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PREACHERS AND PREACHING.—I.

AMONG the many questions that are being discussed in all our religious journals, there are two, of very special import. The first has to do with preachers without any regard to their qualifications. It is this: Are we in America liable to suffer from a dearth of preachers for the many new fields that are rapidly opening up in the West and North-West? The second: Is the preaching of the Gospel declining in power?

Any one who travels through the far West, taking even a cursory glance at a small portion of that vast field, must see that the fears in regard to a dearth of ministers are not without foundation. In the United States and Canada the evangelical churches are bearing a mighty responsibility. If they are not imbued with an intense missionary spirit, the term *evangelical* does not apply to them at all. A true missionary spirit on the part of a church or an individual does not limit itself to any particular branch of missionary work. The interests of the Home and Foreign fields are so closely connected of late, that we cannot take a real interest in the one without having it reach and include the other. This brings us face to face with our question. We have here in America the claims of the whole world ringing in our ears. Upon the Evangelical Churches of Great Britain and America rest the hopes of Foreign Missions. With them rests the question of all questions. Shall the world be evangelized by the Gospel of Christ?

In addition to this, the Church in America has another question staring her in the face. Shall we, or can we Christianize the surplus populations of the world that are yearly pouring in upon our shores? They are coming from all sides; from Europe, about 500,000 annually; from China and Japan they come. We cannot live where these foreign populations predominate without seeing how strong an influence they exert. They are affecting our moral and religious life. No more fatal were the warlike invasions of Goth and Vandal upon Rome, than this more peaceful invasion upon our shores, unless we rise to a sense of our duty. In our social life there are forces at work, some of them unseen, some of them both seen and felt, which are fed and strengthened by foreign elements; and only the elevating moral power which works in and through the Gospel can save them and us from degeneration. We must save them, that we may save ourselves.

"Too many preachers!" some may still be heard to say. But surely he who thinks so must have taken a narrow

view of the field. He cannot be a man of evangelical spirit. He must have confined his survey to the lists of unemployed in the ranks of the ministry throughout the United States or Canada. He cannot have heard the Macedonian cry from the far West; nor can he have heard the clamoring voices from foreign lands. "Too many preachers!" Yes, we have too many of a certain kind, those who cannot get anything to do. In this city there is no lack of work for willing men who are not fastidious. But we have tramps who go from door to door saying they cannot find employment, and yet if you offer them work, it is not just the kind they like. Shall we say because such is the case that we have too many laborers, and not sufficient room for labor?

The world never was brought into such small compass as at the present time. Through the triumphs of steam and electricity, Asia and Australia, Europe and Africa are standing at our gates. The mission fields we call foreign are less foreign to-day than many of our Home fields were a quarter of a century ago. We hear of the triumphs of the Gospel in Formosa and in China and India with greater speed and facility than we did from many of our Home fields then. We can send help to them with greater ease. *The field is the world* was the watchword of the Master, who looked beyond and above all the distinctions of race and color, and by divine intuition pushed aside all barriers—space and time, who took into account all the triumphs of science and art and literature in the service of the Gospel.

Can the Church after more than eighteen centuries not rise to the same broad view—Christianity's glorious ideal. When every Christian can take in the full sweep of Christian effort and the whole field of missionary toil and triumph; from the whole Church there will go up the prayer of Christ as with one heart and one voice, and with a similar intensity. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." If such a prayer means anything, it implies that each will answer it by self-consecration in as far as possible. Christ meant that in praying, the disciples should see the necessity of answering it by giving themselves. The present needs of the church can only be supplied, and a future dearth of preachers prevented, by more personal consecration, and by more numerous consecrations on the part of parents of their children to the work of the Gospel ministry. By the foolishness of preaching the Christian nations must be elevated, and the heathen reclaimed.

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