

FISHERS OF MEN

B. T. R O B E R T S

FISHERS OF MEN
by B.T. Roberts

All scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

This book has not been updated with copy editing styles that follow current trends, therefore some inconsistency may be noticed.

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New Edition

Foreword

For many years Roberts' *Fishers of Men* has in certain circles been a devotional classic and a practical stimulus to Christian workers. The author says in his preface that the book was written "with an abiding sense of the presence and help of God." The character of the book, and the spiritual fervor that animates it, would certainly indicate that such was the case. The father-in-law of the writer of this foreword, who lived in B.T. Roberts' home for a time, told us how Brother Roberts would sometimes say in substance, "The Lord helped me in writing that book, and I am confident that it will help you." And we are confident still that this book will prove to be a blessing to anyone who will read it with an open heart.

However, this book should not be regarded as a full and complete treatment of all phases of Christian work. It is excellent in its sphere, but it needs to be supplemented with other material pertaining to the winning and Christian nurture of children. It has been truly remarked by others that there is not a word in this book about fishing for children. And yet that this is an extremely important matter we would all admit. Over a half century ago the importance of definite Christian work in behalf of children and young people was not realized in many circles as it is today. Of course

there are other specialized fields, such as methods of missionary work in foreign lands, concerning which this book does not profess to treat. But the book does set forth clearly the great, fundamental principles which are necessary to success in Christian endeavor anywhere and in any age.

It may be worthy of remark that a few of the statements made in Chapter II concerning "Success a Duty" seem rather extreme and hardly take adequately into account the difficult and discouraging conditions under which a person may sometimes work. Some devoted pioneer missionaries whom the world has honored would not rank very high if their success were judged solely by the number of souls they won. That Brother Roberts himself sometimes was compelled to recognize the extreme difficulty of attaining results in some fields is evidenced by a statement he made, as reported by John S. McGeary, in a Methodist preachers' meeting in San Francisco when he was holding meetings there in 1880. He said, "I am surprised, brethren, that you have accomplished as much as you have. It is the hardest rock I ever drilled in."

This book ran through three editions during the lifetime of B.T. Roberts. He died on February 27, 1893. For many years the book has been out of print. For some time it has been apparent that it should be reprinted because of the continued demand for it. It is being entirely reset and reprinted at a time when the cost of paper and of almost everything else is extremely high, but the price is being kept as low as possible. It is being edited by the undersigned along the line of modernization of the punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and a few other things pertaining to literary form; but the wording of the original author is preserved intact.

B.L. OLMSTEAD

Preface

Christ, when on earth, called men of different degrees of talent and of mental culture, and from various conditions of life, to preach His gospel. He does so still. Many neglect the call.

Some defer it indefinitely, others until they can attain to a certain standard of literary qualifications. This book is designed to encourage all whom God calls to enter at once upon the work of saving souls. It is hoped that it may be of practical service to young and inexperienced ministers of the gospel. They will find in every chapter hints and suggestions which, if heeded, may help them in their great work.

In this country, among all denominations, the people have more or less influence in determining who shall be their preachers. It is important that they should entertain correct, Scriptural ideas of what they have a right to expect of those whom they take as their spiritual guides. In these pages they may be assisted in coming to a just decision in this important matter.

In the work of soul saving, every follower of Christ should bear a part. He has duties to do which he cannot delegate to any; responsibilities to meet which he cannot transfer to other shoulders. In the pages which follow, the earnest endeavor is made to stir up Christians to a more lively appreciation of their duties, and to lay before them strong incentives to their performance.

The effort has been to take no position that is not sustained

by a fair interpretation of the Word of God. To this Word we bow with the most cordial submission. If our work may be thought by some to be radical, we beg them to bear in mind that the Bible is a radical book.

This life is so short that we cannot afford to lose much time in experiments in the great work of saving men. Just as far as possible, we should profit by the experience of others. Under similar conditions, like causes produce like results. Where others have failed, we should learn a lesson from their failures, and carefully avoid the causes which led to their disappointment and defeat. We should turn the success of those who win, to our own advantage, by adopting, as far as circumstances permit, the methods by which they overcame. Hence, in these pages we frequently refer to those who, by their godly living and by the judicious employment of their time and means, left the world better for their labors. "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."

