

upon the very existence of our Church—deserves particular consideration, I would beg to call your attention to. I mean the duty of providing and training up a supply of well-instructed, faithful, and devoted men for the work of the ministry, in order to occupy the wide and rapidly opening field of spiritual destitution which is spread around us, and to dispense the ordinances of the gospel to multitudes who are hungering and thirsting after them. The difficulties and obstacles to our providing a supply of those properly qualified for this office, adequate to the urgent and immediate wants of our Church, are to human view almost insuperable. But let us not despair: what is impossible with men is possible with God. Let us set about the work with energy—in faith and in prayer—and take courage. But let us be faithful to our trust. There are great dangers to which in this matter we are exposed. There is the risk that our sympathy with a destitute, suffering, and deteriorating population, should, amid the inadequacy of the resources apparently at our command, lead us to the fatal expedient of lowering in any measure the high standard, either of moral or intellectual fitness, which our parent Church in its best days has sustained with the most jealous care. It has been said—and it may be said—that we must employ such agents for the work as can be obtained, and the remark may in some measure hold true; but it is most dangerous to depart, through apparent present expediency, from the high ground which ought to be maintained in this matter. Wherever the standard of qualifications for the ministry of any Church is lowered, not only is her efficiency proportionably diminished—but an impression creeps in upon the office bearers of the Church which tends, conjointly with natural indolence, to weaken the stimulus to exertion—while an impression, at the same time, goes forth among the people which casts a doubt over the justice of those claims made in regard to the importance and high responsibility of the office, and lessens their respect for and confidence in ministers of the gospel, and in doing so, diminishes their reverence for religion itself, and their sense of its responsibilities and obligations. Some have affected to despise—nay, even to condemn as sinful—any special education or training of youth for the ministry, quoting the example of our Lord in choosing his disciples and apostles generally from the more illiterate classes, and

representing it as likely to cause piety to be overlooked, and outward gifts alone to be valued, and have set forth piety and zeal as almost the only requisites for a minister of the gospel. Undoubtedly, without piety, without the inward call of God, and his blessing upon the labourer, nothing will avail; but we are taught in the Scriptures, that along with moral and religious qualifications, a bishop should be apt to teach, and this aptness surely implies as perfect intellectual training as possible for the due cultivation of the powers of the mind, and for the acquiring of suitable knowledge. Without adequate knowledge, a preacher will be but a blind guide for the blind, and a feeble protection against the inroads of error so often propagated through ignorance, and so often set afloat by the emissaries of Satan—for even a due acquaintance with scripture truth cannot be attained without much study, and study too, of other sources of knowledge; nor can it be clearly and forcibly expounded without due information as to all which may either bear upon its evidences, or tend to its illustration and elucidation. How much was Paul's efficiency as a preacher and proclaimer of the gospel increased, by having been fully instructed in all the knowledge of the age, at the feet of one of the most celebrated doctors of the day. And although the qualifications of all cannot be equal, nevertheless, I would impress it upon you, Fathers and Brethren of the Ministry, amid all the temptations to the contrary, and amid all the painful difficulties of our position, and upon you, fellow christians too, as you value the purity and efficiency of our Church—as you desire to hand down to your children and your children's children, the blessings of sound religious instruction, and the faithful and effective administration of word and ordinance, and a just standard of religious feeling and religious duty, to aim at as high a scale as possible, both of morality and intellectual qualification, in those who are sent forth to the work of the ministry; for be assured, in so far as this standard is lowered, so far will the efficiency of our Church be lessened, and her stability be endangered. She has many able and zealous opponents to contend with, who would rejoice in beholding her fall, and as we value, therefore, the principles to which we have borne our testimony, let us strive to provide for their effectual defence and maintenance, and never abate from the object through distrust of the power of God to enable us

to attain it. And prayer, my Brethren, must be your chief instrument; prayer, amid all your endeavours, to Him who alone can accomplish the end, prayer, that he would turn the hearts of parents to desire the dedication of some among their offspring to the cause of their Saviour, in the ministry of the word, and that he would turn the hearts of youth to engage in so noble a calling; for in the words of an excellent letter of the Moderator of the late General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland “to raise up faithful ministers and qualify them for the work, is the special office of the King of Zion, and in bestowing them on any Church, he indeed bestows one of his most precious gifts.” We have a wide and varied field of duty before us. Fathers and Brethren, let us not seek, in our desire to embrace it, to scatter our efforts too widely, so that the work may be done slightly; while at the same time, we never cease to entreat the Lord that He would send forth labourers into his vineyard—the harvest being truly great but the labourers few—and that he would enable us all to be more unremitting and faithful in our respective spheres.

It were impossible for me even to hint at the many duties, Fathers and Brethren, to which we are called. I have already intruded too long upon your valuable time; but I cannot close without offering a single word upon the danger to which we are exposed, from the mixture of joyous and of trying circumstances in which we cannot fail to be placed, of forgetting that christian humility and moderation which is becoming us, on the one hand—or on the other, that meekness under reproach, that forbearance under injury and injustice, that patience under the gainsaying and opposition of others, of which our Saviour shewed us so eminent an example, and which his disciples ought to exhibit. Let us beware lest exultation in the success of our cause, and in the approbation bestowed upon our conduct, should degenerate into pride or vain-glorying on our own account. Let us guard against opposition or misrepresentation leading us either to enmity or uncharitableness. But while we pursue steadfastly and without wavering the course of duty to which we are called, may we ever be ready, not only to render justice to, and make due allowance for, others, but even “to bless them who may curse us, and to do good to them who may hate us, and to pray for them who may despitefully use us and persecute us.”