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THE BUSINESS

OF

Christian Ministers:

A SERMON

DELIVERED

BY JAMES DRUMMOND,

AT THE SESSION OF THE

WESTERN VIRGINIA CONFERENCE,

HELD IN

MOUNDSVILLE, APRIL, 1857.

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THE

BUSINESS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS.

"We preach Christ crucified." 1 COR. I, 23.

I. To preach Christ "in all his offices," to inculcate all his doctrines, "to declare his law, as well as his Gospel, to believers and unbelievers," is the sole *business* of every faithful Christian minister. It is true, other things necessarily claim a portion of his time and attention, but whatever they may be, they are all subsidiary to his calling, or they are prudential expedients which enable him to pursue it. His *vocation* is to preach Christ every-where, and upon all suitable occasions. Thus was he preached by the apostles. "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."* "I have taught you," says St. Paul, "publicly, and from house to house, testifying, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."† Here we have his example; what is his precept? "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself *wholly* to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."‡ Yes, "*give thyself WHOLLY to them.*" In unison with the passages just quoted, are the directions of our Discipline. "In every sermon," "convince," "offer Christ," "invite," and "build up." "You have nothing to do but to save souls; therefore, spend and be spent in this work." We are commissioned not to teach philosophy, astronomy, or any earthly science, but to preach Christ "to every creature." Far be it from us to decry learning, or to utter one word to excuse ignorance. Such men as are described by

* Acts v, 42.

† Ib. xx, 20, 21.

‡ 1 Tim. iv, 13, 15.

Cowper—men with “skulls that can not teach and will not learn”—men “prepared by ignorance and sloth, to make God’s work a sinecure,” ought never to be received into the ministry. If such gain admission they are intruders. What says our Discipline? “Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employment, or at least five hours in the four and twenty. ‘But I have no taste for reading.’ Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your former employment.” So far, then, as learning can be made strictly subservient to the preaching of the Gospel, let it be employed by every minister, but not a whit further, nor for any other purpose. Neither are we called to found or build up political systems or parties of any kind, nor to impart lessons upon temporal economy. True, a vital Christianity never fails to modify political views and systems, nor to clothe with wealth, power, and all the elements of greatness, the nations that foster it. But these results, valuable as they are, are incidental. They fall infinitely short of the end for which the ministry was instituted—*the salvation of souls*. This is the object, brethren, to which all our efforts are to be directed, and to which all our time, talents, learning, and experience are to be devoted. We are called simply to win souls to Christ—to “reclaim the wanderer, bind the broken heart,” and “train, by every rule of holy discipline, to glorious war the sacramental hosts of God’s elect.” Let us, then, cleave to our appropriate work. Let us be men of *one business*. Let us say, not merely with our lips, but by our devotion to the Church,

“For her my tears shall fall;
 For her my prayers ascend;
 To her my cares and toils be given,
 Till toils and cares shall end.”

II. We preach Christ as the great object of prophecy. It was in this way that he preached himself. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Such was the message of mercy which he read from “the book of the prophet Esaias,”

in the synagogue of Nazareth. And when the eyes of all his audience were fastened on him, he said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." In like manner he preached to his sorrowing disciples, as they journeyed to Emmaus. "Beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Thus was he preached by Peter. "But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."* "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."† Thus was he preached by St. Paul. "I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."‡ And thus we preach him still. For "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." He is the scope and design of the prophetic writings, and the predictions concerning his coming, his ministry, and the establishment of his kingdom, which have been fulfilled, constitute a tower of strength impregnable to assault, and an armory from which we may select weapons both for defense and aggression. They furnish us with arguments which set sophistry at defiance. Prophecy is, indeed, light itself—light which emanated thousands of years ago from the omniscience of God—light which grows brighter and brighter as the end draweth near—light which discloses in the future the glories of heaven and the terrors of hell—all that the righteous can hope to obtain, and all that the wicked have reason to dread. He who can calmly consider all the evidence of prophecy, and yet reject Christ, is declared to be invincible in his unbelief. For "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

III. We preach Christ as the Jehovah of the Old Testament, as "over all, God blessed forever."

That the name Jehovah belongs to God alone, is perfectly

* Acts iii, 18.

† Ib. x, 43.

‡ Ib. xxvi, 22, 23.

clear. "I am Jehovah; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."* "Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art most high over all the earth."† "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: Jehovah is his name."‡ Now, this Jehovah is the Christ whom we preach. Isaiah says: "I saw also Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple," etc. St. John applies this to Christ. "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." The same prophet also says: "Jehovah of hosts himself" "shall be" "for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense, to both the houses of Israel." This is applied by Peter to Christ. He is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." Again: Jehovah says, "I have sworn by myself, . . . that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."§ This is applied by St. Paul to Christ. To him every knee shall "bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," and "every tongue" shall "confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father."|| Thus do all these inspired writers testify that Christ is Jehovah.