The most of the matter contained in this volume has been written expressly for it. But when, in treating upon our subject, we have found what we wished to say already written in articles which from time to time we have prepared for *The Earnest Christian*, we have transferred it with suitable alterations, to these pages.

We have written from a deep conviction of duty, and with an abiding sense of the presence and help of God. We have endeavored to write with the utmost plainness, so that none need be at a loss to comprehend our meaning. We speak in earnest, and we wish to be understood.

If what we have written shall add to the usefulness of those

self-denying men who are laboring for the good of others, and thus be indirectly the means of bringing souls to heaven, our object will have been accomplished, and God shall have the glory.

B.T. ROBERTS,

Rochester, NY, August 20, 1878.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

“Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes.” – John 21:11

When may a preacher of the gospel be said to succeed in his calling? We say of a doctor that he succeeds when he cures his patient; of a lawyer, when he wins his case; of a soldier, when he defeats his enemy. Success in any enterprise is the prosperous accomplishment of the object of the undertaking.

The minister of Jesus Christ is a man called of Christ to do for Him a certain, definite work. What is this work? We have an answer in the words of inspiration: “And 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. 4:11-13).

These are comprehensive words. They are full of meaning.

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They teach that the object of the ministry is to prepare men and women for heaven – for an eternal abode with the God of purity and love. This is to be done by converting sinners to God, and then inducing them to go on in faith and love and knowledge and holiness to the end of their lives. In becoming a “perfect man, through faith, and through the knowledge of the Son of God,” is implied deliverance from every sinful disposition and affection of the soul, and from every unnatural or inordinate appetite of the body. He in whom this work is done by the power of the Spirit of God thus becomes a saint. A great work of grace has been wrought in him; but it is not completed. The genius of the sculptor is seen in the finishing touches which he gives to the marble likeness of the human form. So the ability and fidelity of the minister of the gospel are manifested in the ripeness of Christian experience and character to which those attain who put themselves under his guidance. Unless the farmer gives to his grain the care necessary to bring it to the harvest, his previous labor is lost. The apostle writes to some who had been converted through his instrumentality, but who had turned from spiritual to ceremonial religion: “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain” (Gal. 4:11). It was not enough that they belonged to the church, in a day when it was the greatest reproach to be a Christian. It was not enough that they observed all the ceremonies and fasts and feasts of the church: all was of no avail so long as they were wanting in the fruits of the Spirit.

The success of a minister of Jesus Christ does not consist, then, in drawing a large congregation. An infidel having the gift of eloquence may do that. Nor does his success in building church edifices, and paying church debts, and obtaining large contributions

for benevolent purposes, meet the demands in the case. A man of good address and good business ability, whom God has never called to the work of the ministry, may do all these. All these may be important; but they are not the peculiar work of one called of God to labor for the salvation of souls.

He is a successful minister who is successful in saving souls. If he fails in this — no matter in what else he may succeed — he fails in the one important thing. He stands before God in the same light that the general, who drills and feeds and maneuvers his men, but who never wins a battle, stands before the people. He fails in that which is essential. Many fail utterly who are counted successful. They obtain a good name among their adherents and they rest in that. One may have a reputation for learning and eloquence and piety. Another may be esteemed for his courage and straightness in declaring the unpopular truths of the gospel, and in marking out clearly the narrowness of the way to heaven, and in enforcing discipline upon the members. Another may attract attention by his fervor and zeal. But if one fails in edifying the body of Christ — that is, in building up the church by the conversion of sinners and the perfecting of the saints — his ministry is a lamentable failure. Whatever he thinks, whatever men say, God writes him down a failure. His time is wasted; his labor is lost; his energies are squandered; he misses the main thing. There can be no doubt but that many who think they succeed as ministers, will themselves come short of heaven. They deceive themselves to their eternal undoing. This is what our Lord says: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:

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depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22, 23).

But this subject should have a wider application. What is the great object of life with every believer in Christ? Is it to gain wealth or renown? No, indeed. These, in comparison with eternal interests, are the merest trifles. It is not to ministers only, but to every believer that Christ says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19, 20). Here is a plain prohibition and a plain command. Can it be supposed that he obeys the command who devotes his whole life to disobeying the prohibition? The two are in contrast. The Saviour plainly says that he who does the one cannot do the other. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). He, then, who devotes his life to money-getting, even though he succeeds in this, fails in the great object of life. In losing his soul, he loses all.

