

"the pulpit" we need not take vulgar fractions into account. But the world's estimate of the representative class is surely a humiliating one. When they speak of "the profession," they degrade the holy *vocation* wherewith true pastors believe themselves to be called. When the journalist chronicles an "auction sale of pews," as a gauge of the pastor's popularity; when they deal with pulpit "performances" as with those of the play-actor; when they flatter a pulpit "star" in the same breath with the "stars" of the drama; when they direct attention to "sensational" sermons, and praise a preacher in proportion as he spurns the obligations he has voluntarily assumed, and violates the very compact by which he claims a pulpit as his place; when, in short, they never conceive of "the man of God" as in the world but not of it, and as seeking for a "recompense of reward" apart from all worldly emolument, as walking with God and "condemning the world" by his blameless life as well as by the testimony of his preaching; when such is the *pose* given to the preacher by the Press, day after day, week after week, year in and year out, how can it be that the popular estimate of the Christian Ministry should be other than degrading, humiliating in its very patronage, and paralyzing in its praise? Added to this, the professed "reports" of sermons, published on Monday mornings, are commonly caricatures so gross as to furnish excuses for thousands who withdraw themselves from the habits of reputable householders, and are rarely seen in church. "If this is what I should have heard, I am glad I stayed at home." So they speak, and so dismiss all sense of responsibility. The *psychic* mind discerns not spiritual things, and has no sense of duty in such relations. Without reflection, they transfer to "the pulpit" their disgust with, here and there, a man, and wantonly condemn ministrations which, in point of fact, are able, well-studied and well-sustained, and full of meat for really conscientious and healthful appetites.

In the nature of things, the preacher who inhales an atmosphere such as I have described, must be a rare specimen of nature and of grace if he corresponds not, in some degree, with what he finds prescribed to him as his *rôle*. The man of probity he is, but *sanctity* he does not impress, even upon his friends, as the type of his character. Too generally he is credited with reading rather than *study*, and his last sermon is flavored, in the suspicions of many, by his impressions of the last review, if not of the last novel. In short, few suspect him of a profound and holy consciousness that he has a mission to souls, a message from God, a vocation to glorify Christ and save sinners through His Word and Sacraments.

I have been reading the world's image and superscription as it is reflected in its ordinary expressions about the Christian Ministry. God is my witness that I take home to my own heart and conscience,