

Editorial.

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WHY DOESN'T THE CHURCH FILL UP?

A correspondent, in a letter which we published not long since, complained that notwithstanding all our efforts in educating our ministers, some of them so far fail of success, that after being "in churches for nine or ten years," their churches are "weaker at the end than at the beginning." He even hints that this alleged inefficiency is one of the results of over-education. There are others who urge a similar complaint, but refer the failure to a different cause.

At this season of the year, when the financial accounts of the churches are usually presented, it is not uncommon to find a *deficit* instead of a surplus, and under the "pinch" which such an unpleasant exhibit produces, some querulous brother is almost sure to ask, with an unconscious squint at the Pastor, 'How is it our church doesn't fill up?' A very pertinent question indeed, brother, if not put in an impertinent way!

The question is not generally asked with any idea of its being answered, for the very tone and manner in which it is put sufficiently indicate that the mind of the brother who puts it is made up on the subject. To be plain—he thinks the *minister* is at fault. He is not "smart" enough; or he doesn't visit enough; or he preaches too long; or he "scolds;" or he is proud; or he shows

favouritism; or is a partizan; or he is getting too old; or he doesn't study; or else studies too much. And as a consequence the remark is made that "strangers come once or twice, and don't come again," or "our young people leave us," and so "the church doesn't fill up," and hence the annual deficit.

Very possibly, and not improbably, there is some ground for these complainings. Ministers will grow old as well as other men, and old age, like poverty, though not a crime, is often very inconvenient. It is specially so, it seems, in the ministry; for while our physicians and lawyers come to be only the more sought after, and trusted, for their ripening experience, churches want *young* men, and all the better if they are unmarried!

Ministers, moreover, it must be confessed, are not always as wise, or as clever, or as good as they might be. The best of men are but men at best, and if they do not possess all the virtues in perfection that they commend to others, why, neither did Paul nor Peter. They sometimes become weary, and discouraged. Their hearts often grow heavy, just as their purses grow light. They even become worldly, for worldliness may spring from straitness, as truly as from abundance. And, sadder still—more unpardonable than all—they may even be *dull*!

But is that the whole case? Is there not another side? What are the hearers doing to fill up the church? Are they