

Chapter 1

# The Professional Stance, Or The Techniques of Being Unmistakable Clerical

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Each of mankind's occupations, which has managed to pass itself off as a profession acquires, through the years, a distinctive flavor which, though never reduced to specific formula and always semi-mystical in nature, shapes the personalities of its practitioners and is passed on by them like a torch, from one generation to the next.

Somewhere there is, I am sure, gathering dust as its pages, yellow and neglected by an unappreciative world, a Ph.D. dissertation documenting the truth, known to professional men throughout history, but never admitted by them, that the proper professional demeanor is much more important in acquiring and keeping clients than one's professional skill.

Thus, a doctor of medicine may know everything there is to know about the human body, but if he has a weak chin and a diffident manner no one will believe he can cure anything more complex than chickenpox and he will starve to death, unless he goes into research.

A banker may combine in himself an extraordinary grasp of economics with a highly developed sense of how to make money with money without taking risks. But if he affects checkered suits and a breezy manner, everybody will take him for an unreliable chap at best, and suspect that he is embezzling prodigious sums

and has gone undetected only because of his cleverness at faking the books.

The public expects its professional men to act, talk, eat, drink, think, dress and play in a manner which, in sum, reflects their profession. This is what we mean by, and shall hereafter be referred to, as: "the professional stance."

No other calling demands, for success, the constant assumption of the right professional stance as does the ministry. This is, indeed, the first requirement of an acceptable clergyman. Mastery of it has brought mediocrities to bishop's thrones, while its neglect has consigned geniuses to perpetual failure. Though the chapters of this book are not necessarily-arranged in order of descending importance, and while every subject treated is of incalculable value to the young cleric, ambitious of preferment, the problem of the professional stance is put first because if he cannot learn or cannot stomach this part of the course, there is no need to read further. Nothing else will make up for his shortcomings in the matter of the professional stance. It is the sine qua non, the Alpha and the Omega, the essential ingredient if the goal is to be reached and worthy ambitions realized.

The stance proper to a clergyman is not easy to describe with precision because it is made up of so many ingredi-

ents. It is a mixture, the proper proportions of which defy exact analysis.

## Piety And Its Uses

Nevertheless, we must try. To put it in its simplest form, people expect their minister to be serious, but not solemn; unworldly, but possessed of some practical sense; wise, but not smart; gentle, but not effeminate; poor, but not paupers; unctuous, but not pompous; neat, but not natty; diligent, but not ambitious; upright in his own conduct, but not censorious of theirs; forthright. but tactful; affable, but reserved.

Perhaps the best single word to describe the flavor of personality, one must strive to achieve is "pious." This implies that the preacher will gather up, in himself, a host of qualities and characteristics and distill them into an essence which he exudes at all times, and which advertises, unmistakably, that here is a man of much prayer, meditation and lofty thoughts; a man who has disentangled himself from the secular, soiling concerns which obsess most men — in short, a clergyman.

Now someone is bound to say that this means a preacher, to be a success, must be religious — a contention which this book is written to deny.

Here, we must pause to make a distinction between "religious" and "pious."

A genuinely-religious man is, as the sociologists would say, inner-directed. He has deep and abiding convictions, usually derived from his faith in God and what he believes to be God's will. Thus, he is likely to be socially-irresponsible, largely uninterested in the kind of impression he makes on people, often involved in unpopular causes. He tends to be a crusader, frequently-intolerant of what he conceives to

be injustice or evil. Unfortunately, he is usually tactless, making enemies unnecessarily and, thus, becoming an embarrassment to the church.

We can, of course, admire his courage however ill-conceived, and his zeal however misdirected; but, we should not take him as a model. He is the fellow who gives rise to the suspicion that the church is socialistic and brings the whole clerical profession into disrepute. If he wants to make speeches, he ought to hire a hall and leave the care of Christian souls to better-balanced men, who understand that the true minister comforts and pleases his people.

The pious man, on the other hand, seems more religious to laymen than the religious man because he tries very hard to fit the image that laymen conjure up when they think of "preacher." It is like people who have so long had frozen orange juice for breakfast that were they served a glass from freshly-squeezed fruit, it would taste somehow artificial.

