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## THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN MINISTER.\*

BY THE REV. R. M. SOMMERVILLE, NEW YORK.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.—1 Cor. ii., 2.

The Gospel ministry is an ordinance of God. "When the Lord ascended up on high, He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ministers are servants of the risen and living Lord, sent forth to preach the Gospel in His name and as His representatives. The command that comes from the Throne, clear and distinct, is this: "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

I admit that other instrumentalities have been honored to awaken men and promote their spiritual interests. The Gospel is *printed*, and the simple reading of the Word has often been made effectual for salvation. In searching the Scripture, or in reading some book of a religious character that has been prepared and issued from the press to illustrate its teachings, some passage is carried home with peculiar impressiveness and power. It was from an old Bible found in the library at Erfurt that Luther learned the way to life, and not only began to walk in it himself, but led into it the feet of multitudes. While waiting for a friend one evening, Headley Vicars turned over the leaves of a Bible that lay on a table in his room, and his eye rested upon the precious words, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." That was the starting-point in a career of consecrated service. The Gospel may be *sung*, and the views of Divine truth presented in that way have a much stronger and a more permanent influence than the simple reading of the same truths. I believe the service of song in

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our churches is a service that, more than any other perhaps, stands connected with the existence and outgoings of personal piety in its purest and loftiest forms. In reference to the state of his own congregation during the great revival in New England, Jonathan Edwards writes: "It has been observable that there has been scarce any part of public worship, wherein good men have had grace so drawn forth and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing his praises." And in his history, Bishop Burnet tells us that the singing of Psalms was an important means of helping on the Reformation both in England and on the continent of Europe. Indeed such offense did that service give to the Romish priests, and such was their dread of its power, that a leading man among them had the Odes of Horace translated and set to music as a counteractive. Or the Gospel may be *painted*. The picture gallery records its own impressive illustrations of the work of grace in the heart. I have read somewhere, not long ago, that Zinzendorf, the founder of Moravianism, traced back some of his deepest religious convictions to the impression made upon his mind by a representation of the Saviour. And many of us will recall how in early life some rude engraving in the old family Bible, or some picture in an illustrated paper that would now and then come into our hands, helped us to a clear view of scenes and events in sacred history.

I suppose that every one will admit the general accuracy of what I have said; and yet the grand means of reaching and touching the heart, the grand means of moulding the character and conduct, is the Gospel ministry. Despised of men and in the opinion of the world foolishness, it has pleased God through the simple preaching of the Cross to save them that believe. That is his own plan; and hence this resolve of the Apostle: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

I have selected these words to set forth *the ideal Christian minister*, and I invite you to look with me for a little at the *theme of his ministry*, and then at *his personal character* as illustrated in this noble resolve.

The ideal Christian minister *preaches a personal Saviour*. His theme is Jesus Christ. The aim of this apostle was to present the person, and enforce the claims of the Lord who had called him into His service. Standing on the grand principles that his far-reaching and subtle intellect saw should ultimately gain the assent and admiration of the whole world, he cries, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." When you can write a complete history of these United States and say nothing of Washington, when you can prepare an instructive essay on the art of printing and never mention the name of Caxton, or when you can deliver a lecture on the rise and progress and beneficial results of the Reformation and never refer to Luther or Calvin or Knox, then it will be time enough to try and preach the Gospel and not make Christ the central figure in the

sermon. By no re-arranging of the materials of Revelation can you construct a system of Christianity apart from Him. He is the one object of faith, the permanent basis of hope. The author of every grace, the source of life here and beyond the grave. I tell you that the power of the Gospel ministry lies in the presentation not merely of great truth, but of the truth as it is in Jesus. There is the measure of its influence. Above all theories, above all facts in history, above all ethical teaching is Christ, the living person, who gave himself for us and lives to save us through the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice and the prevalence of His intercession. Confessions of faith, nay, as Paul tells, the Holy Scriptures, can only make us wise unto salvation "through the faith that is in Christ Jesus." And you remember the reply that he and an associate in the ministry gave to one who was under deep concern, one who was very anxious to know what it was necessary for him to do in order that he might be saved from sin and its awful consequences: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house." "There is a throne; some one must sit on it. There is a gate; some one must stand at it to keep it open for all who will come by personal decision into the way that leadeth unto life. There is a peril towering high above all other dangers; we need some one to break it and roll it away." So He cries to you and me to-night, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved all ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside me there is none else."

