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## WESTERN RECORDER.

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**GENERAL ASSOCIATION.**  
STATE OF THE CHURCHES, NOVEMBER, 1879.  
Articles written by the late William C. Beck, published in the Western Recorder & Western Pioneer in 1861.

### IV.

Nothing can be more important to the permanent good of the church than a well-appointed ministry. And by this term we mean to be understood as alluding alike to the requisite qualifications of the ministry, and the judicious appropriation of their labor under the direction of the churches; and as in both of these respects we have greatly deteriorated as a denomination, we conceive that it is of ulterior importance to make suitable efforts to recover the ground which we have lost. Although, in a short essay like this, it will be impossible to refer to all that we consider defective in the character, sentiments, practice and attainments of our ministerial corps, or to suggest in detail the proper remedies, still we hope by presenting a few general reflections upon this subject, to aid our brethren who are disposed to do the essential work of self-examination.

It may be esteemed a coarse expression, but it is nevertheless true, that if good men see they do not know the right, unless he is qualified to investigate the only rule of right, the Bible, and has the time to make that investigation? We are far from the opinion, that it is an inadequate qualification to the work of the ministry, that the form of sound words, or that he should be able to read the Scriptures in the original, but we do esteem it essential that he should understand his mother tongue, because otherwise it is impossible that he can understand what he reads, and consequently can not understand the Scriptures; and is therefore incapable of teaching others. No man can love what he can not have an idea of, or have faith in what he can not conceive of, much less hold fast the form of sound words, the purport of which he does not comprehend. Hence, the individual who is entirely ignorant of written language does but guess at what he says, or having received his opinions from others, deals them out, not knowing whether they are true or false. But let us not be understood as holding the opinion that unlettered men are not called of God to do his work of the ministry. We think very differently; we think that the qualification which God gives for the work of the ministry is not a literary one; this they have to acquire, but in the first place he endows them with faculties of mind capable of cultivation and improvement; and in the next place he converts them to Christ, and inspires them with the spirit of the ministry; but it is not, therefore, their duty to go immediately to preaching in this unprepared state; they must study, in order that they may show themselves workmen. The man, therefore, who is thus called of God must go to work, as did the apostles of Christ, to acquire a knowledge of, and a facility to communicate, the holy message with which he is charged to a ruined world. It is here that our churches

have committed the great error in regard to the ministry; they have suffered some of the most devoted men of the age—men whose capabilities and zeal deserve a better fate—to languish in poverty and ignorance for years; until by their own industry they had made a living, and by their untiring assiduity, by torch-light and moon-light, after their days' toil they have, after many years, acquired what, if the churches had done their duty, they would have done in a few months; a capability to preach instructively the gospel of Christ. But let it be remembered that although many of these good men have attained to great distinction and celebrity in the ministry, it was not because they were unlettered, or had been the subject of any supernatural endowment, but because God had given them comprehensive minds, and they studied laboriously for years before they arrived at either usefulness or eminence. It was their learning therefore, and not their ignorance that distinguished them. And even at this time there are many of our brethren who groan under the great encumbrances which trammel their ministerial efforts, on account of a deficiency in literary attainments; but there is no man, whether lettered or unlettered, who deserves the name of minister; who does not wish to see the rising ministry educated and supported; and this work God has committed to the churches, and to it we earnestly call them.

We stated above that the differences among us originated with the ministry; and that wherever there was a difference of opinion there was error; but that among good men, these errors were the results of ignorance, and not of choice. Now we ask in all frankness, what, in the estimation of any reasonable mind, would be the best remedy for this evil? And who would remove the cause and the effect? Whenever a church, therefore, calls one of her members to the work of the ministry, if he has not a suitable education nor the means of obtaining it, she ought to feel she has bound herself by the act of calling him to the work, to aid him, if not wholly to qualify him for it; and if any heretofore sinned in this respect, not knowing their duty, we hereby apprise them of it, and in the fear of God solemnly warn them against its repetition.