Your church members, of course, will not understand this distinction or, even comprehend, that there is a distinction to be made. For them "religious" and "pious" are synonymous. It is best not to disabuse them, for if you try, you will likely only confuse them. Always remember that they are not theologians and have no interest, whatever, in finespun theological ideas. It is better so. If they did understand these things, it would only complicate the minister's already-difficult task.

Let me repeat: You can expect to be a successful clergyman without being religious; but never forget that, you cannot be a success unless you are pious.

Happily for you, the achievement of a pious, preacherly-personality is not over-

whelmingly difficult. Anybody, in fact, can manage it with proper attention to detail. At one time or another in your seminary days, and, perhaps quite frequently, some famous preacher stopped by to speak in chapel and — among other bits of advice — exhorted you to be yourself in your ministry; no doubt quoting Phillips Brooks to the effect that preaching is mediating the truth, through personality (how often you must have heard that quote).

Now this principle is fine for men like Phillips Brooks and other pulpit stars of strong and spectacular personality. But this is very bad counsel for you. The one thing those of us who are average, ordinary mortals cannot be, and expect to succeed, is ourselves. Try this and you will, in all likelihood, sink beneath the surface of the profession and never be heard from again.

You see, as ourselves we have tastes, prejudices, habits, manners and idiosyncrasies, which often are directly opposed to the pious image we must strive to create, and if we permit their expression, they will ruin the image. No one is naturally pious. It has to be learned. But thousands of successful clergymen will testify, that not only can it be learned, but that its mastery is the key which unlocked the door marked “advancement” for them.

The fundamental principle here, which you must firmly fix in your mind, is this: Every aspect and facet of your life and personality must be made to reflect the pious image.

Let me illustrate how you should apply the principle.

### **Notes On Pastoral Attire**

One of the more obvious and accurate indices of a man's personality is his mode

of dress. In earlier ages one could quite accurately fix a man's station, in society and even his occupation, by his costume. These distinctions tend to become blurred in a democratic and affluent society, but how a man dresses still tells us a great deal about him.

Now you may have a taste for shaggy sport coats, gay ties, livid hosiery and the like. If so, you must ruthlessly suppress it. Such apparel is associated in the minds of the good people you will serve with flamboyance, worldliness and instability. Who would turn for spiritual counsel to a man in a tweed sport coat? And how many of the saintly Christians in your flock would believe that the prayers of a preacher wearing chartreuse socks could possibly carry to the heavens?

What is needed is a mode of dress which at the same time, proclaims what we are, but not what we are like. People ought at least suspect that we are clergymen when they look at our clothes.

By now you have, no doubt, leaped to the conclusion that the answer to this problem is clerical garb. Superficially, it would seem to fill the bill. It is an unmistakable uniform, immediately identifying you. It has the virtue of a long tradition and the added advantage of economy. You will at some point in your career, either now or later, be tempted to adopt the clerical collar.

But, do not yield to this temptation. Whatever its virtues may be, its disadvantages are far greater.

For one, it conjures up in the minds of the people you will serve pictures of strange rites, fluttering candles and smoking incense. You may count on it — that most of your congregation will be hostile to the Roman branch of Christendom,

and that they believe (quite erroneously) that only Romans and those with Romish leanings wear the clerical.

Also, if you wear clerical garb while riding a train, some traveling salesman will inevitably-mistake you for an Episcopalian and invite you to the club car for a drink, thus, putting you in the embarrassing position of refusing his hospitality and confusing his image of the Episcopal clergy.

There are a few — a very few-congregations, among the standard-brand churches, in which the use of clerical garb can be an advantage. These are, generally, wealthy, upperclass suburban churches, whose members consider that a pastor in clericals lends tone and class to the church; or congregations in deteriorating areas, where the garb is mandatory for identification and protection. But, you will be serving middle-class folk for most of your ministry and so must devise a clerical costume which marks you for what you are, but does not offend middle-class prejudice.

Experience shows us that a black, oxford gray or navy blue suit (in order of preference) of indifferent cut and average quality, combined with black shoes and hosiery, white shirt and dark tie (a small design in color is permissible in the tie, but plain black is preferable and helps to identify your calling) will serve as a clerical uniform; almost as unmistakable as a reversed collar, but without its disadvantages.<sup>1</sup>

Church-goods supply houses sell a suit especially-designed for clergymen. It is cleverly made so as to look always just a bit out of style (which it is) and inexpensive ( which it isn't). You would be well advised to purchase two or three of these, but it isn't necessary. Any low-priced clothing store stocks what you need.

