

Quotes on False Ministers

by

Richard Baxter

A man that makes a great deal of talk and stir about Religion, and is zealous for his opinions and pious complements, goes currant with many for a true Believer, though the Interest of his flesh and of the world be as near and dear to him in this way of Religiousness, as other men's is to them in a way of more open professed sensuality.

I am afraid, nay, I have no doubt, that the day is near when unfaithful ministers will wish that they had never known the charge of souls; but that they had rather been colliers, or sweeps, or tinkers, than pastors of Christ's flock, when, besides all the rest of their sins, they shall have the blood of so many souls to answer for.

Do you think it is a likely thing that he will fight against Satan with all his might, who is himself a servant to Satan? Will he do any great harm to the kingdom of the devil, who is himself a member and a subject of that kingdom? Will he be true to Christ who is in covenant with his enemy? Now, this is the case of all unsanctified men, of whatsoever rank or profession they be. They are the servants of Satan, and the subjects of his kingdom; it is he that ruleth in their hearts; and are they like to be true to Christ that are ruled by the devil... No wonder if such deride the holy obedience of the faithful; and if while they take on them to preach a holy life, they cast reproaches on them that practice it! O how many such traitors have been in the Church of Christ in all ages, who have done more against him, under his colors, than they could have done in the open field!

Can it be expected that God will bless that man's labours, who worketh not for God, but for himself?... Now, this is the case with every unsanctified man... And can it be expected, that God should much bless the labours of such men as these? It is not for him they preach, but themselves, and their own reputation or gain. It is not him, but themselves, that they seek and serve; and, therefore, no wonder if he leave them to themselves for the success, and if their labours have no greater a blessing than themselves can give, and if the word reach no further than their own strength can make it reach.

As for those worldly time-serving hypocrites, which in all places creep in among the Saints, and do but serve themselves of Christ, let them know that God will one day require an account at their hands, of all these scandals which they have caused in the Church, and the ruin of poor ungodly souls that are dashed in pieces, and cast themselves into hell, by stumbling at this stone which their worldly practises have laid before them. If you would needs be worldlings, you were better have kept in the world among worldlings, then to have crept into the Church of Christ, and brought thither your scandalous worldly lives, to the dishonour of that Religion which condemneth your practises and you. Did not Christ warn you to count your costs, and never to dream of being his Disciples, unless you could forsake all and follow him under the Cross, in expectation of a promised treasure in Heaven?

O grievous case! how rare are self-denying men? Nothing in the world doth more assure me, that the number that shall be saved are very few: When nothing is more evident in Scripture, than that none but the self-denying shall be saved, and nothing more evident in the world, than that self-denying men are very few. Would God but excuse men in this one point, and take up with preaching and praying, and numbering ourselves with the strictest party, then I should hope that many comparatively would be saved... But if self-denial be the mark, the nature of a Saint, and this as effected by the Love of God, then alas, how thin are they in the world! and how weak is grace even in those few!

These are the two sorts that shall stand on the right and left hand of Christ in Judgement: They that gave Christ his own with advantage, and lived to him, and studiously devoted their Riches and other Talents to his use, as men that unfeignedly made God their End, these are they that are set on the right hand, and adjudged as Blessed to the Kingdom which they so esteemed. And those that hid their talents, by keeping or expending them to their private use, denying them to Christ, and living to themselves, these are they that are set on the left hand, and adjudged to the everlasting fire, with the Devils whom they served. It is a desperate mistake of self-deceiving men, to think that a state of Holiness consisteth only in external worship, or that a state of wickedness consisteth only in some gross sins. I tell you from the word of God, the difference is greater, and lyeth deeper then so... What is it that hath your Hearts? your very Hearts? What is it that is the matter of your dearest Love? And what the matter of your chiefest care? What is it that is the very bent and scope of your

life? Is it for this world or the world to come? What do you daily labour and live for? Is it for God? or your carnal selves? What interest is it that is predominant in you? Know but that and know all.

It is not only the contemnors' of Religion, but also too many that go among us for very godly men, that know not where their happiness lyeth, nor what the Christian Religion is. Almost all the apprehensions which they have of Happiness are sensual... they think of Christ as one that came to free them from such punishments, and help them to such a happiness as this.... And the rest they call by the name of *Good works*; which if it be not with them a term of as low importance, as the name of [*Works*] alone...yet at least they take it for that which doth not constitute their Religion. So that true Sanctification is either not understood or taken to be of less Necessity then it is.

So those that would persuade us of the felicity of any worldly enjoyments, & by extolling sensual pleasures, or profits, or honours, would draw our hearts to them, should be despised & esteemed as deceivers by us. No man is more serviceable to the Devil for our destruction, then they that applaud any sensual vanity, and would make us believe what great matters are to be expected from the world, and so would be the Panders of it to entice us to its unchaste embracement. Remember this, when any would persuade you what a fine thing it is to be rich and great, and somebody in the world: what a merry life it is to drink, and sport away your time: These are the Prophets and Apostles of the Devil and the world; and let them be regarded by you accordingly.

Heretics are Traitors in (*the churches*) and make mutinies among the soldiers of Christ, and do them more mischief by perfidiousness, then the rest could do by open hostility... The first sort of these (traitors) took advantage...(of the) fleshly tenderness of many professors of the Christian faith, which made them too ready to listen to any Doctrine that promised them peace and safety in the world; and as they were themselves a Carnal Generation, that looked after worldly glory and felicity, and could not bear persecution for Christ, and so were enemies to his Cross, while they profess themselves to be his Disciples, so would they have persuaded the Churches to be of the same mind, and to take the same course as they;

that so they might not be noted for carnal and cowardly professors themselves, while they brought others to believe the justness of their way.

Do you indeed believe that such glory awaiteth those who die in the Lord and such torment those that die unconverted? If you do, how can you think any labour too much for such weighty ends? If you do not, say so, and get you out of the vineyard, and go with the prodigal to keep swine, and undertake not to feed the flock of Christ. Methinks such men should fear, lest, while they are accounted excellent preachers and godly ministers by men, they should be accounted cruel soul-murderers by Christ; and lest the cries of those souls which they have betrayed to damnation, should ring in their ears for ever and ever.