

644017  
.M35  
COPY 1

# THE DUTIES

OF THE

# PASTORAL OFFICE, A SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ALEXANDRIA,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF

*WELLS ANDREWS,*

JANUARY 11, 1818;

Before the Presbytery of Winchester;

---

BY JOHN MATHEWS, A. M.

---

---

*ALEXANDRIA:*

PRINTED BY CORSE & ROUNSAVELL.

1818.

BK4017  
.M35

IN PRESBYTERY JANUARY 12, 1818.

On motion, *Resolved*, That the Rev. JOHN MATHEWS be requested to furnish for publication a copy of his Sermon delivered at the Ordination last evening.

JOHN MINES, *Moderator*.  
SAMUEL B. WILSON, *Clerk*.

At a meeting of the Session of the Second Presbyterian Church, January 13,

On motion, *Resolved*, That a copy of the Sermon delivered by the Rev. JOHN MATHEWS, in the Second Presbyterian Church on the 11th inst. be requested for publication.

WELLS ANDREWS, *Moderator*.  
THOMAS VOWELL, *Clerk*.

# THE DUTIES

OF THE

## PASTORAL OFFICE,

### A SERMON.



EPHE. IV. 11, 12. And he gave some, Apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ.

“ See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount,” was the admonition of God to Moses when about to make the tabernacle. He was not left to construct it according to the plan which his own wisdom could furnish. Its length and its breadth, its depth and its height, its covering and its sides, its rings and its bars, were all prescribed by HIM for whose worship it was intended. Even Solomon, the wisest of men, was not permitted to draught the plan of that magnificent temple which he reared for the worship of Jehovah. For that splendid edifice, a pattern, embracing in detail, its proportions and materials, its porches and courts, its chambers and treasuries, its pillars and their chapiters, the weight of gold for use and for ornament, was delivered to him by his father, David, who received it “ by the spirit of the Lord making him understand, in writing, by his hand upon him, all the works of this pattern.” The skill of Solomon and his architects consisted in filling up this plan, sketched by the wisdom of HIM, who launched the world in its orbit, and framed the heavens by his word. These, tho’ made with hands are yet “ buildings of God,” and rise according to his directions. Even in their very construction, the loftiest human intellect must learn obedience to the divine will.

If, then, such an accurate observance of the divine plan was required in erecting these buildings, so soon to be shaken and removed, may we not much more expect that the same wisdom

Recd H41325 Mr 35

M. M. M. 16 July 07.

will furnish the plan for that *spiritual house*, which is to remain unshaken? This too is to rise by the instrumentality of human agents: these agents have the promise of the same spirit who furnished the pattern to the king of Israel: they too have a *writing* to which it is their duty to render obedience. If the Divine Architect arranged the order and dimensions of the Jewish temple, how much more will he beautify & strengthen this *holy temple*, the christian church, with the plans of his wisdom? If the builders of the first house were not permitted to alter its order, the builders of the second should also beware, lest they depart from the directions of their divine Master. If, in the first instance, the materials were all to be prepared before they were brought to the place, that neither the *sound of hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, should be heard* while the house is progressing; so now the materials must be *fitly framed together; that they grow unto an holy temple for the Lord*. The foundation is already laid, deep and firm, amply sufficient to bear the superstructure: the building has commenced, and is progressing; in due time the last stone will be laid, with the joyful acclamation of Grace, Grace, unto it. But every man is cautioned how he builds on this foundation. If he labors to execute the plan sketched out in heaven, he shall receive a reward; but if, regardless of this plan, he adopts his own views of propriety and order as the rule of his work, he will retard the progress, and marr the beauty of the building: he shall suffer loss; though he himself may be saved.

The Mosaic economy, with its tabernacle and its ark, its temple, numerous rites, sacrifices and solemn feasts, was admirably calculated to answer as a dispensation introductory to the gospel. Having answered this purpose, as the reign of heaven approached, it began to *vanish away*. No sooner did the Saviour commence his public ministry, proclaiming the *acceptable year of the Lord*, than the *true worshippers*, released, in part at least, from the Jewish ritual, began to *worship the Father in spirit and in truth*. Even from the days of John the Baptist, some were found pressing into the kingdom through a gate, different from that guarded by Moses and the Prophets. During his life the Saviour was employed in preparing the way for the new order and permanent establishment of his kingdom. As a motive to repentance, it was frequently announced as at hand; and his disciples were taught to pray for its approach. Much of his time was spent in sowing the seed which was soon to yield a glorious harvest; in preparing his apostles for the

high and important office which they were to fill under the new dispensation. The change, however, was not completely effected till after his exaltation to the right hand of power. Then, *having ascended up on high, having led captivity captive, he gave gifts unto men.* Then, as the King and Head over all things, did he appoint those offices, whether temporary or permanent, which the exigencies of the church required.