The success of man, then, is to be estimated, not in the hoarded millions of glittering gold, of no value whatever in that permanent home in which he spends his eternity; not in the miles of railroads, or in the farms, or bonds, or stocks which he calls his own; not in the armies which he has conquered, or the cities which he has taken; not in the estimate which the world makes of his greatness, or the praises which they lavish upon his name; but in living a life of devotion to God; in being instrumental, directly or indirectly, in turning many to righteousness, who shall live as imperishable memorials of his fidelity and wisdom when earthly monuments shall have crumbled into dust, and when the earth itself and all its works shall have been consumed.

CHAPTER II

SUCCESS A DUTY

“And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi, even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.” – Ezekiel 47:10

In the undertakings of this life, men are estimated by their success. Washington triumphed in a rebellion against constituted authority, and he is styled a patriot. Davis and Lee failed, and they are called rebels. A sudden rain, raising the river and breaking off his communications, leads to the defeat of a general and to his dismissal as incompetent; while the unexpected arrival of reinforcements at the critical time renders another victorious and crowns him as the hero of the world. An unexpected foreign war makes one speculator wealthy, another a pauper. The one goes to the poor-house, the other is elected mayor of the city. Thus do men honor success, even when obtained without merit.

But in the work of the Lord success never comes by chance. No fortunate circumstances ever secure a crown of life for the unde-

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servicing. The child of the greatest saint does not, by natural birth, succeed to a heavenly inheritance. It is to "them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality," that God shall "render eternal life" (Rom. 2:7). They who wear a crown in heaven, resplendent with jewels, obtained it by well-directed, persistent efforts. He who wins souls labors for souls.

In worldly affairs, the best efforts sometimes fail. Said an accurate observer of large experience: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 9:11). Nothing is plainer to be seen than that, in temporal matters, success is not proportioned to merit. It was a knowledge of this that made the ancient Greeks and Romans worship fortune as a goddess. Splendid temples were erected in her honor, and she was represented with wealth in her arms. But he who works for God never loses the fruit of his labors. Failure is clear beyond the range of possibility. In the service of men, he may be deprived of the rewards of his toil. An insignificant insect, an untimely frost, may disappoint the expectations of the most sagacious, industrious farmer; but to him who properly works in the vineyard of Christ the harvest is sure. Nothing can disappoint him. God has given him the strongest assurances of success: "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

He who fails in securing the object of an earthly pursuit may not be at all to blame. But if the minister of Jesus Christ fails

as a minister, it is entirely his fault. His success is guaranteed by the most unequivocal promises. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Christ does not mean that this was to be their unfruitful calling. It is a promise of success. But to put it beyond a doubt, he says: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5:10). He tells his disciples that his doctrines would be unpopular, that in aiming a mortal blow at human selfishness they would provoke the deepest opposition; yet, in the face of all, there should be such a divine fascination attending the faithful preaching of the cross that men should, in the midst of their hostility, be drawn to Christ – should be alarmed and yet should be caught. The psalmist says: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6). This, as everyone must see, relates to effort put forth for the salvation of souls. He says that of the success of one who properly labors, there is no doubt. He shall come from the great harvest field, not with discouragement, but with rejoicing; not having trampled down the grain, but bringing his sheaves with him. In this passage, as in the others which we have quoted, the conditions of success are found alone in the person who labors. No allusion whatever is made to favorable circumstances. It is not required that there be no difficulties to be encountered, no prejudices to be met, no obstacles to be overcome. No matter how sterile the soil, or unfavorable the season, he shall bring in the sheaves of ripened grain. The opposition to the truth may be ever so great, the power of sin ever so strong – notwithstanding all, he shall see a gracious revival of the work of God.

The conditions of success are within the reach of every min-

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ister of the gospel. It is not required that he be a man of great talent or learning. When the Saviour says, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men," the condition is such that everyone who hears the call can meet it. All it requires is the unflinching purpose, the unwavering faith, the abandonment of all for Christ. Many may be incapable of preaching what are called great sermons; but everyone can "go forth and weep, bearing precious seed."

It is the duty then of every minister of the gospel to succeed in saving souls. If he does not, he is either out of place, or he does not fill his place. The fault is his. He must not lay his failure to do good to the perverse state of things. If everybody was right, there would be no need of ministers. There is no preaching in heaven. It is because men are wicked that they need the gospel.

