

*The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers*

I believe that the habit of saving has a great deal to do with one's moral and even religious character. While we have a great number of colored ministers in the South whose lives are in every way all that could be expected, on the other hand we must acknowledge that still a very large number of our colored ministers are morally unfit for their work. We can gain nothing by attempting to smother or overlook this unwholesome truth. Improvement is going on from year to year in the character of the ministers, but such improvement will only continue in proportion as the minister is made to feel that the weight of public sentiment is in the right direction. There are far too many ministers and others who have received a little education, who are travelling from one end of the country to the other, trying to live by their wits and by every scheme known to man, except by hard and earnest and honest work. At one time they are in politics, at another time they are preaching, at another time they are organizing some cheap and uncertain society for the purpose of extorting money from people by unholy means. We must give our ministers and teachers to understand that they cannot remain in our pulpits or cannot remain as our teachers, unless they live correct lives. What seems the hardest course to pursue, is often the easiest in the long run. When a minister acts wrong, it is a great deal better to hold him up as an example before the world, instead of trying to shield his sins by transferring him from one district to another. When once the minister understands that the people are going to tolerate no immorality, no weakness on their part, we will have an improved pulpit. Many of these so-called ministers are led into evil ways because they are trying to live without work. They have church organizations that are too weak to support them and instead of going to work, they attempt to live by scheming and thereby bring disgrace upon the whole race. I repeat that in Birmingham, Montgomery and throughout Alabama, there are as upright ministers as can be found among any race, and I am glad to note a tendency among the bishops and other church officials to be more strict in the standard required of the ministers, but, notwithstanding all of this I repeat that we ourselves must make great progress before the ministry will be brought to that point where it will have the confidence and respect of the people to the extent that it should have.

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