

## CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

Concerning the calling and sending of ministers, Mr. Campbell writes as follows in 1842, page 249 [*sic*]. It is suggestive of the fallacy of the "good old days":

There are two great defects among us moderns in sending out public functionaries. In the first place, they are not always recommended to the work by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium, or even by a plurality of competent vouchers, to say nothing of whole communities. And, in the next place, their qualifications are not such as to elevate them above *shame*--provided only, they are persons of much sensibility.

It is of much advantage to a person to be sent, and to be sent out by a community respectable for intelligence and moral excellence. To be called neither by God nor man to the work of a Christian minister, but by one's own impulse, is rather a humiliating reflection. And some such persons I have seen. They acknowledged they were not providentially nor supernaturally called on the part of Heaven, and that the church had rather accepted of their services than solicited them. The honor of a Christian minister, whether he be called Bishop, Elder, Evangelist, or Deacon, is one that ought of right to be conferred, not assumed. And to give a person much authority with [269] the community, he ought to have the commendation of Lystra and Iconium, or at least of some Apostle of high standing with the brotherhood and the world. I speak, of course, of public and general functionaries. All the ancient and primitive ministers were called. Apostles, Evangelists, Bishops, and Deacons--all were called either by the Lord in person, his people, or his providences; and so ought it ever to have continued. In the Christian organization this is essential to the influence and dignity of the public servants. A plurality of persons and congregations, as the case may be, should always concur and co-operate in such appointments as concern themselves. But after a person has been invested with the all-important office of a Christian Evangelist, or Elder, that he may be "a workman that needs not to be ashamed," much devotional study of the Holy Book is essential to his proper division and application of the word of truth. The Christian organization should demand this. Paul commanded Timothy, even after his commendation to him from Lystra and Iconium, and his own teaching and example for a considerable time, to give himself wholly to the work that his profiting might be apparent to all.

How few public preachers and teachers at this day are there that need not to be ashamed of their aptitude to discriminate and apply the holy oracles! Ought not many to blush who presume to speak by a divine call specially to them addressed, for their ignorance of all the laws of language, the force of words, the logical point in an argument, the meaning of the sacred style, and their inaptitude to expound and apply the word of truth! How many ought to blush for their irreverent manner of speaking in the divine presence--their rapid and most irreligious way of pronouncing the divine names and attributes--their profanation of the privilege of prayer in the most undevout style of addressing God, and of speaking to him merely for the sake of speaking to men--correcting what they deem popular errors, and eulogizing kindred spirits while addressing the awful throne of God! The times are sadly out of joint in all these respects. Public prayers are sometimes mere sermons preached to God--critiques on doctrine, satires on rival dogmas, protracted efforts at saying something commendable, random attempts to be eloquent, monotonous gibberish, or empty, loud, and vehement vociferations. For all this insolence to Heaven and for all these lamentable defects we have neither jurisdiction nor tribunal! We certainly have not, if every individual may send himself

and authorize his own acts; or if a small, weak, irresponsible community may send out whom it pleases into the world.

The cause of reformation would ere now have overrun the whole community but for two causes--one is the great masses of neglected [270] new converts, who are not taught the Christian religion in Scriptural churches, and who consequently lose confidence in themselves, return to the world, or remain dry and barren branches in the mystic vine. The other is a class of unsent, unaccomplished, uneducated advocates who plead it; amongst whom, too, have been found a number of persons of immoral character, who have assumed the profession as a cloak of covetousness--as means of imposing themselves on the unsuspecting and benevolent.

Hypocrites, or mere pretenders, whether in the common ranks or amongst the file leaders of any cause, have ever been a most grievous pestilence. Paul wept over this more than any other misfortune that impeded his career. His words are, speaking more of private than of public men, "Many walk, of whom I have formerly told you, and now again I tell you, even weeping--they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things."

We have bled at every pore through the lacerations of many such. And had not our cause possessed more than mortal strength--had it not been of celestial origin and divine power, it had long since been prostrate through traitors, pretenders, incompetent disciplinarians, and impotent administrators. True, indeed, we have had a numerous host of mighty men--potent in intellectual vigor, moral worth, enlarged knowledge, heroic courage, ardent zeal, and indefatigable assiduity--men who have sacrificed every interest but that of truth. Still they have had an immense load of obloquy, reproach, and mismanagement to carry on their shoulders, while in heaven-inspired eloquence they were pleading the cause of man's redemption from the guilt, and power, and penalty of sin. I cannot give utterance to my feelings on many such occasions. But the time is come when action must take the place of speculation, and reform *in fact* the place of reform *in theory* in our co-operative efforts to give effect and currency to the momentous truths entrusted to our hands. The profession to restore primitive Christianity in doctrine and sentiment, in faith and practice, in discipline and moral order, is of the most sacred and solemn character, as well as of the loftiest aspiration and noblest daring, and calls for consultation, co-operation, and energies not yet brought to bear upon its progress and final destiny.

But we have not yet laid open the great defects of our evangelical ministry. There are the belligerent theorists, whose special care it is in every sermon, or on all public occasions, to disinter the remains of some fallen or decayed system, exhibit its bones and putrid remains, and then to bury it again with all the honors of an ecclesiastic war; and, in contrast with it, to unfold the living charms of a wiser and [271] better theory. Alas! what pranks are played on earth in the presence of mourning angels by those whose undertaking it is to persuade sinners to turn to God and live forever!

