

difficulty in finding students—what explanation can be given of a thing which seems so portentous as this? It is often said that the real cause is the *decay of piety in the churches*. But not to speak of the extreme difficulty of fairly estimating the religious characteristics of our own times as in comparison with those of times gone past, it may well be questioned whether the loss of spiritual vitality necessarily reveals itself in the way spoken of. Cases, not a few, might be pointed out in which churches have not only declined in zeal, but even widely departed from the faith, and yet the difficulty of which we complain has not been experienced.

We venture, then, neither to affirm nor to deny the decay of spiritual life in the church *on the whole*; but the statement will hardly be questioned that *the age in which we live is intensely secular*; and, it can hardly be doubted, is becoming increasingly so. It is little necessary to adduce proof of a fact which every reflecting man, whether he be a religious man or not, will readily admit. Trade, business, commerce, are insatiable in their demands. The stream is so strong that almost everything is borne along with it. Our young men of talent and energy must be given to business or to the more lucrative professions; and thus the number of those from whom the ranks of the church's teachers must be recruited, is sadly reduced. It is, no doubt, well that we should have strong guarantees for the absence of secular motive on the part of those who enter the ministry; but it seems clear that our theological students would be greatly more numerous were the secular currents not so difficult to resist.

Then, *the inadequate support of the ministry*, whether we regard it as but a token of the secular spirit or treat it as a distinct thing, has something to do with the evil which we are considering. Nor can we wait to adjust the question with those who tell us that it is well the church should not be encumbered with men who enter the "priest's office for a piece of bread:" a statement which is certainly true, but which is far from adequately representing the matter; inasmuch as many pious young men who would not shrink from poverty in their Master's service, fail to perceive in the church, where she deals hardly with her teachers, those tokens of *interest in them and sympathy with them*, which are so efficacious in drawing young men towards the sacred office.

The subject on which we write is one of the deepest concernment to the church. What pious member of our church can hear, without painful interest, the statement that we have too few ministers—too few preachers—too few students? How is the church, if weakened in the arm of her ministry, to do her Master's work—to propagate the truth—to "edify the body of Christ till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?" We must, then, unless we would have great guilt upon us, earnestly consider this matter, and seek to ascertain what the church's Head would have us to do. Nor will our duty, it is believed, prove, in the main parts of it, difficult to discover.

Whether or not the state of things which we deplore is rightly connected with the decline of piety, no doubt *the increase of piety—the reviving of the church—the pouring out of the Spirit upon us*—would go far towards removing the evil. Let the religious convictions of men everywhere be deepened, and the things of the kingdom of Christ become more real to us, and the love of Christ in its constraining power be more felt, and then will large numbers be found saying in respect to every department of the Lord's service—"here am I, send me."

Let the church, therefore, seek an increase of spiritual life. Let us pray that God "in the midst of the years would revive His work." Let