

LIBRARY OF
XENIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE PULPIT

OF THE

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN

CHURCH.

CONSISTING OF

SERMONS BY THE MINISTERS

OF THE

FOUR SYNODS OF THAT DENOMINATION.

EDITED BY

REV. JAMES PRESTLEY.

VOLUME III.

ANDOVER-HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY.
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

CINCINNATI:

LONGLEY & BROTHER, PRINTERS, WALNUT STREET.

1852.

VOL. 3

MAY

No. 1.

THE PULPIT

ANDOVER HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
CAMBRIDGE MASS.

OF THE
ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN

CHURCH.

CONSISTING OF

SERMONS BY THE MINISTERS

OF THE

FOUR SYNODS OF THAT DENOMINATION.

EDITED BY

REV. JAMES PRESTLEY.

CINCINNATI:

PRINTED BY J. A. & U. P. JAMES,

WALNUT STREET, ABOVE FOURTH.

1852.

The postage on this Periodical is ONE CENT for five hundred miles.

Rev. Wm. Davidson

[DOUBLE NUMBER.]

VOL. 3 NOVEMBER & DECEMBER. Nos. 7-8

THE PULPIT

OF THE

ANDOVER-HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN

CHURCH.

CONSISTING OF

SERMONS BY THE MINISTERS

OF THE

FOUR SYNODS OF THAT DENOMINATION.

EDITED BY

REV. JAMES PRESTLEY.

CINCINNATI:

PRINTED BY J. A. & U. P. JAMES,

WALNUT STREET, ABOVE FOURTH.

1852.

S E R M O N X V I .

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.*

BY REV. DAVID MACDILL, D. D.,

Pastor of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Sparta, Illinois.

"And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." *Colossians*, 4: 17.

NEITHER from tradition, nor from history, sacred or profane, have we any further information concerning Archippus than what is contained in the text; and the amount of this is, that he was a minister of the Gospel at Colosse. At what time he entered the ministry, what was the amount of his labor and patience in the service of his Master, by the laying on of the hands of what Presbytery or apostle he was ordained to the work of the ministry; are questions which a curious desire to know more than God has provided that we should know, may have led many to ask and attempt to answer, but the result has been mere conjecture.

Some have inferred from the admonition contained in the text, that he was in danger of becoming, if he had not already become, negligent in the performance of his ministerial duties; but of this there is no sufficient ground of presumption. Frequently and earnestly does the Apostle address similar exhortations to Timothy, of whose zeal and fidelity he had no reason to doubt. "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine; for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." To exhort and admonish, and thus provoke each other to love and to good works is, at all times, the duty of Christians, though no peculiar reasons may exist for it; and indeed, it is by this means that the existence of peculiar reasons is prevented.

* A Discourse delivered at the opening of the Third Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod of the West, at Oquawka, on the 13th day of October, 1852.

In all that he wrote, the Apostle, or the Divine Spirit who directed his pen, had a regard to the future. Till the end of time, this exhortation will meet the eye and sound in the ears of all ministers of the Gospel, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Brethren, let us see that we refuse not him that speaketh to us from heaven. Let us suffer the word of exhortation.

The ministry of which the Apostle speaks, the source from which it flows, and what belongs to the full and faithful discharge of its duties;—are the topics on which we are to dwell for a few moments.

I. The ministry—"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received."

The word is borrowed from the Old Testament, and is the same with that which is used, when the service of the sanctuary or the service of the priests is brought into view. It includes all that service on behalf of God's people, in things pertaining to God, which is necessary to be performed, that He may receive from them that revenue of praise and glory, which his word requires they should render to him.

