

# THE RESPONSIBILITY OF TEACHERS

By

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**I**n the early part of the epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle had considered it his duty to rebuke the parties existing in that church. Those parties took their rise from natural predilections for some especial ministers of Christ. But the formation of such factions was wholly alien to the gospel. The doctrine of a crucified Messiah, disdained the addition of human wisdom. It was God's purpose in the present dispensation, to make the primary truths of the gospel distasteful to the worldly-wise, whether among the Jews or the Gentiles. The Jews looked for power, and were repelled by the sight of a Messiah executed in weakness. The Gentiles demanded profound philosophy, and were repelled by the simple tale of the crucified One of the Jewish nation. Yet God, in spite of it, put forth his power beneath that appearance of weakness, and His wisdom beneath that semblance of folly. The Holy Spirit too, poured into the minds of those enlightened by the cross of Messiah, supernatural and unearthly light.

Of that illumination Paul was in full possession. Divine intelligence he gladly imparted to those who were in a fit state of mind for its reception. But to that height of spiritual attainment Corinthian believers had not yet reached. Their discords and partisanship were the full proof of the apostle's estimate of their low spiritual state.

**1 Cor. 3:4. "For while one is saying, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? 5. Who then is Paul, and Who is Apollos? But ministers by whom ye believed? And unto each as the Lord gave." \* [\*Some critical editions omit the 'but' before 'ministers.']**

This brings us the especial subject that is now to employ us. The words before us regard the estimation in which ministers of Christ are to be held. The Corinthians had made them heads of parties. But that was to set them in a position wholly unsuitable to them. They were but servants of one Lord. They were only means and instruments to bring men to faith in the Saviour, and acquaintance with his will. Let them therefore recognize the servant in his place, and the Master in his.

The last clause of the verse presents a difficulty. Our translators have got over it by altering the position of the words. But this does not seem the way in which the apostle would have expressed himself, had his meaning been that which our translation gives. There was no manner of use in inserting the "even." The conjunction shows, that a new clause is added. Something then must be expressed to fill up the ellipsis. But what should be inserted, is not clear. It should be, however, I believe, one of the two following supplements:-

**"And (ye believed) each, as the Lord gave."**

Or we must supply "ministers" from the preceding context.

**"Ministers by whom ye believed."**

**"And (ministers) unto each, as the Lord gave."**

The sentiment in each case will be, that not only is the salvation of each saint a matter of God's decree, but that the means and ministry by which it is to be effected, are also of his ordination. This is an important truth. The Saviour decides, by whom, as his evangelists, each soul is to be converted.

It was then by no original energy, and no independent powers of Paul or Apollos, that they made converts to the faith of Christ. Those who believed beneath their word were given to them.

**6. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."**

The relative importance of the ministry of Paul and Apollos is represented to us under the figure of the toil of the husbandman, or planter. Paul's work was the first, the most laborious, and important. He had to dig the soil, and to set the vines. Apollos came after to supply the water needed. The labour was important, but secondary. He advanced in knowledge those already added to the faith of Christ.

But next, both these agencies are compared with that of God.

**7. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."**

Both planting and watering are but external ministries: both would be in vain, were there not an inward agency at work, to give efficiency to them both. The glory then should be his, to whom belongs what is inward and essential in the matter; not theirs, who are engaged only about the means. All the labour of Paul and Apollos had been in vain, but for the grace of the Most High.

**8. "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."**

Not only are ministers nothing in respect of the Master that employs them, and to whom alone their powers and their success are owing; but they are members of one body, moving in one work, designing one end by harmonious means. The unity then which God loves among his workmen is not to be broken, by Christians seeking to sever them into parties and sections.

A remarkable sentiment follows, in seeming contradiction to that just preceding. If all ministers are one, surely they will be equally rewarded! NO! individual action will come into question at

the close. They may work unitedly now, but in the reckoning before Christ, each will give an account of himself individually. "Let each prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing unto himself alone, and not unto another. For each shall bear his own burden:" Gal. vi. 4, 5.

The insertion of the word "man," in this passage, and in the one in Galatians, disfigures the sense. Paul is speaking, not of men in general, nor even of Christians generally, but of Christian teachers.

**"Each shall receive his own reward."**

Most important truth! It asserts not only degrees of reward, but peculiarities of reward. None will be able, righteously, to exchange his reward with any other. The labourers of no two are alike. Neither then shall the rewards be equal. The teacher - other things being equal - shall receive greater reward than the hearer; as his responsibility and labour are greater. But not only so. One teacher shall take his station in glory in advance of another teacher. The principle of reward will be that of justice: "according to works." It will not be according to dignity, or estimation among men. Exaltation among men, and even among Christians, often leads to ministers falling off in zeal and labour. But labour is to be the ground of reward before God; and this applies equally to the several forms of it. It is to be labour again, that is to be the basis of adjudication, not success. For success is not in our power, though the want of it should create suspicions in Christian ministers, that all is not right in themselves, or in their position.

**9. "For we are God's fellow-labourers, ye are God's husbandry, God's building."**

Two meanings may be given to the first sentiment. (1) That Christian ministers are co-operating with God in the production of a common end. It is a beautiful and ennobling thought. That is the view which our translators evidently took of the passage. But I do not think that it is the correct one. It appears to me, that such a construction would have required "God" to be in the dative; not in the genitive, as here. Also the two following clauses, in which the same construction holds, satisfy me that the sense is rather as follows:- (2) "I, and Apollos, and Peter, are fellow-labourers who belong to God; you are a field and building belonging to him. As we all, whether teacher or taught, belong to God, you are not to take our names, as though you belonged to us. And we, as fellow-labourers of the same master, are not to be forced apart from one another, as leaders of factions."