*And he gave some*—Apostles. This was the highest office in the church ; of course it included a right in the person who filled it, to exercise the functions of all the inferior offices. They, in common with the pastors and teachers, were authorised to preach the word, administer the sacraments, and exercise discipline in the church ; but there were other duties and qualifications peculiar to them. A special call from the Saviour seems to have been peculiar to this office. Thus from the whole number of disciples he selected twelve, whom he named apostles. And when a vacancy occurred by the treachery and death of Judas, he sanctioned the measures, adopted by the eleven to fill that vacancy, by bestowing on Mathias, the gifts of the Spirit, in the same degree as on the other Apostles.\* Another thing required in an Apostle was, to have seen the Lord after his resurrection, that they might be duly qualified to bear witness to that fact. Thus the eleven required as a qualification in the person who should take part of the Apostleship with them that he had “*compained with them*” from the baptism of John to the ascension ; that he might be a witness with them of the resurrection. It was also peculiar to the Apostles to confer on others the gifts of the Spirit, and the power of working miracles. They were also appointed the infallible teachers of the doctrines of the gospel. For several years after the ascension, no part of the New Testament was committed to writing ; but the life, miracles and doctrine of the Saviour were made known, in an authoritative manner by the Apostles. Several important doctrines were not imparted, during his life, to the Apostles ; because they were *not able to bear them* ; but the Comforter was promised, who should lead them into *all truth* ; and by whose inspiration

---

\* Some are of the opinion that Peter acted without sufficient authority in this case ; others think, however, that his conduct was correct ; and that he might have been moved by the spirit, though this is not mentioned. The first would, if true, only affect the above remarks, so far as they relate to the appointment of Mathias. The discussion would be too lengthy for this place—it is therefore dismissed.

they were to complete the revelation of God to man. By the same inspiration they were authorised to appoint and establish the permanent order and discipline of the church.

All these particulars concur in proving that Paul was clothed with Apostolic authority—He was *called to be an Apostle*; though last of all, yet he had *seen the Lord*; he conferred on others the power of working miracles; through him, as a chosen organ, was revealed much of the doctrinal part of the New Testament. To those, therefore, who questioned his title to this office, he might with emphasis, direct the enquiry—*Am I not an Apostle?*

If these are the peculiarities of the Apostleship, then, of course, it is utterly impossible, without a constant succession of miracles, that they can have any successors. The office ceased with those who were first invested with it. The order and discipline of the church being permanently fixed; the will of God being fully revealed; the functions of this office were no longer required.

*And he gave some—Prophets.* To these it belonged to predict future events. Some suppose that from them was also expected the infallible exposition of the Old Testament; and that to qualify them for this office, the inspiration, called the *word of knowledge*, was given to them. All that was peculiar to this office has ceased with the exigencies of the times which required it.

*And he gave some—Evangelists.* This appears to differ from the pastoral office in no other respect than that the evangelists were not confined to a particular charge. They travelled from place to place, from country to country, in obedience to the orders of the Apostles, to preach the gospel, and organize churches. Such were Timothy and Titus; Philip also, one of the seven deacons (for there is nothing incompatible in the two offices) was an evangelist. The office of missionaries, in modern times corresponds with that of evangelist; and the state of the church, and of the world, calls loudly for its continuance. We trust it is the fervent prayer of christians, that the attention of every destitute neighborhood in our country may soon be roused by the voice of an evangelist, of true primitive Spirit. And for the heathen nations, God grant that where we have one, we had an hundred! The dark empire of Satan; the wide wastes of the world, are more than sufficient to employ their most zealous exertions.

*And gave some—Pastors and Teachers.* As we, my

brethren in the ministry, are accountable to Christ and to each other as pastors of the church; and as we have met this day for the purpose of investing a brother with the ministerial character, and constituting between him and this congregation the pastoral relation, let us, through divine assistance, make this office the subject of a few reflections.

1. The APPOINTMENT of the pastoral office.—That the text contains a complete enumeration of all ministerial offices; and that these offices were adapted to the exigencies of the church, may be assumed from the wisdom of Him who appointed them. If Apostles and Prophets have performed their part and left no successors, because the church no longer required the exercise of their functions; by the same mode of reasoning we may infer the permanency of the pastoral office. So long as mankind are in danger of *perishing for lack of knowledge*, so long will the labor of teachers be necessary to furnish that knowledge. The lambs of Christ will still require to be fed and protected by the skilful and affectionate pastor. The children of God will still require the administration of the sacraments and ordinances of his house, for their “spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.” The greatest prosperity of the Redeemer’s kingdom; the most triumphant state of religion this guilty world shall ever witness, will not supercede the duties of the pastoral office—Then, more than ever, will thirsty souls desire the pure water of life; then, more than ever, will the administration of baptismal water, and the consecrated emblems of the Saviour’s death be required. For then, especially, will the precepts of the gospel be cheerfully obeyed, and all the ordinances of the sanctuary receive a delightful attention; and then, especially, will the zealous pastor be employed in the duties of his office. If then the necessities of the church will always require this office, we cannot suppose that HE who purchased it with his own blood would deny it this gift, or leave it destitute of this provision. Accordingly we find that the catalogue of ministerial offices is not completed till that of pastor is added. When, therefore, the pastor appears among his people, he appears clothed with an office of divine appointment, as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, in whose name he ministers—a consideration furnishing many inducements to fidelity and zeal on his part, and to diligent attention and obedience on the part of his flock.

