

who is supposed to be vested with magical power over the souls of men; and in the sphere of politics he is remanded to the ranks of ordinary citizenship; while in the fields of learning many laymen are fully abreast and far in advance of him. But these things are the accidents of time and place; they do not belong to the essential and permanent elements of the Christian teacher's power. The sacerdotal and political authority has never been an advantage; and the general advance of intelligence is helpful, and helpful only to an earnest man, for it is ignorance, always, that is hardest to persuade. The more the pulpit can take for granted the greater is its practical advantage.

I have not been able, however, to repress the inquiry whether one element of comparative weakness in the pulpit of our time, as compared with that of the past, may not be found in the impatience and sensitiveness that cause so many brief pastorates. The average pastorate does not seem to be over three years. Where the polity of the church makes frequent changes a universal law, their evil results may not be so apparent; but where changes depend wholly on personal decision, their frequency, as indicative of instability or restlessness, cannot but be mischievous in effect. Permanence is everywhere an evidence and element of power. Business firms and banking houses that survive frequent commercial and financial crises, command confidence and secure custom by their simple endurance. The great names in the Christian pulpit are the names of men who possessed this quality of permanence, in whom sincerity and stability so wrought together that their words came to be quoted as oracles in the communities where they labored and died. It may be that for the great majority of present pastors frequent changes are unavoidable, but I cannot avoid the conviction that the pulpit whose occupant never remains more than half a dozen years, loses the confidence of the community, and is smitten with an incurable weakness. Neither eloquence, nor learning, nor wit, nor all together, can make up for the absence of character, the strength of a poised soul, clearly knowing its duty, and faithfully discharging the same.

It is time, however, to give attention to the first question under debate. For myself, looking at all the facts, and judging to the best of my ability, I do not believe that the pulpit has declined, or is declining in power. There are unworthy men in the Christian ministry; but there never were so many true and earnest men in its ranks. There are sensational preachers, whose buffoonery is the sport of the world, and the pain of the Church; but the Gospel was never so faithfully and frequently preached as it now is. The pulpit on the whole is true to its mission, and therein lies its power, whose fruitage is sure to appear. Nor are there wanting other signs confirming the same conclusion.

If we compare the present standard of ministerial education, in all