It occurs in the New Testament accompanied with certain qualifying words and phrases. It is called "the ministry of reconciliation," from which we learn, that a great and leading object of this ministry is, to effect a reconciliation between God and sinners who are "enemies to him by wicked works." The matter, so to speak, of this reconciliation, or the ground on which it is effected, is the atonement of Christ. The minister of reconciliation is to preach this atonement in its fullness, its sufficiency, and its efficacy, that sinners who are alienated from God in their hearts, and have good reason to fear his righteous judgment, may see that a way is prepared for them to return to him, with the sure hope that they will meet the smiles of his love, and not the frowns of his anger. He is to preach it, that all may learn and know, that they may come to God, pleading that, as Christ, *his* Son, but *their* surety, *their* Redeemer, *their* Kinsman, has rendered a full satisfaction for their offenses, he would pardon all their transgressions, and receive them graciously, and be a Father to them. In thus addressing their hearers, they act as ambassadors sent from God, to deal with, plead with, their fellow-sinners, and pray and beseech them to dash on the ground, those weapons by which they have been carrying on

a warfare against heaven, which most assuredly will end in their defeat and eternal ruin; submit themselves to his mild and gracious government; and return with weeping and supplication to him from whom they have revolted, that their latter end may be peace. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

It is called "the ministry of the word;" which implies, that an important part of the work, or, indeed, that to which all may be reduced, is to open the Scriptures and bring forth the precious truths which they contain, for the conversion, the sanctification, and the eternal salvation of their hearers. Hence, the commission given to the Apostles runs thus: "Go preach the Gospel to every creature—Go teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Paul's charge to Timothy is: "Preach the word." He was himself sent to the Gentiles "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might obtain forgiveness of sins." And how he and his fellow-laborers in the Gospel acted under the instructions which they had received, he informs us in those ever memorable words: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

But not to dwell longer on this topic, suffice it to say, that the great end of this ministry is, in the first place, the conversion of sinners from sin to God, and then, their growth in grace, their advancement in knowledge and holiness, till they arrive at the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. And the minister of the Gospel should at all times, and not less in our own age than in any former age, take heed, lest Satan by his policy, or ill meaning men by their clamor, or well meaning but mistaken men by their importunity, divert his mind from this great end of his ministry, to objects of minor and but momentary importance—objects, which possibly may be gained, and yet the great design of this ministry, the glory of God in the conversion, sanctification, and eternal salvation of sinners, be entirely defeated.

II. The source from which this ministry flows—the *Lord Jesus*. "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord."

In the New Testament we have some equivalent expressions which may help us to fix the meaning of these words. "I thank Christ Jesus my Lord, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. From whom (Christ) we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith, among all nations. Christ sent me * * to preach the Gospel."

When the risen Redeemer gave his apostles their great commission, he said, "As my Father sent me, even so send I you." Paul asks and answers the question; "How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a preacher? and how can they preach except they be sent?" These words are used in an absolute and unqualified sense. They declare a truth, which no length of time, no change of circumstances, can make otherwise than true. A standing ministry, a succession of ministers sent by Christ, and separated unto the Gospel, is necessary, and will be necessary, that sinners may believe on Christ and be saved, till the end of time—under all circumstances, in all places, and among all nations. The promise, moreover, which Christ gave to his disciples: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," implies that, after the extraordinary ministry of the apostles should be closed, there should be, till the end of the world, a succession of ministers of the Gospel, commissioned and sent forth, by the "Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

To constitute an apostle, it was necessary that a man should have "seen the Lord," and received his commission orally and immediately from him. But the commission of the successors of the apostles—I mean their successors so far as they were simply ministers of the word,—is mediately given. Nor does it follow from this, that they are any the less called, and commissioned and sent forth by the Head of the Church, than his immediate apostles were. In the dispensation of his grace, as well as in his ordinary providence, God works by means or second causes. What men do in his name and by his authority, he recognizes as his own act and deed for all the specified purposes, as really as if he himself had performed it, without the intervention of any of those means or instrumentalities which he ordinarily sees fit to employ.

What constitutes a call to preach the Gospel?

Piety, a godly and blameless life being supposed; for without this it is needless to inquire any further, it being certain, that a man whose

life is a reproach to the Gospel cannot be called to minister in holy things. This being supposed, there must be—

1. An earnest desire for the work of the ministry—a preference for the service of God in the Gospel of his Son, before any other calling, however lawful and honorable in itself, and though a man may engage in it with an eye single to the glory of God: “He that desireth the office of a Bishop, desireth a good work.” The apostle does not mean, a man who desires the grade of a Lord Bishop, for the honors and emoluments of the office; but him who loves the business, the service, the employment, of one who labors to win souls for Christ.

