
MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

The ministry of the Gospel, practiced as it was taught and practiced by Christ, brings serenity and happiness of soul to him who sincerely gives himself up to the service. To comfort the sick, to help the poor, to guide the unfortunate, to point the way to purity and righteousness, will bring to him who ministers a "peace that passeth all understanding," and it never fails. We all know how the doing of a good deed will bring a glow to the heart, and this is the strongest proof we have of the power of "goodness." We all *know*,—and there is no question in our minds about it,—that to him who gives himself up to a life of true righteousness there will come this reward of peace.

It is fortunate for the world that there are true exponents of Christ's teachings, and they are to be found among all creeds and sects. They are found along the walks of the lowly,

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but they are not abashed by the pretensions of power. Their hearts go out to the wretched and forsaken, but their souls dwell on the heights, and their faces are turned toward the morning. Their presence is a benediction and their lives light the way to the eternities.

There is a second class of men called ministers who are not very bad nor yet very good. They want to do their duty, but they want to be paid for it, and they have an eye to the main chance. They like comfortable living, and therefore they want paying congregations. They are rarely great, but the average is fair. They have a taste for the material things, yet they are serious and mean to be in earnest.

They tell the truth as they see it, and they do some good in the world by preaching severe morals, which helps mankind upward. But their thoughts mould their characters; and to the extent that they are narrow and greedy, and fall short of the true spirit, do their lives

The Cost of Something for Nothing

end on the barren plains of disappointment and bitterness.

There is a third class of ministers, who glory in the title of Reverend Doctor. Usually they are men of average ability and expensive education. They rarely do anything great or original. They are eminently respectable and thoroughly conventional. Respectability is their stock in trade, and conventionality is their protection. They cater to the rich, and they love luxury. They seek large salaries and fashionable and rich congregations. They delight to pose, and are great in the drawing-room and popular with the ladies.

They walk down the avenues where reside the wealthy, and thank God for having guided their feet into pleasant paths. The hovels of the poor shock their refined tastes, and the cries of distress grate too harshly on their delicate nerves; so they avoid both, and the cry of the oppressed does not reach them.

The Cost of Something for Nothing

They turn their backs toward misery and shut their eyes to injustice. On public questions they are to be found on the side of the rich and powerful.

Their sermons are sometimes learned, and their prayers always unctuous and well-rounded; but the former lack sympathy, and the latter lack soul.

Their service suggests a beautiful mockery. They do not conduct religious worship,—they give a fashionable and artistic entertainment. Their congregations are more like fashionable clubs than members of Christian churches.

The men who preside over and guide these clubs may be useful to the world,—not as ministers of the lowly Saviour, but as social guides. They are useful in perhaps even a higher sense than is the dancing master and the instructor in deportment; but, unfortunately, the elements of cant and hypocrisy enter into the case of the Reverend Doctor, and in time they

The Cost of Something for Nothing

change his nature, candor dies, and conventional conduct takes its place. Such a man is constantly deteriorating. He drifts away from the fountains of pure life, and parts company with Nature. His soul becomes bankrupt, and he carries with him the visage of the Pharisee and the smile of the parasite.