Says President Finney: "Want of success in a minister (other things being equal) proves, (1) either that he was never called to preach, and has taken it up out of his own head; or (2) that he was badly educated, and was never taught the very things he needs most to know; or (3) if he was called to do his duty, he is too indolent or too wicked to do it."

The Rev. A.B. Earle, a successful evangelist of the Baptist Church, says: "For years, I have said to the pastors and churches with whom I have been called to labor, that if there was not a revival of religion I should not complain of the church, but take the blame mostly to myself, believing that if I am right and have power with God others will feel the power, and sinners will be converted. In other words, there will be a revival."

In the ministerial work, success is a solemn, an imperative duty. If you fail, the fault is yours.

If a minister finds that, with the utmost fidelity, he cannot succeed, he has mistaken his calling. He should get out of the way and let a man called of God take his place.

His failure is that of the doctor who loses the patient that proper skill and care would have cured; of the general who suffers defeat when he should have conquered; of the pilot who drowns the confiding passengers whom he could have safely landed. It is not merely a misfortune, it is a crime — a crime whose disastrous results are as lasting as eternity.

The people should see to it that the preachers whom they support do the work, not of orators, or businessmen, but of ministers of Jesus Christ. They would not employ a doctor, though he put on airs, and used words too learned for them to understand, and gave a great deal of medicine, if his patients never recovered. A lawyer who talked eloquently, and quoted history and poetry, but lost his cases, would want for clients. So the friends of Jesus Christ should refuse to support a minister whose hearers all remain as proud and worldly and selfish as ever, though they may admire his elegant manners and eloquent discourses. It is a modern heresy that a preacher should be sustained simply because he is a preacher. In the early days of Christianity even a fallen church refused to do that. The church of Ephesus was commended because, as was said to it: "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2). "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). If the people who stately listen to a preacher do not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, the failure is not relieved by the large congregations which he may draw, or the exceptional salary which he may command.

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It is a crime against humanity, it is treason to Christ, to employ a minister that flatters the vanity and gratifies the literary tastes of his hearers but allows them to go on undisturbed to hell. What matters it, though the pews be rented, and the expenses met, and the house crowded, if the hearers all remain destitute of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). See to it that your money and influence do not go to support preachers of this kind. That they should abound, in these latter times, is plainly predicted in the Word of God: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). They shall train up teachers in abundance, who will not interfere with their pride or covetousness, but will please their ears and gratify their tastes. If you find yourself going after these preachers who are made by men, who look to men for their reward, and who, in consequence, prophesy smooth things, you are in a dangerous condition. Insist upon it that the minister whom you support shall preach the Word of God in all its purity, and with such Divine unction that the fruit of his labors shall be apparent. To many who pay freely for the support of the gospel, the expostulation of God is still appropriate: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" (Isa. 55:2.) Why do you encourage preaching that does not save the soul? We have a responsibility concerning this matter that we cannot evade.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO SUCCEED – SOUNDNESS OF FAITH

“Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.” – John 21:6

Fishermen are not generally regarded as a cultivated class. Yet in their calling they are men of science. They have their theories – unwritten it may be – but they carry them into practice with the strictest fidelity. They go for fish where fish may be found. They use such instruments to catch them as experience shows are the best. They do not take a brass band to capture whales, nor a bugle to catch herring. So he who would catch men must adopt proper measures to catch men. It is not enough that he desires success. He

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must use the means to secure it. He has to deal with the conscience and the will. Both, when perverted, are hard to be moved in the right direction. To do it, the great truths essential to man's salvation must be plainly presented, and faithfully applied. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

He, then, who would be instrumental in saving men, must himself hold to the saving doctrines of the gospel. The exhortation to him is: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). But no one can speak properly of that which he does not understand. Men are to be saved in believing the truth. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13).

It is one of the heresies of the age that "it does not matter what a man's doctrines are, if his heart is right." But here is the difficulty. If salvation comes through belief of the truth, how can the heart become right through belief of fundamental errors? But the "right heart" to which this saying refers, is one that is naturally amiable and kind, and not one that is right in the sight of God. Mere amiability is not Christianity. A good-natured heathen is not a Christian. The gospel is not simply a system of ethics nor a code of good manners. Christianity has its doctrines to be believed. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Says the great prophet of Israel: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain" (Deut. 32:2).