As you advance in your career, you will find it advisable to buy clothes of better quality and cut. Indeed, a more sophisticated congregation will not tolerate the shabby look so prized by smaller and rural churches. But you need never change the color scheme.

Young clergymen should remember not to be too shabby, even when serving the first small church. A congregation bitterly resents a run-down-at-the-heels preacher, because it reminds them (and advertises to the community) that it is paying him a shockingly inadequate salary. More than one naive minister has thought thus to shame a church into raising his salary, and discovered that the congregation preferred to solve the problem by firing him. These smaller churches (and some not so small) will be penurious with the preacher in any event; but they expect him to connive with them in concealing it, even if he has to borrow money on which to live.

This garb has the advantage of being suitable for everyday duty, as well as for Sunday pulpit wear. Thus, when you buy a new ensemble, you use it first only on Sunday and for weddings and funerals. Congregations will tolerate and even appreciate a bit of elegance on these occasions. You then demote your other suits one notch, the recent Sunday suit becoming the best everyday suit, the former best everyday suit, the second best, etc. The author once knew a very successful churchman who even went fishing in the double-breasted black suit, white shirt and black tie, which had reached the bottom of his sartorial barrel.

The young clergyman should consider well the many advantages of this solution to the problem of dress before launching out on the uncertain seas of fashion, variety and his own taste.

For one thing, it saves — over an average career of forty years — a staggering amount of time.

There is the time saved daily which other men devote to deciding on which suit to wear, then matching to it hosiery, tie, shoes and other accessories. You are freed from all this because you made this decision once, when you entered upon your ministry. Since there is absolutely no variety in your garb, you need never think about it.

Additionally, other men spend more time, than even they imagine, shopping for new clothes. You can do this simply by calling your haberdasher and instructing him to duplicate your last order. A conservative computation of time thus saved over an average career indicates that it would be more than sufficient for the learning of seven languages or the writing of a two-volume commentary on the Book of Habakkuk.

Furthermore, an invariable costume gives your people the distinct impression that you are an exceedingly-spiritual man; free of male pride, beyond the clutch of the world's sticky tentacles in which most of mankind is so inextricably-enmeshed. Yet, it is so nearly-like what every man wears as to be socially-unobtrusive and to suggest that the wearer, however spiritual he may be, still is in solid contact with the real world and can be depended upon to keep the church budget nicely in balance. There will come a point, in your career, at which you will need to adopt an academic gown for pulpit wear. Some young men make pretensions to the gown very soon after ordination, usually with unhappy results. The good, simple people of your earlier parishes will construe a robe as “formalism.” This weakens their confidence in your theology, as well as your administrative policies.

The proper point at which to put on the pulpit robe must be carefully-calculated and no absolute rule can be laid down for your guidance here. However, in general, when you accede to the pastorate of a church with a Gothic nave, the time has come. People who are not offended by Gothic architecture will not be offended by an academic gown. Gowns go well with Gothic.

One exception to this rule applies to the preacher with a doctorate, whether earned or honorary. Any congregation, no matter how unsophisticated, will be proud of this and want it flaunted. Since it is obviously-inappropriate to sew doctor's bars on a sack suit, a gown is clearly indicated.

## **The Car In Front At The Manse**

Another obvious index to a man's personality is his motorcar. Psychological research tells us that we reveal a great deal about our inner selves by our choice of an automobile. It is at the same time a sign of our station in society, a way of expressing our hidden frustrations and subconscious longings and, incidentally, a means of transportation.

Now, to a pastor, a car is absolutely essential. Of necessity, he will spend a great many hours in it. It represents the largest single item of expense in his budget, after food. The selection of the “right” car, therefore, deserves considerable attention.

Since any make of automobile, when new, will furnish adequate transportation for the clergyman, the selection should be made on the basis of less tangible factors. The first of these factors we will examine, and by far the most important, is that the automobile he drives is for the preacher a potent instrument for creating the proper

pious, professional stance. What we need to arrive at is a reliable formula for combining make, model and color so as to obtain the optimum image reflection. This problem is further-complicated by the fact that what is appropriate at one stage of your career, would be wrong for another stage.

