

entirely. Other causes co operate, no doubt, upon which this is not the place to dwell. But an important, if not the main cause, beyond all question, is, that Christ is second or third or fourth, not by any means first in your thoughts. Are there not parents, communicants, according to the average standard liberal members of our churches, by whom their sons would be deemed throwing themselves away did they devote themselves to the ministry?

Let me not be supposed to teach that only those parents who give a son to the Lord in this particular way are fulfilling their christian duty. No. There may be, in any given household, or in hundreds, a lack of that kind or combination of talent, spiritual and intellectual, which ought to be found in the man who would serve his Redeemer by preaching the gospel. The christian life prescribes no limits of lawful occupation. And in any one of the countless legitimate pursuits of the world, the higher life may also be lived, and the glory of God promoted. But surely there is a difference between declining to dedicate a child to work for which he has not received the requisite mental qualification, and refusing to consecrate him, gifted or not gifted, because the work in question is undervalued or despised.

It is not requisite, indeed, directly to inculcate on childrens' minds that to study for the ministry would be an imprudent choice. The evil is wrought not less effectually by the subtle leaven of worldliness being suffered to pervade your family life. Hence it is, we can hardly doubt, that the Holy Spirit is grieved; that so many of our charges are, spiritually, becoming waste places, and that so few of our young men are aspiring to win that honour spoken of by Daniel the prophet: "They that be wise (*margin*, teachers) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Ought it to be thought an unreasonable expectation—a "thing incredible of us," that our forty congregations should furnish four candidates for the ministry per annum, or say one candidate to

every thousand families? Would it be a marvellous feat of liberality, did each company of a thousand families undertake for the education of their one candidate per annum? That we have not attained to this proportion of candidates, and that we have never yet displayed this surprisingly moderate amount of liberality, what do these facts betoken? Surely nothing less, surely something quite other than that "the pleasure of the Lord is prospering in our hands," or that our people are much in the habit of offering up those petitions which end the 90th psalm.

Brethren, the Christian faith and its ordinances are worth being maintained among us, or they are not. If not, if we think not, let us frankly say so, and, casting aside what our forefathers fondly deemed "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ," let us journey on, we and our children, to death and judgment and eternity, as best we may. If Christian ordinances are, in our estimation, worth being upheld among us, and handed down to our children as we received them from our fathers, let our past and present experience convince us that He who has appointed them will not deign to let them occupy a secondary place in our regard. He will not accept "the torn and the lame and the sick" at our hands. He must be "first in our love," else we may justly tremble lest he should "come unto us quickly, and remove our candlestick out of his place."

Let me ask you to read with earnestness the 85th Psalm. Especially offer up with fervent sincerity the petition, "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" And, as one means of winning an answer to that noble prayer, I would venture to append, to the injunctions imposed by Synod upon Kirk Sessions, a suggestion to christian families. It is, that you consecrate the family devotions of one evening in each week to special supplications on behalf of the christian ministry, its increase in numbers and usefulness in our land, and throughout the world. Who can forecast the results that might be expected to accrue from the offering of such