In his ministry of the Gospel the ideal preacher will give *special prominence to the sacrificial idea in the death of Christ*. He points men to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Lord Jesus did not save us as a kind friend might deliver an insolvent by persuading his creditors to forgive the debt. He did not rescue us from our spiritual enemies as a military leader liberates prisoners, defeating their oppressors and restoring them to lost liberty by force of arms. Nor did He do this, as so many are teaching in the present day, by the moral effect of His divine teachings and sublime submission to sufferings. No; on the contrary He gave himself *for us*, and with the price of His own blood paid our ransom in full, and so put away sin. Certainly the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah can mean nothing else when it says, "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." Certainly the Apostle could have had no other idea in his mind when he wrote, "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Certainly nothing can be more decisive on this point than the language of our Lord, when He instituted the memorial of His dying love: "This is my blood of the New Testament shed for many for the remission of sins." These blessed words of infinite love every minister ought to keep before him that he may know how to preach the Gospel. If not painted on the walls of our churches, or garlanded in flowers around our pulpit

Bibles, they ought to be so engraven on the heart of every minister that he shall be constrained to hold forth this truth in language clear and unmistakable. Only the fact of sacrificial death makes it plain that, while God delivers from the penalty of sin, He does not violate His law nor in any measure impair its obligation. Nothing else, so far as we are enabled to see, could show that it is yet in force and that no one can break it with impunity.

I do not hesitate to say that a ministry in which the sacrificial idea does not hold a foremost and a central place is not the Gospel ministry, and is destitute of saving and sanctifying power. If Christ crucified is to be the power of God unto salvation, we must insist that His death was sacrificial and substitutionary. Socinians say that He died merely to attest His own faith in the truths that He proclaimed during His earthly life and to illustrate His idea of patience under suffering; but the Gospel says, "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Men of advanced ideas in the theological world of to-day represent sin as a misfortune, or an unlovely feature in human character, but not as in any sense of the term a crime involving guilt and demanding punishment; but the Gospel says, "The wages of sin is death." In their system an atoning sacrifice has no place, as it is not needed. The awful scenes in the Garden and on the Cross are nothing more to them than mystic revelations of an all subduing love; but the Gospel says, "He was made a curse for us." What means that cry that rises in perpetual monotone from yonder lonely sufferer in Gethsemane—"O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" What means the cry that rises, silent and echoless, from the centre-cross on Calvary—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani; My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" It means that the Atonement is a reality,—an Atonement starting indeed in the fountain of infinite mercy, yet rendered necessary by the holiness of the Lawgiver and the unbending demands of His law; an Atonement that not only renders salvation possible to the members of the human family in general, a solemn make believe, if the views of those who advocate that theory are correct, but makes salvation sure to his believing people. Deny this truth, and you take away the foundation of the fabric of Christianity; and if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? Deny it, and the light is gone out and nothing is left to us but shadow.

In close connection with this the ideal Christian minister will *present the mediatorial dominion of the Saviour*. The literal rendering of the last clause of this verse is, "even the same that was crucified." No one can read the Gospel with any measure of care and fail to observe how, in the view of the Saviour himself, the cross and the throne were inseparable parts of one whole. So he inquires, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" Even the cross, when He was nailed to it, bore testimony to the crown, for over it beamed this inscription: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of

the Jews." And what says the Apostle?—"Because He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Not only over individuals, but over societies and communities, He holds supreme authority. I read in the Word that He has instituted a form of government for the church, and all experience goes to prove that it is necessary for the purity and efficiency, if not the very existence of the church, that He should rule in the affairs of His own house. I read further in the Word, and I hear earthly rulers called to "kiss the son" and render allegiance to Him as the "governor among the nations;" and no one, who claims to be familiar with history, will venture to say that it is not for the material and spiritual welfare of a community that its rulers should be men that fear the Lord and feel under obligation to use their influence in the interest of truth and purity. In view of this, as it seems to me, we ought to give a place in our testimony to this aspect of the mediatorial character.

