

which needs no very heavy pressure to produce a useful lesson. I would not be the person to depreciate unduly the so-called non-essentials of religion, but they should not, in the least, interfere with essentials; nor should one principle interfere with another which is more essential than itself. Christ's injunction to preach the Gospel throughout the world was explicitly understood and acted upon from the days of Stephen; while doctrinal theology was from its very infancy at variance with itself, in the two main types of Paulinism and Judaism. Dogma may be necessary to check heresy, but how many cases of discipline occur in our evangelical churches in comparison with the vastly greater work of bringing people to Christ? And I will anticipate a possible objection here by asking how many were kept from leaving their particular denomination—to say nothing of lapsing—because of the existence of any special doctrines in their Church? It seems, therefore, that the question of union should be considered in its practical bearings especially—that mere prejudices or even strong convictions should give way to the broader considerations of utility and efficacy in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

PREACHERS AND PREACHING.—II.

IN my first paper I referred to the growing dearth of preachers. In the Presbyterian Church of the United States, the present aspect of the case is giving much cause for alarm. The supply is everywhere far short of the demand. From every corner of the vast home field, there are calls for men, and there are no men to respond. In Northern Michigan and Wisconsin, many Home Mission Stations are unsupplied, just for the reason that men cannot be had. Dr. Herrick Johnson, in his famous sermon before the General Assembly in May last, speaking on this subject, said: "The Church is swiftly approaching, if she is not in the actual presence of a calamity." Let me present a few facts. In 1882 there were 5,744 churches. If in addition to the Home and Foreign Missionaries, the stated supplies, all the professors in our colleges all teachers and editors, and others who were ordained for the ministry, were given a field, there would still remain unsupplied over 600 churches. There would be some hope if we could point to an increasing number of candidates for the ministry; but what are the facts? In 1870 there were in the various Theological seminaries 467 candidates; in 1882 there are only ten more. While the bounds of the field, both Home and Foreign, are increasing with a greater rapidity than ever before, yet, since 1877, the number of candidates for the ministry has been constantly decreasing. In the Canada Presbyterian Church matters are in a somewhat similar state. The supply is by no means adequate to the demand.

What cause can be assigned for this alarming state of things? Is it because of the trials of the ministry? Is

it because of their inadequate support? Is it the inducement of more promising prospects in other callings? It is none of these. Nor is it because of the superior qualities, mental and otherwise, that are required. None of these, nor all of them combined, will keep a man back, who would do honor to his sacred profession. The secret of the whole difficulty lies in the fact, that the Church has become rationalistic in the matter of ministerial supply. We have been expecting the law of supply and demand to prevent a dearth of ministers, in the same way that it prevents a dearth of laborers, or merchants, or lawyers. The law does not apply, because in regard to the ministry, a new element must and does enter in, to which no law of political or commercial science can apply. In the supply of preachers of the Gospel, we have lost the Spiritual element; we have lost sight of the divine law of Christ in this most important of all questions—the supply of laborers to carry on His work. When he saw the fields white unto the harvest, he did not consider a principle of political economy equal to the case. The demand is in the heart of the Master and His followers. "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers." And this must be the prayer of the Church to-day, if she would ward off the greatest calamity that can befall her—a famine of preachers. How seldom is the prayer heard in our churches to-day, that the Lord of the harvest would raise up those who shall give their lives to the work of preaching the everlasting gospel. And why? Because the churches expect the whole question to regulate itself by a natural law. They do not pray for preachers, for the same reason that they do not pray for the increase or decrease of other professions. It will adjust itself. O, that the day might return, when we shall hear of mothers, on bended knees, giving their sons to God in the ministry! May the time return, when the honors attached to wealth and position shall appear insignificant, compared with the greater dignity of being called to proclaim to men the self sacrifice of Christ, and the moral freedom which he brings.

When we pray for the progress of the Gospel, when we look abroad and see the fields ready for the sickle, let the cry go up from every pulpit, "Send forth laborers." And what of the means to send them forth? We need have no fears. The Spirit that offers men to the service of Christ is one with the Spirit that offers means to send them forth. Let our prayers be equally earnest for both, and God will not withhold. Surely an intelligent view of the circumstances, and the calls for preachers that are coming to the churches of America, from every corner of the vast field, will give us a portion of the intensity and enthusiasm which filled the heart of Christ, who saw the time, notwithstanding the faithlessness of His followers, when through the preaching of His glorious gospel, He should receive the heathen for an inheritance.

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