No single term, indeed, can be found expressive of all the

duties devolved on a minister of the gospel. "Hence it is that the person who fills this office, has, in scripture, obtained different names expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed BISHOP. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed PASTOR. As he serves Christ in the church he is termed MINISTER. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed PRESBYTER, or ELDER. As he is the messenger of God, he is termed the ANGEL of the church. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed AMBASSADOR. And, as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ he is termed STEWARD of the mysteries of God." These terms, however, in scripture, are frequently applied to the same persons, in their official character; and cannot, therefore be intended to express different offices, but the various duties of one and the same office. All these duties are included in the work of the same ministry; and are intended to promote the same end—the *edification of the body of Christ*.

The rite of investiture with the sacred office is also of divine appointment, or may be inferred from the example of infallible teachers. From the earliest period of the church, men have been set apart to the duties of this station by prayer, and the imposition of hands. The first pastors of the church were thus ordained. In this manner Paul and Barnabas were set apart to the work to which they were called. Timothy also was invested with this *gift of God* in the same manner. His case indeed is very instructive, as it furnishes us with the term by which the ordaining body was called: He was invested with the sacred office *by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*. A presbytery consists of two or more presbyters or persons already ordained to the ministerial office. From this case we further learn, that it was customary for one member of the presbytery to preside, during the solemn transaction. By a common mode of speaking, the person who presides, might address the person ordained without mentioning the other members; or as if the ordination had been performed by himself alone. The Apostle Paul seems to have presided at the ordination of Timothy; for he afterwards addresses him in this manner—I *put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God that is in thee by the putting on of my hands*.

Thus, my brother, in obedience to this authority, and in imitation of this example, at your own request, and the request of this congregation, we intend by prayer and the imposition of hands, to invest you with the pastoral office ; and by giving you “ the right hand of fellowship invite you to take part of this ministry with us.”

2. Let us next advert to the QUALIFICATIONS for the pastoral office. These may be learned from the sacred volume, and from the nature and design of the office.

It would appear necessary, that he whose profession is preaching, should possess the organs of speech in tolerable perfection. The person who, from a natural defect which no diligence can overcome, speaks with great difficulty, will excite such painful emotions in the hearers as to divert their attention from the truth, on which it ought to be fixed. Such a person may possess the brightest intellects, may be embellished with all the stores of literature, may live the most exemplary life, may feel the most ardent zeal for the prosperity of Zion ; but, certainly, he mistakes the sphere of his duty when he claims to be invested with the ministerial office : For a bishop must be *apt to teach*.

A sound judgment should qualify the pastor for the functions of his sacred profession. For want of this, a series of jests and buffooneries is sometimes heard from the pulpit, calculated only to excite the merriment of the giddy and thoughtless multitude. It is even more painful than to hear the stammerings of defective elocution to witness the grandeur and sacredness of religion exposed to contempt and ridicule for the want of that inestimable quality—common sense. Such persons should be advised to occupy a station where their incurable propensity for eccentricities would not produce such afflictive results as in the gospel ministry. Although the church enjoys the labors of many whose talents are of the first order, yet her dearest interests can be defended and promoted by men of ordinary parts. A large majority of her pastors are men whose genius awakes no admiration, but whose sound judgment, improved by study and application, furnishes such exhibitions of the gospel as are calculated to magnify their office, to perfect the saints, to edify the body of Christ. We are justified in contending for this qualification ; for the Apostle Paul has declared that a bishop must be *sober*, that is, *of a sound mind*.

Learning is another qualification highly useful in a pastor

of the church ; but what degree of it should be considered indispensibly necessary, is not so easy to determine. That he should possess such a knowledge of the language which he speaks as to avoid those blunders and improprieties which grieve the pious and discerning, can be useful to none, and in many excite impressions unfavorable to religion, is quite obvious. It is equally clear that he should be acquainted with theology, the very science which he professes to teach. The christian minister is bound by his profession to spend his life in explaining the Bible—a book written in languages, which, for centuries past have not been spoken by any nation. Every one must admit that great advantage would be derived from a knowledge of these languages. The religious instructor would thus be able to judge for himself, respecting the various, and often conflicting, opinions, expressed by interpreters. That course of science usually taught in the colleges and seminaries of learning in our country will also be highly useful. He will thus be enabled, from a knowledge of the works of God, to derive many striking illustrations of his word. By the acquisition of these sciences, a habit of study, of discrimination and of accurate reasoning will be formed. History will amply repay him for the time spent in its perusal. Profane history is little else than the history of human depravity, afflicting and desolating the world in all ages : for this evil it will be the labor of his life to proclaim the only effectual remedy—the grace of God. His liveliest sympathy must be awakened when he traces in the page of ecclesiastical history, the church of Christ, passing through those various changes which diversified her external state ; sometimes betrayed by professed friends, now assaulted by avowed enemies, alternately clouded with ignorance, distracted with error, burdened with useless rites, deformed with superstition, and often bleeding under the hand of persecution ; but still living, still guarded, still supported, still cherished and loved by Him who is ever in the midst of her and has declared that the gates of hell shall never prevail against her.