I suppose you have often noticed that in His personal ministry our Lord revealed himself first as a prophet, then as a priest, and last of all as a king. And it is instructive to observe, as Prof. J. A. Wylie has pointed out in his "Great Exodus," that these offices came into view in the progress of Christianity in the same order. The great object of testimony-bearing in the first three centuries was the prophetic office of our Lord. The claim that His followers put forth was liberty to speak in the name of Jesus; and that office was vindicated when Paganism fell before their simple preaching of the cross. Then followed the witnessing of the true church for the priesthood of Christ; and for ages down to the sixteenth century the leading article of their Confession, for which many laid down their lives, was that Christ was the true and only priest and that His sacrifice alone could take away sin. But there was another office to be vindicated and confessed before the world; and ever since the Reformation to the present day His faithful followers have had to contend for His rightful authority and claims as King. And, as we gather from the Revelation, which is a faithful representation of history past and yet to come, it is the acceptance and earnest advocacy of this truth that is to mark the era that shall usher in the glories of the Millennial Church. "In that book," to use the language of Dr. Wylie, "Christ is first seen walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, *the prophet*; next He is seen as 'the Lamb as if it had been slain,' *the priest*; then He is seen as the rainbow-crowned angel, standing on the sea and the dry land, *symbolic of universal dominion*. And last of all He is seen on the great battlefield with many crowns upon His head, and 'on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.'"

This final struggle, as it seems to me, has begun. Never, perhaps.

was the opposition to the kingship of Christ more marked than in the present day. The open desecration of the Sabbath, the popular sin of our country, is growing to an alarming extent; and I think there is no clearer evidence that this nation is determined to reject Christ than the fact that those clothed with authority in the land permit laws that have been enacted for its protection to be a dead letter, while many desire to secure legislation relating to its observance in the interests of infidelity. Every one will admit that, owing to great variety of opinions on this subject and to the fact that so many are found ready to deny the very principle, the supreme Headship of Christ has become *the present truth*. I would that all who are called to preach the Gospel were led in zeal for His glory to contend for it more earnestly. To the fact that so few are set for the defence of the crown, I trace the manifest indifference of not a few professors of religion to the public interests of His church and the apparent readiness of many to trample principle under foot for the sake of worldly advantage.

This leads me to remark finally that the ideal Christian minister *will declare the whole counsel of God*. In this and in other Epistles we find the Apostle, notwithstanding his solemn resolve to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, insisting on duties and going into minute details. So every minister, who would be faithful to his trust, must be careful to declare the whole truth, but ever in its relation to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He is the central sun of revelation, and, as the stars and planets revolve around the sun, the centre of the solar system, in their proper orbits, so all facts and doctrines revolve around Christ, drawing light from Him and seen only in His light. The law is to be proclaimed in its spirituality and unchanging obligation, as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, or as a rule of life in the hands of the Mediator. The privileges of believers are to be unfolded, as the fruit of his purchase, the outcome of his fullness, and the ground of measureless obligation to be His only, His wholly, and His forever. "Now the glories of heaven will lend rapture to the theme, and now the woes of hell will deepen its solemnity; but always with the intensely practical aim of commending Christ as the only hope of the one and the only refuge from the other." I have read somewhere of an eminent minister that, when called to preach to men and women under conviction of sin, his chosen texts were laden like a summer cloud with heart-subduing tenderness and love: "I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely." "Come now, saith the Lord, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." And what is his own record of the effect of these discourses? In his diary at the close of such a service he would make this entry: "The victorious sweetness of God was present with His Word." But when he saw formalists and Freethinkers and the unawakened representatives of religious respectability coming to hear him, he dealt with them as

Samuel dealt with the smooth-lipped and hard-hearted Agag of old; he hewed them in pieces before the Lord. To preach Christ crucified is to offer mercy to penitent believers, and to declare wrath to come for those who persist in impenitence and unbelief. Not unfrequently too it will be necessary for the Christian minister to refer in the pulpit to political events that he may point out their moral significance, and confess His supremacy, who from His place in the midst of the throne is ruling over and overruling all social and political movements for His own glory and the good of His church.

