

## GOD'S SERVICE AS A CAREER.

“ Whom shall we send and who will go for us ? ”

By STUART E. MCNAIR.

THE impression grows upon us that the number of young Christians who, when the time of choice arrives, think seriously of God's service as a possible life-career, is a diminishing one.

At the same time we are faced by the remarkable circumstance that, while every other calling is overcrowded, the Lord's service in every part of the globe, and especially in the foreign field, is deplorably under-manned.

A youth quite rightly only thinks of one thing as his life work. The years of preparation are too long and the period of active work too short for anyone to propose changing his occupation after a few years' practice. And the choice has to be made early, for after the rudiments of general education have been mastered, studies will necessarily take a special character.

The fact is usually faced, that certain professions, such, for instance, as civil and locomotive engineering, mining, and the sea, will probably lead to work abroad, and the same eventuality must be contemplated in the Lord's service also.

Some twenty years ago, the extraordinary idea current in certain circles, that “ the heathen's time has not yet come ” was sufficient to prevent many an earnest worker from contemplating even the possibility of foreign service. Now, the irresistible logic of facts ; the mighty work of God actually in progress in Korea, Japan, India and other heathen lands, contrasted with the general complaint of diminishing church membership at home, may well lead us to entertain the enquiry whether it is not rather that *Christendom's time of opportunity has almost passed.*

In any case, where God's service is clearly recognised as the life calling, the point of locality becomes only a matter of detail.

It can easily be understood that, for the one who loves his Lord, the service of God as a life work must have irresistible charms. While in one sense everything we do should be done as to the Lord, and so

have a special character and yield a special joy of which the world knows nothing, the privileges of direct occupation with spiritual things, of working for eternity, is an exceedingly great one.

A Christian physician may accomplish a difficult operation "to the glory of God," and at the same time he may add materially to his reputation and his income. The evangelist's service is even more directly to God's glory, and none the less so because little prospect of personal gain is connected with it.

The fact that, in the great majority of cases, the Lord's service as a career is scarcely contemplated by the young Christian, much less chosen, is a disquieting one. May the fault not be as much with parents as with their children, in never having set before them such a career as an ideal to be aimed at? The desire to get on in the world is not found only amongst worldly people, and a calling that offers no prospect of material advantage is scarcely considered at all by the majority.

#### AN INTERESTING EXCEPTION.

A father, deeply interested in foreign work, proposed to send one of his sons to school in Lausanne to learn French and German, and another to Barcelona to learn Spanish, in the hope that they would eventually find some sphere of Christian usefulness where those languages are spoken. Incidentally it may be noted that, even should one have to spend his life in Britain, a knowledge of such languages would be no drawback in a commercial or professional career.

And might not other parents send their Christian boys of 14 or 15 to carefully chosen foreign schools for a year, with the hope that, after their technical training should have been completed at home, they might be led to return to the land whose acquaintance they had made in those impressionable youthful days?

#### WHO SHOULD GO?

The *best* are needed most, and yet the fact of not attaining to "the first three" of the King's warriors, is no reason for anyone withholding from the fight.

It may be taken as an axiom that even mediocre gifts will be of more use abroad than at home, just as a small candle, which is positively useless where the electric arc blazes, would be found

invaluable in a very dark place. Dr. Baedaker said, "I have only one little candle of life to burn, and I would rather burn it out where men perish in heathen darkness, than in a land flooded with gospel light."

Only such as walk with God will be of any use in God's service, whether at home or abroad; but any of such will be some use—if not as preachers, at least as "helps"—where the need is greatest, most urgent, and least supplied.

#### THE QUESTION OF SUPPORT.

The support of those called to the Lord's service as a career need scarcely be considered a problem.

The normal thing is for each to "work with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." The exceptions which are occasionally met with, are when the directly spiritual work has so grown upon the servant that he has no time left for his ordinary occupation.\*

This, however, is not likely to be the case for the first few years, and with some may never be, so the Lord's servant will look that some temporal work for present needs may be provided.

But it is just here that the distinction is sharply seen between the one who is called to the Lord's service as his career, and the one whose career is determined by his profession.

In the former case, the servant will go where his Master's work calls him, and "labour with his hands," or his brains, merely to meet his own and others' present needs. In the latter case, the professional man will go where he finds the best market for his talents, and, if a Christian, will no doubt give some help in Christian work. The real question that every young Christian has to face is, "What is to be the *first thing* in my life?" and then to learn how to keep first things first.

Then, if he understands that God has called him to the sacred service of His interests, he will need to ascertain what particular technical training will be useful to him as a means of "providing things honest," assuming, as he should do, that he will probably labour for his own support, not only because such is normal, but because it will sometimes be useful in the way of testimony.

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\*NOTE.—In the foreign field, where the need is more urgent and the supply altogether inadequate, the exception becomes more frequently the rule. In some parts, too, like Central Africa, self-support is often impossible.

“ I have shewed you all things,” said the great Apostle, “ how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

The present moment seems one of unique opportunity in the great harvest field, and the Master’s appeal, “ Who will go for us ? ” sounds now louder and more urgently than ever. Who will heed it ?

Even the little land of Portugal, where this paper is being written, offers in consequence of the recent political changes, a great field for gospel effort, where scores of workers, if equipped with the language, might find spheres for immediate service. At the present moment, Romanism is too much shaken to offer an effective resistance. A few years hence it will have regained confidence, as in Brazil, and may once more be master of the situation.

We would conclude this short paper with the testimony that no service offers such splendid opportunities for one’s whole ability, or yields such constant joy, as the service of the One who gave His life to serve our need and the Father’s pleasure.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS:—

### A Simple Exposition.

CHAP. XI., 27-31.

#### FAITH IN ITS DIVERSE ACTINGS.

Ver. 27 : “ *By faith he (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King : for he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible.*”

**W**E read elsewhere : “ Whatsoever is not of faith is sin ” (Rom. xiv. 23) ; because the opposite of faith is doubt. And if we act in doubt it means we are the sport of circumstances or our own wayward hearts ; or, it may be, going directly contrary to conscience. Faith ever acts as before God. So we learn from the above passage of Scripture it was not the wrath of the King that constrained Moses to forsake Egypt. Fear was not the motive. We have a beautiful example of this same faith in Nehemiah’s history. His enemies first of all tried to catch him by guile and then, when this failed, they sought to act upon his fears, proposing that Nehemiah should secrete himself in the temple and shut the doors for fear he should be slain. But neither blandishments nor brow-beating