

THE
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HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS OF OUR LORD'S
INFLUENCE OVER MEN.

I CAN conceive nothing more necessary for our day than an intelligent and thoughtful perusal of the life of our Lord. It is good to turn from the world as we know it, to His world,—from the transitory and the accidental, which, “comparing ourselves with ourselves,” we mistake for the eternal and the essential. In spite of ourselves, we are dazzled and carried away by the lives of the men around us. We are in danger of drifting into the conviction that the victory which overcometh the world is, not our faith, but talent, wealth, position, physical force, fortunate accidents. In politics, literature, science, art, and religion, the real issues, the true interpretation, are in danger of being obscured. It is a danger especially besetting the young in their entrance upon life. They are apt to become unsettled, possessed of some unwholesome ideal, discontented with the ordinary clay of life, worshippers of glitter and sham, seeing only the height attained, not the ladder by which it has been reached,—stony-ground hearers, false disciples, who would win the crown without the cross. They see only the gold of life; they pause not to consider that every man is the Midas at whose touch all the common things of life turn into the precious metal.

The benefit is inestimable of having a standard of our true self such as we have in the Gospel. There, what the world worships, falls into the background; the germ and secret of all life stand revealed in unmistakable colours. The pulse loses its fever throb, the mind its restlessness, the whole being its fitfulness. The purifying baptismal wave sweeps away the top-soil, and we take our stand upon the imperishable rock.

Here, again, an element of unreality is apt to creep in. We are in danger of failing to realise the perfectness of the Humanity of the Great Life, of making the appeal to this standard practically null. A false reverence for the person of the God-man has taught us to dwell upon

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

A PROMINENT feature of society, in all Christian lands, is a distinct order of men, engaged in a peculiar work, to which they are set apart with ceremonies of deep solemnity. Separated from secular callings, they are supported by the contributions of others; and, in turn, their lives are devoted to the moral and spiritual interests of their fellow-men, and filled up with self-sacrificing toil in their behalf. As a class, they are characterised by purity of life, disinterestedness of aim, untiring industry, and unswerving fidelity. And while their high attainments, intellectual and moral, win from all the tribute of respect, in the hearts of those who have been blessed by their labours, they are cherished with the warmest feelings of love.

But it is not to be expected at any time, and least of all in an age like the present, that such an institution as the Christian ministry will be allowed to pass unchallenged. Our age is wont to measure things by materialistic standards, and to lay its measuring line on institutions of the most sacred and spiritual nature, with utter disregard of any distinction between them and things material and gross. As if one could measure knowledge, piety, or happiness in a bushel-measure, like corn, it insists upon bringing all kinds of labour to the test of productiveness, recognising all the while no products but those that can be seen and handled, and that directly promote the wealth of nations. And so, from quarters outside the Church of Christ, there comes a continual *quo warranto* directed against the Christian ministry. By what right, it is asked, do the ministers of religion claim pecuniary support from their fellow-men, and what do they give in return for such support? And why should so much of the world's best talent and learning, which are needed to turn the wheels of secular industry, and carry on the work of the world, be withdrawn from the channels of business, to stagnate in pools of pious meditation, or flow feebly in unpractical and unprofitable endeavour? It seems to the worldling a waste of men and money, both of which might be utilised in developing the resources of the earth, and increasing the aggregate of human wealth.

Even within the bounds of the Church, where the Christian ministry is held in high honour, there is very inadequate appreciation of its grand utility and pre-eminent importance to the world. There are several grounds for this assertion. The unwillingness of Christian parents to devote their sons to the ministry, and the reluctance of Christian young men to choose this as their calling in life, indicate a low estimate of it, as compared with other pursuits and occupations. Parents, especially if in good circumstances in life, seem to feel that they can do better by their sons than to make ministers of them. And

the young men, with paths of honour and profit opening before them in the various vocations of life, give too little heed to the claims of the ministry, and persuade themselves that they can be, not only more happy, but even more useful in some other calling.

Besides, the familiar cry of "too many ministers," raised from time to time by the press, and echoed by society, tends to the discouragement of young men who are looking towards the ministry, and to the depreciation of the sacred office in the estimation of the Church.