Again: the prophets and apostles ascribe to our Redeemer, without any limiting qualification, all the glorious titles and attributes of the Most High. They style him Immanuel, "God with us;" "the mighty God;" "the Lord of hosts;" "the Prince of Peace;" "the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Does immutability belong to God alone? Then is Christ God, for he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Does omniscience belong only to God? It is ascribed to Christ, and he claims it as his own. "Thou knowest all things," said Peter. And his own language is, "All the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts." Do eternity and omnipotence belong to none but God? They, too, are ascribed to Christ Jesus. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."¶ "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O

* Isa. xlii, 8. † Ps. lxxxiii, 18. ‡ Amos v, 8. § Isa. xlv, 23. || Philip. ii, 10, 11. ¶ Micah. v, 2.

God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." And, finally, in the Apocalypse he says: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and the morning star." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, . . . which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Thus does the whole tenor of the Scriptures proclaim that Christ is "the brightness" of God's "glory, and the express image of his person;" that he upholdeth "all things by the word of his power;" and that "of him, and through him, and to him are all things."

IV. We preach Christ as "the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe."

How God can forgive sin, without leading to such views of his government as would serve to encourage rebels in sinning against him, is a problem which the wisdom of this world could never solve. That he can not pardon sin as a mere act of prerogative, is obvious; for to pardon is an act which involves considerations of justice, of good government, and the honor of his throne. If, indeed, God would forgive even one sin solely upon prerogative, he might, in the same way, forgive all manner of sin, and all sinners. But to do this would virtually be to issue an unbounded license to sin, for it would subvert all government. God can not thus act any more than he can cease to be God. His law, which dooms every impenitent transgressor to perdition, must be honored—its authority in all its length and breadth must be upheld. How then can any escape when all have sinned? To this important question the wisdom of the world can give no satisfactory answer. Propound it to reason and philosophy, and they are mute. But where these fail, revelation with its scheme of substitution, brings relief.

It discloses a vicarious sacrifice for sin. Christ "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Our transgressions, as regards their penal consequences, were "laid on him." "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."* God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."† By his obedience "unto death, even the death of the cross," he has made it perfectly just and righteous, as well as merciful, to forgive every penitent believer. God is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." His righteousness is as clearly manifested in this method of saving sinners, as it would be by the personal punishment of every offender. It is fully vindicated by the sufferings of Christ—by his mysterious agony in the garden, his "fainting pangs and bloody sweat;" and his painful death upon the cross. With the offering thus made, the justice of God is satisfied; his law is honored; his holiness, when he exercises clemency, remains untarnished; his truth is maintained in all its glory, and yet mercy is extended to the guilty. The law has not relinquished one iota of its claims—no, not a tittle. It still cries to the sinner, "pay me that thou owest," and its demands are met by Him who is "mighty to save." Grace points the culprit to the Lamb of God, and, trusting in the merits of the Redeemer, he exclaims,

"Guilty I stand before thy face;
On me I feel thy wrath abide;
'Tis just the sentence should take place;
'Tis just, but O, thy Son hath died!"

Again: the benefits of the atonement are not limited by the decree of God to a certain number of our race styled the elect. Many great and good men, whom we honor as servants of the Most High, and whom we heartily bid God speed in all their labors of love, still have inscribed upon their creed, that none were "redeemed by Christ, . . . but the *elect only*," and that "the rest of mankind, God was pleased . . . to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."‡ "Glorious justice!" To "pass by"

* 1 Peter ii, 23. † 2 Cor. v, 21.

‡ "Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted,

men and leave them without a Savior, and consequently without any chance or *possibility* of salvation, and to damn them for not believing in a Savior who never died for them—and in whom they surely ought not to believe if he never “redeemed” them—is called “glorious justice!” Well, if that be justice, it is, as one remarks, justice “stamped with the most terrific features of its opposite, so that no human mind can see the glory of the one, for the inevitable manifestation of the other.”