The house does not belong to the bricklayer, nor the field to the ploughman. You are God's husbandry, God's building. Beautifully does the apostle here unite two metaphors. He had before represented his own work and that of Apollos, as that of farm-servants. He now employs the figure of a building, to bring into view a new truth.

The previous figure had exhibited the nothingness of human agency in comparison of Divine. But the present metaphor inculcates the responsibility of the Christian minister to God.

**10. According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation, but another is building on it. But let each take heed how he buildeth on it."**

Paul, in this verse, takes to himself the character of a "wise architect." But, ere he thus describes himself, he is careful to give to God the praise of his wisdom. He is wise, by wisdom given from on high. Let God ever have his due!

In the figures employed, he still maintains his comparative superiority, to any teacher of the Corinthian church who might succeed him. As, before, he described himself as the planter, so, now, as the layer of the foundation of the house. This is the most laborious part of the building, and therefore that which claims the most regard, if done well. Without Paul's previous labour, there had been no place for the superstructure of Apollos.

But the Lord had called Paul to labour elsewhere, for it was his office to raise churches for the Saviour. Another had taken his post, and was raising the superstructure. Not all are teachers. Nor does it become the Christian minister ever to be laying the foundation. That once well laid, the superstructure is to be raised. The saints are to be led on to the full knowledge of Christ, to the deeper things of God.

But while the further edification of the saints was a matter of duty and of necessity, it was less full of responsibility to the teacher. Observe, that the builder is addressed. "Let each (not 'every man,' but 'teacher,' understood) take heed how he buildeth thereupon." It is a lesson ever needed. Yet the account to be rendered by the believing minister, of the doctrines he has preached, is a subject seldom or never treated of.

The general impression seems to be, that all that can legitimately be demanded, is the preaching of the truth that saves - the great fundamentals of justification, and sanctification. But the apostle's caution is entered, not in regard to those foundation and vital truths, but to the subordinate doctrines of the faith. The "take heed," refers to the superstructure. "Let each take heed, how he buildeth upon" the foundation.

**11. "For other foundation can none lay, beside what is laid which is Jesus (is) the Christ."**

The apostle's work could not be superseded by anyone who came after him. The foundations of the faith must be the same everywhere. All Christian teachers who succeed him must take for granted the great fundamentals which Paul had inculcated.

But the superstructure might be different in different churches. There is a great copiousness and variety in the subordinate truths of the Christian faith, flowing from the great sources. And the circumstances of different churches, as well as the range of knowledge in different teachers, would naturally give a prominence in some cases to certain truths. How different the characters of Paul's Epistles to different churches! Their difficulties, dangers, and degree of advancement drew forth from the riches of the apostle's wisdom, the topics most required.

The present verse decides a question which is afterwards raised, concerning the nature of the materials supposed to be used.

1. Some suppose that persons are the materials in the eye of the apostle.
2. Others, that doctrines are intended.

But the foundation which Paul laid at Corinth was the doctrine concerning Christ. Over Christ's person he had no power. He did not introduce him personally to the church. He had only to declare the truths concerning him. By parity of reason then, the superstructure is of the same kind as the foundation; and as the foundation is a doctrine, or set of doctrines, so is the superstructure.

Nor does it appear that Christian ministers are responsible for introducing to the church none but true believers. If it be their aim to receive those only who give credible evidence of being born again; this is all that can be required. We read of no rebuke administered to Philip for accepting Simon Magus. Nor does Paul esteem himself or any other in fault for admitting to church fellowship, those who afterwards fell away to blasphemy or immorality. And indeed, as far as regards the churches of believers in this country, they are generally received, not on the judgment, or by the instrumentality of one, but by the general vote and decision of the whole. It does not therefore appear, that the question relates to the perception of believers or unbelievers, but regards the preaching of doctrines; over which the teacher has entire control, and therefore in regard to which he is thoroughly responsible.

Jesus alone is the foundation of the church. None but the God-man can bear the weight of salvation rested on him. He only can make atonement: he only intercede on high. His past and present work, is the resting-place of the soul. His future work defined by the word of prophecy, is the groundwork of hope. At his coming, the toils of the way will be over.

**12. "But if any build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble:**

**13. The work of each shall become manifest: for the day shall declare it: for it is revealed in fire; and the fire shall try the work of each, of what sort it is."**

The materials which may be built upon the precious corner-stone of the faith, are of two kinds; arranged in reference to the test of fire which is to be afterwards applied to them. The three first are materials not liable to be consumed; the three last, are easily inflammable. Now as fire is to try the work of each, it must be of deep importance to each builder to employ only those which are incombustible.

Thus, by means of a figure, the apostle gives us to understand, that Christian teachers may lay before the saints either the truths of God, or the doctrines on men. The truths of God will stand the test of the coming day of account. The doctrines of men will not.

But the doctrines on men again may be described as taking two main currents. (1) The preacher may insist on adding to the Word of God, the traditions of the visible church. He may descant on the beauty and necessity of rites and ceremonies appointed by "the church," that is, by men. His teaching may be of feasts and fasts, of articles, councils, the fathers, and the necessary submission of the judgment to the authority of men. (2) Or his mind may be of the opposite turn. He may expatiate on the wonders of philosophy, and reason. He may lead out the souls of his auditors in metaphysic flights, and teach the doctrines of the philosophy of the day intermingled with Scripture phrases.