In some cases this desire, though as true and genuine, may not be as strong as in others. But, whether more or less ardent, like all other desires and inclinations of men, it should be submitted to the will and good pleasure of God. As Moses entreated the Lord, “If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence,” so should every one who desires the office of a Bishop, the work of the ministry, say, If thy Spirit go not with me, to aid me, and bless my labors, carry me not forward till I realize the object of my desire. The event should be submitted to the judgment of God. No one should inordinately press toward the object of his wishes, by his own importunity, or by the importunity of his friends, if, in the opinion of those whom the Head of the Church has appointed to judge in the case, he ought to give up his intention; or if, in the providence of God, his way seems to be so barred against him that he cannot advance. The desire may be a gracious one. God may accept it; though he do not see fit to employ him in this particular kind of service. It was not God’s will that David should build him a temple, though he declares that it was good that it was in his heart to do so. In the world of nature there are a thousand embryos of existence which never pass beyond that stage. Millions of seeds of vegetables and trees fall to the earth, which are never quickened into life. How abundant are his resources. Notwithstanding all this—waste, as it might seem to us—“the earth is full of his riches.” Enough and to spare, is written on all his works. Nor less in the world of grace. Think of a Pollok, whose uncommon powers of thought, of fancy, of feeling and sympathy were blighted by an early decay; of a M’Cheyne, who was cut down almost as soon as he had entered on a career of extended usefulness

—and of glory, too, as that word is understood in heaven; of a Larned, who fell a prey to the destroyer, when the tones of his almost celestial eloquence were just beginning to move an opulent and luxurious, but ungodly, city. Think of the numerous cases in which the youth of ten or twelve years, who has already arrived at such a precocity of knowledge and grace, that it might almost seem that his moral nature had received no damage from the original transgression, is snatched away from the fond embrace of parents whose hearts often leaped for very joy over the precious treasure which they possessed. How great the loss, we say; but God can spare them. Not one the less ray of glory is reflected back from earth, on the throne of heaven. He will be at no loss for other babes and sucklings, from whose mouths he can perfect praise.

2. There must be some suitable qualifications for the work of the ministry.

Our Lord, the Master whom we profess to serve, has said: "Every scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth out of his treasure things new and old." He must have a good store of spiritual food to deal out to hungry souls. To keep his stock up he must be continually laying in new supplies. He has no new doctrines to advance: nothing, indeed, has he, but the same Gospel which we have heard from the beginning; but he must be capable of making new observations and reflections on old and well known facts; new applications of principles long since well known and established; and of illustrating the doctrine which is according to godliness by new analogies and comparisons.

Paul charges Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." And he lays it down as an indispensable qualification of a Gospel minister that he must be "apt to teach." He must be able to state, and explain, and illustrate, the doctrines of the Gospel, so as to advance his hearers in the knowledge of God their Savior. And he would have his pupil Timothy make a constant and diligent use of the means whereby he might not only possess, but increase the necessary qualifications of a Gospel minister; "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."

In addition to that higher kind of instruction which is to be ob-

tained only in the school of Christ, every minister of the Gospel should have a competent degree of human learning. The day is past, or is fast passing away, when ignorance, impudence, and vulgarity, were reckoned among the best qualifications of a Gospel minister; and when ignorant and vulgar men harangued other ignorant and vulgar men against "college learning," to keep themselves and their hearers satisfied with their ignorance and vulgarity.

But I do not say that great learning or splendid talents are essential. Talent, indeed, if genuine, may enable a man to be more highly useful in the Church; and if blessed and truly consecrated to the service of Christ, will make him so; but "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." In all ages, and over all the world, the greatest amount of real good has been done by ministers who possessed no such talents as rendered them the idols of the multitude; but who, by fidelity in their sacred calling, and a constant occupancy of the post of duty, were the honored instruments of turning many to righteousness.

3. There must be an opportunity of usefulness in the ministry.

If Christ sends a laborer into his vineyard, there is some place in it, where he intends to employ his labors. A door is opened before him, by which he may enter upon his work; not always, by any means, such "a great and effectual door," as Paul at one time saw opened before him; but nevertheless a door. If in one place the door is closed against him, though it may be only the foolish and sinful prejudices of men which oppose, as such things closed the door against Paul when he would have gone to his brethren of the seed of Abraham; the Head of the Church suffers it to be so, because this is not the place where he would have his servant to labor. But his way will be directed to a people whose hearts the Lord hath prepared to desire, and esteem, and cherish his ministry.