The beginning clergyman will avoid a great deal of difficulty in the years ahead if he will get well in mind the general outline of the automobile market, classify it as to cost, luxury, public image, etc. He will, then, bracket the available selections in terms of appropriateness in relation to the size, affluence, educational level and sophistication of his congregation. But, let us hasten to simplify.

It is well to envision, as a beginning point, the low end of the market; those makes, models and colors which would be suitable for the pastor of three small rural churches, whose members think that Calvin Coolidge was the greatest statesman of our century. This is represented by one of the popular, economy compacts. Purchased in the least expensive body style and most conservative color, it says of its owner, "This is a thrifty, sober man who makes no rash decisions, whose money is not at the mercy of his emotions, whose true values are spiritual, who is not seduced by the trifling, the flashy and the frivolous."

Thus, we arrive at a black standard two-door Falcon sedan as the ideal automobile for the beginning clergyman. Admittedly, our society has liberalized in attitudes toward the motorcar since Henry Ford manufactured nothing but black cars. A dark green Chevy II<sup>2</sup>, with an automatic transmission, would not be too daring for most small congregations. Such a car is always "safe," although a substantial urban church generally expects its

pastor to drive something a bit larger and less austere.

Now let us envision the upper end of the market. Most people think of a Cadillac as a symbol of the ultimate in luxury, price and status. They consider a convertible to be the final-frivolity in body styles, and associate the color red with flamboyance and daring. A red Cadillac convertible sums up, therefore, everything you must avoid in the selection of your vehicle, just as the black two-door Falcon sedan sums up everything that is correct for you in a motorcar.

You will never consider, then, a Cadillac, a convertible of any make, nor red in any model.

With these sound principles in mind, you may vary the make, model and color of your car as you climb the ecclesiastical ladder.

For example: nearly any church which pays a pastoral salary of more than \$7000 per year will tolerate a hardtop sedan in the parsonage garage and will not object to one of the more-muted colors in metallic paint. A handy chart to aid you in your selection is included on page seven.

You will note the overlapping of some makes and models. This simply means that the maximum selection suitable for one salary range can, also, be the minimum selection for the next higher range.

One complicating factor in the car purchase problem is the occasional automobile dealer you will inherit with your congregation. There is no way to avoid buying from him. He knows he has you and will overcharge you by the amount of his annual contribution to the church (which, fortunately for you, is unlikely to be large).

1st Pastorate Salary Range \$4000-5500	2nd Pastorate Salary Range \$5600-7000	Large Urban Parish Salary \$7100-10,000
MAKE: Any compact MODEL: 2-door sedan COLOR: Black, dark green, dark blue or Chevy, Ford, Plymouth or 4-door sedan or gray, It. green	Dodge, Pontiac Catalina, or Mercury, or Buick LeSabre  4-door sedan or hardtop — Black, bieve or Metallic blue or green	Chrysler 300, Olds 98, Buick Electra  4-door sedan or hardtop Any color but pastels or red

## Living The Inhibited Life

Everybody has his own little peculiarities: ways of doing things, characteristic facial expressions, reactions to others, moods, affectations, etc., which we lump under the heading of personal habits, and which total up to our public personality.

Most people find it expedient to control and develop these habits along lines which they would not take if people were free of all inhibitions. (This is why a quiet, polite, gentlemanly fellow may become loud, uncouth, insulting and lecherous when drunk, because alcohol ingested in sufficient quantity removes these civilized inhibitions.)

It is absolutely-essential to the preacher's image that he hedge in his natural inclinations with a rugged set of custom-made inhibitions. Let us illustrate.

It is essential to the achievement of the pious image to project a mild but distinct quality of asceticism. The average Protestant church in America is made up of people who are only a few decades removed from their Puritan ancestors; and who have not yet succeeded in shaking themselves free from the conviction that a Christian is one who doesn't enjoy this world very much.

The author is aware that this is a heresy, but the relevant point is that it is

a popular heresy. You don't need to preach it, for you know better and you don't want to be blatantly dishonest. But, you do need to practice it.

A prudent preacher, therefore, will never use alcohol or tobacco.<sup>3</sup> He will avoid card playing and dancing and the use of profanity. He will never, never tell an off-color story, and when one is told in his presence will react with a slight frown, followed by a very brief, tolerant, superior smile, which will make the teller feel sinful and embarrassed.

