

we can do ourselves. There is more practical religion in the man who owns a farm and cultivates it, than in a thousand able-bodied, poverty-stricken fellows who starve their families while they sing, "Didn't old Pharaoh get lost," &c.

The terrible tide of vice on one hand and the superstitions and impracticable conceptions of religion on the other are doing the Negro incalculable damage. There are some men in our church who are trying to meet the issue. But oh! how the mob of howlers fight them.

It is time to awaken. Let us agitate, protest, demand and obtain all that honest, earnest, fearless effort will win, or let us die like men in noble endeavor.

V.

THE DEFECTS OF OUR MINISTRY, AND THE REMEDY.

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That our ministry is not at present what it ought to be is too painfully apparent to be called in question by any one who is acquainted with the facts in the case. In point of intelligence, in point of character, in point of piety, there are various defects, which call for very decided action on the part of those who hold the keys of admission to the sacred office in our various denominations.

FIRST. There are grave defects in point of intelligence. That this is so is not to be wondered at in view of our past condition as a people. Still, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that it is a defect, and a very serious one. That there has been some progress in this direction is a gratifying fact. In point of intelligence the ministry of to-day is very far in advance of the ministry of twenty years ago. Our seminaries and schools of learning have greatly increased the number of intelligent Gospel preachers amongst us. Still, there is yet a vast amount of ignorance in many of our pulpits. No one can travel through the South, and, indeed, the same is true to some extent in the North, and visit many of our churches without being painfully conscious of this fact. It is literally the blind leading the blind. This is to be regretted, (1) because it brings reproach upon the sacred office, and tends to bring religion itself into contempt; (2) because it is inconsistent with the highest function of the minister as teacher; and (3) because it stands in the way of progress. It is a fact which many will testify, that one of the chief difficulties with which an intelligent minister has to con-

tend, in leading our people forward in the South, is the opposition of such men. Utterly unfit to lead themselves except from bad to worse, they are not sufficiently unselfish to be willing, for the general good, to be superseded by others who are better qualified to lead, and, hence, the struggle to maintain their old supremacy.

SECOND. There are grave defects in point of character. By this is meant that a large number of unworthy men have found their way into the ministry—unworthy (1) in the sense of being bad in character, immoral; and (2) in the sense of entering it from improper motives.

The old idea of the ministry as an office to which men are called by God, having as its object the salvation of a lost and perishing world, requiring peculiar and special qualifications, and to which are attached grave and solemn responsibilities, is not the conception which is current with many to-day. Men think of it now only as an *avocation* or means of making an *easy* and *respectable* living. Hence we find many who have acquired some education, and who feel themselves above engaging in manual labor employments, turning to the ministry for a livelihood; and hence the still more pitiable spectacle to be met with in many of our Southern States, of political demagogues, who find it no longer possible to feed at the public crib, turning to it as a means of support. Thus it not unfrequently becomes a refuge for indolence and immorality. That this is true of some of the incumbents of our pulpits cannot be doubted. Many of them are thoroughly bad men.

THIRD. There are grave defects in point of piety. The man who stands between the living and the dead, as God's ambassador to a perishing world, should himself be a man of God, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. Paul, as the ideal preacher, presents to us, in his own life, a noble example for our imitation. His meat and drink was to do the will of God. The great end of his living was Christ. His desire was to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and he was ever pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ; adding to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, etc., to the end that he might attain to perfect, Christian manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. And there was the secret of his power, not in his intellectuality, as great as that was, but in his immense spirituality, in the fact that he lived and moved under the constant power and influence of divine things.

The importance of this cannot be over-estimated. It is the very crown of ministerial qualification. And yet it is just here where our greatest danger lies. In the movement which began some years ago, in the direction of intelligence, so much emphasis was laid upon the training of the intellect that heart culture has been driven, almost entirely, into the background. This is especially noticeable among the younger men who are now entering the ministry. Their ambition seems to be scholarly rather than to be good; to be smart rather than holy; to shine intellectually rather than spiritually. This, to say the least, is unfortunate. We need intelligence, we

need all the intelligence we can get. There is ample scope in the ministry for the exercise of the loftiest power of the intellect, and for the use of all the gathered treasures of human learning, in illustrating and enforcing the truth of God; but to cultivate the head at the expense of the heart is a great mistake. It would be so in the case of any one, but especially so in the case of a minister. He, of all men, can least afford to neglect the care of his soul. No amount of learning, however great, or scholarship, however varied, can compensate for a lack of spirituality. It may not affect the popularity of his preaching. Though unspiritual, it may draw crowds of listeners Sabbath after Sabbath; but if any lasting good is to result in arousing the conscience and quickening aspirations after a Christly life, there must be a truly consecrated heart back of his pulpit ministrations. Only such ministries have been blessed of God in winning souls to Christ and in building them up in faith and holiness. So much for our defects, and now a word as to remedies.

