

Messenger and Visitor

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Editor

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CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY.

The question of candidates for the Christian ministry is agitating the minds of many of the most thoughtful as to the cause for the decline in the number of students for this high office. The presidents of Theological Seminaries and Home Missionary societies are carefully considering the problem and its best solution. Some of the reasons which are given are in our judgment not what they should be, though they may be correct. It is affirmed that there is a lack of freedom in the pulpit of to-day—that the minister is trammelled in his thinking. He must travel in a rut. As it has been, so it must be. He has no chance to grow. He must defend certain tenets of the correctness of which he has some doubt, or be regarded with suspicion by his brethren. He is not a free man, and he feels himself hampered at almost every turn. But is this true? Is the ministry bound, is it unduly limited? Will men elsewhere have greater freedom of thought? Paul the apostle to the Gentiles was a thoughtful preacher. The whole realm of truth was before him. He did not find himself "cribbed, cabined, and confined" as to his thinking. He does not complain that he found himself restricted, though he was restricted as is every Christian minister, by the truth itself. When certain teachers rejected the teaching of the resurrection, Paul affirmed that there was no place for them in the ranks of approved writers. These persons were not prevented from teaching their views, but they could not use their positions as pastors to subvert the fundamentals of the faith. Was there any hardship in this, any fetters to thought or to its fullest expression? Every thinking man will have many theories, and queries and doubts and half-formed beliefs. This must needs be. Of some of these he may have hopes that they are true and yet he cannot affirm them as certainties. But surely no sane mind would pour out into the ears of his congregation those questions which are agitating his own mind, concerning the truth, of which he is not at all certain.

As a writer in a recent issue of the *Baptist Commonwealth* says, "The critical question that may be profitable in the study has no place in the public ministry. And yet some pastors feel that their liberty is abridged because they are not free to open their innermost thinking to their people. But there are certain reasonable limits beyond which we may not go as a Christian minister. The great Apostle planted one stake—the denial of the resurrection. Let a minister deny that and how long should he remain in a Baptist pulpit? In law no lawyer may get out of sight of Blackstone. There is a clear dividing line between recognized principles of law and lawlessness. In medicine one may not practice Christian Science and be regarded as a true physician. A person may deny salvation through Christ, deny his miracles and resurrection, deny his divinity and no one will send him to prison for so doing, but it is no infringement upon his freedom that the Christian church cannot recognize him as a teacher." We do not know what others may think on this subject, but for ourselves we cannot see how any fair-minded person can take exception to the above quotation. We do not think there is any valid reason for not entering the Baptist ministry because of the shackles that may fetter the free soul. Every thoughtful minister will have, must have, a broader outlook, a wider horizon as he grows older in his work, but the great outlines—the fundamentals of our faith and hope, will become more and more fixed as the years go by. Our ministry is privileged as are few others to think honestly on all subjects. They are not bound, except by the truth. Neither is the word of God hidden in the depths and assures of their own mental make-up. They are free men in Christ Jesus; but they are not on that account to claim the privilege of upsetting the convictions of other men without question, and when taken to task for so attempting to complain of a "yoke of bondage" that is upon their necks, which galls and frets.

We are convinced, however that this is not the reason why there are not an increasing number of candi-

dates for the Christian ministry. We suspect that the materialism of the age, the commercialism of the churches, and the low conception which many parents have of the ministry, has much more to do with this question, than is generally supposed. It requires more than ordinary grace for a young man to face the problem of how to live comfortably on \$800 a year, when it costs him at least from \$1200 to \$1400 to fit himself for his work. The fact is that the dickering on the part of churches to get a pastor for the smallest possible wage is most reprehensible from every point of view.

A GOOD PRAYER TO AVOID.

How often we have heard in a prayer meeting a petition like this: "O Lord, pardon our sins, those of omission as well as commission." The distinction seems to be a favorite one with many, judging from the frequency with which it is made. Has it ever occurred to those who use the phrase to ask themselves what authority there is for it? Certainly there is none in the Scriptures. A distinction is there recognized between sins of wilfulness and sins of ignorance, but none between sins of omission and sins of commission. Not only do these words not occur in Scripture, but there are no passages that we are familiar with which point even indirectly at such a distinction. We must look elsewhere; then, for a justification of the phrase.

But does common sense afford any better warrant for it than Scripture? Not at all. A sin is a sin, if knowingly committed, and no verbal quibbles can disguise the fact. A "sin of omission" is as much failure to keep the law as a "sin of commission." What moral difference is there between disobedience of the "Thou shalt"—which constitutes the "sin of omission,"—and disobedience of the "Thou shalt not," which is the "sin of commission"? Are not both disobedience? And, as disobedience, are not both equally culpable? Not to obey is to disobey; not to keep the law, is the same as to break it, to omit a duty is to commit a sin.

The distinction is like that authorized by Roman Catholic casuists between "deadly" and "venial" sins. The Scriptures plainly teach that any sin whatever, if wilfully persisted in, is "deadly"; and that any sin, if repented of is in a sense "venial." Such verbal distinctions correspond to no real difference, and are useful only as a means of stifling the voice of conscience. We regard the phrases "sins of omission" and "sins of commission" as a positive evil to those who imagine that some real meaning lies behind them. Such an idea cannot fail to beget in the minds of those who hold it a carelessness and a disregard of everyday duties to which men are only too prone at the best. The fact is that the sins called "sins of omission" are not seldom the most culpable, as they are always the most insidious, of all. Who can be more worthy of the condemnation, alike of God and his fellows, than the man who habitually and knowingly disregards his duties to himself and to others? It does not matter that we are unable to lay our finger on any great transgression of the moral law. To be a great sinner is not always necessary that a man do wrong; it is enough that he never does good.

