and careful touch the beautiful statue out of the rude blocks of lifeless marble, but to reproduce, with ceaseless toil and loving care, the image of God in those immortal souls defaced by sin. Shall you not consider your life-work, however toilsome, noble and well spent if but one living, redeemed soul, made like unto his glorious image and meet for heaven, shall be the result of your life-work? May you have many such as your joy and crown!

And, thirdly, think of *your life-work in its relation to the results which it is to have in view.*

For yourself, think of the thrilling joy of your soul as you hear the "well done" of the Master at the great day. Think of your honor in being called to shine as the stars forever in the firmament of his kingdom. Forget not, my young brother, that our best thought of all this will come far short of the reality; for the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of men conceived, all there is in store for his faithful servants.

But think, most of all, of the results in the enduring kingdom, whose builder and maker is God, in whose upbuilding you are to have some share. This kingdom is to be a splendid temple. Its foundations are laid in the eternal purpose of God's grace, its materials lie scattered along the centuries of the history of all races, and many workmen, under divine oversight, are now preparing those living stones and fitting them into his temple. As we scan the centuries of the past, we see it slowly rising; as we look around at the present day, we behold its goodly proportions; and as we look forward to the future, we see in vision the copestone set in its place, and the temple ready for its eternal abode.

In this whole task you are to have a part, and may it be yours to furnish many of the spiritual stones for this great fabric. Then, when it is all complete, and your eyes behold it in glory, what emotions will fill your soul as you stand and think that, by his grace, you had a share in making this structure a reality!

As the great painter stands in admiration before the work of his hands which men greatly praise, as the famous sculptor looks with delight on the splendid statue which the beholders much admire, and as the architect is deeply gratified to see his plans all working out in the splendid cathedral which pleases the

on-looker, so may it be yours, in the eternal state, to know the joy of having some portraits in the picture gallery of heaven, where the likeness of Christ appears; of having some statue in glory whereon the image of God can be clearly seen, and of having some stones which were laid by your hands in the temple eternal in heaven.

This, then, is my message to you: May it bring you a measure of uplifting hopefulness as you enter with fear and trembling, as you work. Oh! may there be firmly fixed in your soul the noble optimism it is ours to cherish as ministers of the Gospel. It is the glorious gospel of the blessed God; it is the holy Evangel to sinful men. You go forth to preach it. Your friends will follow you to your field of labor with many prayers for your comfort and success in your work. In turn, you will not forget them and all they have done for you.

And now, my young brother, you bid farewell to college and seminary scenes so fragrant with happy memories, and you are welcomed into the ranks of the ministry by the solemn act of ordination. Be true to Christ, be loyal to his word, be in sympathy with the Gospel, be faithful to your church, be earnest in seeking to save men, and be diligent in doing all you can to extend the kingdom of God in the earth.

Be diligent in your studies, be very careful in your preparation for the pulpit, be ever tender and faithful in all your preaching, and be watchful and tactful in all your pastorate work. Be regular in your attendance upon the courts of the church, be courteous in all your dealings with your brethren in the ministry, and be scrupulously careful of your life and conversation before men.

Above all, my young brother, in character be a true, strong, candid, noble man. Be like the rugged oak in the strength of your inflexible integrity; be like the stately palm in the gentle dignity of your social bearing; be like the shapely linden in the moral beauty of your daily conduct, and be like the bending willow in the sympathetic tenderness of your warm affections. So may you adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and be a workman who needs not to be ashamed.