There is full permission now to each to build, as seems him good. There is no check, but that administered by conscience, the Scripture, or the hearers. But from the responsibility under which he lies, none can free himself. As each Christian ought to be careful, that he holds the truth, so, much more, ought the teacher of others to be careful that he propounds only what is of God. His work of instruction is unchallenged now; but it will be strictly scrutinized hereafter, both as to motives and substance, by the Great Head of the Church. The trial of the doctrine of each minister of Christ shall be public.

"For the day shall declare it." There is one day which was ever present to the thoughts of the apostle. There is one, to which he would continually turn the gaze of believers. And hence he often speaks of it without specifying it more particularly. Everyone in that age could supply the ellipsis. He has already spoken of it before. "Ye come behind," he had said, "in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ:" 1 Cor. v. 5. So, in his second epistle, he said, that his converts were his rejoicing "in the day of the Lord Jesus." He described also the same time more fully in his address to the Romans, as "the day in which God would judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ:" Rom. ii. 16.

The opinions passed upon doctrine by man, and by each varying age of the Christian church, are no suitable foundation on which to rest. The current of opinion and of doctrine varies. The day that is finally to decide what is true and what is false, amidst the many styles of doctrine which have been inculcated by various ministers, is that of Jesus. He then shall judge, whose decision is perfect. Popularity has often attended false doctrine. It will still more accompany it, as the dark latter days draw on. Then they "will not endure sound doctrine;" but will chose what pleases. Becoming deaf to the truth, they will be given up to the fables, either of philosophy falsely so called, or to the lying legends of traditions, miracles, and saints.

The present is "man's day," the day of his passing sentence, and of his self-exaltation. But the apostle, in the next chapter, leads us to look to the coming of Christ, as the time of real judgment, and of praise for the true servant of Jesus. 3. The day now intended is the day of "reward," as the next verse proves. But the day of reward for the servants of God is not till the sounding of the seventh trump. Then, "the reward" long promised, is to be given: Rev. xi. 15-18.

### **"For it is revealed in fire."**

Thus it is spoken of the day of Christ. "Who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand, when he appeareth. For he is like refiner's fire:" Mal. iii. 2. "The same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed:" Luke xvii. 29, 30; also 2 Thess. i. 8.

Only, be it observed the fire mentioned in the two last places is literal and material fire, affecting the persons of men. In the passage under consideration, however, as the builders are so only in a figurative sense, and the materials are not literal gold or wood, so neither is the test that is to be applied to them material fire.

Under this metaphor Christ's active scrutiny of the doctrines taught by his ministers, is fourfold. "The fire shall try the work of each of what sort it is." Not all doctrines preached even by converted and conscientious men, are true. Some do not "rightly divide" the word of truth; but confound together all dispensations; as though what was once commanded or sanctioned of God, must be equally in force at all times. There are workmen who will pass the examination of their ministry with shame. In that day, doctrine much caviled at and opposed, may receive the approval of Christ; and doctrines popular and applauded be rejected as untrue, owing their popularity only to that leaven of evil which still cleaves even to the children of God.

It is "the work" of each, not the person of the teacher, that is spoken of as being subjected to fire. 2. It is not a fire now lighted, but a future one, kindled when "the day of the Lord" is come. 3. It is metaphoric, not real; as has been noted above. These observations evidence how vainly Roman Catholics rest their doctrine of purgatory on the passage under consideration. 4. They suppose, too, that the fire of purgatory attacks every Christian; while this only applies to Christian teachers. 5. The fire of purgatory, as they teach, is designed to purge the souls of the sinful alone. It is the fire of visitation for sins. But this fire is to try the work of the good and bad workman alike. The teaching of Paul and Apollos, no less than that of ministers of the present day, is to be subjected to its power.

### **14. "If the work of any abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward."**

The work of the teacher is primarily concerned in the trial by fire. But he himself is greatly interested in the issue of the ordeal, as it is favourable or unfavourable. Hence the two verdicts, and their consequences, are spread before us. Some will have preached only the pure truths of God. On these the fire will descend harmlessly. Their work will stand the test. Christ will esteem such a one, a steward who has proved himself faithful. He will receive a positive recompense. As his responsibility has been greater than that of the Christians in general, so will his reward be.

The same principle, in reference to the teachers of the Law of Moses, is announced by our Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount. "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets." "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach

men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven:" Matt. v. 17, 19.

**15. "If the work of any shall be burned up, he shall suffer loss: but himself shall be saved, yet as through fire."**

To exhibit the latter alternative, the figure of the apostle is expanded. We have only to imagine one of the fearful thunderstorms of those hot Eastern climes. A fire-ball strikes the house of each of the two builders. It touches the house of gold and silver, and glances off. There is nothing inflammable there. But again, it strikes the house of him who has constructed his domicile of wood, hay, or stubble. The fire-bolt sets it in flames in a moment. The householder awakes, and finds to his dismay, that his building is consuming over his head.

Such will be the case of one, who, together with the foundation truths of salvation, has preached human traditions; or the philosophy of the day. He will stand before the presence of Christ ashamed. The contrariety of his teaching to that of the Scripture will be instantly apparent, even to himself. The vain arguments by which he sought to justify it to his own mind and to others, will be dissipated in a moment. Nothing but the Lord's truth will stand the day of the Lord.

His work is "burned up." From this it would appear, that the two extreme cases are in question: one, were all the teaching has been genuine: one, were all the subordinate instruction has been false.

In such a case the builder "shall suffer loss." The word is more definite in the original than in the translation. It signifies, "he shall be fined." It is ordinarily spoken of penalties in money exacted of offenders. Christ pays to the one teacher recompense. But the other not only receives no payment: he has himself to make it. He not only suffers the loss of his work, which is consumed; but a further fine is inflicted, as punishment. What then is that fine? It is not that of his soul, of which the Saviour once says:- "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, but (be fined) lose his own soul:" Matt. xvi. 26. For we are told presently after, that he shall be saved. Can the loss be any other, than the loss of the millennial kingdom?