It is admitted there are some, who, without this learning, discharge the duties of the pastoral office in a manner reputable to themselves and useful to the church. “ We do not say that a liberal education is absolutely essential to a man’s usefulness in the ministry of the gospel ; but reason and experience both demonstrate its high importance and utility.” And, if we love the church, will we not labor to acquire those qualifications

so useful in promoting her interests? Several years are often spent in acquiring a knowledge of the mechanical arts before the business is commenced, that when it is commenced, it may be prosecuted to greater advantage. And shall we consider those years as lost which are spent in acquiring that knowledge, that habit of study, that discipline of the mind, that expansion of thought, that maturity of intellect which will render the labors of future life better calculated to defend and promote the cause of religion? Certainly these deficiencies should be cause of regret; not of boasting and self complacency. The first preachers of the gospel were educated by miracle—a method which it would be absurd for *us* to expect. They were not permitted to leave Jerusalem till endued from on high with *that wisdom* and knowledge of languages which qualified them for the duties of their office. We might suppose that the constant labors of Paul would leave but little time for reading; but, such were his studious habits, and such was his literary taste, that he as naturally sends for his *books, and especially his parchment*, as for his *cloak*. His vigorous mind was improved with all the learning of his country; therefore, well knowing its value, he enjoins it on Timothy to *give attendance to reading and meditation*, as well as to *exhortation and doctrine*, that his *profiting might appear to all*.

The progressive state of learning in our country calls for increasing attention in the pastors of the church to this subject. The adversaries of Christ and his cause are often men of extensive literary acquirements. And shall the advocates of truth, through their own negligence, be laid under the necessity of meeting them on terms so unequal? No: let them ever be ready to front these *children of mischief* on equal terms. In that case, none need tremble for the issue of the contest. The influence of the most profound erudition will not destroy, but strengthen and support the claims of christianity. The works and word of God are always consistent: the most accurate and extensive knowledge of the one will but confirm the other.

The chief qualification, however, for usefulness, in the pastoral office, is piety; genuine, fervent. The powers of darkness never wielded, against the cause of Christ, a more dangerous weapon than an irreligious clergyman; especially if the garb of morality conceals from public view the base infidelity of his heart. His learning and talents only render him the more dangerous. His ministrations can only increase the

torpor of spiritual death among the flock committed to his charge. In him the love of religion can have no place; he must, therefore, be influenced by some selfish and mercenary motive. Perhaps the revenue of the church, his yearly salary, is all the reward he desires. Or if ambition should be his ruling passion; if he thirst for literary fame, then he will permit his hearers to sink quietly down to perdition, provided they depart with the language of adulation to his vanity on their lips. Or perhaps he claims to be distinguished as a man of zeal: then no sacrifices, not even compassing sea and land, will be too great to gain proselytes. His learning and talents will be employed in *biting and devouring* those on whom his efforts prove ineffectual. But if he can succeed in teaching the *shibboleth* of his party, and drill his followers in all the routine of external forms, then his work is accomplished, and he expects his reward. From such a scourge, may the Lord, in mercy, preserve his church! and send her *pastors after his own heart*, who shall feed her children with *knowledge and understanding*, whose experimental acquaintance with religion will qualify them to guide others in their passage from death unto life; whose temptations, and sorrows, and trials will qualify them to sympathize with their people when tempted, afflicted and distressed; whose acquaintance with the Saviour, whose hope in his mercy, will dispose them, in the most inviting terms, to recommend him to others as a willing and all sufficient Saviour; whose closets will often witness the fervor and humble importunity of their private devotions for the success of their ministry; whose people, though they perish in unbelief, will yet be constrained to confess that they were solemnly and repeatedly warned! *to flee from the wrath to come!*

The power of vital religion will bend the loftiest intellect in humble subserviency to the grand designs of the gospel, and consecrate the richest stores of learning to the purpose of instructing the ignorant, of *making wise the simple*, of rendering the plan of redemption through Jesus Christ intelligible to the weakest capacity. The pious pastor will repose all his hopes of success in the sovereign mercy and grace of God; well remembering that *Paul may plant, and Apollos water: but God giveth the increase*. When he feels the *love of Christ constraining him*, bearing him along with a mild and gentle, yet commanding and forcible impulse, this will sweeten the laborious duties of his station, and lighten the pressure of

its difficulties : this will render him perfectly contented, though convinced that his office is not the high road to the wealth or honor of this world : this will often lead him from the scene of public duties to the retirement of his closet ; there, with mingled emotions, to converse with his God and his Saviour ; there to blush and grieve for the coldness and languor of his heart in so good a cause ; there to confess and weep over the imperfections of his best services ; there, sometimes, with a heart overflowing with gratitude to offer up his devout acknowledgements for the least appearance of success in the works of the ministry ; there, with tears, to commend his people to the grace of God ; there to derive encouragement by reflecting on the life, the labors and sufferings of Jesus, his divine master, and by listening to his animating voice—*lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world : be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life !*