In the present day the tendency is to divide revealed truth into essentials and non-essentials. The former include the primary truths of the Gospel, while the latter are, as some one has put it, "points of comparative indifference that men may deny or oppose and yet be received into the closest fellowship as Christians holding the Head." I deny that there is one non-essential in the whole Bible. Under the teaching of the Spirit a very simple truth may be the means of leading a man to the Saviour; but who will dare to put his finger on one truth in the inspired volume and say, "That is not needed to lead me on in faith and knowledge and in all grace to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" and there is the Bible idea of salvation. And who will name one that is not essential to his glory? Surely, if every star over our heads shines to His glory, and if every flower under our feet blossoms and fills the air with its fragrance to His glory, every truth of the Word that He has magnified above all His name speaks to His glory. There is no surer test of fidelity than to be "faithful in that which is least." To use the illustration of another, "What would the commander-in-chief say to an officer who, charged to defend one of the bastions or outworks of a besieged city, should surrender it without any resistance into the enemy's hands? Would He entrust that officer with the defense of the citadel?" The inquiry implies the answer. No more can men, who are ready to give up this point or that point because in their view non-essential, be relied on in time of trial to defend the citadel of saving truth. To preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified is to preach the Bible in its entirety.

But we must look for a little at *the personal character* of the ideal Christian minister as brought out in this resolve.

1. He is one who has an *experimental acquaintance with the truth he preaches*. The primary meaning of the word here translated *know* is to *see* or *observe*, and then it comes to signify the knowledge that has been acquired as the result of observation and experience. That is the idea; and is not this essential in a minister of the Gospel, and indeed in all who have the care of souls? We may have attended the theological lectures of eminent professors, and we may have satisfied ourselves as to the evidences of Christianity. I am afraid that many have done this and yet lack the one thing needful. Any one who understands the

use of language can teach the truth in doctrine, but only those who have felt its power in their own hearts can preach the truth as it is in Jesus. To tell of His beauty, we must ourselves have seen Him as the altogether lovely and the chiefest among ten thousand. To commend His grace and mercy, we must ourselves have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The aim, the essence of all Sabbath teaching in the pulpit, or in the class-room, or in the family, is to unfold the riches of the Gospel and endear the Lord Jesus Christ. And in exact proportion to our personal happiness in communion with God will be our success in the ministry.

2. He is *circumspect in the social intercourse of life*. "Among you," says the Apostle. Not only in the pulpit, but in our intercourse with those who wait on our ministrations, are we to preach Jesus Christ. There is singular force in the resolve "among you." In order to the efficiency of our ministry there must be in our daily life some real manifestation of the transforming power of grace and of the peace and blessedness of religion. Robert M'Cheyne, of Dundee, was wise to win souls, and not a little of his success is ascribed to the eminent sanctity of his personal character and conversation; not a few of his hearers tracing their deepest impressions, not to his pulpit utterances but to the manner of his life. So it ever will be. Public teachers are watched more than others. Every word and every action is sure to be scrutinized, and they cannot spend a single day without exerting a secret influence for good or evil. I could cite many instances where trifling conduct and frivolous talk "among them" have driven away the serious impressions that men had received under the formal ministry of the Word. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor." In his studies of the Old Testament Prof. Phelps, of Andover, relates the following incident: In conversation with a friend, a man of the world said, "Our pastor is a capital fellow, a born wit, a splendid mimic; he keeps the room in a roar and in the pulpit he is not afraid to make us laugh." "Suppose," inquired his friend, "you had lost your only child, or that you were yourself about to die?" "Well, to tell the truth," was the reply, "he is the last man I should want to see then." "Somehow," says the Professor very wisely, "these capital fellows in the ministry or out of it are somewhat limited in their range of usefulness. When we come to those passages of life or death at which eternity looks in upon us, we turn to men and women of another make." Oh, to live and speak and act "among men" so that every one who is acquainted with us shall be constrained to say of us, as the Shunamite woman said of the prophet Elisha, whom she afterwards received into her home, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually." Example does tell. A young man of sceptical tendencies, who afterwards became a Christian, used often to remark that there was one argument in favor of Christianity



that he could neither gainsay nor resist, and that was the consistent life of his own father. If we knew our power and used it, we might walk "among men" as angels in whose presence ignorance would flee away and infidelity would hide its head in shame.

