

most effective way of learning and impressing a truth. So important a factor is it that a capable instructor never fails to utilize this means to enliven the interest, and awaken vigorous thought in the minds of his class. But this same capable instructor also is scrupulously careful to avoid the serious error we have pointed out. If there be some instructors in Sunday schools or other organizations who do not comprehend how this end can be reached in a higher and better way than by debate, we commend their attention to a little work called *The Preceptor*, written by Elder John Nicholson. It makes this matter so clear that all who give it care can understand it without difficulty. This little book, so readily attainable and containing so much that is of unusual value to teacher and student on the first and fundamental principles of the Gospel, often is overlooked for others of greater pretensions and less clearness and force. And we further suggest to class teachers, superintendents and presiding officers generally in those organizations where the youth are being instructed in religious principle, that the Church rule entirely excludes the objectionable class of debates to which we have drawn attention.

PROTESTANTISM DECLINING.

In a recent article in *The Independent* the statement was made that 1,400 Congregational churches and 1,750 Presbyterian churches in this country did not report one single accession as a result of conversion during the year 1895. Three thousand churches and not one conversion during a whole year!

Mr. Moody, the great evangelist, in an article in the same journal, says this statement has taken such a hold of him that he "can't get it out of his mind." It is almost enough, he thinks, to send "a thrill of horror through the soul of every true Christian." He then makes the following appeal to the religious denominations:

If this is the case with these two large denominations, what must be the condition of the others also? Are we all going to sit still and let this thing continue? Shall our religious newspapers and our pulpits keep their mouths closed, like "dumb dogs that cannot bark" to warn people of approaching danger? Should we not all lift up our voice like a trumpet about this matter? What must the Son of God think of such a result of our labor as this? What must an unbelieving world think about a Christianity that can't bring forth any more fruit? And have we no care for the multitudes of souls going down to perdition every year while we all sit and look on? And this country of ours, where will it be in the next ten years if we don't awake out of sleep?

I wish some of you editors of the influential papers, who are in close touch with the ministers and churches, would tell us what the matter is. Is this the result of what they call the "modern criticism" of the Bible? Is this a specimen of the better times, when we would get rid of the old stories about Moses writing the Pentateuch, and the sun and moon standing still, and the fish swallowing Jonah? How much of all this is owing to the politics our ministers have been preaching lately, and the

talks on the labor question, and the stereopticon shows on Sunday evenings, and all these other things that have been driving out the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ? When ministers go into preludes on current topics, how can they expect any afterglows of conversions?

As might be expected, the religious press of the country feels deeply the rebuke in Mr. Moody's article. *The Independent* does not believe that a critical study of the Bible is harmful, nor that political sermons and stereopticon exhibitions lessen the power of the preaching. It also points out as a consolation for the sterile churches that Young Men's Christian associations and the Salvation Army are doing a good work.

The Presbyterian Journal says most of the churches referred to are small and located in sparsely settled districts, where many conversions cannot be expected. The *Observer* calls attention to the misleading nature of church statistics. The more than three thousand churches that reported no accessions on profession of faith were in the majority of cases no churches at all. The *Observer*, reviewing the statistics upon which Professor Howarth relied for his arraignment of the lack of progress, called attention to the large number of "dead churches on our rolls."

Other journals comment in the same vein, but all support more or less strongly the appeal for more evangelistic work among the masses of the people.

It is well enough for Protestant Christendom to pause and consider the results of the immense energy employed in the cause it represents. But in so doing, the ministers should not neglect earnestly to compare their theology with the teachings of the Master; they should go over the creeds and ask whether they have the same authority as that which was held by the Apostles of our Lord, so that in speaking in the name of the Lord they are not liable to the rebuke that He never sent them; they should test their faith to see whether it is genuine, since according to the divine word works even greater than those performed by the Master should be shown by His followers. For it is certain that a theology different from that preached by the Son of God, a ministry without divine authority, and a faith not productive of the works of faith may be expected to give negative results.

And then in a great many churches, where conversions are reported, an investigation should be made to ascertain how many of these are to Christ Jesus and how many, perchance, are only to the preacher or to friends already in the church; how much of the accession is due to the doctrines preached and what portion of it is to be credited to eloquence, to social influences or to personal interests. The ground of Mr. Moody's cry of despair can be understood only when all the facts are ascertained.

Protestantism of today is nearing the end of its great mission on earth. Some of the principles for the maintenance of which it was called into existence will live on and be a blessing to mankind forever, but the outward forms once essential to

the life of these principles will not remain. In the great educational work by the Almighty of His children on earth, many different systems have been employed as the education has progressed, all toward one end—the restitution of all things. Protestantism has had its day, and its sun is setting. Mankind now needs something to meet its present conditions, so different from those of the age of Luther and the reformers. It stands in need of new teaching from the Lord, new revelations, new gifts, new power.

SOURCE OF POPULATION.

A short time ago the *Philadelphia Record* remarked that "Massachusetts has turned over a new leaf, and has resolved not to depend upon immigration to work her farms and operate her factories." The item selected as a basis for this conclusion was in the report of the medical examiners of Massachusetts for 1895, in which it was shown that in that state there had been born in the year 1,472 twins and 27 triplets; and the *Record* further suggested that the moralist who, some years ago, cited statistics to prove that the birth rate in New England was falling off would not now have occasion to fear such a danger.

Upon this point, however, the *Republican*, of Springfield, Mass., comes to the conclusion that there has been no development to put the aforementioned moralist in the wrong, for the foreign-born population in Massachusetts still continues to contribute more to the state's natural population increase than does the more numerous native-born element; and it points out that in June, 1895, the foreign-born constituted 30.5 per cent of the total population in the Bay state; but in 1894, of a total of 66,936 births, foreign-born parents contributed 31,008, and parents, one or the other of which was foreign, contributed 13,940 more; thus much less than one-half of the population gives to the state much more than one-half of its new-born every year.

Carrying this subject further, it is noted, that nearly all the plurality cases in births are of foreign parentage. And in regard to the sum total of population, as figured up at the end of each year, the statistics show that the distinctively native element of Massachusetts is not self-sustaining in point of numbers. In 1894, for example, the deaths among the native-born numbered 34,301; but the births exclusively among that element numbered only 21,718. In 1893, the deaths of American-born numbered 35,285; the births among that element only 21,788. On the other hand, the deaths of foreign-born in 1893 numbered 13,138, and in 1894, 11,895; while births from foreign parents numbered 31,448 in 1893 and 31,008 in 1894.

These statistics show beyond question that Massachusetts, which is typical of New England in general, is very far from having achieved independence of foreign immigration as the chief element of numerical growth. If that immigration had been shut off a generation ago, Massachusetts would today be declining in population, so far as its supply from native-born