If after sufficient trial, it appears, that nowhere do the people desire a man's ministry, then the Lord hath not sent him. It is on this ground that we vindicate the practice of the Church in first licensing, and afterward, on further trial, ordaining candidates for the ministry.

The Presbytery, with us, judges of the fitness of a candidate to preach the Gospel. If satisfied of his fitness, they license him. This their deed declares, that, in their judgment, from all that yet

appears, it is the will of Christ that he should preach the Gospel; in other words, that he has a divine call to engage in the work of the ministry. But there are many nameless things on which a man's usefulness in the ministry depends, of which they have not yet all the necessary means of judging; and of which, indeed, they are only in common with the mass of Christ's disciples, capable of judging. They then put him, for a season, on trial before the people. Do the people concur in the judgment of the Presbytery? This is now the question to be decided. He is to be *their* minister—their servant for Christ's sake—will he be acceptable to them? Thus the Presbytery obeys the commandment of the Lord; "Lay hands suddenly on no man." This is the democratic element in the Presbyterian system. Let no man think of disturbing it. Were Presbyteries to ordain candidates for the ministry without placing them for a sufficient length of time in a state of trial before the people, the government of the Church, as to one of its most important functions, would be a hierarchy; or, as it might not improperly be called, a spiritual aristocracy.

The choice of the people, and an appointment or commission from a competent court or tribunal to preach the Gospel constitute what is sometimes denominated an *ecclesiastical call*. It is nothing more than a formal recognition of the divine call. It is necessary for the sake of order, and to save the Church from the evils which she would otherwise suffer from men who "run though God hath not sent them." As a divine arrangement it is perfect. The errors which may be committed in carrying it out, arise from human imperfection. This is the door by which a true minister of Christ enters the sheepfold, and he will not seek to climb up some other way. Thus, our ministry flows from Christ as its source. We magnify not ourselves, but we magnify our office, as our Master has taught us to do. All the gifts which are necessary for the "work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ," are from him. To him we are accountable for the faithful discharge of its duties. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment; he that judgeth us is the Lord. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. What our Lord said to his immediate disciples holds true, and to the end of time will hold true in reference to all his ministers: "He that receiveth you, re-

ceiveth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." As every one who would take part in this ministry, should see to it that he do not run unsent; so the people should take care not to despise him whom God hath sent. There are curses found written in the book of the Lord, for both these classes of offenders.

III. What is necessary to the full and faithful discharge of the duties of this ministry. On a topic which would require a volume to do it full justice, I cannot be expected to notice more than a few leading ideas.

1. Attention to the means of mental improvement.

The world is in motion. Knowledge is increasing. Every new invention in the arts; every new discovery in science, in geography, in the records of antiquity, affords new helps for explaining and illustrating the doctrines of the Bible. Hence, the minister who needeth not to be ashamed, must be all his life a student.

The heavier particles which are held in solution while water is in motion, precipitate or fall to the bottom when it enters the quiescent pool. By an analogous law of mind, the ideas which are acquired by careful investigation and close study—those heavier particles of knowledge, so to speak—are gradually lost if the mind is not kept in a constant state of activity. They are no longer grasped in their full magnitude, nor perceived in their full dimensions and in their proper relations; but they continue to float on the surface of the stream of thought, and are, from time to time, thrown off with an endless repetition. The discourses of such a minister will become dull, dry and uninteresting, and often painfully tedious; for he is under a continual temptation to endeavor to make the length of his sermon compensate its lack of weight and solidity.

Ordinarily, indeed, after a man has spent many years in the ministry, the decay of his bodily strength, and the pressure of his more active duties, will not permit him to think of adding much more to his stock of general knowledge; but then, meditation comes in and supplies the place of what is usually called study. He meditates on the truths and facts with which his mind and memory are stored, and applies them to practical uses hitherto unthought of. And hence, if he is taking heed to his ministry, the practical appositeness of his thoughts, and in some sense, their originality, will compensate the lack of those ornaments of language and delivery, and

even of that brilliancy of fancy, which he may have possessed in former years.

