

Preachers' Institutes.

We are soon to have a California State Meeting, and in connection with it a "Preachers' Institute."

Possibly many of our brethren and sisters have not very closely studied these matters. Possibly they may not be fully posted concerning them, their dangers, their good and evil effects, and what each one should do—for every Christian is deeply interested in these proposed meetings. Hence I send for publication the following tract. It is formally endorsed by Pres. J. K. Rogers, Dr. W. H. Hopson, L. B. Wilkés, M. E. Latf, Thos. Porter, H. D. Connell, J. P. McCorkle, J. C. Keith, B. A. Howard, A. W. De Witt, W. C. Ridgway, E. Swinford, E. B. Ware, R. H. Byles, B. S. Gardner, James Tully, L. F. Ames, B. C. Lawson, J. S. Simpson, Henry Cogswell, and others.

The tract is, therefore, worthy of consideration. A careful study of it may do us good.

C. K.

Preachers' Meetings, Conventions, Committees for Settlement of Church Difficulties and Evangelists.

These meetings are very dangerous. They are extremely useful, if their action is confined to legitimate subjects. But this is the difficulty. It is almost impossible to do it.

PREACHERS.

As a class, preachers are very influential in the church, and especially when, as now, the body has relinquished to them almost wholly the faith, practice and discipline. They know and feel their power. Thus situated, they are inclined to meet and prescribe for every trouble. They are encouraged, and almost forced, by the general apathy of the Church, to secure at least, all rightful power. They understand that almost any action, taken by them as a body, will be sustained or acquiesced in by the Church. Good men know that much needs to be done; they see the preachers must do it; hence they call a preachers' meeting or convention. But now they are met, what must they do? Every good man says: "All they can rightfully do;" but what may they rightfully do? Here is the difficulty; for the line is not always definitely marked.

POWER.

Now it is in the nature of power to aggrandize itself. This disposition is manifested on almost every page of Church History, as well in the faith, as the practice and discipline of the Church. And this disposition to usurp power and transcend the Divine teaching is especially strong when the end is, or is supposed to be, a very desirable one; and although expressly condemned by an apostle, we are yet much inclined to think, or to act, as if we thought, "the end justified the means."

DEPARTURES.

And then men are so apt to depart from the faith, (and of this we have express warning) that it requires great watchfulness to avoid overstepping the limits of the Divine teaching. Some of the departures are doubtless intentionally made; but many of them pass good men unnoticed. They are usually, in their beginnings, small, and not palpable; and would be opposed by many, if seen. But although each is small it is a departure—it is one step, and is like crossing the Rubicon by Cæsar;—the fall of Rome was the consequence. The crossing the line unfenced between two landed proprietors is a small thing; but by so doing, the party leaves his own and stands upon his neighbor's soil; and although going but an inch beyond he is as much a trespasser, as if he had gone a mile. When once the horse passes the inclosure surrounding his pasture, he is then OUT SIDE and can and may go where he pleases; and he is as completely outside, as if he were a thousand miles away. And this is doubtless what the apostle

meant when he said: "Whoever keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of ALL. For he that said; Do not commit adultery, said also: Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." James ii. 10, 11;—And so every "transgression" or "going beyond" is to be punished as well as disobedience.

AMBITION.

And again, ambitious and influential men will have a place in these meetings. They will have personal ends to gratify. And remember, ambition is generally made of "stern stuff," and is too strung for friendship. They will seek to use such meetings to gratify their ambition, or their malice; and before many are aware of it, the whole meeting may be prevented from the original purpose, and made to subserve private ends. In such meetings therefore every proposition, coming from no matter whom, should be closely scrutinized. Each good man should ask himself these questions: Is it prompted by ambition or malice? Has the proposition been sufficiently matured; and is it clearly within the Divine teaching?

ASSUME POWERS.

As these conventions become strong and popular, they will almost certainly assume powers and subjects beyond their jurisdiction. Transcending their proper bounds, such bodies have issued decrees, established rules, published bulls of excommunication, and made creeds. Each one of these steps, taken separately, may not be long; but all of them together, takes a people out side of the Bible; and thus they reject God's law, and establish their own.

ONLY SAFETY.

It is not safe for such bodies even to express an opinion on subjects beyond their jurisdiction.

The only safety from these numerous dangers, is to keep clearly within the expressly written, or the necessarily implied teaching; to keep off of ground; to steer clear of doubtful disputations; and to avoid untaught questions.

EVIL, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE.

There is scarcely any danger that an assembly, strong and popular, will not exercise all their rightful powers; and if they should not, it is a negative, and not a positive evil,—it is simply the absence of right and not the presence of wrong—and may probably, be easily remedied. But if they should exceed their powers, here is a positive evil, and one very difficult, if not impossible to remedy.