Your people do all of these things, of course, but they feel vaguely-guilty about doing them. If you will remember that your congregation, although it does not understand this, pays you to be good for them, it will help you in the formation of your public attitudes. You are, in a very real sense, the modern Protestant equivalent of the ancient Jewish scapegoat, upon which the sins of the people were heaped and thus expiated. The esteem in which you are held and the more-tangible appreciation in the form of salary and emoluments will be directly-proportional to your skill in fulfilling this role.

A preacher who appears to be getting a lot of fun out of life does not impress the laity as a very good scapegoat. He may be popular at Rotary Club, but he will be poorly-paid by the people he serves and constantly in danger of losing his pulpit.

Your pleasures, then, should not be of a vigorous nature. It is a pity that croquet is no longer popular, for it is the ideal recreation for the clergy. No one gets very excited about it, no one swears over a poor shot, it is inexpensive, and it doesn't work up a sweat.

Checkers is a wholesome, if boring pastime. Chess is permissible only in a college community where it is not disadvantageous for a preacher to be thought intelligent. Tennis is a sport of good repute, but a little strenuous. Younger clergymen (modestly attired) may play it without undue criticism. Otherwise, things being what they are, the habit of extensive-walking is the recreation best suited to the clerical image.

The one sin permitted the preacher by his congregation is the sin of gluttony. Not only will your people permit it, they will urge it upon you at every opportunity, to the accompaniment of coarse humor about how preachers like to eat.

The reason for this, while not apparent to the people, is not hard to discover. Having denied you every other indulgence of the flesh, they ease their unconscious guilt by removing all limits on this one. And since most of them are dieting, it has the added advantage of making them feel spiritually-superior to their pastor at one point, at least.

It must be pointed out, though, that you are not expected to be fat. How you are to eat prodigiously and remain slim is one of the more-trying perplexities of your profession, but a fat man can hardly manage to look ascetic. It will be thought that either he is worldly and grossly-sensuous, or that he has a clutch of emotional disturbances gnawing away at his psyche, the pains, of which, he assuages by incessant gourmandizing.

Space does not allow us to detail every item which can contribute to the total image we are seeking to create. The rule to remember, however, is that the little things add up to the big thing.

## **Choosing Art and Literature Suitable For The parsonage**

The young clergyman, for example, may be negligent about the reading matter reposing on end tables or carelessly thrust into magazine racks in the parsonage living room.

You will discover that parishioners who drop by the house (and there will be many of them) nearly-always take note of what the preacher is reading and report it through the parish grapevine.

Novels in plain sight must be of the most chaste type. The works of Lloyd Douglas, Frank Slaughter and the religious novels of Thomas Costain are examples of the kind of thing you should have on hand for display purposes (there is no necessity for reading them). Reader's Digest condensed books are perfectly-safe because everyone knows they have had the racy passages leached out of them.

For magazines you will do well to have, always in some obvious place, the current issues of Time to show that you are a man who keeps up with the world, and The Saturday Evening Post, which identifies you with the solid middleclass virtues and suggests that you are politically-conservative.

You will naturally-always have copies of your denominational publication and other religious journals in abundance lying about. They are, in the words of a celebrated, fictional divine, filled with "holy bilge and sacred bunk." But again,



you do not need to read them (unless your taste runs to that sort of thing), just display them. They complete the picture, add the right touch and tone, solidify the image.

Judgment must be exercised, too, in the art with which you adorn the parsonage walls.

The salient rule here is that any painting or reproduction displayed must be representational. If your taste runs to Picasso or Paul Klee, hang them only in the privacy of your bedchamber (and take them down on the days your wife entertains the Ladies' Society, because the ladies will expect the use of the master bedroom for a cloakroom, and may mistake any abstract art for examples of arcane erotica).

It is best to stick to reproductions familiar to the least-sophisticated members of your congregation. This limits your choices to a relatively few paintings, most of them bad, but you will just have to make the best of it.

Every preacher should possess and display in the most prominent place in his house (over the fireplace mantel, for example) a large and well-framed copy of Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ." That this is a badly done, repulsive piece of art is beside the point. It is the most popular "Christ" among American Protestants, and your possession of it not only puts the properly-pious stamp upon you (for Sallman's is a very pious, otherworldly Christ indeed), but it identifies your taste with that of about 99 per cent of your congregation, which is very good for you.