Without a firm and intelligent belief in the doctrines of God you will, if you attempt to reform others, be as likely to be yourself perverted from the truth as you will to convert them. A Protestant young lady, intent on doing good, visited a poor Catholic family to

minister to their bodily and spiritual wants. Meeting the priest there one day, she said to him in an apologizing way: "I am not trying to teach my doctrines."

"And pray, what might be your doctrines?" asked the priest.

To this question the young lady, though more than ordinarily intelligent, could make no reply satisfactory even to herself. The result was, as she had no doctrines which she firmly believed, the priest instructed her in his, and had the satisfaction, not many months after, of receiving her into the Roman Catholic Church. You will come in contact with able, positive men, into whose minds dangerous errors have been instilled from infancy. Unless the truth is ingrained into your very being, they will unsettle and perhaps overthrow you. You must be positive in your convictions; then your language will be positive. You must declare truly, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know" (John 3:11). But if you are in doubt yourself whether you are right, you will be led astray by those who are decided in their errors. The floating ship turns out for the imbedded rock. The wavering yield to those who are firm in their convictions. The learned travelers follow the ignorant guide, who with evident sincerity assures them that he knows every inch of the ground over which they wish to pass.

When the eloquent Apollos "was instructed in the way of the Lord, he began to speak boldly in the synagogue." The utterances of many, who preach the gospel in honeyed phrases, are weak, because they are weak believers. Many fail to declare "the whole counsel of God" because they do not hold the Scriptures in sufficient authority. They substitute the gospel of expediency for the gospel of the Son of God. On popular sins they touch but

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lightly, if at all. It is well if they do not apologize for some of the worst foes that true Christianity has to contend with. Their converts take up with a part of religion for the whole. They build with untempered mortar. Their edifice will not stand in the day of eternity.

CHAPTER IV

HOW TO SUCCEED — CALL TO PREACH

“Go thou to the sea and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up.” – Matthew 17:27

To succeed in any business one must go about it with an undivided purpose. The ancients represented fortune as a jealous goddess. He who would win her must be unremitting in his devotion to her.

When the hands are engaged in one pursuit, and the mind, at the same time, is debating the question whether they ought not to be doing something else, the probability is that nothing will be done as it should. You do not like to work for one unless you know he wants you.

God calls laborers to work for Him. Our Saviour says: “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:38). The harvest is the Lord’s, and it is His prerogative to send out His workmen.

The apostle avows his divine mission: “Now then we are am-

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bassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). The government chooses its own ambassadors. No one goes on this service because he thinks he is qualified for it and deserves it. What an absurdity then to think that God lets His ambassadors appoint themselves!

The apostle tells us that he did not preach the gospel simply from choice. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16.) Again, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Tim. 1:12). It was not his talent, nor his learning, nor yet even his love for souls that enabled him to preach, but his being put into the ministry by the hand of God. He was confident he was in the right place.

But the apostle declares that his call was not peculiar. Every true minister of Jesus Christ becomes such by the appointment of God. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:4). It is of the Christian ministry that the apostle is speaking. His language cannot well be more positive and plain. "Taketh" refers not to the past, but to the present. "No man" is an expression that admits of not a single exception. So that under no pretext whatever, may any one assume to be a minister of Jesus Christ unless he is divinely called.

We see the reason why so many ministers are, so far as the real work of the ministry is concerned, useless. They are intruders. They have chosen the ministry for a profession, just as men choose the law or medicine to make a living. They desire to do good to oth-

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ers as a means to benefit themselves. They think that by proper training and study they may fit themselves so as to meet the popular demand and obtain a large salary. They may have their reward. The churches are too generally in the state predicted by the apostle. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3). That is, the people, rejecting the self-denying doctrines of the gospel, and yet not prepared to reject Christianity, will establish theological schools and raise up preachers who will preach to please them. The gospel has won its way to honor. Whatever persecutions any denomination may be exposed to; however small a salary it may afford, there are men whose prospects for a living and whose social position will be improved by becoming ministers among them. The people of God need spiritual discernment that they may recognize as ministers the Lord's ministers and reject all others. There are still those who will come to Him that have influence in the matter, and "Crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread" (1 Sam. 2:36).

It is because our pulpits are filled with man-made preachers that our churches have become, as Joseph McCreery expressed it, "like the pyramids of Egypt, at once a temple and a tomb, filled with spiritual mummies sitting in sardonic magnificence, while the preacher's voice, instead of being the voice of the Son of God in its resurrection power, is lessened down to a reptile's whimper in these habitations of the dead."