An extensive and minute acquaintance with the history of all those nations, ancient and modern, which have had any connection with the Church of God, and also, an accurate knowledge of what God is now doing in our world, is absolutely necessary, if a minister would explain those prophecies of Scripture which have been fulfilled, and are now fulfilling in the age in which we live. And for this work every minister of the Gospel should labor to qualify himself, that the Church may enjoy the full benefit of this standing and continually augmenting proof, that the Bible contains a revelation from heaven; and also, that she may understand her present position, her present duty, and her future prospects.

To keep himself constantly "posted up," to use a mercantile phrase, in all that knowledge and information which he must possess in order that he may be "a good minister of Jesus Christ," will subject him to continual expense. And when a congregation is consulting about what is a competent provision for the support of a minister, this important item of expenditure should not be overlooked. They expect him to make full proof of his ministry. They would not, like Pharaoh, be a cruel taskmaster, requiring the "full tale of brick," without furnishing the "straw."

2. Attention to the means of spiritual improvement.

Amongst these means, the diligent reading of the word of God, and prayer, hold a prominent place. The word of God is the food of the soul: prayer is the breath of the soul. Both are essentially necessary to spiritual life. How can our souls live, if we neglect either?

We should read a portion of the word of God every day; not as critics, nor as scholars, nor yet as theologians, nor yet as stewards of the mysteries of God, that we may lay in a supply of spiritual food, to deal out to his hungry children; but as sinners who hope to be saved through Christ; and who, equally with our hearers, should grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Savior. And a remark made by some man of God in a past age is well worthy of our attention, that we should first preach our sermons to ourselves before preaching them to others.

If we do not know the terror of the Lord, how can we persuade others to be reconciled to him, and flee the wrath to come? If we

do not know the worth of our own souls, how can we duly estimate the souls of our fellow-men? If we are taking little or no care for our own souls, how can we stand up before God and men and reason with others on the subject? Must not our tongue be ready to cleave to the roof of our mouth, and the silent monitor within be ready to disconcert and abash us with the whisper, *thou hypocrite!*

3. Diligence in the performance of the duties of our ministry.

It is the command of Paul to Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." And he enforces this exhortation by what a man whose calculations are based on worldly principles would consider rather a singular reason: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts will they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." They will soon grow weary of the pure and healing doctrines of Christ; they will desire to be entertained with the "enticing words of man's wisdom;" they will thirst after novelties; they will become weary and restive, under your reproofs and admonitions; they will say you are not the preacher they need, and so lust after others, and still after others. But let not this abate your zeal or your earnestness. He that judgeth you is the Lord. If you are despised and rejected of men, your beloved Master was so before you. So much the more necessary is it that you should earnestly labor and strive for their salvation. Why Paul! Am I, a young man, just setting out in the ministry, to pursue a course which will the sooner estrange from me the minds of some of my hearers, perhaps a considerable number, how many I cannot tell? Yes, just so. You and all other Christians were once foolish and disobedient, as they are. Therefore, by all means labor that you may save them.

There are always two classes among the hearers of a minister of the Gospel. First, the pious. These love to hear and are never tired hearing, the true and faithful words of God; for though they wound they know it is in order to their healing. They say: "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer shall be in their calamities." These desire the minister to be faithful and industrious; and while they see him aiming to be faithful and industrious in his sacred calling, they will make allowance for many infirmities and imperfections, and still cheer

him on in his work. Blessed is that minister who has many such in his flock. There will be conversions from sin to God. He will have seals to his ministry; and a crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord. Happy is that congregation which contains many such. God will dwell in the midst of them, and will surely bless them. He will satiate their souls with his goodness. He will satisfy their poor with bread, and their saints shall shout aloud for joy. A minister's usefulness and comfort in a congregation will rarely be over till he has lost the affection and confidence of such.

The other class give little evidence of piety, though there may be among them many professors of religion. These are they who are never satisfied, but always complaining that the minister does not preach right, and that things are not managed as they should be in the congregation; while none more frequently grieve the hearts of the godly by their untender and unchristian conduct and temper than they themselves do. These are they who are constantly demanding that the minister should preach more about the faults of the government, the sins of our rulers, the wickedness of every political party but their own, and the unrighteousness of others, that he may seldom have an arrow left in his quiver to shoot at their own sins and pierce their own consciences; and who, if he ever touch some beloved sin or darling lust of theirs, complain that he is personal.