RELINQUISH POWER.

Excess of authority and usurpation are revolutionary acts, and revolutions it is said "never turn back." Strength may and almost certainly will usurp, but scarcely ever relinquishes power.

After transcending rightful authority, the body is much more likely to take two more steps forward than one backward.

Now this is reason, it is history, which is accumulated experience; and is equally true of both civil, and religious government.

ACT OR NOT.

It is certainly safer not to do what you might possibly rightfully do, than to do what, with equal possibility may be wrongfully done. For the man that eats, or it may be, acts religiously, doubting, is damned, because he does it not in faith; "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Rom. xiv. 23. If we are not in duty bound to act, and if it be doubtful whether the DIVINE LAW permits it, then it is safer not to act; for if, in such case, we do not act we do no wrong, but if we do act, we may do wrong. The doubt should result in non-action; and for additional reason that the good Lord has thoroughly furnished us unto every good word and work; and has given us a perfect rule of faith and practice. Where this does not lead us, we cannot

safely go.

RULE OF ACTION.

It is often a point of great difficulty to determine whether in a given case, to act religiously. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. viii. 8, has given us a rule, which in principle I think applicable in this connection. If we are not better by acting, nor worse by not acting, then we should not act.

EVANGELISTS.

And here I must mention the theory that every preacher is an evangelist, with all the powers of Timothy or Titus. I consider this an assumption; not warranted by the Bible, and exceedingly productive of evil. On this theory the Church does not make the preacher, but the preacher makes the Church; it does not regulate him, but regulates it. He disciplines the Church, instead of being disciplined by it. And in case of withdrawal for bad conduct, he declares the Church guilty of disorder, or something else, and withdraws from it; instead of its withdrawing from him.

If this is not Lording it over God's heritage, it would be difficult to tell what is.

SUPREME TRIBUNAL.

I have supposed that the congregation, and not the preacher is God's supreme Court on earth, and that its rightful action will be ratified in heaven.

The Savior says: "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church or congregation; but if he neglect to hear the church or congregation, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily, or indeed, I say unto you whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Math. xviii. 17, 18.

On this theory, every preacher is wholly irresponsible, and complete anarchy follows.

Almost all our Church troubles come from bad preachers, and his immunity from punishment encourages licentiousness and vice of every kind. This theory may do for denominationalism, where the preacher may exclude all the members; and many of such bodies have a Pope, greater or less; but it will not do for Christianity, where the Lord of all washes the saints feet. Titus was especially charged with the duty of setting things in order in the churches, and this by an inspired apostle; but no preacher now has any more such power than a private member.

It may be said he is sent out by the Church, and that hence he has more power. This fact only shows he is their creature, and not their creator; and that his powers, thus obtained, are only such as they can give; but they cannot give what they have not. One congregation has no power to regulate or interfere with another. If he is sent, it is to preach the Gospel; and is not, and could not now be to discipline Churches.

There is no safety for the cause of Christ, except in strict accountability to the congregation, of both preachers and private members. And even under such accountability, bad preachers have almost ruined the cause in many localities.

I cannot adequately express my fears, of this doctrine of the irresponsibility of preachers. I think it will result in great evil, and should be strenuously opposed. It is a new doctrine. The fathers of this restoration neither knew nor taught any such thing. It is a departure from the old landmarks, and promises only evil.

CHURCH TROUBLES AND COMMITTEES. Are a source of much confusion and evil. Committees for the settlement of differences between brethren, are now very common and popular. They are often self-constituted, assuming to rise up and call the parties before them; but more frequently they are called into existence by the agency, direct or indirect, of one only of the parties; frequently without the con-

sent and sometimes without even the knowledge of the other party. The injustice of such procedure is too palpable to require more than the statement.

THEIR ACTION.

I do not remember any committee action, that ever did either of the parties to the trouble, or the facts in the case, justice; nor am I sure that I now distinctly remember any such tribunal that ever tried to do exact justice. Their purpose would seem, sometime to be to destroy one of the men; but more frequently to patch up a compromise that does no one justice; apportioning the burdens and reproofs between the parties; putting as much on each as they think he will bear; and so frequently requiring most of the best man, because they think he will stand the most.

HOW TO SETTLE CHURCH TROUBLES.

I now think of but four justifiable ways of disposing of Church troubles, involving either preacher or layman. And these are

1st. In case of private trespass, the injured party may agree to forgive and forget.

2nd. In case of mutual trespasses, or complaints, the parties may agree upon referees. The agreement should be in writing, and signed by the parties involved; and should contain a pledge to abide the decision. Without this agreement no referee should consent to act; for in all probability the award would be rejected, and the whole thing would do more evil than good.

