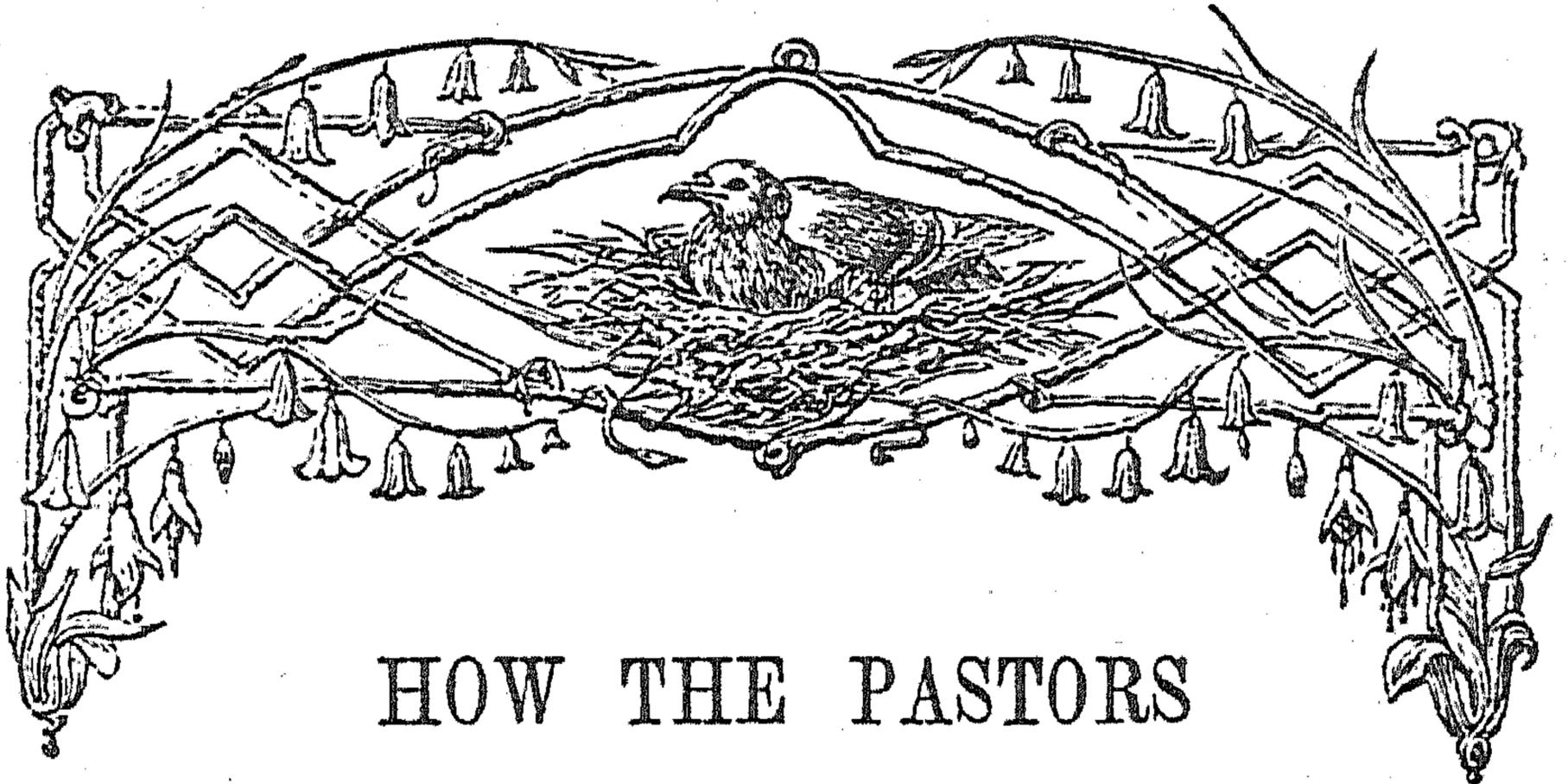


# *a community called ...*

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HOW THE PASTORS  
TOOK UP THE COLLECTION.

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BY REV. L. D. BARROWS, D.D.