But inadequate appreciation of the ministry is especially evidenced by the meagre and reluctant support given to their pastors by many churches, and their want of liberality for the furtherance of the Gospel at home and abroad. While the labourer on the farm, or in the shop or factory, is deemed worthy of his hire, there is a latent feeling on the part of many church-members that the minister does not earn his salary, and that his support is a burden unjustly laid upon those who are doing the actual work of the world. And while other debts are paid cheerfully, or at least promptly, the minister's salary, or each individual's share of it, is doled out with reluctant hand. Food, dress, the comforts of home, books, schools—these are found to be necessaries of life, and are paid for without grudging; but the Church and the ministry are too often regarded as things which might be dispensed with, or which may at least be put last, and put off with whatever may be to spare after all other things have been provided for.

Under these circumstances, the claims of the Christian ministry present a subject of vast practical importance, worthy of the most thoughtful consideration.

An inquiry into the *origin* of the sacred office carries us back to remote antiquity. This is no new institution, no experiment of modern times, seeking the adoption and begging the suffrages of the world. Without any of the infirmity, it has all the glory of great age; it has existed throughout the generations of mankind. In the Divine economy, provision has always been made for the religious instruction of men. And this instruction has been imparted through the agency of men, some of whom were endowed with supernatural gifts, and spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and were sometimes solemnly inducted into a sacred office; but all of whom, whether their gifts were ordinary or extraordinary, and their office recognised or unrecognised, laboured for the spiritual improvement and eternal welfare of their fellow-men. From the beginning, the father of the family, or patriarch, was the divinely-appointed minister of religion to his household. And in the increasing degeneracy of mankind in the age that succeeded the Fall, God raised up men whose piety and wisdom qualified them to be leaders, and whose influence was exerted beyond the narrow limits of the family, upon the world. Enoch prophesied; Noah preached; through Abraham were given to the Church the riches of the Divine promise and the seal of the righteousness of faith; Jacob proclaimed the coming Shiloh; Joseph

CATHOLIC PRESBYTERIAN, September, 1880.]

pointed to the blessings of the future and the possession of the promised land ; and Moses, the great prophet of God and type of the coming Saviour, wrought a mighty deliverance for the Church, put it in possession of the oracles of God, and ushered in a new dispensation, which was the promise and preparation of the Gospel redemption.

And in that Mosaic dispensation, when no longer the family, but the *nation* was the Church, one whole tribe out of twelve was, by divine command, solemnly set apart as the ministers of religion and instructors of the people in holy things. For we must not fall into the common mistake of supposing that the functions exercised by the priests and Levites comprised nothing more than the offering of sacrifices and the performance of the elaborate ritual of temple worship. To their charge the law of God was solemnly committed ; it was their duty to preserve it, to read it in the hearing of the people, to interpret it, to teach it. "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law" (Deut. xxxiii. 10). The general interests of religion throughout the whole nation were their care. Debarred from secular pursuits, they were not even allowed a portion in the land upon its division among the tribes ; for the Lord was their portion, and the Lord's work was to be their constant employment. That they might give themselves wholly to it, their support was made obligatory upon the other tribes, who were commanded to pay them a tithe of their substance, and besides doing this, to treat them with the same kindness and generosity as were to be accorded to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, seeing they had no inheritance in the land (Deut. xiv. 29). The duties of the priests and Levites at the temple were indeed arduous, but they occupied only a small portion of each individual's time. In the days of David there were twenty-four courses of priests, who offered sacrifices in turn ; and twenty-four thousand Levites, who were also divided into sections or courses for the service of the house of the Lord ; besides six thousand who were officers and judges, four thousand porters, and four thousand musicians. Thus ample time was afforded to each one, when not on duty at the temple, for the more private, but not less important, part of his work,—the religious instruction and guidance of the people. And it is worthy of note, as an arrangement which seems to have been made with direct reference to this part of their work, that these ministers of religion dwelt, not in the city of Jerusalem, where they would be near the temple, but in forty-eight cities, scattered in all parts of the land, among all the twelve tribes, where they were easily accessible to all the people, and whence they could exercise a pastoral care and oversight of all.