And will not that award be just? Was it not in his power to know what God's truth is? Has not the Holy One given us his sacred Book, and promised the teaching of the Holy Spirit to them that seek for it? The real causes of most, or of all false doctrine, are sinful. The eye of the teacher is not single. He will rather teach what is for his present interests, than that which is well pleasing to God. Some are deterred from examining the Word of God by sloth; some, by the fear of censure, are kept back from proclaiming what they see on its pages; some, by the perception, that to preach the doctrines there set forth would lead to loss of worldly standing, or of money; some are guided wholly by human authority, neglecting the divine. But are not these, and similar reasons, worthy of rebuke?

But not only do false doctrines take their rise from sinful feelings in the preacher's mind; but they end not there. Many wait upon the teacher's lips. Most, without examination, receive what he utters. Hence they too suffer loss. They are guided through life by false principles. And false principles are intimately connected with wrong practice. Consequently the teacher of false doctrines on subordinate points is responsible for the errors of those affected by his teaching. As the truth of God would have nourished and led on the souls of his believing hearers, so have the errors which he has proclaimed stunted their growth, and destroyed their vigour. Shall a beaker be responsible for the quality of his flour, and his wholesomeness of his bread; and shall not the Christian teacher be justly summoned to account to Christ for the doctrines to which he has given currency?

"But he himself shall be saved." In these few words is contained the force of the passage, as applying to converted ministers. The apostle is describing believing teachers in both cases. The very man whose work is consumed, is yet saved at last. We have not to do then with the case of the guide who is utterly blind, and who is leading men blind as himself.

The lot of both there is, as the Saviour declares, the pit. \* [\* Not 'the ditch.' One might easily get out of that, not so easily out of a pit-fall made to entrap wild beasts.] The builder here is saved, because he held aright the one great mode of acceptance with God. He led his hearers too, to trust in the one foundation given of God. Hence his salvation is guaranteed. The trial of the text is not that of the ungodly, whose eternal life or death hangs on the decision of the judge. He has by faith passed from death to life.

But his escape is "so as through fire." The rendering, "by fire," has wonderfully darkened the meaning of the apostle. It has led the reader to imagine, that the fire is the means of his salvation; and therefore that it exerts a purifying agency upon him. But no; the meaning is, that the fire is that enemy through which he has to make his way. His house is on fire, above and around him. He has to burst through the flames, in order to escape from the conflagration. \* [\* A similar error has been committed in regard to 1 Pet. iii. 21. "Eight souls were saved by water." Nay, but "escaped through water." The water was their foe. It brought death to all others. Then safely consisted in getting out of its reach. Again, "Who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law;" Rom. ii. 27. Nay, but who through the letter." That and circumcision are a double hedge, through which the trespasser breaks.]

That it is not a real fire, is again noticed in the expression, "so as through fire." His escape is like the escape of the scorched and terrified householder. He is ashamed of his unfaithfulness. His disgrace is made manifest to angels and the saved. he is shut out with dismay and anguish, from the kingdom. \* [\* This result in the metaphor, answers to the difficulty of the escape from the flaming house. The house is in one view of it consumed; in another it is on fire, in order to illustrate his position from two points of view.] He feels that the fault is his own. His fellows enter with joy.

It is evident from this passage as from others, that the Scriptures present to us something more than bare salvation; and are very far from asserting, that all the saved will be equal. Great indeed the contrast, between the two builders, and their recompenses!

How unsound then is the popular view, which represents the subordinate doctrines of Christianity, as of little importance. "If a minister teach the great fundamentals of the faith, why ask for more? Never will it be asked in heaven, whether you belonged to the Methodists or to the Establishment; to the Baptists, or the Independents!"

Nay, but it will! The subordinate views of every teacher and of each hearer too, will come into question. And reputation or loss will turn greatly upon the difference of the doctrines held and acted on.

How important then for ministers, both of the Establishment and of the Dissenters, to prove all that they teach by God's word: and to found on the New Testament all that they teach, as the duty of a disciple of Christ!

Should not the clergyman inquire with solemnity and singleness of eye, whether the Prayer-book does not confound the Law and the Gospel, in many of its services? Should he not ask, whether oaths and war are permitted by Jesus? And whether the union of Church and State, that is, of the world and the church, is according to the mind of his Master? Is infant baptism an ordinance of Jesus?

Should not the Dissenter inquire too, whether the coming of God does not demand the presence of Christ in person? That, the post-millennial coming of Christ, cannot both be true. Does the New Testament urge the Christian to seek to be great in the riches and honours of the world? Does it encourage him to drink deeply into the philosophy of this present evil age? Does it incite him to plunge into politics? The doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and the modern theory, cannot both be true. The doctrine of the eternity of the punishment of the wicked, and its non-eternity cannot both be genuine; which does the Scripture teach? Which do you? Are the servants of Christ to invite sinners to him, or merely to preach to the elect? Both doctrines cannot be scriptural. Which does the Scripture affirm? One of these will be burnt up as stubble. Which is it?

How necessary to poise in God's scales, fellow-workman in the Gospel, all that we teach! It is not, what can be said upon a passage of Scripture; not what will make the most brilliant, learned, poetic, or philosophic sermon, that should be our inquiry. But, what saith God? Is it not, what will bring present favour? But, what will stand the eye of Christ?

We had better be ashamed now, than then. Better confess our previous errors, when we have discovered them by the prayerful study of Scripture, than meet the day of Christ, as one whose work is to be consumed, and whose escape is to be as through flames.

