

HOME,
THE SCHOOL,
AND
THE CHURCH;
OR THE
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

EDITED BY

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Is not his Almighty grace *promised to you*?

Is not his Almighty grace *sufficient for you*?

Has not his providence afforded you means, or the prospect and assurance of means to enable you for the work?

Would not the efforts used for your worldly establishment in some other manner, succeed in accomplishing *this*?

Are not souls *now perishing*, which by the blessing of God, *you* could be instrumental in saving?

Will you hear Christ in vain?

Shall they perish?

Before you deliberately weigh these considerations, invoke, on your knees, the guidance, and over-ruling power of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE XVII.

PAUCITY OF CANDIDATES FOR THE HOLY MINISTRY.

BY ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D.D.*

THE great Head and Founder of the Church had this subject in his mind, and urged it on the attention of his disciples, while he was on earth. His commandment on this point, which is as obligatory now as it ever was, is, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." It is evident from these words, that the Lord of the harvest is able to supply the deficiency of labourers; and that He will only do it in answer to prayer. Christ could have offered a prevailing prayer for this gift, but no: Christians must pray. "*Pray ye.*" He will be inquired of for this blessing, that he may do it for us. When there is a great deficiency of faithful labourers, does it not suggest a reason for an inquiry, whether this command has been obeyed? In some cases, we cannot be certain that what we ask is agreeable to the mind of God; but here, all room for doubt is removed. It is not often that Christ, in exhorting his disciples to the duty of prayer, informed them particularly, what to pray for; but in this case, he puts words as it were, into their mouth—"Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." It cannot be, then, that He would omit to answer a prayer thus expressly dictated by himself. If there be a want of labourers, the neglect must be in the Church. The blessing has not been asked, with due importunity and perseverance. The people have depended on Education Societies and Theological Seminaries to provide the candidates; and there has been but little earnest supplication to the Lord of the harvest.

Thus the matter now stands; and if this state of things continues,

* This article originally appeared in the *New York Observer*, 1840.

your Education Societies and your Theological Seminaries will soon experience a great falling off in their numbers. Let Christians know and remember, that no organized societies or seminaries, can supply this want. They may educate pious young men when they come to them; but what if the number of such shall go on diminishing, every year, can they create a supply? Surely not. We must have recourse to the Lord of the harvest. Formerly, pious parents dedicated their children to this sacred service, from their birth, and were incessant in their petitions, at a throne of grace, for ministerial grace and gifts for their devoted sons; and such prayers God has heard and answered, in thousands of instances. But where now do we find the consecrated Samuels, growing up under the light of the sanctuary? Where are the Hannahs, to wrestle with God in public and private, until they obtain their heart's desire? This ought to be a weighty care with every Church of Christ. The Church cannot exist without a ministry; and where are we to look for candidates for the ministry, but in the churches? Can that Church have done its duty, in which few or no candidates for the sacred office have been reared up? Or what judgment must be formed of those large and flourishing churches, with their hundreds of communicants, which once had a succession of young men in training for the harvest, but now have none? Perhaps it will startle some of our good people to hear it alleged as a fault, that particular churches are rearing no candidates for the ministry. But I will maintain it. There must be a grievous fault somewhere, in relation to this important concern; and as it is a matter of common duty, when there has been a continual barrenness, there must have been a want of due culture. Why have you no pious young men, on their way to the ministry? Have you not many sons who, if their hearts were touched by the finger of God, might be useful? But you may say—We cannot give them grace. True; this is not the ground of your accountability. But have you, as a Church, prayed for the conversion of the dear youth, that they might be prepared for this work?

Every Church, rich in numbers, as well as worldly substance, which has no young men in a course of training, ought to appoint a day of fasting and humiliation, to inquire into this matter, and to beg of God not to leave them like a barren tree, in his vineyard. You say that you contribute every year to the Education fund. This is well; but it is not all, nor the half of your duty on this subject. You must furnish men, as well as money; and the men are by far the most important part of the means. Without suitable men, money in this concern is worthless. You must bring forward pious and promising men. Do you ask how you can accomplish this? I answer as before, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest." Do not forget to pray this prayer, as you have too often done. Think much of it, and lay it before God in secret, in your families, and in the church. And be not contented until you receive this blessing of the ascended Lord, to be the honoured instrument of furnishing the harvest field with at least one labourer. There are a few churches

in our land, which can number more than one devoted missionary in the foreign field. The writer knows a church of moderate size and little wealth, in a remote station, which within his recollection has furnished five or six faithful men for the work of the ministry, the bones of one of whom lie among the heathen. He could designate another place, where at least a dozen ministers have proceeded from one church, and some of them men of eminence. But, alas! the glory is departed; for years past, this fruitful spot has been barren in this respect. An able and excellent minister in Virginia was snatched away from his family without a moment's warning. His children, mostly sons, were then small—now, *five* of them are labouring in the field; and possibly the sixth may enter. Do you not suppose that this was in answer to the prayers of the father?

Some people say, that there is no real deficiency, or we should not have so many unemployed ministers. It may be admitted, that if the sacred office be viewed as a secular trade, by which men may make a comfortable living, the profession is already overstocked. At any rate, it is overstocked with men who will not work—or will only work where they can find everything ready prepared to their hand. The Church wants no *cumberers* of the ground, but *labourers*—not men who wish to enter on and enjoy the fruits of other men's labours, but *working men*, willing to break up the fallow ground, and ambitious to preach the gospel even where Christ has not been named. No class of educated men are more to be pitied, than those clergymen who are not occupied with the proper business of their profession. Although they may grow rich (though Providence commonly thwarts their schemes and disappoints their hopes), they are not to be envied. In fact, they lose all respectability in the eyes of the world. What would be unnoticed in another, public opinion will not tolerate in them. But to bring up such as a proof that there are supernumerary ministers, is as absurd as to plead that reapers are not wanted for a great and ripe harvest, because many idle loungers or busy triflers may be found in the country. The Lord hath spoken it, “The harvest is great and the labourers few, *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*”

ARTICLE XVIII.

THE BIBLE THE BEST BOOK FOR CANDIDATES
AND MINISTERS.

A PASTORAL LETTER TO CANDIDATES.

ISSUED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION ROOMS,
Philadelphia, February, 1851.

DEAR CHRISTIAN BROTHER—May “grace, mercy, and peace” be given unto you “from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord.”