Ideally, the provision made for the spiritual welfare of the nation, by the separation of one tribe to the holy office of the ministry, was perfect. With holy and faithful men in the office, nothing more could be needed or desired. But in addition to priests and Levites, and probably because of their degeneracy and neglect of duty, God raised up, in course of time, another class of religious teachers, the prophets. In the earlier and

purser days of the theocracy, the prophetic function seems to have been rarely exercised ; but from the time of Samuel onwards, the nation was rarely without the presence of one or more of these servants of God. When the sons of Eli made themselves vile, and he restrained them not ; and when, under a corrupt priesthood, the people of Israel were sinking into vice, God raised up Samuel, and after him a succession of prophets, who laboured for the restoration of moral purity and spiritual worship. Schools of the prophets were instituted by Samuel, and continued by Elijah and Elisha, into which pious and promising youths were gathered, and there trained as religious instructors of the people. Weekly and monthly meetings seem to have been held by the people, to receive the instruction of the prophets (2 Kings iv. 23). And after the schools of the prophets and the emergency which called them into existence had passed away, God still continued from time to time to raise up men endowed with the Holy Ghost, to reform evils into which His people were falling, to speak in His behalf unto them and others, and to write books of Scripture which should remain the precious and enduring possession of all mankind.

Still later in the history of the people of God, and apparently the outgrowth of peculiar circumstances and needs, the Synagogue appears. In this institution, bringing the means of grace to "every city" and within reach of the masses of the people, and combining with its ceremonies a large admixture of the didactic element, we see the transition from the Old to the New Testament worship, and the providential preparation for that grand and final agency which is now flooding the world with the knowledge of truth and salvation. Springing up in the period of the Babylonian captivity to meet the deeply felt needs of those who mourned their exile from the holy city and the ruin of their temple ; ingrafted, at the Restoration, in the worship of the nation as a branch whose fruit had already been found nourishing to piety ; and in the subsequent Dispersion transplanted to Gentile cities everywhere throughout the civilised world,—the Synagogue is a striking illustration of the provision which is ever being made, either by God's direct appointment or His providential leadings, for the spiritual needs of man. If the people of God must go into exile, or be scattered among the nations, then the institutions of religion, the means of grace, must go with them. If the old, local worship, with its sacrificial rites, is about to be broken up, and the time approaching when "neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem" shall men "worship the Father," then the way must be prepared for a worship suited to all countries and times, and fitted to bring men to the highest spiritual attainments. And as the government of the Synagogue by its elders gave form to the constitution of the Christian Church, so its simple worship, consisting of praise and prayer, with the reading of the Scriptures and the sermon, or "word of exhortation," formed the model of those services of the church in which the people of God find constant profit and delight.

CATHOLIC PRESBYTERIAN, September, 1880.]

The Christian ministry, the present and final order of religious instructors, was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. "He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach." Other seventy also He appointed, and sent them as labourers into the great harvest-field. And throughout the centuries since His redemptive work was finished on Calvary, thousands upon thousands more have heard the voice of His Spirit, and have gone forth in obedience to His command, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Though neither priests nor prophets, in the technical sense of the words, Christian ministers are the historical successors of both, and of those who taught in the synagogues. Their work is higher, grander, and more blessed than that of those who went before them—the work of heralding a finished redemption, and publishing a universal offer. Yet, as the ministers of religion, the spiritual teachers and guides of mankind, the spokesmen of God, they are one with those who went before them in older dispensations. The succession is unbroken from the creation; it shall continue unbroken to the end of the world.

The minister of the Gospel need not apologise for his vocation. He can glory in its ancient origin and its illustrious history. He can claim many of the noblest and best of earth as his fellow-craftsmen. He can trace his pedigree to devoted toilers whose lives have blessed mankind, and heroic martyrs of whom the world was not worthy, and inspired apostles who sat at the feet of Jesus; and upward through the centuries to holy men of God like Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, Elijah, Samuel, and Moses, and Abraham the friend of God, and Noah the preacher of righteousness, and Enoch the seventh from Adam, who prophesied and who walked with God, and was not, for God took him.