He who is called of God, preaches with authority. His cre-

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dentials are from heaven. All who understand the language can read them. He can say, not to converts to himself or to his opinions, but to saints: "For the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:2). Men look to him and in their hearts say with Cowper:

*"There stands the messenger of truth; there stands
The legate of the skies. His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear,
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him in strains as sweet
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace."*

Such a man does not shun to declare all the counsel of God.

Gideon Ouseley was a remarkably successful laborer in that most unpromising field – Ireland, among the Irish Catholics. After he was converted his heart was touched with compassion for the unsaved millions around him. From the perishing he seemed to hear the cry, "Come over and help us." Within his heart the Spirit said, "Go – go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Yet such was his sense of his own unfitness that he would say: "Lord, I am a poor, ignorant creature; how can I go? Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak, for I am a child."

Then the Lord would seem to say to him, "Do you not know the disease?"

"O yes, Lord, I do."

"Then go and tell them of the disease and the cure."

"So then," he would say, "with only these two things, the knowledge of the disease and the knowledge of the cure, I went forth. All glory to my divine Master."

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Whitefield, in one of his later sermons, says: "I never prayed against any corruption I had in my life so much as I did against going into orders so soon as my friends were for having me go. Bishop Benson was pleased to honor me with peculiar preferment or to do anything for me. My friends wanted me to mount the church betimes. They wanted me to knock my head against the pulpit too young, but how some young men stand up here and there and preach, I do not know. However it may be to them, God knows how deep a concern entering into the ministry and preaching was to me. I have prayed a thousand times, till the sweat has dropped from my face like rain, that God in His infinite mercy would not let me enter the pulpit till He called me to and thrust me forth in His work. I remember once in Gloucester – I know the room, I look up to the window when I am there, and walk along the street; I know the window upon which I have lain prostrate. I said: 'Lord, I cannot go; I shall be puffed up with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Lord, do not let me go yet.'

"I pleaded to be at Oxford two or three years more. I remember praying, wrestling, and striving with God. I said: 'I am undone. I am unfit to preach in Thy great name. Send me not, Lord – send me not yet.' I wrote to all my friends in town, that they would pray against the bishop's solicitation; but they insisted that I should go into orders before I was twenty-two. After all their solicitations these words came into my mind, 'Nothing shall pluck you out of my hands.' They came warm to my heart. Then, and not till then, I said, 'Lord, I will go; send me when Thou wilt.' So he consented. On Saturday evening he retired to a hill near the town, and there prayed fervently for about two hours. The next morning he was ordained.

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'I trust,' he said, 'I answered to every question from the bottom of my heart, and heartily prayed that God might say, Amen. And when the bishop laid his hands upon my head, if my vile heart doth not deceive me, I offered up my whole spirit, soul, and body to the service of God's sanctuary. Let come what will, life or death, depth or height, I shall henceforward live like one who, this day, in the presence of men and angels, took the holy sacrament upon the profession of being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon me that ministration in the church. I can call heaven and earth to witness that when the bishop laid his hand upon me I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me. Known to Him are all future events and contingencies. I have thrown myself blindfolded, and I trust without reserve, into His almighty hands.' Such was the call, and the response to it, of one whose career has had no parallel since the days of St. Paul.

"The late Dr. J.W. Redfield was a wonderfully eloquent, faithful, and successful preacher of the gospel. Multitudes were converted under his labors. He attacked with unsparing severity the popular sins of the day and insisted upon the most thorough work. He says in his Memoirs: "From my earliest childhood a strong impression followed me that God had designed me for the gospel ministry. But so disagreeable to me was the thought that I kept the whole matter a secret from even my nearest and dearest friends. ... I found myself in every plan of life swayed by this one dreaded and yet absorbing thought – I must yet preach the gospel." At an early age, after a terrible struggle, he was converted. I said to myself, if this is religion, the world will now be very soon converted; for I shall tell everyone whom I meet, and I can tell it so convincingly

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that they will certainly believe and seek and find. So ardently did I desire the salvation of men that I felt I could have parted with my life to impart salvation to the world.”