It is view of our particular responsibility as preachers, that James enforces his exhortation: "My brethren, become not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment:" James iii. 1. Jesus expects more from them than from others, both in doctrine and practice. "Art thou the teacher of Israel and know not these things?" John iii. 10. "Ye blind guides, which strain out the gnat, but swallow the camel!"

The principle is just, that they who lead, should be especially careful that they know the way. They do not move wrong alone. Their mistakes involve others in like mischief.

Does not even human government hold the chemist responsible, if he should dispense arsenic for quinine, or oxalic acid for Epsom salts? Is not the surgeon responsible for his mode of treating disease? It is enough, that he does not kill outright? Is he not bound to use means suited to cure? Is it enough for the baker to plead, that though his loaves were unwholesome, they did not kill; and really contained more wheat-flour than chalk or alum?

Shall others give account to Christ how they spent their money and time; and shall not we be more called on to account, how we taught them to use their money and their time?

Again, can error produce the same holy present results as truth? Will chalk and bone-dust sustain the labourer's strength as well as wheat-meal? Will they develop as healthy the frame of the young child? If we teach others to think wrongly or to act wrongly, who can say how far the evil consequences extend? Great is the blessing of truth, so great is the damage inflicted by error, even though it be error on subordinate points. And who can doubt, that among the regenerate teachers of the faith, there is a vast amount of error taught, on points not destroying ultimate salvation? There may be some few workmen that will not be ashamed, as rightly dividing the word of truth. But there are very many, ignorant of the difference of dispensations, or willfully disregarding it, who mass together into one confused conglomerate whatever they find in Scripture. They hurl together into utter chaos the principles of the law and those of the gospel. But can false doctrine on these points, produce right practice? Can anything but the pure word of the kingdom draw forth the conduct worthy of the kingdom?

Error of principle is necessarily associated with erroneous conduct. There may indeed be disobedience where the unadulterated doctrines of the New Testament are proclaimed; but the teacher in that case is free of blame. The life of the hearer is then in contradiction with the forces brought to bear upon him. But obedience to false doctrines on subordinate points produces a life unsuited to the peculiarities of Christ's precepts, and hinders fruit to the glory of God. Not only so : it shuts up the Scripture in many of its parts, infusing darkness into light, dimming the glory of God's character, and causing discord among those who are fundamentally one in Christ.

Such being the responsibility of those who minister the gospel of God, how diligently, my fellow ministers, should we scrutinize our doctrine! Each teacher is a householder. The system of truth which he holds and teaches is a house, which he has built for himself. Of what kind then is that

building? Now is the time to inquire; for now mistake may be rectified. Hereafter it will be too late. Have we tested, by Scripture, the doctrines of which our structure is composed? Or have we received them in the lump, by tradition? Have we used, without scruple, and without examination, whatever was accredited among those with whom we associate? Have we taken for granted, that whatever professors of divinity taught, and our denomination holds, must needs be true? Are we sure, that every part of our teaching is sound in itself, accordant with, or rather derived from, the New Testament model? Do we ever remember our responsibility to use the test of Holy Scripture, and try our materials by it? If we have not, we shall do well to see to it at once. For our place in the glory to come will materially depend upon the character of our doctrine. Do we inquire, in every text we take, not what may be said upon the passage with striking effect, not how our abilities may be most advantageously displayed, or how ingeniously it may be diverted from its original meaning, nor what great names have said about it, but what is the legitimate meaning deducible from the words?

Is not the superstructure of thousands of Christian ministers imperfect or untrue, because they never regard themselves as responsible for doctrine; or, at least, not responsible, beyond teaching the fundamentals of Christianity? And are not many, who see dimly that they are wrong in points not directly connected with the believer's justification, unwilling to examine, or determined not to do so; because they fear that the issue would be destructive of the views they teach? Are not many afraid to propound truths which they see, because they perceive at a glance that it would embroil them with the mass of their friends, or perhaps thrust them altogether from their post?

Let us then earnestly enforce on every minister of Christ who reads these pages, the apostle's word of caution. Take heed what you build! I assume with him, that the reader receives Jesus as his atonement before God; that he takes him for his present Intercessor before the throne, and acknowledges the Holy Spirit as the Great Agent in regeneration. But it is mournfully possible, as facts abundantly testify, to rear upon this foundation a superstructure wholly or partially erroneous. There may be willful keeping back of truth; there may be conscientious assertion of what is unscriptural; there may be implied sanction of what is confessed to be evil in doctrine.

The lesson of the text is a great means in the hand of God, to raise his ministers above all unworthy motives in the promulgation of doctrine. Remember, preacher, that you are the servant, directly and primarily, of Christ. You are the servant of his people, for his sake, and under his control. Remember that the Saviour's scrutinizing gaze and searching fire will try your work. Ask yourself concerning every doctrine - Will this stand the day of account? Will Jesus applaud me in that day, as having taught his pure truth and his whole truth?

Let us remember, too, that the teaching, both in its substance and in its style, manifests the heart of the teacher. The earnest student of Scripture will come forth freighted with God's

word. The hankerer after philosophy will savour of its vanities. He who is ambitious of a name for eloquence will make it apparent to God, and most probably to his hearers also. If our aim be to astonish and to captivate, we shall employ one style. If our desire be to build for eternity and the eye of Christ, we shall exhibit another and a soberer one.

The showy sermon, the popular doctrine may win the heart of congregations now; but will they stand the day of the Lord? Do they even now produce the best results? Who oftenest hit the target? The archer that with eye intent on the mark steadily draws his arrow to the head, regardless of all around, careful only of the mark before him, or he who desires to be accounted an elegant bowman, and who therefore stands in an elegant attitude, and with graceful action shoots high into the air?