But, besides and above all this—a glory before which these names fade as stars before the sun—he holds his commission from Him whose name is above every name, the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. This is the grand and all-sufficient vindication of the Christian ministry, that the Lord of Heaven and earth has said to men, "Go, preach." What service is so exalted and honourable as His service? What work is so worthy of human talents and human lives as the work to which He calls? And what golden gains, reaped in the harvest fields of the world's business, can compare with the blessedness of the most humble and obscure servant of Christ, who toils for his Master in the great spiritual harvest? In all the lofty flights of human ambition there is nothing so exalted as this. And while he must ever be deeply humbled by a sense of his own unworthiness, and amazed at the grace of God who has counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry, the preacher of the Gospel may justly feel that his office, divinely instituted, is the highest to which man is called on earth, and his work, divinely appointed, the grandest in which human talent can be employed.

"I magnify mine office." Yet the claim of the Christian ministry

upon the world is not merely one of authority, but also and especially one of lowly and helpful service. Like their Master, the Son of Man, they came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. "Ministers of Christ" on the one hand, bearing His commission, and speaking to men in His name,—on the other, they are "stewards of the mysteries of God." They are put in trust with the Gospel, and what trust so precious has ever been committed to men for the use of the world? They are messengers who bring good tidings; and what tidings so sweet have ever sounded in the ears of men as the message of divine mercy and redemption through Jesus Christ? Carlyle says: "That a man stand and speak of spiritual things to men, it is beautiful;—even in its great obscurity and decadence, it is among the beautifullest, most touching objects one sees on earth. This speaking man has, indeed, in these times, wandered terribly from the point; has, alas! as it were, totally lost sight of the point; yet, at bottom, whom have we to compare with him? Of all public functionaries, boarded and lodged on the industries of modern Europe, is there one worthier of the board he has? A man ever professing, and, however languidly, making still some endeavour to save the souls of men: contrast him with a man professing to do little but shoot the partridges of men! I wish he could find the point again, this speaking one; and stick to it with tenacity, with deadly energy; for there is need of him yet! The speaking function—this, of truth coming to us with a living voice, nay, in a living shape, and as a concrete practical exemplar; this, with all our writing and printing functions, has a perennial place."

In the service which it renders to mankind, the Christian ministry is, firstly, a ministry of *reconciliation*. "God hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 18-20. What a blessed ministry is this; how full of saving power to a lost world! That a man should go forth among sinful, dying men, to tell them of divine mercy, and, as an ambassador from the court of Heaven, proclaim the terms of the divine amnesty; that he should tell the perishing of the blessed Jesus, who came to save the lost, and point them to the cross on which the glorious redemption was wrought; that he should plead with them, as one who has himself found mercy, to turn from their sins and be reconciled to God; that, by divine help, he should bring one after another into the enjoyment of peace, and the blessed relation of sonship with God; and going on with unwearied devotion, should ever seek for more, and win them back to God,—among rich and poor, learned and ignorant, in stately palaces and out in the highways and hedges, everywhere seeking and saving those who were lost:—is there any work so worthy of man's mightiest energies? and is there any

CATHOLIC PRESBYTERIAN, September, 1880.]

service rendered by man to his fellow-man worthy for a moment to be compared with this? Nay, oftentimes, overwhelmed with a sense of the world's sad condition and the importance of spiritual things, we almost feel that there is nothing else worth doing at all. And although this feeling is unwarranted,—for every honest calling in life has its utility, and men have physical and intellectual as well as spiritual needs,—yet what needs are so crying as those of souls that perish, and what calling is so freighted with blessing for mankind as the ministry of reconciliation?

Are there "too many ministers?" Impossible. The most pressing need of the world at the present hour is for thousands more, to go forth as ambassadors for Christ, and publish everywhere the glad tidings of salvation, and plead with men to be reconciled to God. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Whole nations have never heard the message of redeeming grace; and even in Christian lands, wide regions are destitute of spiritual privileges, and thousands of immortal beings are hurrying to judgment without a hope in Christ. "Too many ministers!" There will never be enough until every shore shall be trodden by the feet of them that publish peace, and every son and daughter of Adam shall have heard the message of salvation; until every city and village, every hill and valley on the broad face of the earth shall be ablaze with Gospel light; until every tongue shall sing the praises of the Redeemer, and every heart rejoice in the hope of His glory.