However imperfectly we may have discussed the first section of this head of our subject, we are admonished by its length that it is time to dismiss it, and attend to the next item proposed, which is, secondly, His integrity to the gospel as implied in the necessity of holding fast the form of sound words. The very term, gospel ministers, implies that he to whom it is applied professes to preach the gospel; and in order to be a gospel minister in the just use of the term, he in whom it is applied should preach the gospel and nothing but the gospel; for God designs, by the gospel alone, to convert men from error to the truth; and to this end, will own and bless nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus. If we are asked how it comes to pass that men of such opposite opinions and practices in religion, succeed in making so many converts, and drawing after them such a crowd of admirers, we answer that many may be converted from one error to another, and preachers may proselyte them by seces to their opinions and practice, and yet the eye of God discerns nothing of his work in all this, or if there should be some gold, silver and precious stones among the masses, it will be comparatively so little, that at the last day when the hay, wood and stubble are swept away, how much sinner the preacher may have counted, and himself have accounted his success, he will then hate the mortification to see his labor lost; and if he himself should be saved, it will be as by fire. The truth then, the doctrine of the cross—should constitute the grand and only theme of him who professes to be a minister of the gospel, and would win souls to Christ.

He should avoid everything, however, it might tend to his personal advancement, to flatter his vanity, or gratify his nature, which would tend in the least degree to obscure the truth, or bedim the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, and to excite all auxiliaries, however refined and popular, which have this tendency, the dishonorable to God and subversive of his designs by the gospel. All the drapery and embellishment intended for popular effect, every effort of the minister to place himself in a position of pre-eminence before the people, the fiery zeal of partyism and the labor to maintain the pride of place, of opinion and consistency, will all that is done to elevate or to exalt above our brethren, and to arrogate ourselves ministerial or literary distinction in the world, may be classed among the impediments to the progress of the gospel and the harmony of the churches; and these are defects in the ministerial character, which ought to be discontinued by the churches, and rectified by the ministry. To specify all the varieties into which these errors may ramify, or in what manner in which they are detested by God, would require a volume to allude to them, therefore this is all we can do at present.

Truly, The spirit which should influence him in his work; he should love a faith and love, as it is in Jesus Christ. The minister of Christ should possess the spirit of Christ. It is essential that the ambassador of Christ should represent him in his person as in his word. And it is essential that in the very consultation of the great messages that the truth be told in a proper way, as it is that it should be told at all; and indeed, this is the peculiar organization of the church, that the truth of it can not be told, therefore never is told where the spirit of it is absent. By the spirit of the gospel, however, we do not mean that impetuous zeal, that impetuous earnestness, or assumed fervor which arises from ambition, self-love, or party spirit; or that philanthropic zeal, which is prompted by mismanagement of the plan of salvation by Christ. Nor do we mean that cold, insipid, stay-laced and person-like men, sometimes put on in the pulpit for effect, nor yet the holy dross, nor the slow-by thread-like uniformity which is so characteristic of a fashionable modern sermon. No; God forbid that even we should cherish the vanity of such men as are so fond of self-love, to pay tribute to God, and to trifle with the souls of men. We mean, first, what the words import, that the man who ministers for Christ should have caught so much of his spirit as to feel, in reference to the divine character and government, an all-absorbing devotion, one which would induce him to sacrifice every thing else in order to serve God and honor his government, for thus did Christ; and to be influenced by such an ardent love for mankind, that in view of their ruined condition and the way of life by Christ, he should feel that it was his chief concern and purpose in life to make known the doctrine of Messiah, and to persuade sinners to come unto him. For thus did Christ manifest his love for a lost world. Now he that has this spirit will not go to the work of preaching as a time-server, setting his canvas to every popular breeze, nor will he be coldly and indifferently talk to a world about the glory of Christ, and the salvation of his soul. No; he will be in earnest in his Master's cause, he will be ardent and even impassioned in his appeals to men, but he will not work at random as he that breathes the air; he will have definite object to accomplish, and a definite plan to work by. His object will be the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, and his plan will all ways be the gospel, and his motive will be determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. If that goes to the work of the ministry, and with a single word, the salvation of the world, is as much deceived in the estimation which God sets upon him, as he who goes with a scribble

and seal to turn the world from Christ to another gospel.

