

### An Abomination.

For several years back my soul has been often stirred within me by the method of calling preachers now becoming prevalent. I have annually resolved to enter a public remonstrance, but have every year neglected to do so until it was too late to anticipate the evil for that year. I fear that I am too late even this year to accomplish what I desire, but I postpone the effort no longer.

It has become the custom of our richer congregations in towns and cities, when they are in want of a preacher, to search for him as a man does when he wants a new horse. Taking it for granted that every preacher who is unemployed, or who is living on a smaller salary than they can give, is for sale, they send for all such, one at a time, and try them. They put him up for a trial sermon, as the jockey litches up the horse for a single drive, and as he goes through the performance, they watch all his movements and scrutinize all his "points"—not merely the points of his argument, but the points of his person, from head to foot. Every man, woman and child in the church looks and listens as a critic. Does the preacher wear spectacles? Is he lame? Is he too slim? Is he too fat? Has he a long nose, big feet, awkward carriage, red hair, no hair at all? He may do good in some places, but he is not the man for us. Is he young? There is a set who are opposed to having a young preacher. Is he old? There is another set who are opposed to an old preacher. Is he middle-aged and single? There is a set who are opposed to old bachelors. Has he a growing family? Bro. Pinchfinger is afraid we can't support him and "all of his brats." Does his trial sermon please the most of the old people? The young people are not at all pleased. Does it please the young people? The old people shake their heads, and are afraid that he is fast. Does it please everybody? It never does and it never will. Next. Another Sunday and another trial sermon with the same result, and another and another until the end of the year is reached, or till the list of applicants is exhausted. Now a choice must be made, and a vote is taken on the one who has the most outspoken admirers, and he is elected by a small majority; or possibly, two are put in nomination, as at a primary election and the man who receives the largest

vote is called. He enters upon his duties with a large minority opposed to his coming, and he is an extraordinary man if by one year's faithful work he wins that minority to his hearty support.

Sometimes the story is varied by the circumstance that a man is found who on first trial is acceptable to a large majority, but he is already engaged elsewhere in a good work, and thinks he cannot come. Then the word is "Offer him a little more money and you will be sure to get him."

I protest against this whole procedure, in all its parts, from end to end and side to side. I protest in the name of the churches, in the name of the preachers and in the name of the Lord.

As for the church, this practice deadens its spirituality by causing it to assemble from week to week, not to worship God and be edified, but to hear and criticise a succession of strange preachers. It sows the seeds of just such dissensions over men as Paul rebuked in the church at Corinth. It submits the all-important question of choosing a spiritual guide for the church, to the judgment of the inexperienced and incompetent, instead of confining it to those who are capable of judging. It determines this question by the poorest of all tests, a single sermon delivered under most unfavorable circumstances; and it often results in the choice of the most unsuitable of all the candidates on exhibition. Finally it exposes the church to the danger of being made the prey of some sycophantic place-seeker; for all the birds of this variety flap their wings in the direction of such a church as buzzards toward a distant carcass and their borrowed plumage is often very beautiful while it lasts.

As for the preachers, this abominable practice compels them to go through the farce of preaching a sermon which ought to glorify Christ, for the express and understood purpose of exhibiting themselves; and if they have any self-respect, it excites within them such a sense of shame that they appear at their worst instead of their best. It places them before the eyes of many as place-seekers who can be bought for a price. It makes them actual competitors against their fellow-preachers for a good place. It often subjects them to the mortification of being rejected after a searching, unmerciful and some-

times unjust inspection by the very people whose instructors they desired to be. It puts them below the rank of hirelings; because a hireling is employed on the recommendation which he brings until he proves himself unworthy of them.

I protest against the practice in the name of the Lord, because it is as far removed as possible from any thing approved in the word of God, and it brings the name of Jesus in to reproach in the persons of his public servants.

But perhaps some church is ready to ask, how shall we obtain a preacher who will give satisfaction, unless we try him? And some preacher may ask, how shall any church that needs my services know enough of me to call me, unless I go and see them? I answer the latter first. If you cannot find a field of labor in God's vineyard without making an exhibition of yourself to your own shame, this is the best proof that you have mistaken your calling. If you are not wanted where you are, and nobody invites you elsewhere, go to the heathen, or go to tent-making. Rest assured that if you have done faithful work where you are, somebody knows it and will want you elsewhere. Or if you have not yet begun to work, and have a heart for labor, go uninvited where you know that there are ears to hear you, and there begin. In the meantime if you are thought of for any field, let people judge what you can do by what you have done, and if this does not satisfy them, it is either because they lack good sense, or because your past work is not good. I beg all my preaching brethren, both old and young, to utterly refuse henceforth and forevermore to preach a trial sermon. I speak not of the past; I have no reproaches for what has been done; I speak only of the future.

For the churches also there is a more excellent way, and it is not a new one. The elders and deacons are the divinely appointed rulers and public servants of the church. Let it be understood that when a preacher is wanted, they are the proper persons to search for him, and in the main, to judge of his qualifications. If, for special reasons, it appears good to the congregation, or to the officers, that other good and wise brethren be appointed to act with the latter, let it be done. Let these men, by private inquiry, find the man best fitted of all within their reach for the work

proposed. Let them judge not by a trial sermon, which is no test at all, but by what they can learn from disinterested persons of the preacher's work and worth; and when they are satisfied, let them report to the church and obtain authority to call him. Then when he preaches his first sermon he will be heard by all as "our preacher;" all will try to be pleased with him instead of listening to criticise him, and he will have a fair chance to do a good work from the beginning.

Let me say in conclusion, that no preacher who has any self-respect, will knowingly allow his name to go before any congregation while they have not yet fully decided to discontinue the man they already have, or while they are negotiating with some other man whom they think of obtaining. Of all the little contemptible things in a preacher, to interfere in such cases and try to undermine another is the most contemptible. Such a thing is not tolerated even among horse-traders; let it never be spoken of among preachers.

If I have written anything amiss in the above, I shall be glad to be corrected. If I have spoken what is right and just, I beg every preacher who will be liable to forget any part of it to cut out this piece and pin it in his hat.—J. W. MCGARVEY, in *Old Path Guide*.

### How a Preacher Was Cured of the Filthy and Degraded Habit of Smoking.

Jas. A. Wells, a prominent preacher of the church of Christ, who visited Oregon a few years ago, tells how he was induced to quit the habit of smoking. He had preached before a certain congregation and stayed all night with a family in which were a number of girls who were very fond of singing. Before leaving the family he had charged his pipe with tobacco and touched off the same with a match, when the ladies asked him to join with them in singing a certain song. He laid his pipe on the parlor stove, and, while singing, the proprietor of the house came in with an armful of wood; seeing the pipe on the stove, he laid the wood down on the floor, walked to the wood-house and returned with two chips in his hand, with which he removed the pipe from the room. He never smoked again.

WM. PORTER.

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