Another portion of our more gifted and ingenious cohorts have addicted themselves to the enviable task of public censors of the senior theologians. Boys in their teens, or youths who for years to come would not have been permitted to lay a shoulder of mutton on God's ancient altar, are now gravely and learnedly exposing the errors of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, the Synods of Dort, Westminster, and Trent, *cum multis aliis*, with as much self-approbation and secret relish as the most exquisite sensualist devours a favorite dish when his appetite is stimulated with the pickles of Macenas and a fast of full twelve hours. These are the wild beasts of our Ephesus, with whom; it is more difficult to conflict than with those with whom Paul fought at the capital of Asia. Yet these are workmen who are never ashamed, but always glory in their success in what they call preaching the gospel of peace.

Of these profanations of the evangelical office and of these flagrant aberrations from good sense, good taste, and approved models, the more intelligent and pious communities are always complaining, but without perceiving that they have the power of preventing the evil. They flatter themselves that Time, the great teacher, innovator, and reformer, will of its accord correct these evils. But will it save the multitudes that are fatally injured in the meantime while the experiment is in progress! And has the Lord commissioned Time and Experiment as his reforming agents!

True, indeed, the brethren in their comments upon preachments and preachers do much to produce a correct taste or to cherish a bad one. When they commend the, pertness, piquancy, wit, and smartness of a young preacher, they are offering a bonus, a sort of premium for eminence in railery, drollery, and satirical declamations. "Such a preacher gave the Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, or some other party, a good and decent whipping," said Deacon *Pugnatius* to his friend *Hairesis*, who immediately applauded him for his talents and services. He received his reward, and continues to improve in the arts of castigation.

The brethren at Tabor applaud gravity, sincerity, and fidelity in declaring the testimony of God, and listen with approbation to such ministers only as seem to feel the solemnity and importance of their high and holy profession. Hence they have always the most pious and successful preachers to visit them, and the cause of truth is espoused by a larger ratio of the whole population than in any other town in the State. [272]

Still the praises and the censures of auditors and spectators is a very inadequate school for educating and training an exemplary and efficient evangelical ministry. It is not the Lord's scheme of reformation. The popular praise and blames system is too vague, too precarious, and too liable to abuse. I have seen its operations in the best of hands, and although they have reaped the largest harvest of praise who have been most profuse in commending others, still I opine it has been an unfortunate remuneration, and, spiritually considered, a very unprofitable investment for themselves.

*Adulatus* is very popular. He praises all except a few who scorn it. He is praised in turn, and fattens on the incense of human applause. As measured to him he metes to others: and, imparting liberally, is most liberally rewarded. With him it has become an adage, that "they who praise most will be most praised by others;" and, true to his theory and himself, he is the most accomplished eulogist among us. With me, indeed, it is an adage that "they who most love praise most freely bestow it on others."

Many and various instances could be given of the inadequacy of all accidental checks and restraints to perfect a Christian ministry; yet all agree that the perfection of the mass very much depends on the perfection of this class of citizens in the Christian kingdom. Shall we not, then, earnestly endeavor after a more rational and Scriptural organization? Is it not competent to the Christian institution to prevent such abuses, and to discountenance and prevent such displays of ignorance and folly! Other communities do measurably prevent or frown them down; though, indeed, with the exception of but one or two Protestant parties, in all there are many, very many bad models of that dignity and sanctity, that persuasive and affectionate eloquence which commends itself alike to the understanding, the conscience, and the affections of the intelligent and the devout.

[A. C.]

Of the authority of Evangelists, the *Harbinger* said in 1852 [*sic*]:

The business commanded Timothy, involving his duties at Ephesus, comprehended the following items:--

1. He was to charge some teachers in Ephesus to teach no other doctrine than Paul taught.
2. He was to supervise the appointment of bishops and deacons, and to participate in it by the imposition of hands.
3. He was to attend to public reading, exhortation, and teaching in the congregation, and to his own improvement, and to have prayers and thanksgivings offered according to, the will of God.
4. He was to preside in cases of discipline involving even the accusation of elders, and to have a general supervision of all the affairs of the church. [273]

The second epistle to Timothy, if written to him at Ephesus, which is only probable, so far as church organization is concerned, inculcates, indeed reiterates, what is expressed in the former. It shows, moreover, that Timothy was not bishop of Ephesus, as the interpolated postscript in some copies would indicate; for Paul, his superior, commands him to leave for other ministries, and that in a short time after the date of his last letter.

[A. C.]

There are two things so superlatively uncomely, that they must excite universal disgust. To see a young man who cannot do more than parse a common sentence of the King's English, mount the stand and lampoon all the Rabbis and Doctors, all the commentators and critics of a thousand years, as a set of fools or knaves--as a pack of dunces or mercenary impostors--is infinitely more nauseating than *lobelia* itself, and shockingly repulsive to all the finer feelings of our nature. Again, to see a person, young or old, appear in the garb of a preacher of righteousness, with the Living Oracles in his hand, addressing us in the name of Jesus Christ; with the flippancy of a comedian, courting smiles, instead of wooing souls to Jesus Christ, acting the religious mountebank, full of levity, displaying wit and seeking the reputation of a smart fellow in the presence of God--is the climax of irreverence as respects God, and inhumanity as respects man. If any thing on earth could excite a sigh or a tear in the honourable group of Apostles and Prophets which now environ the throne of the Eternal, methinks it would be such a sight as that before me, especially were the preacher one who professed to advocate the Apostles' doctrine, in opposition to the doctrines and commandments of men.

[A. C.]

**Sources:**

1. Alexander Campbell. Extract from "The Nature of the Christian Organization.--No. V." *The Millennial Harbinger* 13 (June 1842): 243-247.
2. -----, Extract from "The Nature of the Christian Organization.--No. VIII." *The Millennial Harbinger* 13 (October 1842): 445.
3. -----, Extract from "Reformation.--No. 4. Reformation of the Preachers of the Reformation." *The Millennial Harbinger* 6 (March 1835): 135.