May I not, my brethren in the ministry, appeal with confidence to your judgment and experience for the truth of these remarks ? When is it that you can most unreservedly and cheerfully devote your time, your talents and your learning to the single purpose of promoting the Redeemer's Kingdom ; that you rejoice in becoming the teachers of babes, the instructors of the ignorant ; when can you warn, with the most affectionate concern, the unruly and impenitent, with the most lively sympathy ; comfort the desponding and distressed, with the most animating zeal ; encourage the believer ; when do you most feel the spirit of those martyrs who, with tranquility and firmness viewed the engines of torture, mounted the scaffold, or approached the burning stake, rather than relinquish the duties of their office ; when can you most easily bear with a meek and forgiving temper, the cold neglect, the frowns and reproaches of an ungodly and inconsiderate world, and say, none of these things move us ; neither count we our life dear to us, so that we might finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus ; when can you see, without a murmur, the companions of your youth, your classmates in academical studies, having embarked in other professions, grasping the honor and acquiring the wealth of this world ; when do your closets witness, in reference to your ministry, the most humble confessions, the most grateful acknowledgements, the most fervent supplications offered up to the *Father of Mercies* ; when do you resolve, with re-animated

zeal, to spend, not only your life, but, if God permit, your last hour, your last breath, in preaching the gospel, in proclaiming salvation, in recommending the Saviour to perishing sinners? Is it not when you have the most scriptural evidence to believe that the divine spirit is performing in your own hearts *the work of faith with power*? Is it not when the love of God is shed abroad, is poured forth, with all its transforming energies into your own hearts; when Christ is most precious to you; when a view of his sufferings and death affects you with the deepest sense of your own guilt; when a view of his mercy inspires you with the liveliest hopes of your own salvation?

Conscious, then, of the indispensable necessity of genuine piety, as a qualification for the sacred office, as guardians stationed at the gate, leading to that office, let us, as our constitution directs, always make religion, experimental religion, the very first object of enquiry in all candidates for the gospel ministry. Let us never, through the neglect of this duty *become partakers of other men's sins*. Let us neither licence to preach nor induct into the pastoral office, any man who does not first satisfy these enquiries. These remarks remind us of another subject claiming attention—

3. THE DUTIES of the pastoral office. These, every pastor will find, sufficiently numerous to occupy his whole time; and sufficiently arduous and important to employ all the talents, and learning, and piety which he can possibly bring to the task. With the faithful discharge of these duties, is closely connected the prosperity of that part of the church with which he is more immediately concerned; his own peace of mind, and hopes of acceptance with God; and the dearest interests the eternal salvation of the people committed to his charge.

Every pastor is, by virtue of his ordination, a member of Presbytery, of Synod, and occasionally may be of the General Assembly—those ecclesiastical judicatories, constituted for the purpose of exercising government and discipline, and of devising measures calculated to promote the general interest of the church. Punctuality in attending these judicatories is unquestionably his duty, unless prevented by imperious necessity. Principles of government, cases of discipline, points of doctrine, and other subjects involving the deepest interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, and of the world, are, in these meetings often discussed: these discussions he should aid by all the wisdom and prudence of which he is possessed.

But among his own people, *over whom the Holy Spirit has made him bishop or overseer*, is the scene of his principal labors. These are the people whom he is to guide through the darkness, and sorrows, and toils, and temptations of this life, to the joys and glories of heaven. These are the lambs, this is the flock he is to feed. To these he is united by the most endearing ties. To these his thoughts turn with peculiar interest from the greatest distance to which he is removed from them, for here are the sources of his purest earthly delight; and here too are the causes of some of his deepest anxieties, and bitterest sorrows.

The purpose for the accomplishment of which the pastoral office was appointed is, *the perfecting of Saints; the edifying of the body of Christ*. This is a short, but very comprehensive sketch of *his duties* who fills that office.

For this purpose he is to assist, when necessary, in the exercise of discipline. He may sometimes find that neither public warnings, exhortations and reproofs, nor private admonitions and entreaties will be sufficient to preserve in all his people, that christian deportment, that consistency of conduct which would render unnecessary the infliction of public censure. Sometimes it may become his painful duty to suspend from the sacraments, or excommunicate from the church an unruly member. In all such afflictive cases he is to act with impartiality, with firmness, with the most affectionate tenderness, accompanying every stroke with tears and prayers. that the offender may be reclaimed and restored to the communion of the church; and that others may fear and walk worthy of their profession.

With the same view he is, on proper occasions, to administer the sacraments of baptism & the Lord's Supper, those seals of the covenant of grace. Too many will be found who expect these holy ordinances to operate, in a manner, very little, if at all, different from the charms and tricks of jugglers, without any correct knowledge of their design, or any suitable preparation of heart in those who receive them. Such opinions he must combat with all his zeal, and rescue, if possible, these channels of mercy from this unhallowed degradation. He must labor to preserve them surrounded with all their native simplicity and dignity, as means of grace, intended to strengthen every pious affection, and improve the whole moral character.

