

TERMS AND NOTICES.

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Religious Intelligencer.

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Rev. Joseph McLeod, D. D., - - Editor.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1903.

Editorial.

—Our friends whose subscriptions are due will be doing us a great favor if they will remit at once. Many payments have been delayed. They are needed now. Kindly send them without further delay.

—Encourage the attendance of the children at the regular church services.

—The devil laughs when he has started a quarrel among church members. He knows that no Christian work can be successfully done while such quarrel continues.

—The "Away from Rome" movement in Austria continues. New churches are being erected, and new centres of evangelization are being established. The converts are showing the missionary spirit. In Italy, also, Protestantism is showing increase of strength and is pushing its work.

—The League of Free Baptist Young People's societies in New Brunswick is in session this week at Marysville. Ten years ago the League was organized at Marysville. The present session will afford an opportunity to take stock of the ten years' work, and to rejoice for the good done.

—Somebody has been making inquiries as to the denominational preferences of the governors of the states of the American Union, and has discovered that there are eight Methodists, seven Presbyterians, six Baptists, four Episcopalians, two Unitarians, one Universalist, one Quaker, and one Mormon, and that twelve have no church preference.

—There are churches that have no mid-week prayer meetings. Such churches do no aggressive Christian

work. They are not even caring for local religious interests. We have read of a church which, when some of the members desired a prayer meeting, voted that if such a meeting were established those who attended it must pay the cost of fuel, lighting, etc. How much does such a church impress its community for righteousness, or advance the Kingdom of Christ in the world?

—No Christian body in Canada is pushing home mission work more vigorously than our Presbyterian brethren. The heavy demands made on the churches for the support of the work have been readily and enthusiastically met. The officers of the Home Mission Board are able to report that every application for aid in opening new fields has been met.

—Christian mission work is, says *The United Presbyterian*, the solvent of the problem of church divisions. As we face the great world in sin, as we stand before the combined forces of evil, we feel the need of unity. When we give ourselves first to the Lord and to his work the spirit of our Saviour takes possession, and the dominant thought is brotherhood for the salvation of those about us.

—Notice of the meeting of the Nova Scotia Conference appears on another page. Thursday, August 27th, is the day of meeting. The editor of the INTELLIGENCER expects (D.V.) to attend. He will be glad if subscribers in the Nova Scotia churches, whose subscriptions are due, will send them by ministers or others going to Conference. The pastors can help the paper by mentioning the matter to their people, and soliciting renewals and new subscriptions. We will appreciate it much if they will do so.

THE WEAKER CHURCHES.

In all denominations there are weak churches. They are weak because numerically small, or the members are poor, or there is nobody well-fitted for leadership, or they have not been rightly taught, or they have been much without pastoral care. Of some churches one or more of these things is true; of a few, perhaps, nearly all are true. What to do with the weak churches is a question which frequently arises. Occasionally some one suggests that they be left to work out their own salvation; if they fail—why, let them die, it is their own fault, they are not worth saving. Even when this is not said, it is thought, as is shown by the failure to provide for the help of the weak and struggling.

No argument ought to be required to make it clear that one of the chief duties of a denomination is the care of the weak members of the body. To let them suffer and die for want of proper attention is scarcely less reprehensible than the conduct of parents and the members of a family who would neglect a child because he

is weak and unable to bear equal burdens with the others.

The reasons why the feeble churches should be ministered to and helped are many. There is, first, the divine law, written not only in the inspired word, but in the very nature of things, that the strong should help the weak. It is particularly the law for the government of Christians in their mutual relations—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Disregard of this law results not only in the hurt, and, it may be, the death of the neglected, but is disastrous, as well, to those guilty of the neglect. Spiritual poverty and weakness are sure to come to those churches which, having the ability and opportunity, withhold the hand of help from the needy. If the true history of some churches, once strong but now weak and decaying, could be written, the real cause of their decay would be seen to be disregard of the claims of the feeble and struggling. They were satisfied with themselves, were selfish, lived for themselves alone, and they paid the penalty—loss of spiritual life.

Then, it should not be forgotten that the larger and stronger churches in the centres of population are debtors to the churches in the remote and sparsely settled places. Many of the churches in country districts that are weak are so because their members, especially the young people, have gone to the towns and cities, where they help to fill the churches and make them strong. Take out of the churches in the towns and cities the members they have received from the country, and they would lose full half their strength, financial and spiritual. Because of the training they received in the homes and churches where they spent their early days they are useful and valued members of the churches where they have settled permanently. But for the little churches in the remote districts, and the blessed influences they exert in spite of all the difficulties they have to meet, there would be fewer and weaker churches in the centres of population. The stronger churches cannot afford to let the weaker churches suffer and die. It pays to look after them. As well might an army cut off its own supplies, as for the strong churches of a denomination to neglect the weak but faithful interests scattered throughout the country. Self-interest, if no other or higher consideration, should move them to extend sympathy and help.

We confess to a profound sympathy with the weaker churches. They are a most important factor in the life and growth of the denomination. They should have the most thoughtful attention and care. We have not a larger proportion of such churches than other denominations. Those we have should be in the hearts of all our people, and should have practical encouragement in the good work they are doing.

CHURCH OFFICERS.

Writing of the dignity of a church office, the *Observer* says: "The Christian church is the greatest institution on earth. There is nothing that will compare with it for nobility of aim, scope of vision, breadth of sympathy, permanence of influence, and glory of historic development. Any generation that makes the mistake of disparaging Christianity as it is represented in the fellowship of the church universal, will perish in its obtuse carnality."

If the church of Christ is all this, to be an office-holder in such an organization is the greatest honor that can befall a mortal man. To be a minister of Jesus Christ is a dignity which any man may be pardoned for coveting. To be an elder or a deacon in the church is to be charged with a grave responsibility which confers a corresponding honor on the individual who faithfully responds to it. It is to be feared that in some quarters at the present day, appointments to church office are all too hastily made and lightly regarded. In new communities an excuse for this course may seem to be offered by the fact that the right sort of official timber is not at hand in sufficient quantities. Better, then, to begin with the proper quality of leadership and let the quantity wait. One man who is right is better than ten men who are not what is wanted, or who lack appreciation of the essential dignity of a church appointment.

It is an old saying that if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. The same observation holds regarding the office of an elder or deacon, and applies in a degree even to the doorkeeper in the Lord's house. It is a great honor to have anything to do with the support, administration or development of a church of Jesus Christ. One of the largest churches in the city of New York recently paid special honor to a sexton who had served faithfully in that capacity for many years. It might be well if there were more prayer for, and praise of, sextons. More appreciation of church servants, whether at the top of or below the pulpit stairs, would make better service.

If you are a church officer, magnify not yourself but your office. You are in the line of a glorious succession. Heroic men are behind you in the historic series, and you, if you are faithful, may perpetuate your official kind by a splendid coming type of cleric or lay leader. In your personal character lie low in profound humility before the uplifted Cross, but as an officer of the church of the living God, on which rests the splendor of the divine benediction and whose development seraphic hosts watch with intensest interest, lift up your head with a pride that is not a hauteur and a sense of dignity which is not born of earth. You are an official representative of Jesus Christ—therefore walk softly yet rejoicingly before the Lord, who has done you the superlative honor of making you a pillar of his church.