Da Vinci's "Last Supper" is, also, appropriate. You may feel, as does the author, that this is one of a great painter's dubious efforts, but it is religious and it is identifiable by anyone who has advanced

culturally to the level of reading without moving the lips.

For relief from religious art, a landscape or two (which should be nearly indistinguishable from photographs) and, maybe, a still life are acceptable. You may even use a still life which includes a bottle of wine, so long as the setting is clearly foreign. Even the president of the local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union understands that foreigners are less enlightened about the joys of total abstinence than good solid American Christians and will not think ill of you. And there will be many a night when, exhausted from a day of dealing with cantankerous saints, you will contemplate such a painting with considerable pleasure.

In your early pastorates a small felt banner reading "God Bless Our Home," and perhaps a wooden plaque with the Lord's Prayer burned into it will complete the objects d'art necessary to clinch the image. By your third church, though, they should be omitted, lest you be considered a bit bucolic.

You need not be told, I am sure, to avoid any art which contains nude figures. American Protestants have discovered sex, of course, but they are slightly ashamed of it and prefer to think that their preachers haven't.

Whatever you do, you must not show much interest in the arts. Businessmen associate artistic proclivities with unreliability and the Democratic party and will be certain that any fiscal policies you advance can bring nothing but ruin to the church. Also, the "arty" image is fatal to the pious image. The two are fundamentally incompatible.

## The Value Of The Stained-Glass Voice

This chapter on the professional stance does not pretend to cover every possible life situation through which the image can be expressed, because it would be impossible to do so. The point is that any and all public situations, in which you are involved, are not only opportunities to reinforce the image with which you seek to invest yourself, but it is mandatory that you use them as such.

Remember that the pious, or professional, stance has to be learned. Clergymen of your acquaintance whom you have always thought of as having been born pious will immediately come to mind. But were you to question them (and assuming that they would give you an honest answer), they would tell you that they, too, had to practice the stance with all the single-minded devotion of a concert pianist or a professional golfer, before they achieved their present levels of proficiency. True professionalism, in any field, demands unremitting practice.

This means that you must take care not to shuck the image completely, even in the privacy of the home and family life. One successful and well-known minister claims it is absolutely-essential to speak in a "stained-glass voice," even to your wife and children.

There will no doubt be protests among you that the deliberate and calculated effort to achieve the pious image makes a man a phony, and will, thus, do lasting harm to his psyche. It is dishonest, some will say, to pretend to be something you are not.

Let me put your mind at rest on this.

Be reminded, first, that everyone pretends to be a better, more interesting, more important person than he really is.

You are only carrying this "erecting a front" to a sensible, well-planned extreme. Second, you are doing this for a good cause. Church people expect their preachers to be pious, indeed-demand that they be pious. They are disturbed, upset and angry, when their pastors do not fit the stereotype of preachers which they have so long held sacred, and which symbolize for them, the true man of God. To refuse to conform to their blessed prejudice is to diminish your effectiveness as their spiritual counselor and leader.

Third, it is only a short time, relatively, before the assumed image becomes the "true you." Console yourself, during your first year or so of image building with the thought that before long the strain of pretending, the feelings of guilt will pass. Soon you really will be pious. Soon you will feel guilty on those increasingly-rare occasions, when you momentarily forget to keep the image firmly in place. You will feel guilty, though you may not believe it now, when you are not pious.

Fourth, and of primary pertinence, there is no other way to assure yourself a level of success in the ministry commensurate with or exceeding your natural endowments for doing the Lord's work.

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1. In some parts of the Midwest this costume has come to be known as the "central Illinois clerical."

2. The author is aware that some small foreign cars are cheaper to buy and maintain than American compacts. One runs the risk with them of being accused of "inverse car snobbism," however, as well as laying oneself open to the suspicion that one is less than a 100 percent American. The

author is preparing a monograph "Is a Foreign Automobile Suitable for the Clergyman?" which will appear subsequently in *The Preacher's Home Companion* and may be included in later editions of this book.

3. Episcopalian and Lutheran clergymen and Presbyterians serving country-club-type congregations are exempt from these restrictions.