In the removal of these evils three things are necessary. First, the educational standard of ministerial qualification must be raised. By this I do not mean that no one should be ordained to the ministry who has not enjoyed the advantages of a classical training, or who has not passed through a regular college course; but that, in every case there should be at least sufficient intelligence to understand the word of God, and to expound it intelligently to others: in other words, some preparation, having special reference to the work to be done, should be required as a condition precedent to induction into the sacred office. The time has passed, or at least should be, when any and every ignoramus can mount into the ministry on a plea of a supposed divine call to preach. Paul's instruction to Timothy was to lay hands suddenly on no man, and he was especially charged to commit the things which he had heard from him among many witnesses to faithful men who *should be able to teach* others also. This is not only in accordance with the word of God, it is also the dictate of common sense.

Second, there should be a more conscientious and rigid exercise of discipline on the part of ecclesiastical courts and presiding officers. When men are known to be bad in character and are allowed to go unchallenged, it not only hardens them, but encourages others. This, unfortunately, is too often the case. Immoralities are winked at, or, when brought to light, are too often covered up or excused. It is to this laxity of discipline, this toleration of evil, more than to anything else, that the presence of such a large number of unprincipled men in the ministry is to be traced. They venture in because they feel that it is safe to do so; and this will continue until a more careful and conscientious scrutiny is exercised on the part of our bishops and ecclesiastical courts. That such men are allowed to continue, year after year, to fill our pulpits, under the sanction and by the authority of the church, discloses a condition of things that is appalling, and that should bring the blush of shame to our faces.

Another thing which has contributed to this evil is the unholy greed for numbers that characterizes too many of our religious denominations. Hence, not unfrequently we find ministers who have been expelled from one denomination, because of some immorality, received with open arms by others. The effect of that is to encourage a class of men that every denomination, of whatever name, should combine to crush out. A man who is morally unfit to occupy the pulpit of one denomination should be morally unfit to occupy the pulpit of every denomination. Such, at least, is the dictate of a proper self-respect, to say nothing of higher considerations.

Third, greater emphasis should be laid upon Christian character. The time was when men invariably thought of the minister as a holy man. Whatever else he might lack, piety he was expected to have. The standard of spirituality to which he was expected to conform was high, and thus the importance of holiness was kept ever before him. But, alas! it is not so to-day. We do not expect much of our ministers in this line, and the result is, we get but little. Piety is rather at a discount. We are concerned more about the heads than the hearts of the men who are to occupy our pulpits. Mere smartness is too often allowed to atone for lack of spirituality, and even for more serious defects of character. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that we grow so few saints in our pulpits. What is needed is a movement in the opposite direction, a revival of the old regard for piety. This should begin (1) in our own seminaries of learning, where our young men are being trained for the ministry. In the midst of their intellectual pursuits, the transcendent importance of piety should be kept ever before them; (2) with the appointing powers outside of our seminaries. The bishops, to whom the other clergy look up, should be men of exceptional piety, and the vast appointing powers delegated to them should be so exercised as to stimulate those under their jurisdiction to more earnest efforts after holiness. Christian character, while not overlooking intellectual qualifications, should be taken more largely into consideration in making appointments to important charges; and (3) it should begin with the people of our several congregations. They need to be trained to place a higher estimate upon piety in selecting spiritual leaders. Instead of looking, as is the custom now-a-day, first and mainly for what are called smart and eloquent men, they should be educated, while not overlooking the proper intellectual qualifications, to value ministers chiefly for their spirituality. It is better for the church, and better for the community at large, to have a holy man go in and out among the people, even if he is not so gifted, than to be served by the most brilliant intellect or the most eloquent tongue without spirituality. Thus may we hope, in the future, to avoid the evils from which we are at present suffering. The standard of qualification must be raised; a more careful and conscientious scrutiny must be exercised, and greater emphasis must be laid upon Christian character. Intelligence, virtue and piety should be possessed by all who aspire to the sacred office, and only such should be allowed to enter. Against all others the door should be shut.