The legitimate work of the ambassador of Christ is, first, to exhibit the truth to his hearers as it is taught in God's holy word, and in the next place, to press that truth upon their consciences by all and every legitimate consideration which the love he bears to Christ and to them can inspire, but let him be sure that in all this solicitude for their welfare he does not impair the truth, or induce them to rest short of Christ. Titus 1:7, as we have said, refers particularly to the person, character and conduct of the minister of Christ. O, how important it is to the success of the minister that his life and deportment should correspond with his profession—that he should wear about him every day, and everywhere, the insignia of his high and holy calling: "He preaches sublimely who lives a sober, righteous and pious life."

Who that claims to love the Savior does not feel to adopt the language of the heart-broken Jeremiah: "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night, over the slain of the daughter of my people." When he looks upon the bright and the rain brought upon the cause of Christ, by the impious lives of many who, even now, profane the sacred desk, and in acts blasphemous the holy name which they profess to love and serve, how can such vain hope to be honest, lowly, or honor God? O, can it be expected that the drunkard, the man of fashion, or the lover of the world should be instructed in turning his guilty compass to God, or warning from their heads the vengeance of his violated law? It matters not what they preach, nor in what apartment spirit they do it, while their lives give the lie to their sermons; they are but unclean in society, and a bitter curse to the church. Let us repeat here the whole of this 7th verse of the 1st chapter of Titus: "For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre. Take this picture and compare it with the men who turn the office into a sinecure, compare it also with those who break through all the restraints of Christian fellowship and the government of the church, influenced by increased wealth, or those who in the rage of unbridled passion, trample upon all that is sacred in religion, and lovely in society, to gratify the infernal fiend who has enthroned himself upon their hearts. Follow the blotted and red-faced drunkard with this picture into the very pulpit, and while the fumes of death-distilled with which he has saturated his guilty carcass, ooze out of every pore upon his tubercle face and nose, and gush forth upon every fetid leaf, set it up in his view and warn him of the awful doom that awaits him, tell him that he who owns the realm has said, "no drunkard shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." And with this model warn the lover of the world of the consequences of his idolatry. Let him know that he that loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him," and urge him to repentance.

Filthy lucre: how many cry out against it, from the very influence of the sin upon their own hearts; so intensely do they love their money, that they would consider it a sin deserving eternal death if you ask them only for an alms-box of silver to pour upon the Sufferer's head. Ah, how many even now, alas! Judas-like have this precious world, and as did he, so must they, go to their own place, and there are bound too in the ranks of the ministry, as well as the laity, and as Judas failed on Mary for anointing the savior's feet, so do these men on the very last end of the age, namely because they are true from the Savior and a dying world in losing their lives and fortunes in efforts to spread the gospel message.

and endeavor to engage others in the same good work. Oh it is astonishing to hear what ungodly slanders they propagate against them, and what reproachful epithets they apply to those devoted servants of Christ, in order to bring their work of love and mercy into disrepute, lost by their influence the liberality of others should reproach them for locking up their golden god, and robbing the treasury of the Lord of that which he claims to be his own, and of which they are but the responsible stewards.

Now, say that those are evil in our denomination which must be corrected, if ever it recovers its pristine purity and influence. We ask, with a heart that sickens at the thought, why are drunkards, idolaters (lovers of filthy lucre), and men of loose morals, suffered to hold their credentials to the disgrace of religion and the annoyance of the church, or why are such men suffered to live in society? Do not the churches know that they who serve at the altar should be attired in "clean linen" or is the spirit of Christianity so low in any Baptist church in Kentucky, that she is without the power, or the will to discipline such offenders? And may we say, if there are any among the pious and the good brethren in the ministry who will consent to these evils, and consort with, and countenance the guilty perpetrators of the sins to which we have alluded? And O, how glad we should be to answer no, to all these interrogatories, and feel that we had increased no guilt thereby. W. C. N.

### SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

SOMEbody has collected several very curious facts about the cost of books in early times, and in the light of them you shall say that books nowadays are not cheap? The King of Northumberland in 690 gave to a library of the world 800 acres of land, and a Countess of Aragon, date not stated, once gave 200 sheep and a large parcel of fur for a volume of homilies, and 120 crowns for a single book of Lxxx. In 1720 a Latin Bible was valued at \$150, and this was a time when two acres of London bridge was built for less than \$100. A laborer in those days had wages so small that the earnings of fifteen years would have been necessary to buy the Bible, and the Bible was a book of Lxxx. In 1720 it was at that time all—*laterus*.

Yes, and at this time a paper like *The Index* would have been considered cheap at five hundred dollars a year. The people of this day do not appreciate their privileges. Just think of a preacher coming to your very door once a week for a whole year, with all sorts of nice little sermons, and pleasant talks, and interesting lectures, together with the religious news of half a continent, and with the ideas of the best thinkers on current topics; and all this for two or three dollars; or say for the retail price of fifty pounds of flour, or two or three bushels of corn, or twenty-five pounds of cotton, or about ten spring chickens, or a couple of turkeys, or twelve or fifteen dozen eggs.—*Christian Index*.

In these days we often hear the remark made of this or that man who has fallen into crime, "What a wicked fall!" There is a mistake here. Men do not fall into crime suddenly. The downward course is gradual. It is an inclined plane leading to an abyss, and the man who tumbles with sin approaches the edge by degrees. There comes a moment when the verge is reached, and then he goes over. It seems sudden, for only the final fatal plunge is seen by mortal eyes. The beginning of evil in all cases involves the possibility of such dreadful ending. Do not start down the inclined plane. Resist the temptations of evil. *Nashville Christian Advocate*.

It is often there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, shall give me at that day; and not to me only. But unto all them also that love his appearing.







Our Baptists

1. The Baptists Year Book reports Kentucky Baptists numbered 160,000...

OUR INFERENCE FROM THE ABOVE.

1. That the Baptists of Kentucky have not yet awakened to a sense of the magnitude of the great instrumentalities in the salvation of the soul...

OUR DUTY.

We who realize the importance of this work to be done, and the necessity of immediate action, should realize the responsibility resting upon them in connection with it.

WHY DIE? IS THAT THE QUESTION?

I had a dream the other day, as I often do, in my old arm chair. Looking into the mirror, for I must have been in bed some hours...

A Baptist Preacher's Experience in a Methodist Home of Veritas.

I received two urgent letters from Hickman, Ky. in regard to some and began a series of articles in this paper...

What Account for That?

Such was the expression of an outsider to a merchant who was measuring him some cloth recently. The customer must not be troubled with the expression of his mind...

The Bruner-Allen Debate.

Utah, Nov. 21.—A most interesting religious discussion has just closed here. The disputants represented the Baptists and Methodists, discussing the following propositions...

THE TWINS OF TABLE MOUNTAIN.

A book of other notes, mostly California material, has just been published by the publishers of this paper...

WANTED.

Chickens' Conventions and other things. I have a number of copies of the book 'The History of the Church'...

of some sympathy with them and holds that it is a spiritual force of some 1,000 inhabitants...

ORDINATION—KLEIN—Council met pursuant to call in the German Baptist church...

On motion, Bro. J. L. Burrows was elected moderator of the council and Bro. J. T. O'Neal secretary. The German Baptist church, through Bro. J. P. DeHorn...

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NEW PUBLICATIONS.

First Edition, 100,000. So rapidly has the demand for Dr. Carter's Sermon that it is thought the first edition of 100,000 will not satisfy the demand...

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