3rd. In case of public wrongs, charges may be preferred against the wrong-doer, before the congregation of which he is a member.

4th. In case of trespasses as provided for in Math. xviii. beginning with the 15th verse.

I believe these plans are clearly warranted by Bible precept or example—plainly within the express or implied teaching, and that they are commended to us by their inherent justice.

But we must not be too sanguine about settling all difficulties. If the parties are not willing, or in the right state of mind and heart, no committee can settle the matter; but if they are in a proper state, then it can be settled easily; and probably no committee will be needed.

SELF CONSTITUTED COMMITTEES.

Any self constituted committee, or one otherwise than above appointed, is not only unauthorized, but is a greater evil than the one it proposes to settle, because invariably it makes the case in hand worse; and because it is a usurpation of authority—it has neither the divine sanction nor the consent of the parties; and such usurpation is an evil precedent that encourages any other usurpation which the folly of man may suppose necessary.

If we may go an inch beyond the Divine teaching, express or implied, we may go anywhere—everywhere—there is no limit.

C. H. HINING.

Pricking Folly.

One of the Hebrew proverbs says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." The late Bishop Ames once obeyed this suggestion:

While presiding over a certain Conference in the West, a member began a tirade against universities, education, etc., and thanked God that he had never been corrupted by contact with a college. After proceeding thus for a few minutes, the Bishop interrupted him with the question,—"Do I understand that the brother thanks God for his ignorance?"

"Well, yes," was the answer; "you can put it in that way, if you want to."

"Well, all I have to say," said the Bishop, in his sweet, musical tones, "is, that the brother has a great deal to thank God for."

The New Type.

She is the outgrowth of our latest and best civilization, the direct offspring of the strength and tenderness of Christianity. She is the working woman, and an old maid. She is usually a teacher, but may be found in other walks of life. Her eye is bright, her complexion rosy, not a gray hair, nor a wrinkle in her calm forehead. Her years cannot be guessed from her looks, yet when she frankly tells her age her hearer thinks she has, unwomanlike, exaggerated. Her step is firm as it should be, must be, in a shoe with a broad sole and a low heel, and she shakes hands with a warm, manly grasp, though her hand has all the softness of a woman's. She avoids every extreme in dress, for she feels that no true woman will call attention to herself by her costume; but is an ardent lover of waterproof cloak and ardent shoes in wet weather. Keeping herself in good health by careful, yet not selfish and over-anxious attention to the laws of hygiene, she is usually in good spirits, abhorring "the blues," not only for their own misery's sake, but from a deep religious conviction that they belie the color of a healthy God-fearing soul. She goes out to her work with a cheerful heart and willing hand, and a face so bright with the full gladness of life that she seems a daily morning gleam to the people, who have learned to set their run-down clocks by her punctual passing by. The young girls with whom she comes in daily contact look to her as to an ideal—nor are they ever disappointed in getting just the love and sympathy they need—a look, a book, a caress, a word fitly spoken. And the boys—they worship her. She is to them the very woman—a strange commingling of mother, sister, a friend to whom they give their confidences on the noblest thoughts and ambitions of their dawning manhood—since God has made us so that we give our confidences more readily to those without our own households, who never see in us the half-dress our minds and souls at times get on. And many boys have been known, under her gracious influence to declare boldly for the Master and the right to "cease to do evil and learn to do well." I myself have known her in her schoolroom to so charm them by her calm requests that they have committed to memory large portions of the best minds' best thoughts, only to give her pleasure. By-and-by "her boys and girls," as she calls them, bring their husbands and wives to see the dear friend of their youth, and call their daughters by her dear name, and pray God the little ones may grow in her sweet likeness. If she has, or has had a sorrow, God only knows it; you and I can only suspect it from a dreamy, far away look in her eyes, coming sometimes when in a midst of very happy people. Her heart is open to every human cry, her hand ready for every good work, her mind alive to every step of progress, and her soul on the alert for every revelation of God's will. She deserves to be canonized, and doubtless would have been in an earlier day. But she found no orders build no convents, does not shut herself in a narrow cell, vibrating between states of exalted ecstasy and ascetic humility. She lives a strong, healthful, beautiful life in the midst of the working-day world.

Do you know her? She is the New Type—the antipode of the dreaded old maid of former years—who has prepared a highway for thousands of good women, and to whom the thousands following look with thankfulness, each whispering in her heart, "Me, too, thy nobleness has taught To master my despair; The fountains of my hidden thought Are, through the friendship fair."

—Presbyterian.

—Robert Collyer says that a woman who is not fit to be a poor-man's wife is not fit to be any man's wife.