**16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17. If any defile the temple of God, him shall God defile; \* [\* The same word in both cases.] for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."**

Each individual Christian is a temple of God: 1 Cor. vi. 19. But the text here would lead one to believe, that the apostle was speaking of the church as constituting a collective temple, in which, at all times, the Holy Spirit dwells. Now not only might curious and worthless, but even defiling doctrine, be taught in it. Nay, viewing the subject more generally still, not only the teachers of the church might defile it; but the ordinary members might introduce evil practices and stir up strifes. We have an example of defiling doctrine taught by the false prophetess in the church at Thyatira; Rev. iii. We see that even at Corinth, the sin of the incestuous was gloried in by some of the church, and that they defended their eating in the idol's temple, and even fornication itself. Now these things defiled the temple. And God held all such introducers of defilement responsible. If they made his house unclean, he would defile them when the day of glory should come. When their holier fellows rejoiced in the kingdom of God, and they should be dishonoured and mourn.

"For the temple of God is holy." The indwelling of God makes the church holy. Reverence therefore must prevent us from making it unworthy of him. Of this the history of God's actions in his earthly and material temple may give us instruction. Nadab and Abihu used strange fire: they are smitten dead at once before him. The irreverent Bethshemites looked into the ark: they are cut off amidst the very joy of its return. Uzzah puts forth his hand to steady it when shaken, and is stricken to the ground. A king enters to minister as a priest, on the forbidden ground of the temple. His presence defiled the house, and the Lord defiled him by leprosy. Ever from that day, all men must account him unclean. Yet he did not cease to be an Israelite and a king. Gehazi, by his lying and covetousness, defaces the glorious testimony to the grace of the God of Israel! And what is the issue? He who was clean, is defiled. "He went out of his presence a leper as white as snow." Even so, it appears that the present threatening is addressed to believers, and does not involve perdition. "There must be heresies (parties) among you, that the approved

may be made manifest." How many believers are guilty of creating parties and strifes in the church to which they belong!

**18. "Let none deceive himself: if any among you has a reputation of being wise in this age, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. 19. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, for it is written, 'he taketh the wise in their own craftiness.' 20. And again, 'The Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain.'"**

If any believer, after this warning, will still hold on his way, in spite of the threats of the Most High, the fault is his, not God's. But many will not believe that God can inflict punishment on the willfully disobedient saint.

The wisdom of the world must be put off by those who wish to be wise before God. For there are two opposing wisdoms, each of which is foolishness to the other. The wisdom of the present age is foolishness with God. Wisdom of Messiah's age and kingdom is foolishness to the men of the world. We must renounce then the wisdom of the world, that we may be wise with God. This therefore is an admonition, not to mingle the philosophy of man with the truths of God. Wood is a fit material for building in human judgment. But if the house is to be tried with fire, it is unsuitable. We must build then only with divine materials, if we would have our work to stand the day of God.

The believer is to become a fool to the worldly, that he may become really wise. The true doctrine of Christ will ever seem foolish to the world. Reputation therefore for wisdom must be sacrificed. But here lies the difficulty. Few are willing to give up a doctrine they have once asserted, especially if the confession of previous error, and the assertion of the opposite doctrine, will strip them of their repute for understanding and consistency. But all things are better than loss before God.

That the world's wisdom is folly with God, is established by two quotations from the Old Testament. The cleverness of the worldly wise, far from delivering them from God, delivers them up to God.

There are difficulties connected with both these quotations which as I cannot solve, so I will not raise.

**21. "Therefore let none boast in men, for all things are yours. 22. Whether Paul or Apollos, whether Cephas, or the world, whether life or death, whether things present or things to come, all are yours. 23. And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."**

The party-making spirit of Corinth again receives its rebuke. It was a boasting of men, and a consequent splitting asunder, while a perception of their true position, as servants of the one master - God - would have united them. What belonged to the ministers, as men, was only worthless: all that was really valuable in each was derived from the One Divine source. The Jews

might form themselves into parties headed by human leaders, in their additions to the law. This was the sinfulness of man. The heathen might range themselves in schools of philosophy. This was natural enough to those blinded by unbelief. But Christians were not thus to act.

Paul specifies three of the ministers who were singled out as heads of parties. He bids them cease from this procedure. By overvaluing some, they set themselves against others, and despised valuable powers and means of edification, which God had bestowed upon his ministers, for their service. Paul, and Apollos, and Peter, were all sent by God for usefulness to his church. And he inflicted loss upon himself, who, by over-estimating one of these, refuted the light and blessing to be obtained from the others. Each of these servants of God was meant for his benefit, and each in turn had something to communicate.

But the apostle carries the sentiment a step further. All things, even Christ Himself, belonged to God. He was the one head to which all things were to be traced up. Here is the final unity in which the believer may joyfully rest.

**1 Corinthians 4:1. "Let a man so account of us, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2. Moreover, it is required of stewards, that one be found faithful."**

The truth thus announced is of the deepest importance. The Holy Spirit in the former chapter had rebuked the false position in which the Corinthian believers had placed the ministers of the new covenant. But it now takes up the positive side of the question, and shows in what light they are to be regarded by those who would view the matter as it appears to God.

They are "servants of Christ, stewards of God's mysteries." While all believers are in a general sense "servants of Messiah," these are so in a special sense. Some he has set to rule his household, to give to each his portion of food in season. They in a measure act the part which Christ would have done, had he been on earth. They explain his will to believers; they deliver his call to those without.