He went among his friends and told them what great things the Lord had done for his soul. Many were converted; but meeting with some severe rebuffs, he would gladly have settled down, but the call to preach kept ringing in his ears. “The cause of my distress at the thought of preaching was this: I had contracted the idea that the most awful and solemn responsibility is connected with the office of a gospel minister. I think I felt something as a man would who, ignorant of navigation, was obliged to take charge of a craft freighted with human life and liable at any time to run into danger. The responsibility to me was overwhelming. I began now to settle the matter by reasonings, which brought me into great straits. Appetite and sleep forsook me, till in about two months I was worn down, weak and wasted.”

He tried prayer, but when the answer came was so fearful of being deceived that he would not accept the clearest answer. At one time he prayed out in the woods one winter night until his clothes froze to the ground. “In the cold snow I kneeled and pleaded with God, as a man would plead for his life, to grant me this once such an answer as would forever settle my doubts. ... I had such a sense of the awful majesty and near approach of an offended God that my agony of body and soul was so extreme that I felt I could not live. I instantly shrieked out: ‘O God, remove this from me and I will go immediately.’

“Immediately this scene was removed when my doubting heart said: ‘I have seen no angel, and heard no voice, and how can I

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go on such a doubtful errand under these circumstances?' I went to a hilltop farther on, and again I kneeled down; and there I continued in prayer till about sunrise. Seeing that I was not likely to bring God to my terms, I thought best to retrace my steps to the house. But on trying to rise, I found I was frozen to the earth. But so great was my distress of mind, that I did not once think that I was cold. I pulled my clothes loose from the frozen earth, and, after rubbing my limbs, so far regained their use, that, with difficulty, I began to move towards home. I passed the spot where the awful presence of God had so distressed me. I sat down upon a log, deeply grieved that I must be the victim to so much anguish and doubt, when God might so easily satisfy me. The thought came, 'Stand still and see the salvation of God.' Instantly the very sign I asked for appeared. Still I was not satisfied." But at last every doubt was removed. "I now felt fully committed to do God's will. The unearthly sweetness and calmness that took possession of my heart, was beyond the power of words to express."

When at last he did go, multitudes were converted under his labors; for he went at the call of God.

*"My soul is not at rest. There comes a strange
And secret whisper to my spirit, like
A dream of night, that tells me I am on
Enchanted ground. Why live here? The vows
Of God are on me, and I may not stop
To play with shadows, or pluck earthly flowers,
Till I my work have done, and rendered up
Account.*

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*Henceforth, then,
It matters not if storms or sunshine be
My earthly lot – bitter or sweet my cup;
I only pray – ‘God fit me for the work;
God make me holy, and my spirit nerve
For the stern hour of strife.’ Let me but know
There is an arm unseen that holds me up,
An eye that kindly watches all my path.
Till I my weary pilgrimage have done,
Let me but know I have a friend that waits
To welcome me to glory, and I joy
To tread the dark and death – fraught wilderness.”*

Not preachers only, but all Christians are called to labor to win souls to Christ. When Andrew had been a day with Jesus, “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1:41, 42). This is the way true converts are multiplied. As soon as one is saved, he seeks to bring another to the fold. To do this he has God’s authority. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). He who hears, that is, obeys God’s voice, has the right to invite others.

One of the most hurtful, practical errors of Protestantism is the idea so widely prevalent that to do efficient service for Christ one must be an accredited preacher of the gospel and have the pastoral charge of a congregation. This is a great mistake. Many who feel a love for souls take it for a call to preach. They get into the

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ministry, by dint of hard work keep their position, yet do but little good. Many do positive harm. The Roman Catholics manage such things better. If a person wishes to give himself up to doing good, the church finds something that he can do, and sets him at it, under her authority and control. In furthering her work she employs every grade of talent, every degree of cultivation. So she has her teachers and nurses working with her priests to spread and establish the Roman Catholic Church in the earth. But Protestants recognize only one authorized band of workers – preachers; and practically but one order of preachers – pastors. This is not as Christ intended. He calls others to his work, and he would have the church recognize the call.

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28). This was no temporary expedient, but a permanent arrangement. The phrase “hath set,” implies a fixed condition. But in the original, the word is one that in the New Testament is frequently translated “ordained.” So this is an established order of Christ’s church that God has called others than ministers to labor for the salvation of souls. Have it then firmly settled in your heart that whatever work you undertake for God is of his appointment. Then, if you do your duty, failure is out of the question.