

The Lord of The Harvest and The Labourers.

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Christians are exhorted in the Word of God to exhort one another daily, lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, involving sins of omission and commission, relative to their daily duties. In branches of the professing visible church where hierarchical church governments prevail, ordinary professing Christians have to wait for the archbishop, diocesan, or prelatical bishop, to give the lead in such exhortations, but in churches where the government is Scriptural, and therefore without gradation of rank in the ministry, each Christian, and especially ministers of the Gospel, should exhort one's fellow-believers, relative to duties that may be neglected or omitted, due more to thoughtlessness than to any other cause. For instance, one has reason to believe that the clear duty of praying to the Most High to send forth ministers to preach the ever- lasting Gospel to their perishing fellow-creatures, is one very much neglected in our day. There are many reasons for concluding that this is so.

Let true Christians seek to remember, what they know already, and let them act prayerfully on it, that only God Himself can make true, sincere, faithful, consistent, and conscientious ministers of the Gospel. When one, whom a Kirk-Session is satisfied, on the basis of a credible profession, is born again, or supernaturally regenerated - the first and indispensable qualification of a minister of the Gospel - applies to be commended to his Presbytery as a candidate for the sacred office of the ministry, the clear duty of every member of that Kirk-Session is to satisfy himself that, as far as can be humanly judged, that person has a call to preach the everlasting Gospel. His educational attainments at this stage are not an indispensable qualification. As the late Rev. Neil Cameron, with characteristic gracious judiciousness, said, concerning such a candidate, who was objected to by some, because he was practically illiterate? What you are concerned with is the young man's call to the ministry, and when that solemn matter is settled in his favour, it becomes the church's clear duty to educate him as much as he is capable of benefiting by. That ought to be always so in such a connection. The educational qualification, though very important, is secondary to the spiritual in this connection.

In exhorting, the praying readers of our magazine, and especially those of them belonging to our own church, to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest, let them seriously consider the following facts. When a supernaturally regenerated person, a member of the church, is called to the ministry years after he has ceased to study at school, it will certainly take a year, some- times two years, at some educational college, or private tutor, to fit him for entering the University. He must then attend the University for three years, and, after that, three years in theological training, and this means eight years altogether, in carrying out the church's part in equipping this young man for his future usefulness in the sphere of the Gospel ministry, the most honourable calling to which God ever called man. Even when such a candidate has had an unbroken uninterrupted academic career at a school, he still has six years of study before him, before he is ordained a minister of the everlasting Gospel. The present writer emphasises this point because of objections he has heard from well-meaning but unthinking praying people who said, concerning our own church, that we had a sufficient number of ministers at present to fill all the vacant sanctioned pastoral charges. That this is due to thoughtlessness is evident when one considers that there are still sanctioned charges in the Home country pastor-less, and in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S.A., our people are yearning for a minister to be placed over them as their pastor. In addition to this, by the time the young students will have finished their eight or six years' studies, how many of our older ministers, among who I put myself, will have been compelled to resign, due to the increasing infirmities of age, even when death spares them? It, therefore, becomes our praying people more than ever to plead and wrestle with the Lord of the harvest, fervently, importunately, diligently, and perseveringly, to send forth labourers into His harvest. It was when the great, blessed, and glorious Head of the Church, during His personal ministry in this world, was moved with compassion when He saw the multitude, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd that He delivered Himself of the following exhortation:- " Then saith He unto His disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." (Matthew ix, 36-38).. This Divine exhortation continues universally and perpetually binding upon the Church of Christ. Africa and Jewry are much in need of true, faithful, Heaven-commissioned labourers, actuated with a single eye to the glory of God,

in the salvation of sinners, the edification of believers, and the uncompromising upholding of the eternal, immutable, infallible truth of the Gospel of grace.

When the Cause of Christ is low, and graceless ministers abound, in a nation or generation, as in our own land at the present time, the Most High, as the present writer fervently believes, often sends out lay preachers, whose services He owns in giving them many souls for their hire. As an ordained pastor for every congregation is the ideal, it would appear that the sending forth of godly lay preachers is an extraordinary Divine arrangement, in mercy, to rebuke the prevalence of a graceless ministry, while mercifully feeding His own people with the finest of the wheat, through the instrumentality of these godly faithful lay preachers. Take, for example, and as typical, as I believe, of such a Divine arrangement, the labours of Robert Flochart in Edinburgh and Finlay Munro in the Highlands of Scotland. Their services were abundantly owned by Heaven in the conversion of sinners and the edification of true believers. The fact that Divine decrees are immutable, Divine promises infallible, and Christ's intercession invincible, does not exempt from the duty of prayer.

Relative to resigning, or retiring, by an ordained minister or lay preacher, the present writer cannot understand how anyone can think of it, until compelled to do so by failing bodily strength or the decaying of mental faculties, such as blindness, deafness, voice weakness, or gradual loss of memory and other mental faculties. A person otherwise retiring or resigning, while his bodily strength and mental faculties are normal, or comparatively so, must be actuated by carnal selfishness, and a desire for worldly ease and comfort when he would desire, whether a minister or lay preacher, thus to retire. Such a person, could never have felt the necessity of preaching the Gospel as fire in his bones. "Woe unto me, unless I preach the Gospel."

When the great Dr. Charles Hodge was offered the Chair of Systematic Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary, he had to be assured that the duties of that position would not interfere with his preaching of the Gospel, otherwise he would not accept it, declaring that the preaching of the everlasting Gospel was the greatest honour God ever conferred on man.