Again, it is a ministry of *edification*. Could we suppose the whole world converted to God, we would see, in the wonderful achievement, not the completion, but only the commencement of the ministry's blessed work. That work has reached only the first stage of its success in the conversion of the soul. The new birth is but the germination of the seed; and the tender plant of grace must be cultivated and cared for, digged about by the hand of patient industry, and watered with many prayers, that it may bring forth fruit unto eternal life. The new-born child of God must be fed with the sincere milk, and as he is able to bear it, with the strong meat of the word, that he may grow thereby; his mind must be instructed, his graces confirmed, his conscience quickened, his capabilities of usefulness called into exercise and directed, his whole character developed in symmetry and strength, even unto perfection. This is the work which the Christian pastor aims to accomplish for every individual of his flock. Says the apostle Paul, "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: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11-13). And he represents himself as "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that I may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 28).

This is a part of ministerial labour whose results cannot be estimated

by figures, nor paraded in statistical reports. It wins no applause for the patient toiler, who waters the plants which others, it may be, have planted, and trains for usefulness on earth and glory in heaven the souls entrusted to his care. But how vast is its importance! Without it, the work of evangelisation would in many cases fail of its grand object, for converts gathered into the Church would soon relapse into indifference or immorality. Nay, without it, evangelisation would soon cease, for none would be fitted and trained to carry it on. And thus, were it not for this quiet and constant work of spiritual culture, religion itself would die, and the world sink into heathenism.

Our Lord emphasised the importance of this ministry of edification when He gave to Peter the thrice-repeated charge, "Feed my sheep: feed my lambs." The Apostle Paul appreciated it when he said to the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed unto yourselves, and unto the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." And aggressive as was the great Apostle's ministry, eager as he was to carry the Gospel to those who had never heard its glad sound, he nevertheless returned again and again to the churches he had founded, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith." If he may be called a benefactor of mankind who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, what shall we call him through whose influence in a community the vile weeds of vice and immorality give place to a harvest of virtue, and holy affections and generous deeds multiply and abound? Like the seed growing secretly, this work of the Christian minister is silent, unobtrusive, unnoticed, perhaps despised, by the world; but its fruit is abundant and precious. Like the salt which purifies and the light which illumines, the pastor's influence is a perpetual benefaction to the earth. In restraining vices, preventing follies, and enlightening ignorance; in strengthening souls against temptation, helping them onward in the varied experiences of the Christian life, training them for work in the vineyard of God, guiding them in effort, and leading them upwards to high spiritual attainments and rich spiritual enjoyments,—his work is one of the largest factors in the production of human civilisation, prosperity, and piety.

Once more, it is a ministry of *consolation*. One of the most devoted of the early preachers of the cross, the companion and fellow-labourer of Paul in his first missionary journey, was surnamed by the Apostles, "Barnabas, which is being interpreted, the son of consolation." And such are all the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ,—sons of consolation, comforters of those who mourn, sympathising helpers of all who are in trouble or distress. They are servants of Him who was "anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised;" who invited to His sympathy and help all the weary and heavy-laden, and said to His sorrowing disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The Gospel

CATHOLIC PRESBYTERIAN, September, 1880.]

they preach has healing balm for all the wounds of humanity ; and it is theirs to apply the balm to wounded hearts, to soothe the sorrows of earth with heavenly consolation. Everywhere we behold them following close upon the track of human woe, to assuage its anguish, remedy its evil, and gather up for the good of men the spiritual blessings it conveys. In the abode of poverty they are familiar and beloved guests, cheering earthly privation by the disclosure of heavenly riches. By the bedside of the sick they are found, pointing to the Great Physician. In the house of mourning and by the open grave, where hearts are breaking with sorrow, and inexorable death holds sway, they ever stand to tell of Him who is the resurrection and the life, and point to the mansions in the Father's house which He has gone to prepare.

