

eternity<sup>1</sup>—of the need of watchful carefulness against this baneful snare of our Ministry.<sup>2</sup>

Upon the full consideration of the subject, the Writer is constrained to express his decided conviction, that a very large proportion of our inefficiency may be traced to the source of worldly conformity. This needs no proof in the too frequent cases of decided love of pleasure and dissipation. ‘For’ (as Massillon asks his clergy), ‘after having fully mixed in the diversions and follies of the world, can you appear in a Christian pulpit, impressed with a sense of the importance of the Gospel and zealous for its success?’ Of such Ministers we would speak “even weeping,” that they are the sores of the church—that they have given more strength to the cause of separation, than the most powerful objections either to our established formularies or government—and (what is far more fearful)—that they are charged with the awful responsibility of dragging with them immortal souls down to perdition by their negligence, or by the positive influence of their example.

But is not also the lax, indulgent approximation to the spirit of the world—either in our general habit and appearance—or in our intercourse with the world—a leading, though not always a tangible, cause of failure? Even the faithful exhibition of the cross must be materially weakened by a want of the corresponding exhibition of its power, in crucifying its Ministers to the lusts and affections of the world. A connexion with the world

<sup>1</sup> Compare 2 Tim. iv. 10. with verses 6–8.

<sup>2</sup> Not wishing to interrupt the direct line of argument in the text—we throw into the form of a note the suggestion (applying with equal decision to Ministers in every department of the Church)—whether an engrossing interest in *worldly politics* does not canker the spirituality of Christian Ministrations? ‘*Politics and party*’ (Bishop Burnet observed of his day) ‘eat out among us not only study and learning, but that which is the only thing that is more valuable—a *true sense of religion*, with a *sincere zeal* in advancing that for which the Son of God lived and died, and to which those who are received into holy orders have vowed to dedicate their lives and labours.’—These remarks—important in themselves—derive additional weight from being found in the preface to the last edition of the *Pastoral Care*, written only three years before the Bishop’s death, when we may hope that the remembrance of his own course, (far too political for the sanctity of his office) suggested the caution. It is not meant, that the clergy should neglect the exercise of their civil privileges, or the enforcement of civil obligations. But surely the Minister of a “kingdom not of this world” ought to be ready to say of his own interest in the politics of this world—“Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.” The more we are of politicians, and of party men, the less we are of Ministers; and the less of unction, fruitfulness, and comfort will be found in our work.—See some useful hints to ministers in Scott’s *Life*, pp. 306, 307.

beyond the point of clear duty, (or even within these narrow bounds, without a heavenly temper) must bring us into a worldly atmosphere, which deadens the vigorous actings of a spiritual life, till, like the torpedo, we benumb every thing we touch. Conscience in a tender and susceptible state, might almost determine the question—What is the effect of such connexions upon the spiritual frame? Has there not been in this atmosphere a closer communion with the world than with God? Has not the spirit of prayer been well nigh extinguished, and delight in *the more spiritual exercises* of our work fearfully lost? And does not our Ministry thus become (perhaps unconsciously to ourselves) weak, general, and indefinite upon the main point of separation from the world. Or, even if our exhortations reach the Scriptural standard of decision, must not their power be wholly counteracted by this compromising spirit.

Accurate and earnest statements of truth, combined with sociable conformity to the world, will give no offence, and bring no conviction.<sup>1</sup> Cowper's line—"If parsons fiddle, why may'nt laymen dance?"—has at least as much truth as wit in it. If we go one step into the world, our flock will take the sanction to go two; the third will be still more easy, and the atmosphere more enticing, till at last it proves, "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."<sup>2</sup> 'The Minister, therefore, who would not have his people give in to worldly conformity such as he disapproves, must keep at a considerable distance himself. If he walks near the brink, others will fall down the precipice.'<sup>3</sup> 'A preacher who enjoys the smiles of the world, can hope for little success from God;' but 'a Minister of the Church, who is entirely disengaged from the love of earthly things, is a great treasure, and a great "consolation" to her.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The "way is still narrow," and "the gate is" yet "strait." The world will allow us to say this officially, to read it in the lesson of the day, and to amplify the solemn saying in a sermon. But if we *mean* what we preach, and awaken men's belief of our sincerity in the interval between one Sunday and another, then begins the debate between a Minister and his flock. So long as he is not missing in the circles of pleasure, he may deliver without suspicion the most fearful warnings of God against a slumbering world; and none will molest him. But the moment his own example comes in aid of his doctrine, and irritates the consciences of those around, his creed is discovered to be false and foolish."—*Antichrist*. By the Rev. J. Ryland. pp. 49, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. vii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Scott's Life, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> Quesnel on 1 Cor. ii. 3. Acts iv. 36. See some striking thoughts on the subject of this Chapter, in the Bishop of Calcutta's Prefatory Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. liii.