

## PASTORAL SUPPLY AND EFFICIENCY.

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Two views have been maintained by Baptists in this country from the beginning with substantial continuity and harmony. One is that pastors should be educated in all learning so far as reasonably practicable; the other, that the preaching right and pastoral standing should not be made contingent on such education, in either its quality or its quantity. Our earlier leaders not only favored an "educated ministry", but were themselves educated in considerable numbers, although not many of them passed through schools of higher grade; and they persistently proclaimed a conviction as distinct as any since then on this subject. Neither Congregationalists nor Presbyterians in the eighteenth century were more clearly in sympathy with the best general training for their leaders than were the first-rank leaders among the Baptists.

But at the next step we parted widely from most other people. Otherwise we would have parted more widely from our destiny, from the possibilities set before us by God. The difference between them and us was this: They hinged the issue on the intellectual, but we on the spiritual. Two results followed: First, while they could not get enough qualified men, according to their standards, we could approximately, according to our standards; second, while their qualified men, who were dominated by the intellectual element in their qualification, became comparatively heretical and worldly, ours did not, or not so much. An eminent Presbyterian historian, meeting the fact that the young people of the Scotch-Irish population in the southern Alleghanies went over numerous to the Baptists and Methodists at about the opening of the nineteenth century, and seeking explanation of this fact, finds much of it at this point.

(The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed, particularly in the west and south, a retrogression in the Baptist denomination in this particular, interlinked with a corresponding retrogression in relation to missions and kindred interests, which constitutes perhaps the most humiliating, if not inexplicable, curiosity in our history.)

The above fragmentary hints, designed only as fragments and hints, show with approximate accuracy how we have always been in sympathy with the best available intellectual culture for our leaders, as well as how we have set this whole educational qualification, however varied and however secured, so as to leave our men free to answer the call of God and the people. Doing this we necessarily had in the earlier periods many pastors with little or no training in the schools and sometimes of but little training anywhere. This was not then so much a misfortune as it might now seem to have been, the conditions then not calling as loudly for such training as they now do; and the possibility then existed, as it does now, of educating a leader away from the sympathies and styles of the people. This brings us up to the door knob for which we have been reaching; and having arrived, we open the door to see what we see.

First, we are in peril of substantially the same mistake that lost the people to the Presbyterians a hundred years ago. We show signs of moving toward the position that respectability, or even tolerability, in the Baptist pastorate is contingent on a certain quantity and quality of secular learning. This movement in the theological schools has been more or less indeterminate in recent years, with the aggregate tendency toward the more exacting requirements. Some have restricted all of their privileges to those of college preparation, or its equivalent, and others approximately so, while some signs of a counter tendency are now evident. In this way we have been setting up a secular standard in training for the "ministry". One effect of this is to push men

who cannot meet the higher standard into schools of lower demands which involve a correspondingly lower standing in the opinion of the advocates of the broader secular scholarship. So it has come to pass that in some schools designed distinctively to equip men for spiritual leadership, especially as pastors, no opportunity appears for any one to secure any training for pastoral service unless he has had a secular preparation of a fixed type and measure. What does this lack of making the secular training the dominating, controlling consideration? Nothing at all, because under this system the most spiritual man, as also him of best natural endowment, is excluded, if lacking that which has no necessary connection with pastoral efficiency. Whatever this scheme may design, this result is automatic and inevitable.

Second, the movement under consideration seems to be necessarily, with a natural tendency toward a cumulative consequence, in the direction of the production of a specific intellectual aristocracy in the pastorate, if the men from such schools enter the pastorate. The secular which is dominant at their matriculation will ordinarily tend to like dominance beyond their graduation. Such graduates who become pastors will be subjected to a powerful temptation to consider themselves superior to their associates in the pastoral service. If they fully resist this temptation they will do so by the possession of a superior Christian character, for it is a temptation at once strong and subtle. And if they yield to it they will in the yielding put themselves in a position and condition of peculiar peril spiritually. Will they be able to resist? One needs much optimism, if not audacity, to affirm that they will.

Third, the money consideration is pressing to the front in a way unfolding a complex peril. Aid for ministerial students seems to be passing from the basis of their necessity, as well as that of their practical pastoral qualifications, to that of their scholarship, with increas-

ing tendency toward the scholarship which is not essential to spiritual leadership. At the same time, the impulse imparted by the most encouraged scholarship is away from the pastorate or the missionary service and toward the secular or the semi-secular. That is, those most aided on this newer method will naturally avoid the pastorate and seek the professorial, editorial or administrative positions; and failing to secure them, will drift into secular professions or employments. Their scholarship will tend spontaneously toward this result, unless it is prevented by their superior spirituality and evangelistic zeal. So then, if these reflections have any value, the basis of aid to students in our theological schools is moving away from the pastorate. The tendency under scrutiny seeks to justify itself on the plea of the need of a higher order of pastors; but, unless our vision here is seriously awry, its effect will be to keep the most qualified men, on its own standard of qualification, out of the pastorate. This point is not met by saying that our spiritual leaders in the past have led in promoting intellectual training, in classical and scientific fields, of ministerial students, because the modified way in which the money consideration now enters the field shifts the central stress of the situation, as suggested in the next paragraph.

Fourth, the recent enterprise among us in multiplying facilities for secular learning, accompanied by but comparatively slight advances in our missionary contributions and pastoral support, reinforces the foregoing consideration and encourages this deplorable tendency. Swayed by the general temper of the time, our wealthier people have been largely, if not excessively, putting their money into secular education and philanthropic enterprises. The sentiment of the more wealthy thus manifested has influenced the less wealthy. So has expanded and deepened among us a comparative indifference to the intellectuality of our pastorate, as appearing in the

educational status as a whole, and a carelessness concerning the spirituality in the use made of such culture as they have. The result to emerge from the confluence of these two tendencies wears the aspect of a pastoral supply inferior both intellectually and spiritually. In so far as such ensues, it will be of very serious character, making one of the most menacing problems in our history. The current exaltation of the "layman", in which Baptists have been earlier forceful pioneers, and in sympathy with which they must continue or be false to their own type and destiny, does not indicate or tolerate a low order of pastoral equipment in any essential element; but on the contrary calls loudly for the highest order, because those who follow must have competent leadership and their standard of leadership rises as their own efficiency does.

Fifth, what is the crucial problem? to secure enough pastors of sufficient intellectual calibre and culture without deterioration in spiritual quality. But is not that the old problem? Not exactly. The purpose of this writing is to indicate some of the elements in which it is, or is becoming, a new problem to set those to thinking, where they are not already doing so, whose thinking will be effective to ward off impending evil and bring in possible good. The situation hinted, and possibly others, of a menacing character, needs to be regarded very wisely by those whose attention to it may shape the future. Our supreme danger seems to me to be that we will lower the standard of spiritual character in pastors. Special tendencies that way are reinforced with peculiar persistence and craftiness by general conditions. It must always be true for Baptists that when the spiritual standard in the pastorate falls, the whole line wavers; when it goes down, even to the normal level in some other denominations, the whole line breaks, the whole battle is lost, our life goes out of us, our meaning is erased, and we become an impertinence on earth and a calamity to the universe.