3. *Whole-heartedness in the service of the Lord.* The word here translated *determine* signifies to *separate* or put asunder, as one *picks out* of a mass of good and bad articles laid before him that which he prefers to have. The meaning seems to be that from many professions or offices opening before the Apostle the most brilliant prospects, he *select'd* or *picked out* as his life-work the ministry of the Gospel, and thus he coupled with that choice the resolve that his whole being should be consecrated to that service. "Nothing but" is the language of unreserved surrender. The great business of the Christian minister is to save souls, and he needs to be to some extent an enthusiast in his profession; he needs to feel the force of the apostolic counsel, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." The man who stands in the front rank among merchants, or rises to eminence in any branch of professional life is one who has set before himself a definite object and never dissipates his energies. So the successful minister is one who is determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There is a legend of Beza, the great divine of Saxon England. An old man and almost blind, a friend led him to a heap of stones and told him they were people. This was enough; and with fiery tongue he preached the Gospel he loved so well, closing as he was wont to do with these words, "To whom be glory through all the ages." Then, as the legend goes, out of that pile of stones there came this voice, "Amen, venerabilis Beza." The minister who lives to preach Christ to men, and feels that His glory alone justifies the existence of his office, will do more than any other to put the crown of saved souls upon the head of the Saviour. Gold hammered out to cover a wide extent of surface loses its influence; it is not half so mighty as gold compressed into coin. Where one desire fills the soul, that will be sought after and everything will have to bend to it. It will give a coloring to the outgoing stream, directness to the aim, and power to the blow.

A single remark to close with. The essence of vital religion is to know Christ as a personal Saviour, whose promises are bread of life to us and whose grace is our constant trust. To this knowledge the Gospel calls us. Listen to the words of the Saviour: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "Believeth"; in this way we are brought into living union with Him, and are made to share in all the blessings of the new covenant. "Whosoever believeth."—The grace that found the jailor in his deep concern, the malefactor on the cross, and Zacchaeus in the indulgence of his curiosity says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of

life freely." This offer takes in all classes and characters; but observe it is not *shall believe*, but *believeth*. "Now is the accepted time."

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### CHRISTIAN MINISTERS AND SECRET SOCIETIES.\*

BY THE REV. C. D. TRUMBULL, MORNING SUN, IOWA.

What should be the attitude of ministers toward secret societies? The discussion of this theme might be made both long and broad. I do not expect to cover the whole field, but only to present some salient points for the consideration of Christians. I shall come directly to my theme and observe—

I. That the attitude of ministers toward secret societies should be a *separation*. The words of our Lord, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," apply as directly to all secret associations as to anything under heaven. Ministers of the Gospel are by profession official members of the mystical body of Christ—the church. Secret societies are antagonistic to that body. That this is the case will appear from a few familiar statements. Most secret societies have distinct and positive forms of religion;—have chaplains (so-called) who inculcate certain doctrines of religion, offer prayers and sometimes perform other rites which ordinarily pertain to ministers of the Gospel. Some of these societies claim for these rites a deep religious meaning,—claim that by living in strict obedience to the obligation of their orders men may attain perfect sanctification. All, or nearly all, claim that by conformity to their teachings individual members may be fitted for an eternity of happiness in the future world. Most of these orders reject the Lord Jesus Christ—do not permit the use of His blessed name in lodge ceremonies and prayers, lest, forsooth, the enemies of Christ should be offended and stand aloof. Many of their rites are borrowed from heathenism. These things being true, how, we ask, can any Christian minister unite with such associations and minister at the altar of some secret lodge while he professes to be a minister of Christ? What would the church say, what even the world, if it were discovered that certain ministers of Protestant churches belonged to the order of Jesuits, and while ministering ordinarily in Protestant churches, also ministered secretly in Roman Catholic churches? Would not all be horrified, on such an exposure, at such perfidy? I know there are many who will say the cases are not parallel. To my mind, the inconsistency in professing to be a minister of a Protestant church and at the same time be a Jesuit priest is not so great as in professing to be a Christian minister and at the same time be a member of a Masonic lodge. The Roman Catholic church, though described in Holy Writ as "mystery,

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