Another important duty of the pastor is, to *preach the word*. *Without faith it is impossible to please God; and faith cometh by hearing; but how shall they hear without a*

preacher? If he ever beholds the encouraging sight of careless sinners awakened to a sense of their danger, of the distressed finding peace, of christians, advancing towards perfection, these pleasing effects he will consider as the fruit of that *incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever*. While, therefore, he ascribes, most unequivocally, the whole success of his ministry to the influences of the Holy Spirit, yet will he resort to the truth, as the grand instrument, used by the spirit in promoting that success. As he regards the prosperity of the church, the salvation of his hearers, he will feel it his great duty to preach the word; to explain and enforce its doctrines and its precepts, its warnings and its invitations, its threatening and its promises with that affectionate earnestness, that enlightened zeal which have a tendency to perfect the saints, to edify the body of Christ.

But it is comparatively an easy task to preach the gospel so as to produce a favorable opinion of the talents, the learning, and even piety of the preacher, when, at the same time, his duty may be so imperfectly discharged as to furnish no ground for the approbation of an enlightened conscience. To form a correct judgment of his preaching he must have a special reference to the effects which it is intended to produce. Its adaptation to these effects is the very quality which stamps on it the highest value; its other qualities may excite the admiration of the hearers; but this alone ought to satisfy his conscience in the sight of God. These effects, and of course the means best calculated to produce them, must vary according to the different state and character of his people. His discriminating mind will readily perceive that his hearers are, in fact, divided into three general classes—the careless and impenitent—the awakened and distressed—and the pious, or those who profess religion.

The first class will generally be found to be the most numerous; for to this we all, by nature, belong. These are to be transformed by the renewing of their minds; to be changed into lively stones, and then built up a spiritual house, a residence for the Holy Spirit. The image of Satan, the deep impressions of sin are to be effaced; and their character is to be adorned with all the beauty and loveliness of the Saviour's image. But how wide is the difference between the meek, the humble and penitent believer, and the wordly minded, the careless and impenitent sinner! How great the change which they must experience; and how difficult the task to present

the means best calculated to produce that change! In this class, although alike in their general character, will yet be found many shades of difference in the features of that character. Their minds are alike surrounded with an atmosphere of prejudices and passions which either resist or pervert the truth; but these prejudices and passions present almost an endless variety, arising from the natural constitution, the age, the education, the society, the circumstances in life and the daily pursuits of different individuals; requiring a correspondent variety in the preaching of the gospel to remove these prejudices and subdue these passions. To furnish this variety will task the judgment and skill of the preacher to the utmost extent. He must endeavor to find the readiest access to the heart, enveloped as it is, in this dark and repulsive atmosphere. In attempting to remove one prejudice, or subdue one passion, he must avoid every thing that would excite another. If the warnings, expostulations and entreaties of one attempt seem to fail, he must persevere with renewed exertions, still better adapted, if possible, to produce the desired effect. He must not give up as hopeless and incorrigible those with whom God is still waiting with much long suffering and patience. He may often be discouraged, but ought not to despair. He knows not when the Divine Spirit may enlighten the darkest mind, touch and dissolve the hardest heart. He labors for the salvation of the soul, and this is inconceivably precious.

Among the second class, the awakened and distressed, the prospect is more encouraging. The stillness and insensibility of death no longer grieve and discourage the heart of their pastor. He considers their anxious enquiries, their earnest desires and cries for mercy as pleasing indications of returning life. His hopes, indeed, are revived; but mingled with many fears and painful apprehensions. Now, with gratitude and joy, he anticipates the moment when they will *pass from death unto life*, and be united by indissoluble bonds to the Saviour; again he fears that these impressions, like the morning cloud and early dew, may soon pass away, and leave the heart more insensible than before. Their feelings are excited, but they possess no correct and practical knowledge to regulate these feelings. The visions of the imagination may be mistaken for the realities of faith; or the mere emotions of animal nature, for genuine religious affections. It will be the duty of the pastor to watch with the closest attention, all the movements of this excitement. It will require all the skill and prudence he can derive from his know-

ledge of the human heart, from his own experience and from the oracles of truth, to furnish instruction and motives at once adapted to their general character, and to all the shades of difference which diversify that character. To these he will speak with the mild inviting voice of mercy; unfolding to their views the glorious plan of redemption in the connexion of its parts and the fulness of its provision. To these he will preach the Lord Jesus Christ, exhibiting the majesty, and meekness, and love, and compassion of his character, as inducements to trust in the merit of his atoning blood for pardon and reconciliation with God. These labors of love must be continued till the dawn of hope shall authorise them to be ranked in the—

Third class, embracing the pious, or those who profess religion. The same causes which diversify the general character of the two former classes, will operate here in all their extent, together with those which are peculiar to a state of religious experience. Of this class some are exposed to severe temptations; some are distressed with doubts and fears; some are sinking in despondency; some are weak in the faith; some are loitering in their race; some are stationary; some are stumbling and falling; some are impelled by a zeal, not according to knowledge; and some, it is to be hoped, are increasing in knowledge and usefulness, adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour. Some, again, are babes, some young men, and some fathers in Christ. To furnish admonition, instruction, consolation and reproof adapted to all these various cases will require a pastor well instructed in the doctrine of the kingdom, who can present from his treasure things new and old. To provide for all this variety of wants will be the most noble work in which his talents, his learning and his zeal can be employed. These are the lambs of Christ who have committed themselves to his pastoral care. These are the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, *whose names are in the book of life*. These are the children of God, whom he is to educate for the courts of their Father in Heaven. These are joint heirs with Christ, whom he is to train up for the *inheritance of the saints in light*. These are soon to be united with an innumerable company of angels, and to shine with a glory far excelling the brightness of the sun. Never, therefore, were talents and learning employed in promoting a more honorable cause—a cause in which angels rejoice to be employed; in which the Son of God himself labored, and suffered and died! With what diligence then, will not the faithful