The minister will often be mortified to see how little respect and attention they show to the word of God as ministered by him. Their levity, their want of that sobriety which becomes Christians, their neglect of duty, their destitution of love to Christ's disciples, after he has for so many years labored for their spiritual improvement, will often discourage him and almost sink his spirits. He will be tempted to say, "I have labored in vain, and have spent my strength in vain." And the faintheartedness thus produced will unfit him for making such earnest and fervid appeals to their hearts and consciences as he did make while he had more hopes of success. Against this despondent feeling and the debilitating effects which it produces, every minister should be on his guard. If he cannot be the means of saving all who hear him, let him take heed that their blood be not found in his skirts. Then though Israel be not gathered, yet shall he be glorious in his Master's eyes.

4. Earnestness and fidelity in pressing upon men the duty of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The soul is precious. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It is in a perishing condition. By the judgment of the righteous Lawgiver of men, it is sentenced to eternal death on account of sin. From the execution of this fearful sentence, no man is able to save himself. Nor could the powers of all men combined with the powers of all the angels of God save him. But "it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." By his atonement he purchased for us redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, which, being received by faith, we obtain deliverance from condemnation and from the wrath to come; and by his obedience to the law, he brought in a righteousness which, being received by faith, becomes our righteousness for justification of life, on account of which we are held to be entitled to the reward of the inheritance. To bring sinners to believe on Christ and rely on him alone for these blessings, is the great object of the Gospel ministry. This is the all-important cause which they have to plead.

Now, we know that in the order of nature, evangelical repentance is preceded by faith, and flows from faith in Christ; but there is a general repentance which must precede faith. "Repent and believe the Gospel." No proud self-righteous Pharisee; no corrupt skeptical Sadducee, ever comes to Christ till his views and feelings have undergone a change. He must be convinced that sin is the object of the divine abhorrence; that, on account of sin the wrath of God is coming and will surely come upon him; and that in vain does he hope for safety on any of those fallacious grounds which once satisfied him; before he will listen to the Gospel as a gracious message sent to him from heaven, and receive it with joy and gladness of heart. It is therefore by laying before the mind of the sinner his obligations to God which he has violated, his duty to God and his fellow-men which he has not fulfilled, and placing before his eyes the sin of his nature, the plagues of his heart, and all the evil which he has done and imagined to do, together with the judgment of God which is according to truth against those who do such things; that the minister may hope to bring his hearers to such a state of mind that they will regard the Gospel as worthy of all acceptance. The law then must be preached—that it is the law of God, which he will have all men to obey—that it is holy, just, and good—and that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. But in con-

nection with this, the remedy—the grace of God which bringeth salvation—must be held up to view. We must here do our utmost to enable the sinner to see, and if possible, to bring him to feel, that his sin and condemnation are not set before him to distress and torment him, as if God had pleasure in filling his soul with fear and trouble; but that, knowing the truth as to his awful condition, he may feel a salutary alarm, and adopt the wise and prudent resolution to embrace the remedy, which God, though greatly offended by his sins, has, in his unbounded mercy and goodness, provided, that he may escape with his life, and obtain the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory. This should be the great aim of the minister of the Gospel; this, *this* the end to which all his labors should be directed. Whatever range we may allow ourselves in the pulpit—and a wide range we may take, for the Bible opens before us a wide field—all should be made to bear on this one point, namely, bringing sinners to God through Christ, that they may obtain forgiveness of sins and inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