As servants of Messiah, they are ever to keep themselves, and to be kept by others, in their position of subordination to him. But God had also communicated to them a knowledge of his secret purposes, which are called "mysteries." This does not mean "things incomprehensible," but "things undiscoverable by man, though capable of being comprehended when revealed." Such a mystery is the answer to the inquiry - What would become of the saints alive upon the earth at Christ's appearing? None knew, till it was revealed to Paul, who states it for our illumination: 1 Cor. xv. 51.

From this passage then we learn that ministers are not to be regarded as priests, mediating between God and man. They are not persons ordained, or men set apart to offer up prayer on behalf of "the laity," privileged, by virtue of their peculiar sanctity, to draw nearer to God than the common believer. Nor are they consecrated to "administer the sacraments." The Church of England does indeed speak of these "sacraments" as mysteries. "He hath instituted and

ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort." But this is unscriptural. The rites of Christ are never called "sacraments" in Scripture; much less "mysteries." Doctrines alone are called mysteries in Scripture. So far from apostles being sent to "administer the Sacraments," Paul tells us that he was not sent to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. He was sent to "make all know the economy of the mystery which was hid from ages," but then first fully disclosed: Eph. iii. In the full sense then, the passage before us supposes immediate communications of God's will. But Christ's ministers now know his will, and understand his mysteries, only by study of the Scriptures with prayer for the Spirit's aid.

For this office of stewardship the prime qualification is faithfulness. Scripture is as wise in what it omits to say, as in what it says. As the great preparation for the Christian ministry, it exacts, neither collegiate education, nor a genteel position in society, nor superior abilities, nor eloquence. Its demand is a spiritual one, "faithfulness."

Intellect in a steward is good, if combined with trustiness. Without it, the servant is only able the more completely to misuse the property entrusted to him. But one possessed of the feeblest understanding may deal honestly. As such he must be respected, even though he may judge but poorly what is best for his master's interests.

**3. "But to me it is a very small thing that I should be judged [The word signifies to examine.] by you, or by man's day, yea, I judge not mine own self. 4. For I am not conscious to myself of anything; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me, is the Lord."**

Estimates may be formed of a minister's faithfulness by four different parties. These are now presented to us, and the value to be attached to each is calculated for us.

The four estimates are these.

1. That of the world
2. That of the church
3. A minister's own conscious
4. The Lord

1. The judgment of the world is, of course, the lightest of all. Paul speaks of it as being examined by "man's day." A remarkable expression! The present is "man's day." God is leaving him to himself; to his own counsels, and thoughts, and discoveries. The builders of Babel are permitted to lay their plans, to make their bricks, to collect their bitumen, and to discover their enmity against God. It is man's day, to prove to all what he is. But soon this day is to come to an end; and to be replaced by "the Day of the Lord." "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." And it is to take effect upon all the contrivances, and on all that he accounts great and glorious;

proving to him, in spite of his unwillingness to receive the hateful truth, that he cannot regenerate the world, or make himself happy, or shield off God's judgments, or by wisdom find out God. The Lord is coming out of his place to see the tower which men build, and not only to scatter as before, but to smite and destroy Babel, and its builders.

The result of man's day will be, to increase his pride, his stout-hearted unbelief, and independence of God. But that presumption will be checked, that pride be stained, by "the great and terrible day of the Lord." After man has shown what he is, it is fitting that God should show what he is. And he will do it in judgment. Then, and not till then the nations of earth will learn righteousness. Rev. xv.

Now there is an estimate which man forms of his fellow. The world forms its judgment about the ministers of Christ. It discusses their merits, as learned, just as it would treat any other topic of the day. Such judgment Paul regarded not. He cared neither for its applause or its censure. Its very standard of judgment was wrong; how then could it discern aright? The judgments of the present time are not to abide; they belong only to the fleeting period of "man's day."

2. But another estimate of a minister's faithfulness may be formed by the church. This is a far more correct opinion. Believers in Corinth know something of the mind of God. To them it is given to know what God loves, what he hates, and the principles on which Christ will administer judgment at last. Their standard, as possessed in the Scripture, is perfect.

But even this judgment was little esteemed by Paul. It was very shifting. Now the Galatians would have plucked out their eyes to give him. Yet a few years, and they sympathized with the apostle's enemies, gave way to false doctrine, and came near to abandoning the great centre truth of Christianity. But even if the church's judgment were constant, it must fail of attaining to any great value on this point. It cannot read the heart. And a minister's faithfulness is a question of the heart. It can only guess at the character of the householder and the proceedings of the interior of the house, by what passes outside.

If the decision of the Lord had been merely a confirmation of the sentence of the church, then indeed the approval of its members would have been of the very highest importance. But, as it is, their most lofty opinion of a servant of his will not exalt him in Christ's eyes. Nor will their severest condemnation foreclose the question of his guilt. The whole matter will be tried on a new footing, in which their approval or rejection will find no place. It is possible he may have won the good opinion of his fellow-believers by conduct and much unfaithfulness. It is possible that he may have taken a course which he knew to be popular, while conscious condemned it, as disapproved of Christ. It is possible, that the heaviest odium may fall on a servant of Christ for principles and conduct which are wholesome, and profitable to the churches.

Paul therefore cared very little even for the church's estimate. It was a very little thing. It was but for a moment. It would not influence the judge's decision. It was only a guess at the apostle's motives, founded on more or less of evidence. He durst not be guided thereby. He

must at times crossed their thoughts, and rebuke their practices, drawing down on himself the secrets of his heart. Doubtless the history of his sufferings, as sketched in the close of the second Epistle, was quite new and startling. How unfit then were they to be judges!