Can the world afford to be without this ministry of consolation ? Can it afford to silence this voice of good cheer which comes across the dark and troubled waters of life's sea ; or put out this light which illumines the valley of the shadow of death ? Surely not, while it is the abode of affliction and sorrow ; not while there are such things on earth as privation, and pain, and care, and trouble, and death. Even those who, in prosperity, neglect and despise the ministers of Christ, are ready to listen to them when sickness and trouble come, and send for them when death invades the household. Careless and hardened as they may be, they cannot bear to follow their dead to the grave without some word of comfort from the Gospel. Hostility itself vanishes when the crying needs of the heart are felt ; and they who once regarded the Christian minister with aversion and contempt, now look to him for comfort, and lean upon him for support.

Combining these elements in one living, loving service, what calling in which man is engaged is so fraught with good to the world ? It deals with the highest and most precious interests of humanity. And its results, unbounded by the horizon of time, stretch onward for ever, filling eternity with blessedness and glory.

We would press the claims of the ministry upon the young men of the Church. There is need of more labourers in the great harvest-field. This is a field that is ever enlarging its bounds with the increase of population, the settlement and growth of new countries, and the opening of heathen nations to the Gospel. The Macedonian cry is ever growing louder and more pathetic, and the need more urgent for the strong reinforcement of the ranks of the ministry. How sad it is to learn, that in some even of the leading denominations of the Church, there are not enough ministers to hold the ground already occupied, still less to go forward with aggressive work ; that there is in the colleges a dearth of candidates for the sacred office ; and that the annual number of ordinations is less than that of deaths in the ministry ! Chancellor Howard Crosby, Chairman of the Committee on Education of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (which met last May in Madison, Wisconsin), says in his report : " From present

prospects in the colleges, we shall have, for several years to come, an accession to the ministry of only 56 a-year, when we require 110 new men every year merely to fill up our losses. We need 47 more to keep pace with the increase of our churches. We should have, therefore, 157 new ministers each year; against which need we have only these 56 a-year to expect, together with what additions may come in from independent sources—say 44, as the most we can reasonably expect. These most favourable calculations show that we shall run behind at the rate of 57 ministers a-year.” That the ministry of this Church cannot afford such decrease in its numbers is evident from another fact, stated by Dr. R. M. Patterson in the *Presbyterian Review* for July,—namely, that for 4100 ecclesiastically organised fields which need pastors, there are only 3900 ministers and licentiates who could, without cramping other departments of ministerial labour, be placed in them. And the same writer shows that this state of things exists in other branches of the Presbyterian Church in America and Europe, and in the Congregational, Episcopal, and other denominations.

These facts are significant, and demand the thoughtful consideration of young men. Not that we would have any enter the sacred office who are not called of God, but that every Christian young man, in looking forward to the work of life, and considering the needs of his fellow-men for his service, should inquire diligently whether he may not be called of God to devote himself to the ministry of the Gospel. And if so, he should obey the divine call promptly and gladly.

The privations and hardships of the ministry, contrasted with the attractions of worldly business and worldly wealth, tend to deafen many young men to the call of God, and turn them aside from the great work in which their talents are so urgently needed. They do not intend to neglect the service of God, or fail in duty to their fellow-men; they simply choose an easier, more attractive, and, they try to think, a better way. They think that they can be more useful in other callings in life; that they can do more good by accumulating wealth, and consecrating it to God; and that, at the same time, they can escape the trials and toils of ministerial life, and have more of earthly comfort and happiness.

This reasoning is plausible. It is true that men may serve God faithfully in any calling in life; and the Lord hath need of men who will consecrate their business to Him, and pour their wealth into His treasury for the advancement of His cause. And if a man be not called to the ministry, there is nothing better for him to do than this. But no consecration of wealth, especially of wealth whose accumulation is only a possibility of the future, is equivalent to a consecration of *ourselves*, our talents, our lives, directly to the work of God in the salvation of men. And no calling in life is so full of the promise and potency of human welfare and of the glory of God as the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the highest ideal of life are joined two things—fellowship with

CATHOLIC PRESBYTERIAN, September, 1880.]