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**WE** always notice with much interest the *manner* in which pastors take their public benevolent collections. In no place or duty can we more readily and accurately discover whether or not they are men of taste, culture, and earnest simplicity, agreeable or repulsive, efficient or inefficient, than in this important department of their work.

We will describe two men whom we saw, not long since, each take up an important public benevolent collection.

The first man, it appeared, had preached on the subject the Sabbath before; hence at the collection he only referred briefly to the cause and sermon, and, in a few well-chosen words opened the subject for those who did not hear his sermon. To divide with the needy, and help the suffering, was a part of Christianity—both a privilege and a duty. God had given us the power, the means, and called us to it; and it was “more blessed to give than to receive.” The real Church of Christ was seen and known by the work it did for the Master. The claims of God and humanity on us were proportioned to our ability, when we pushed ourselves into the realm of some self-denial; and these benevo-

lent collections were indispensable to the maintenance and growth of our own piety even. The congregation looked upon the preacher as an intelligent Christian gentleman and faithful pastor, and nearly every body put something into the boxes after having been shown fully the merits of the cause. The pastor said he was pleased to co-operate with his people in so good and pleasant a work, and to be their agent for those who were ready to perish. All seemed cheerful and happy, without laughable stories or vulgar jokes, and retired without having been needlessly detained half or three quarters of an hour. The pastor's appeal had been only to the highest and purest motive of the Christian life, and the high-toned culture of his people was evidently on that line alone. It was a pleasure to cast our little offering in

at the call of such a pastor and with such a people.

The second pastor had not preached on his benevolent subject, gave little or no explanation of it, assumed that all his hearers were as well informed upon it as himself—which may have been true—said the conference was soon to occur, and they had taken only one or two of the regular collections; he so disliked to annoy his congregation, but he was compelled by conference and disciplinary orders, and they must take two or three that day to get rid of them. He said something about the Freedmen's Aid, Church Extension, and Bible Societies, explaining neither, and told his people if they did not give as much as other Churches it would disgrace them and him before the conference, and he should not dismiss the congregation

till enough had been raised; told the collectors to pass the boxes, while he went on rambling and joking, to keep them from leaving too soon. But we saw the people had caught the spirit of his opening remarks, and had settled back into the corners of their pews, and seemed to say, "Now do your worst, we can stand it." Collections came in rather lightly, and he cried out, "Too small; come to divide this up between two or three causes it will be shamefully small! must have more than this." Some start to leave—"None but stingy ones run." Still they go, more and faster. In despair he calls at the top of his voice, "Brethren, what can be done?" A few good and mortified brethren come up in sheer shame, and by a dollar each supplement the meager collections, and the meeting is dissolved as

a town-meeting breaks up, the Church and congregation thoroughly demoralized. Not a mind has been informed; not a conscience quickened or appealed to; not a Christian motive has been cultivated or named; the pastor and people have cultivated themselves on about the same social and moral level, neither having learned or felt that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and in such hands, the Lord pity his suffering cause of Christian benevolence!

A recent editorial in "Zion's Herald" reports the following fact:—

"A lay member of the missionary committee stated in one of its sessions that recently he had attended Church where the pastor, at the close of a sermon which had no reference to the benevolent collections, stated that cards were distributed in the

pews upon which were printed four benevolent objects—Missions, Church Extension, Freedmen's Aid, and Sunday-Schools—and he hoped the collection for them, then to be taken, would aggregate twenty-five dollars. This brother then arose and asked the pastor if he would please state what Church Extension is. The pastor said some things respecting it, whereupon this layman proposed to give fifty dollars for that object, provided the congregation would give fifty more for the other objects named. It was promptly done, and the contributions of that day, instead of being twenty-five dollars, were one hundred dollars. The ability was there, and it only needed the touch of Christian enterprise to call it forth."

In the hands of such unskillful, uncultivated, and unappreciative pastors, our

Churches will not only fail to meet reasonable expectations of them in our great work of evangelizing the world, but they will remain unenlightened and non-progressive, and sooner or later *die of sluggish and selfish inactivity.*

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