3. But there was yet a higher tribunal. The conscience! Is not that supreme? No. "I judge not mine own self." You Corinthians have been debating about my faithfulness as God's steward. But you are not competent judges. As you read not the motives, this question is above your decision. Even my own decision is not final here. It is true I am conscious of my motives: I can call them before the bar of reflection. But even this estimate is not to be relied upon. It is not the sentence that is to stand. It is not the supreme court of appeal. Conscience has indeed authority to call each word, thought, action, in to its court, and to pass sentence thereon. The secret springs of action in each may by self-examination be known to each. The judge then is far more to be depended on than thousands of verdicts given from without. It is able to give us calmness when assailed unjustly by those who know not the true state of the case.

But, superior as this tribunal is to the other two, Paul exposes its insufficiency. He could indeed rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, he had lived before the churches. He could assert it as an example to the Ephesian elders. But he durst not trust it as a sure echo of the great sentence, to be passed by the Lord himself, at his appearing. He was "indeed unconscious to himself of anything." No sense of duties left undone, or doctrines kept back through fear or self-interest, weighed down his spirits. From the first he had been obedient to the heavenly vision. From the opening of his commission he had successfully exercised himself in keeping his conscience always void of offence.

But though conscience did not accuse him of duties left undone, or of offences of a positive kind; though it bore record of zeal the most untiring, and of boldness that daily periled life, yet this was not sufficient for acquittal before Christ. He was acquitted indeed, even by the verdict of impartial conscience. But there is a higher and final judge.

4. "He that judgeth me is the Lord." Jesus will adjust my place, not for life or death eternal, but in regard to my reward. His standard will be perfect. His knowledge embraces everything. His sentence will be the unbiased verdict of Truth and Righteousness.

**"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each have (his) praise from God." (1 Cor 4:5)**

All judgment of motives is now out of season. It is "before the time." These shall indeed be one day settled. They are questions of the highest moment. But they belong to another dispensation, and other parties than the saints. God is not unmindful of his ministers' trustworthiness: but now is the time of making proof of each. Hereafter shall be the decision concerning him. It shall be when the Lord comes. We are to be working ourselves, not passing sentence on the faithfulness of others.

Jesus alone is fit for this "high argument." There are two points necessary for the settlement of the faithful character of each, which are not possessed by the believer. He who would give a perfect decision must know - (1) The secret life of each. (2) The thoughts of the heart.

Some men and ministers are better in secret than they appear to others. The world and the church see only their consistent life, and powerful ministry. They know not their secret life of prayer and good works. The Saviour then, when he comes, will bring into open day the concealed portion of their life. "For there is nothing hid that shall not be known." And this manifestation of their hidden acts shall be for their glory. "Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

But there are other ministers whose best side is visible. They live for the eyes of their fellows, and the secrets of their life would bring them disgrace. To these, the broad light of heaven flung upon their unworthy deeds, will bring shame and woe.

But there is another attribute necessary to a perfect adjustment of the question. The motives of the heart must be known, ere the completeness of fidelity can be manifested. Jesus then will make manifest "the counsels of the heart." He will show the inner man and his purposes, as well as the actions, which men may have beheld. Many plans and efforts for good have been hindered and wrecked by untoward circumstances, and death. These will be recognized; and, were right, commended. There will be a scrutiny of motives. The counsels of the heart are God's peculiar province. They are the soul of every action. The body of the act may be seen by man, but its value for good or evil can only be perfectly calculated from within.

"Then shall each have (his) praise \* [\* Olshausen says that (the Greek word . . .) means not praise, but recompense or requital generally. But he brings no proof of such a sense, either from the New Testament or from the classics.] from God." The rendering "every man" creates confusion. Alas, not every man, will be praised from God!

The context shows that believing ministers are meant. To all of those who have really been faithful, suited praise, exactly according to their due, shall be rendered. "Each" shall be dealt with. The motives and deeds of every minister shall be settled individually. To each, according to his heart and his work, shall recompense be rewarded. Before, the judgment of doctrine was in question. Here we learn that motives, or fidelity, will be put to the test.

Solemn day! Some pastors, who enjoyed the full popularity of the world, and of the church of their day, will find that there is a wide difference between the sentence of Jesus, and the sentiments of men. Some faithful servants on the other hand, despised, misrepresented, maligned, will receive the approval of the great Investigator of the heart!

Solemn day! How momentous for the future are the thoughts of the heart; how abiding the consequences of our actions! Our post in the kingdom will display, like an armorial bearing, to all beholders, what our place in the world has been. How should every rising of what the Saviour

will disapprove, be checked and silenced by the thought of that day, which will bring to light every motive, and draw off the veil from every concealed act!

For the present, darkness hangs, and is intended to hang, its thick drapery of mist over half the life of every one. But the rising of the Sun of Righteousness shall scatter it. What will the consequence be of each, when the curtain is lifted?

Blessed is it, that the Lord Jesus shall decide the whole question! How, at times, the heart sighs amidst the misrepresentation of the prejudiced, for one that with full knowledge and spotless impartiality, will adjudge the whole" for one who knows the purity of our motives, when falsely coloured and maligned!

And what an assembly shall that be, before which this judgment shall be passed! It shall make praise the sweeter and blame the sharper, that so many eyes of the nobles of heaven behold, so many ears are there to listen. How heavily shall every word of rebuke or even disapproval fall from the lips of the King of kings! How joyous and glorious, the praise and the crown to the faithful pastor? Is praise, even from our ignorant fellow-mortals, too potent a cup to be much drank of without intoxication? What shall be the tingling of delight to hear it from the lips of Jesus, the crowned conqueror, in the presence of the Father and his angels!