
THE PICTURE ON THE WALL

THE FIRST LESSON taught by the Interpreter relates to the character of the true minister of the gospel. In Bunyan's day, state-anointed vicars abounded. These were men who were more concerned with stipend and status than with the souls of the flock. They were false shepherds following form without substance, caring only for their own personal comfort while many perished at their feet. This kind of religious man is caricatured in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in the Reverend Mr. Collins, who lived under the benevolence of a benefactress and whose sole delight was the praise coming from her lips.

In contrast to the state-anointed vicar, the seven marks of the true and faithful pastor (according to the "picture on the wall") are:

1. He is a serious person.
2. His eyes are raised up toward Heaven.
3. The best of books (the Bible) is in his hand.
4. The law of truth is written on his lips.
5. The world is behind his back.
6. He stands as if he were pleading with men.
7. A crown of gold hangs over his head.

It is significant that formal theological education is not mentioned as a mark of the

true pastor. Bunyan himself had no ministerial training from any of the major institutions in the land. His creed was the Bible and his teaching came from the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit as he applied himself to the understanding of the Scripture. This is not to say that ministerial training is without value—Bunyan himself benefited greatly from some of the best books of his day, such as Luther's commentary on Galatians.

The point is this: there are prerequisites, conditions and attitudes that must be in place if a man would shepherd the souls of men. If these dispositions of heart are not well-entrenched, then an excellent theological career from the finest institution in the land produces only exactness in exegesis and precision of statement that will leave the man in the pew as cold and precise as the man in the pulpit.

It must be noted that Bunyan was not a Quaker, nor did he imbibe the notion that "inner light" was all that a man needed. Quite to the contrary, Bunyan attempted to center himself in that place where Word and Spirit meet; and thus, each time he spoke to the souls of men, it was the Word of God being animated by the Spirit of God through the foolishness of preaching whereby hearts were moved and converted.