The scheme of absolute predestination, by which God carries out his purposes, touching both the elect and reprobates, is thus delineated by Dr. Chalmers, a great and a good man, who possessed liberal views, and a warm, benevolent heart: “The will of man, active and spontaneous, and fluctuating as it appears to be, is an instrument in his [God’s] hand, and he turns it at his pleasure, and he brings other instruments to act upon it, and he plies it with all its excitements, and he measures the force and proportion of each of them, and every step of every individual receives as determinate a character from the hand of God, as every mile of a planet’s orbit. . . . This power of God knows no exceptions. It is absolute and unlimited. . . . It reigns and operates through all the secrecies of the inner man. It gives birth to every purpose. It gives impulse to every desire. It gives shape and color to every conception. It wields an entire ascendancy over every attribute of the mind; and the will, and the fancy, and the understanding, with all the countless variety of their hidden and fugitive operations, are submitted to it. It gives movement and direction through every one point in the line of our pilgrimage. At no one moment of time does it abandon us. It follows us to the hour of death, and it carries us to our place of everlasting destiny in the region beyond it.”* Now, wherein, as regards man’s free agency and his destiny, does the most rank fatalism differ from this rigid predestination? Can fatalism do more than to ply

sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”—*Westminster Confession, chap. III, par. VI and VII.*

* Works of Thomas Chalmers, D. D. Philadelphia. 1830. Pp. 438.

the will with "*all its excitements,*" and measure the "*force and proportion of each of them,*" and give "*birth to every purpose,*" "*impulse to every desire,*" "*form and color to every conception,*" wield an "*entire ascendancy over every attribute of the mind,*" give "*movement and direction through every one point in the line of our pilgrimage,*" and *carry us to our eternal destiny?*" No; fatalism can not go beyond this. For there is nothing in thought, desire, or action—nothing involving our happiness or misery, in time and in eternity, that is not ascribed, in the foregoing quotation, to the *resistless power of God.*

We do not thus preach Christ. We have found no such heart-chilling system of absolute predestination in the volume which proclaims "good tidings of great joy" to "all people." On the contrary, we proclaim that ample provision has been made for the salvation of *all men*, and that all who will may come, and "take the water of life freely." What says our only "rule of faith and practice?" "As by the offense of one, judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon *all men* to justification of life."* "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."† "The man Christ Jesus" "gave himself a ransom for *all.*" "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death *for every man.*"‡ If then any fail of eternal life, it is not because they were "passed by" from eternity—not because Christ did not die for them—but because they reject it. If any "perish for whom Christ died"—and the apostle teaches that this is possible—it is because they deny "the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction;"|| or having been "once enlightened, and . . . made partakers of the Holy Ghost," and having "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh,§ make "shipwreck" of faith, and count "the blood of the covenant wherewith" they were "sanctified, an unholy thing," and do "despite unto the Spirit of grace."¶

* Rom. v, 18. † 1 John ii, 2. ‡ Heb. ii, 9. § 2 Pet. ii, 1. § Heb. vi, 4, 5, 6. ¶ Ib. x, 29.

V. Finally: we preach Christ as "all and in all"—as giving point, significancy, and efficacy to all the instructions of God's word. For its facts, symbols, rites, doctrines, institutions, and examples of faith and piety, are generally so set forth as to point us to Christ.

Do the Scriptures speak of creation? They ascribe that stupendous work to Christ. "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: . . . by him all things consist." Do they speak of the faithful ministry of Noah, who preached righteousness when the earth was "filled with violence?" They inform us also that Christ preached "by the Spirit" "in the days of Noah;" that is, he inspired Noah to preach. Do they speak of the institution of circumcision? To Abraham it was "a seal of the righteousness of . . . faith"—faith in Christ. And, hence, "if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Do they speak of the noble decision of Moses, who boldly renounced all the fascinating attractions of an Egyptian court? His conduct is ascribed to faith in Christ. He esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt!" Do they speak of a long and brilliant train of holy, self-denying prophets as worthy examples "of suffering affliction, and of patience?" They all had the Spirit of Christ. They searched "what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Is instruction drawn from the services of the tabernacle and the action of the high-priest on the great day of atonement? We are taught that "the holy places made with hands . . . are the figures of the true"—figures of the Messianized holy of holies in heaven, into which the "High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," has entered, not "by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood," there "to appear in the presence of God for us." Has "the handwriting of ordinances" been blotted out? It was nailed to the cross of Christ. Meats, and drinks, and new moons, and holidays, etc., were merely "a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." "The law was our schoolmaster to bring

us to Christ." Thus it is shown that the two Testaments, much as they seem to differ, are one in spirit and design, the one answering to the other as the shadow to the substance, and both continually pointing sinners to Christ.

