

ible, unswerving devotion to its eternal verities, is the hiding of the preacher's power. That faith it is his business to have, even though it perish from the ranks of the Church. I am afraid that we have slurred over the doctrine of a divine call to the ministry, and that we have been tempted to regard it as simply invested with such rights of leadership as are derived from the vote of the Church. In our defence of the autonomy of the local church, we have partially surrendered the independent and peculiar vocation of the Christian preacher. He may not lord it over God's heritage; but neither is he like the creature and servant of the Church. Both alike are the servants of Christ. And if there be neglect and decay of zeal in one of the great departments of service, there is all the more urgent need that this decline be met by greater devotion in the second class of servants. The power of the pulpit, like all true power, is intensely and wholly personal. Its fires must be self-fed; the fuel must be gathered by the preacher's own hands. And he ought never, for even a moment, abate from his settled conviction that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing the most stolid, everywhere and always securing its results. The weakness of the pulpit begins with the abandonment of this assurance, with the disposition to gauge effects by the things that can be seen and heard, by the nodding head and the approving sentence. These will not be wanting where the speech is true; but when these are the immediate and conscious object of search, the preacher has already parted with his power. Only in the full independence of his mental and spiritual life is he strong; and lacking in that, no Church, however intense its spiritual devotion, however virile its faith, can make up or compensate for the fatal deficiency. This thought is overshadowing in its solemnity; but as a careful diagnosis must precede recovery, it is of prime importance to remember, and to emphasize the confession, that weakness in the pulpit is a crime, for which neither the world nor the Church are responsible; that it is the greatest of sins, which the preacher should charge only against himself, and whose discovery should lead to earnest searching of heart and repentance toward God. If Ahab's age had an Elijah, and Nero's time a Paul, there is no good reason why they who preach the Gospel, as the assured messengers of God, should ever mourn the loss of power.

Everything, however, depends on our definition of power, and the signs by which its presence or absence is to be determined. It has been shown, and it is universally conceded,* that there has been a loss of sacerdotal and of political power, and that the pulpit does not at present occupy the same relative rank of superiority in intelligence and literary culture, which characterized it only a century ago. Of some things the preacher has been deprived, and of others he is no longer the sole and privileged possessor. He is not revered as a priest,