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Motives of ministry

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MOTIVES OF MINISTRY

Entering as we are today, upon a life of ministry, it seems highly fitting that the question of motive should receive our consideration. Three motives present themselves to one who contemplates this vocation;- the selfish, the humanitarian and the Christ, motive.

That the selfish motive is inconsistent with true ministry, is at once apparent. Selfishness questions "how much can I get?" ministry, "how much can I give?" Selfishness works for wages and reckons the things of the kingdom of God as so much merchandise. Of such surpassing value are the avenue church of marble and mosaic, the luxurious home, the lucrative salary; that little consideration is had for the orphan's cry, the widow's heart-throb, and the submerged millions who languish in tenement house and alley-way and prison cell.

Like a pirate ship on the sea of life, selfishness is in quest of every rich argosy of blessing, determined to distribute none. More popular perhaps is that form of selfishness often seen in service, which sacrifices with a view to "the recompense of the reward." Orphanages are endowed, crosses borne, riches, home, friends, are laid on the altar, the most rigorous asceticism is practiced; as a means of securing an eternal

life of unmeasured bliss. It is manifest that such a spirit would ultimately ruin the ministry of men or angels. Centripetal in action, self-centred in life and purpose, the selfish motive is inadequate to the demands of a worthy ministry.

Witness likewise the failure of the humanitarian motive.

Its champions seek to enlist our services in bringing the race to an ideal upon which there is no agreement, either as to what the ideal shall be, or the means of its attainment.

One class would eliminate the supernatural and trust to evolution to work this miracle on the race; the other class would crown the race divine, prophesying that ultimately it will possess every divine attribute and exercise every divine prerogative: - a divided house cannot stand.

This motive fails for a second reason. The real function of ministry is remedial and he who would heal the race, must himself, be whole. The humanitarian must therefore meet the challenge, "physician heal thyself" and history bears abundant testimony to his stupendous failure. The Pharisee could cleanse the platter, but not his soul. The rivers of Damascus have no healing power for the leprosy of sin. Crim-
soned with guilt, not "all the perfumes of Arabia can sweeten one little hand" ~~Despite the remedial agencies of men, that~~

have been at work in the world through long and weary ages; misery groans, crimes flourish, wrongs go unredressed, virtue is chastened, hope falters, love repines, aspiring souls are chained by sin, to the dust, honor on the auction block, truth on the scaffold, the world's Redeemer nailed to a rugged cross.

Though man has induced beauty to shine in marble, the sails of commerce to wed the wooing winds, the lightening to become his messenger; yet in no loom of earth, has ever a garment been woven, to touch whose hem, gives life. Gautama, Confucius, and all their satellites, Christless churches, socialistic clubs, and federations of labor, zealots of every earth-born enterprise, will never break the bands, nor heal the wounds of this fettered and festering world. Fountains rise no higher than their source. Love of self, love of humanity-- these are motives too low to give inspiration to holy ministry.

The cords of humanity must be strung higher to be resonant with power divine and life eternal. It is with confidence therefore, that we turn to Christ for such a motive; for he--being lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto him.

-- The sufficiency of the Christ-motive is seen in its relation to self; by him selfishness is destroyed, but self is transfigured by a radiance divine. It is likewise seen in

relation to humanity. The conviction grows daily that Christ was the ideal man. Blending in himself a wisdom surpassing Solomon's, with the purity of an angel; infinite strength is mingled with a mother's tenderness and exhaustless love.

Possessed of a nature that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; - but in no respect is it tarnished by sin.

Viewing this character in all its length and breadth, its depth and its height, no humanitarian ideal is comparable to Jesus Christ. . . . But in the remedial agency of ministry, the efficiency of the Christ-motive becomes still more manifest:

for here the Son of man becomes the Son of God, the Child of Bethlehem's manger, - the King of heaven's throne, infinite, omnipotent, eternal. Faltering hope in him is anchored "sure and steadfast"; repining love, twining her tendrils about his heart, can cling forever. The orphan in its helplessness, the widow in her weeds, the prodigal in his rags, the harlot in her shame, find a sure retreat and a royal welcome in his bosom of infinite love. To this exiled race, in the bondage of sin, he becomes an hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The crowning feature however, of the Christ-motive for.

ministry, is the inspiration which his presence gives to his servants. "Lo I am with you alway," is assurance that human weakness is supplemented by infinite strength; that the path of drudgery and hardship- life's "Via Dolorosa"- shall be illumined with light from above. Under his magic touch, work shall become worship, duty shall be clothed in love, every morsel of service made to minister to a multitude, and every humble and contrite heart shall be an altar aflame with God.

Inspired by his presence, faithless Peter preaches with a flaming tongue, selfish John becomes the prophet of the Apocalypse; persecuting Saul becomes conquering Paul who brings a Gentile world and lays it as a trophy at the feet of his Redeemer. He who kindled the zeal of these martyr spirits of the past, is the same today and forever.

Then let the Christ-motive be ours in ministry and, mastered by his conquering spirit, kindled by his zeal, enamored of his loveliness, transfigured by his presence; we will hasten the coming of that glad hour when this, the crowning motive of service, shall find complete expression in a world redeemed.

When humanity, sundered afar by race and color and caste and creed, shall be gathered at his feet, bearing his image

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clothed with his beauty, radiant with his glory; united by the bonds of love fraternal, into one common brotherhood, whose Father over all, is God.

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