But it is in the New Testament especially that Christ crucified is "evidently set forth" as the only source of mercy and eternal life. Here he is most emphatically "*all*." His plan of salvation is here "brought from under the veil of types and the symbolical language of prophecy," and his authority, atonement, mediation, doctrines, ordinances, and example, are the constant theme of the inspired writers. Do they claim authority to govern and feed the Church? That authority is derived from Christ. He is the "Chief Shepherd," and they are his pastors, his servants, his ambassadors, and apostles, "the messengers of the Churches, and the glory of Christ." Do they speak of the unity of the Church? It is the "body of Christ." Its members are all baptized "by one Spirit." They have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and to each is grace given, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Do they speak of redemption? "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ." Is sin represented as polluting? Then a purifying process is the appropriate remedy, and the blood of Christ "cleanseth from all sin." "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" Is sin a state of spiritual death? Then spiritual vitality is needed, and it is found in Christ. We are "quickened together with Christ"—we have "risen with Christ," and our "life is hid with Christ in God." Is sin bondage? Christ is our ransom. He "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

Is repentance enjoined? The grace which produces it is the gift of Christ. "Him hath God exalted . . . to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Does the awakened sinner ask, "What must I

do to be saved?" The answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Is peace the immediate result of saving faith? It is "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Is the witness of the Spirit given? It is from Christ. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Is the sacrament of baptism enjoined? The exhortation is, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." Does the apostle speak of the nature and design of the Lord's supper? It is to "shew the Lord's death till he come." "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Does St. Paul glory? Yes, but not in his descent, though a "Hebrew of the Hebrews;" nor in his learning, or eloquence. No, "what things were gain" to him, he "counted loss for Christ;" and he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Does he speak of the communion of saints? It is sitting "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Is the resurrection his theme? Christ is "the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." He it is "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." He it is who hath said, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Are the terrors of judgment disclosed? "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven . . . in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." It is the wrath, not of an inexorable, malevolent tyrant, but "the wrath of the Lamb," that fills hell with terrors and anguish, and clothes it with "the blackness of darkness forever." And, on the other hand, the righteous are made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, only through the merits of the Redeemer. They are "heirs," not in their own name or right, but in the name and right of Him who bought them—"heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." And hence

their song through eternity will be—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

In conclusion: while others are doing their utmost to take the crown from the head of our Redeemer—while they are taxing all their ingenuity and powers of criticism to degrade him to the level of a mere man—while many wholly ignore his atonement, and some, with the audacity of Theodore Parker, affirm, that it makes our religion resemble the religion of Moloch—be it our business, brethren, to proclaim His true dignity and saving grace—to preach him as we ever have done, as Prophet, Priest, and King.

"Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly."

Let us endeavor also to copy more closely and fully the apostolic example, not only in our manner of preaching, but in all our deportment. Let us form such an estimate of mere earthly accommodations and enjoyments, that we may always be able to say to our flocks with sincerity, as did Paul to the Corinthians, "I seek not *yours*, but *you*." Let us never enter upon negotiations with strong, wealthy, or popular appointments, in order to secure to ourselves comfortable quarters and fat salaries. But let us go to our fields of labor, in accordance with the economy of the Church at whose altars we serve; and in the spirit of our fathers, who bore "the burden and heat of the day," let us offer salvation in the name of Christ, to the bond and the free, the learned and illiterate, the rich and the poor. In sunshine and storm, in good and evil report, unmoved by the allurements of earth, the taunts of the wicked, and the rage of devils, let us proclaim our Redeemer as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life"—the only Savior of an apostate race—the "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

"O for a trumpet voice,
On all the world to call—
To bid their hearts rejoice
In Him who died for all!"

And while we "labor in the word and doctrine," "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," let us ever claim the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." How oft has his presence sustained us under the toils and discouragements of an itinerant life! He has been with us in our various fields of labor, and he has displayed his saving grace, through his word and ordinances, in the assemblies of his saints. We have seen the prodigal return to his father's house, and have heard the wailings of penitence followed by shouts of joy. He has been with us in our pastoral labors—in the family circle—in "the pious house where zeal and friendship meet," to sanctify the union and fellowship of kindred and friends. He has been with us in the chambers of the sick, and in the "house of mourning." The dying have whispered in our ears, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" or, as they have entered the swellings of Jordan, they have sung in holy triumph,

"Forever here my rest shall be
Close to thy bleeding side."

And often amid scenes of deep sorrow, while our eyes have rested upon badges of mourning and habiliments of woe, and our ears have been pained by the wailings of the widow and the orphan, the eye of faith has rested upon a "better country," where "the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick," and funeral knells shall never be heard.

"O let us still proceed
In Jesus' work below;
And following our triumphant Head,
To further conquests go."

God grant that we may all finish our "course with joy"—that we may die at our posts, and "be forever with the Lord!" Amen.