This principle is inculcated by one of our Lord's most memorable parables, that of the sheep and the goats. Why were those on the right commended? Because they had been faithful to their duties, and had done good whenever opportunities offered themselves. Why should such scorching words of condemnation be meted out to those on the left hand? Because they had been unfaithful to their duties, and had neglected to do good. No charge of positive transgression was brought against them, nothing worse than "sins of omission" is to be found in their indictment, but the Judge deemed those sins so grave as to call for their everlasting banishment from his presence. Let us then guard against these "sins of omission"; and let us banish from our vocabulary for good and all a distinction which finds no warrant either in Scripture or in common-sense, and which is as dangerous as it is unfounded.

DR. DIXON IN ST. JOHN.

Rev. A. C. Dixon, D. D., of the Ruggles St. Baptist church, Boston, gave a three days service in St. John last week. The meetings were all held in the Germain St. church and were presided over by Dr. Gates the pastor. The other churches in the city united with the Germain St. church in this service, kindly giving up their own week night services to unite with their sister church. The pastors were often upon the platform and gave helpful assistance. Dr. Dixon preached with earnestness and power. He is thoroughly evangelical in his interpretation of the Scriptures, believes in the Bible as inspired of God in the efficacy of the cross in saving men, and the work of the Holy Spirit to renew heart and life. It was refreshing to the great mass of men and women who listened to his burning words, to see the emphasis which was laid upon the old Book, and upon the cross of Calvary. The atoning work of Jesus was put in clear, strong terms, and made a deep impression upon many who heard him. Dr. Dixon will be pleasantly remembered by all who had the privilege of hearing him, and should he ever find his way back to St. John would be warmly welcomed.

The Colchester Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis.

The above Association has been formed in Colchester County, Nova Scotia, and promises to do a good work for the people of that county, and the influence of their work is bound to extend to other counties. 8000 persons die annually in Canada of this dread disease. Probably 50,000 persons are now suffering from the disease. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, have undoubtedly a higher average death rate than the rest of the Dominion. It is now known that Tuberculosis of which consumption constitutes about 90 per cent of the cases, is a communicable or infectious disease. It can therefore be prevented from spreading. If taken in its early stages at least 75 per cent of the cases can be cured.

There are now many people who know the nature of the disease and the best means to adopt to avoid infecting others, and the best means to arrest the disease in themselves. Many such are now engaged in their usual occupations without detriment to themselves or danger to others with whom they come in contact.

But in these Provinces there are hundreds who do not know the nature of the disease, nor the means to be adopted to prevent its spread. Such persons, particularly if suffering from the disease to the least degree are most dangerous members of the community.

The great secret in preventing the spread of this disease is in educating the public upon the means to be employed for this purpose. The leading members of the medical profession have taken this stand and are supporting this movement in our principal towns and cities. Ontario has taken the lead in the matter and has many Societies. The Colchester Society is the first formed in Nova Scotia. The County Council and Town Council have made grants to the work of this particular Association. Further funds are secured by a membership fee of \$1 for men and 50 cents for women. J. B. Calkin, M. A., ex-Principal of the Provincial Normal School, is President of the Association, Dr. S. L. Walker is the hard working Secretary, and John D. Mackay, Esq., is the Treasurer who will be glad to receive and acknowledge all subscriptions.

Editorial Notes.

—The Windsor Baptist church has been sorely bereaved in the loss by death of two deacons. Henry Redden and John Nalder, the former far advanced in years, the latter in the prime of his manhood. God's dealings with his children are past finding out. We know that he is God and that he is wise, just, and good. To the church and the bereaved families we tender our sincerest sympathy in this trying time, and pray the Father to grant unto each and all his sustaining grace.

—The article entitled, "The Colchester Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis," deserves the thoughtful consideration of every reader of the *Messenger and Visitor*. We are glad to learn that our Government—Dominion, Provincial, and Municipal are having their attention turned to what has been termed "The white plague," and the best means to be employed in assuaging its terrible ravages. We trust that every endeavor will be put forth by our people to stamp out, as far as this is possible, the disease which has proved so fatal in its attacks.

—There will be many of our readers who will learn with the deepest regret that Dr. Harper of the Chicago University has been compelled to submit to a surgical operation for an inward cancerous growth. The operation was successfully preformed, and the patient has rallied from its effects. What the end is likely to be it is hard to predict. Dr. Harper has been a most successful President, a fine scholar and an enthusiast in the lines of work to which he has given himself. We sincerely hope that his valuable life may be spared to the world in order that he may continue to prosecute those studies for which he has special aptitudes.

—The *Journal and Messenger* says "We do not accept the interpretation of Matt. 25:41-46 which makes love for fellow-men an acceptable evidence of love to Christ, love for man, as man, is not love for God. When the Judge shall say 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these' he adds the words 'my brethren' pointing to those on his right hand. The giving of a cup of cold water is recognized as praise-worthy, not because it is given in the name of humanity, but 'because ye are Christs', that is, the benefaction must be in recognition of the relationship between the recipient and Christ. 'Because ye belong to Christ,' is the form in the 'Common Version.' We confess to the same view as expressed in the above quotation. To us it seems to accord best with the tenor of the Master's teachings as recorded in the Gospels.

—The Baptist Year Book for Ontario and Quebec, and the Western Provinces, has come to hand. It is full of most valuable information concerning the work in Western Canada, compiled by Rev. P. K. Dayfoot, M. A., of Orillia, Ontario. It contains the record of the Convention of Ontario and Quebec, reports from the H. and F. M. Boards Brandon College, the Grand Ligue Mission, MacMaster University, the Woman's H. and F. M. Societies, and other reports all bearing upon the work of the