God, and usefulness to man. A life spent without realising either of these is an utter and melancholy failure. That is the grandest and noblest life which combines both these elements in the highest degree. And in no vocation is there so great a possibility of attaining this as in that of the Christian minister. Separated from secular callings, engaged in the study of divine truth, a man of prayer, a labourer together with God,—he is in a great degree exempt from those worldly and sensual influences which hinder the growth of piety, and walks with God in the exercise of his holy calling. Yet, on the other hand, his life is not one of monkish seclusion, but of daily contact with his fellow-men, and of daily toil in their behalf—a life whose whole energies are bent to the one work of doing good. In him is realised the picture drawn by an old poet :—

“ Man of lofty nature looks up
To heaven, so calm and pure and beautiful.
He looks below, but not contemptuously ;
For there he sees reflections of himself
As a poor child of nature ; and he feels
A touch of kindred brotherhood, and pants
To lead the weak and erring unto heights
Which he so joyous treads ; nay more, descends
Into the smoky turmoil and the roar
Of the rude world,—his hands at work on earth,
His soul among the clouds, dwelling with God
And drinking of His Spirit.”

There is need throughout the whole Church of a higher and juster appreciation of the ministry. If pious young men are turning aside to secular pursuits, and the supply of ministers is failing, is it not because of the discouragements to the sacred office presented by the indifference, censoriousness, and parsimony of the Church,—indifference which leaves the candidate to struggle through his long course of preparation as best he may, or gives him scanty and reluctant aid,—censoriousness which subjects the minister to a life-long ordeal,—and parsimony which doles out to him a niggardly support in return for his devoted service ? If there are “ too many ministers,” is it not in the sense—the only sense in which it can be true—that there are more than the Church is willing to send forth into the great field, whose waving grain is white for the harvest ? And if there are evils which the Church laments,—if her ministers are incompetent, or insufficient, or restless,—under the blessing of her exalted Head, it is in her power to remedy such evils, to call into her service the most gifted of her sons, to give permanency and content to the pastoral relation, to inspire her ministers with new consecration and new power, and crown their labours with grand success. And these things are to be attained, first of all, through the hearty recognition of the divine authority and pre-eminent usefulness of the ministry.

The ministers of Christ ask no superstitious homage ; they claim no

lordship over God's heritage ; they are not greedy of filthy lucre. But they are entitled to receive the cordial appreciation, the sincere affection, the generous support, the earnest prayers, and the hearty co-operation of the people of God, and the grateful recognition and esteem of the world.

W. B. NOBLE.

THE PERILS AND DIFFICULTIES OF COLONIAL CHRISTIANITY.

THE first and great necessity of the Colonies is religion—Christianity. We have everything, literally everything, else. We have fine continents and islands upon which the Anglo-Saxon stock not only thrives but improves. We have abundance of food, abundance of money. The colony may be poor, but the individual is rich : he either has enough or can have enough, or he is positively wealthy. We, moreover, are rapidly possessing all the implements of civilisation, all the education of older countries, even the refinement of modern society. Walking through the streets of Melbourne or Sydney, it would puzzle you to tell what want, which you were accustomed to have supplied in Great Britain or America, cries here in vain for its complement. You can have a coach, a cab, a bus, or a railway, if you wish to travel by land ; you can have a well-appointed steamer if you wish to travel by sea. You can have your newspaper on the breakfast-table, side by side with the ham, chicken, or any other kind of food you were accustomed to in the parlours of Old, or New England. You can rush to your office as merchant, manager, or clerk, and pass hundreds or thousands of pounds through your hands during the day. You can lunch sumptuously or modestly, according to your means, in the café at midday. You can have your soup, roast beef, custard, and dessert in your own mansion in the evening. If you love to stay at home, you can sit at your sea-coal fire and read your magazine or novel from the neighbouring lending library or reading-room ; or, if your appetite be voracious, you can go to the public library. If you are fond of the concert, the ball-room, or the theatre,—if you like an oratorio or a political meeting, your wish may be gratified. And thus onward might we enumerate.

Of course, we have not all these things in perfection everywhere. The lonely shepherd in his shieling, or the miner in his tent, does not enjoy the luxuries of life in this degree any more than do similar classes at home. The small town or the embryo township has the appliances of society only in a rudimentary form. Nevertheless, here is the type which varies in quantity and quality according to circumstances. And thus we have in substance, and in most instances the beginnings, of every worldly comfort and worldly enjoyment. We can by no means