Time was when much of the attention of the Gospel minister was engrossed with polemics. Points of faith were to be defined; assailed truths were to be vindicated, and erroneous principles in religion were to be refuted. The controversial air of the pulpit too often made the impression on the mind of the hearer, that, to vindicate and maintain speculative truth, was the great end for which God ordained the Gospel ministry. There seemed to be a call for this; and I do not say but that something in this way may still be necessary. But the labors of polemical divines have already, in a great measure, wrought their effects, whatever those effects may have been; and if such preaching ever was bearing testimony for God, to the extent some have imagined, we are now near the “end of the wonders,” and the witnesses are about to finish their testimony. Every careful observer of things must have remarked, that a great change has taken place within the last twenty or thirty years. Though the Church is split up into an almost endless number of sects, and some of these are so divided amongst themselves, that one may almost be said to contain two or three sects; yet there are two great leading parties forming, which are destined soon to divide mankind throughout all Christendom. First, men of evangelical sentiments. These read the Bible, and pray, are meek and humble; and desire to serve God with all good conscience, though

in some things many of them may be in error; and kept so, yet for a season, by the imperfect theological systems to which they have committed themselves, and by the prejudices of education. The other party is made up of the enemies of God and of his Christ. By whatever names they may be called—Unitarians, Universalists, Deists, Papists, and what not, they have all the same interests, instincts, and sympathies; and notwithstanding an occasional skirmish among themselves, they are fast coalescing, that they may come up and compass the camp of the saints. By a gradual, but sure process, these two parties are consolidating their strength, and marshaling their forces, for the great coming conflict, in which the controversy is to be decided in favor of truth, and righteousness, and God, for one thousand years. And as the more Christians drink into the one Spirit of Christ, and the more fully they are brought under the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of Truth, the more they certainly will, and do, become assimilated to each other in their religious views and habits, and the more scriptural these will be; so, the great means of preserving and defending and propagating the truth hereafter will be, the preaching of Christ whom God hath appointed to be his salvation to the ends of the earth. Hushed forever will be the harsh notes of the fierce war trumpet, summoning the tribes of God to go up to war against their brethren—their brethren of kindred spirits, though perhaps not exactly of kindred views with themselves, in all things. Charge home on the common enemy; a brisk and incessant fire along the whole line: let no recreant soldier turn his arms against his fellows, but see that you give sin and Satan no quarters;—will be the word of the Commander-in-chief; and it will be obeyed. Then the most pure Church will be that one in which there is the most godly living; the most active zeal to advance the kingdom of Light, and from which the most vigorous sallies are made on the kingdom of darkness. All that to which men give the name of the true doctrine and worship and order of the Church must fall to the ground, if not well sustained by a living, active, devoted piety. The age of speculation is past; we have entered upon the age of action. Henceforth, men and Churches, and doctrines will be held in estimation according to what they are seen doing for Christ and for the honor of his kingdom; not according to the strictness of their rules which they do not observe, nor the strictness of their testimony, which they can not administer. Churches which know not nor will understand

this, will henceforth present a shriveled, and a still more shriveled appearance. Good warm-hearted Christians will come out of them; other good warm-hearted Christians will pass them by; their youth will learn to mock and scoff. For, the illusion will be dispelled; it has existed too long—that gross deception has cursed some Churches too long, which leads men to attach a high value and importance to ecclesiastical purity, and to glorify *their Church* because she has such a pure profession, while her members are no more holy, or sober, or godly, than the members of other Churches whom she regards as apostates, and too impure for her touch. Then will be the days of *Christian* union. For this, let us labor and pray. “And as many as walk by this rule, peace be on them, and mercy; and upon the Israel of God.”

Brethren, our lot is cast in a most important, and at the same time, a most critical age of the world. All things portend that great changes are at hand. Old organizations, ecclesiastical as well as civil, will be broken up. Opinions to which men have long clung, and for which they have zealously contended, will sink into the grave. Already gray hairs begin to appear here and there upon many of them. Religious customs and habits which men have fondly believed had existed from the beginning, and were to continue till the end, will give place to others. What thousands have rejected as error will be found to be truth; and what other thousands have held for truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, will be found not entirely so. But “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” “The word of the Lord liveth and abideth forever,” though the opinions which men derive from it often change. It will still be a great and momentous truth, that “He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Our duty lies before us, and it is always the same. Amidst all changes of opinion, and all mutations of things, the good Master, whom we serve, will keep our feet from sliding, and “lead us forth by the right way,” if we take heed to ourselves and to the ministry which we have received from him. He will surely guide, and guard, and finally reward, all his faithful servants. And to him who has been faithful even in a little, he will say, when his warfare is accomplished and his course finished, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Wherefore, let us comfort ourselves with these words.