pastor persevere in the work of the ministry, when he perceives that work to be connected with the glories and happiness of eternity ! He will bear on his heart the beloved people committed to his charge, and cherish them *as a nurse cherisheth her children*. He will exhort, and comfort, and charge every one of them, *as a father doth his children*, animating them to *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. They are his hope, his joy, his crown of rejoicing *in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing*. He will, therefore, cheerfully spend his life in *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*.

Such is the manner in which every faithful pastor should endeavor to preach the gospel ; not *uncertainly*, or as one who *beateth the air*, without a specific object to accomplish. The object of his ministry should be accurately defined, and well understood, to the accomplishment of which all his efforts should continually be directed. If his preaching be calculated to answer this purpose, it must be carefully adapted to all the characters, and shades of character, which diversify his people ; otherwise he will not *rightly divide the word of truth* ; and if not, he will have reason *to be ashamed*. His preaching should be calculated to awaken the impenitent, to comfort the distressed, and to confirm and animate the christian. But while attempting to rouse the careless, he must avoid giving unnecessary pain to the heart already broken for sin ; and while the broken heart is healed, the conscience of the guilty must not be quieted. As a wise and faithful steward he must endeavor to give each one his portion in due season.

His style should be, at once, simple and perspicuous, yet energetic and dignified, calculated to instruct the ignorant, to enlighten the illiterate, without giving just cause of offence to the most correct taste, to the most improved understanding. He should endeavor, through the perspicuity of his language, to elevate the weakest mind by enabling it to form clear and impressive conceptions of divine truth, while the importance of his message, the grandeur of his subject should awe into reverence the strongest intellect. He should preach with that zeal and affection which would not require a single effort in his hearers to perceive that he is deeply in earnest and much concerned for the success of his ministry ; that he is not aiming to proselyte them to a party, but *to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God* ; that he is

not laboring to excite their admiration of his talents, or learning, or eloquence, or even his zeal; but their fears of everlasting misery, their sorrow for sin, their faith in Jesus Christ, their love to God, their hopes and desires for heaven.

Thus will he be a good steward of the manifold grace of God; thus will he approve himself unto God; thus will he save both himself and those who hear him; and thus will the object of his ministry be, through divine grace, accomplished.

My brethren in the ministry, let us frequently and seriously reflect on these things; let us often consider with what honesty and zeal we are laboring to discharge the duties of that office with which we are invested. The frequent review of these duties, the frequent recollection of our own solemn promises, cannot render us, as pastors of the church, less faithful and diligent; but the neglect of this review and of this recollection may suffer the duties to vanish out of sight. Our hearers are daily departing to the judgment seat of Christ—But I trust it is unnecessary further to pursue this train of thought. If we have been enabled to be faithful, let us thank God, and persevere; but if we cannot evade the painful recollection of deficiencies—and, O! thou searcher of hearts, who, in thy sight is clear of the charge, let us plead for quickening grace, renew our promises, and return with invigorated zeal to the work of the ministry. We may, indeed, exclaim with Paul, *who is sufficient for these things?* but we must fly with him to the same refuge, remembering that *our sufficiency is of God*.

Permit me, my brother, to remind you that the office which you desire, and with which you are now to be invested, is a work; not an amusement, or a sinecure. A work necessarily implies the idea of labor, of exertions: exertions, again, necessarily involve the consideration of difficulties which are to be met and surmounted, of opposition which is to be encountered and overcome. You are not ignorant from whence these difficulties, and from what quarter this opposition may be expected. Your knowledge of the human heart, its native and deep rooted aversion to religion; of this world, its infectious example, its poisonous opinions and maxims, its dangerous and seductive temptations; of the powers of darkness leagued together, their malignity; their subtlety, their unwearied activity against the cause in which you are engaged, will present them, in sad abundance, to your view. But, be not discouraged. It is the cause of God and of truth, and will prevail. You will be aided by the prayers of your pious people, and of all

who feel interested in the prosperity of this congregation. All the divine perfections are pledged for your assistance. You are to be a co-worker with God; the great head of the church will be with you; the divine spirit will assist you. It is therefore a noble, an honorable, and a good work in which you are to be employed. When the splendors of wealth, of kingdoms, of the world shall have passed away, the glories resulting from the work of the ministry shall remain.

Remember also that the office in which you are thus to labor is a GIFT—a rich, invaluable gift, given by the exalted Redeemer: as such it is mentioned in the text; as such it is represented in relation to Timothy; as such it was considered by the Apostle Paul, and drew from his heart the most devout expressions of gratitude. It is a rich and invaluable gift; for it was purchased with the labor, the prayers, the tears, the sufferings, the groans, the blood of the dear Saviour. When you are permitted to warn the impenitent transgressor of his danger, to pour into the wounded soul the consolations of mercy, to animate the hopes of the pious, is it not a privilege? When you hear from the awakened sinner that interesting inquiry—*what must I do to be saved*, is it not a privilege that you can point him to the *lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world*? When you meet the disciple of Jesus Christ, tempted, discouraged, and almost sinking in despondency, how dear is the privilege of directing his eye to the cross of Christ for support and consolation? When you visit the dying bed of the christian, and find the soul lingering out its last moments, just taking its flight for eternity, casting on you its last, anxious look for comfort and encouragement, how piercing to your heart would be that look, if you had not the promises of mercy, the rich provisions of sovereign grace to offer? If pardon itself is a blessing of infinite value, it is a precious privilege to be authorised, in the name of Jesus Christ, to offer that pardon. To rescue from death a fellow-creature, and restore him again, though but for a few short years, to his friends, would be a source of the most pleasing and grateful reflections: How much more so to be instrumental in *converting a sinner from the error of his way, and thus saving a soul from death*, and restoring it to the joys of a life that shall never end? If, on the eve of some holy Sabbath, when you anticipate the prospect of going up to the house of God, it should be communicated to you, respecting some of your people, that *this night their souls should be required of them*; but that, at your interces-

sion, they should be spared, not one year, but one day longer; or if the message should come to you, as to Hezekiah of old, *set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live*; but in answer to your prayers, one day should be added to your life, that under this impression you might deliver your last message—in either case, how would you feel, and how would you preach! and how great a privilege would you not esteem it to be permitted to warn, to admonish, to comfort and animate your people once more, before the final separation! Well, it is with this very design that you and they are spared from week to week, that you may preach, and they may hear the gospel; and neither you nor they can tell, but every time may be the last. Or if, when you and your people shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, you should there see some of them (O, painful thought) placed on the left hand, every moment expecting to be driven from the presence of the Lord, and plunged into eternal despair; if the Judge, arrayed in all the majesty and glory of that tremendous day, should turn to you and say—Go to these criminals; go, and offer them pardon in my name; if they accept of it, their sentence is reversed, and they are restored to my favor; your commission is but for a short time and will soon be recalled—With what mingled emotions of trembling and cheerfulness would you not fly with this *good news*, with this message of mercy? with what zeal and pathos would you not urge them to accept of this pardon? as an inducement for their acceptance, at one moment pointing their attention to the burning gulph that opens and thunders and moves from below to meet their fall; at another, to the joys and glories of heaven waiting to receive them; now, displaying to their view the infinite mercy, the love, the compassion of him in whose name you speak; again reminding them of the shortness of the time; that another moment and your commission may be recalled—Feeling this consideration yourself, how would it call forth every power of the soul! not knowing but every word might be the last, with what earnestness, and tears and prayers would you not invite, and entreat, and beseech them to be reconciled to the Judge? and with what astonishment and grief would you not witness their indifference or rejection of this pardon? Well, this is the very commission you now bear; this pardon you are now authorised to offer in the name of Christ, as his ambassador; the same motives and arguments may now be used to urge the acceptance of it. The great object of your ministry is to beseech your people to be

reconciled to God, and escape the terrors of that day when the voice of mercy will be heard no more. Is it not, therefore, a gift which you are about to receive? a gift conferred on you for the benefit of your people. Those grateful emotions which it ought to excite will sweeten the labor which it implies.

It was mentioned that your pious people would help you with their prayers: shall we be permitted to ask the members of this congregation, is this intimation true? Shall we let it remain for the support and encouragement of your pastor, or shall we recall the promise, and tell him, that if he is determined to undertake the duties of this office, he must not expect the assistance of your prayers? Do not your hearts with all the warmth of pious affection, reply—no! Let it remain: we will verify the promise: we will pray for him. We see the arduous task, the numerous and difficult duties he is about to undertake on our account, and we will support him with our prayers. Be it so: the promise shall not be recalled. God is witness to the pledge you have given. But will you not support and encourage him by all other means in your power? Parents, will you not aid him by your instructions, your example, by the prudent exercise of your parental authority in training up your children in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord*; in teaching them to love and reverence religion? Beloved youth, what encouragement will you give? Will you *remember your Creator in the days of your youth*? Will you embrace religion, become the disciples of Jesus Christ, dedicate yourselves to the service of God in the morning of life, and thus animate the heart of your pastor with the precious hope that when your fathers and mothers are laid in the grave, you will be ready, and willing to fill their places in the church, and support the worship of God? or will you, neglecting religion, pursue the pleasures and amusements of the world, and thus deprive him of this hope? Dear little children, you are interested in the transactions of this day. When you see us lay our hands on the head of this man, and pray for him, remember that we are then appointing him to teach you the knowledge of God and religion. Wherever you see him then say to yourselves—this is the man who is to pray for us, and teach us the way to heaven: There may you, your parents, and your pastor finally meet, and spend eternity in ascribing salvation, and glory, and honor to God and the Lamb. Amen.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 022 168 905 7

