

power it has ever seen and felt. She has been the purifier, the guide, the almoner of the nations. Light has shone round her footsteps when she has gone into the deepest darkness. Health and healing have attended her touch whenever she has approached those most hopelessly affected with moral disease. She has stooped to man in the lowest degradation to which he has ever sunk, and raised him to the noblest height to which he has ever attained. In doing all this, was she false? Was her means of accomplishing it a lie? Who that reasons, who that believes in the distinction between virtue and vice, can believe this?

P. P. FLOURNOY.

ARTICLE V.

THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR, ONE OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION GIFTS.

BY THE LATE REV. DR. ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE.

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.—*Ephesians iv. 8.*

I. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men." Such are the exalted strains of the Psalmist (Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18), predicting the triumphant ascent of Messiah into heaven. The Apostle, in our text, quotes and applies to Christ so much as asserts the fact of his ascent to glory, and the consequent distribution to men of his ascension gifts. Though in our English translation of that Psalm the rendering is, "thou hast *received* gifts for men," the words of Paul, he "*gave* gifts to men," are fully as just a translation of the Hebrew, and agree precisely with the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the Arabic. Our translators seem to have been misguided by the LXX.; and the example is a striking proof how little dependence is to be

placed on the assertion, so often hazarded, that the quotations in the New Testament are chiefly drawn from the Greek version of the Jewish Scriptures.

In this ascent of the Lord Jesus, he led captivity captive; for he had before this blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Col. ii. 14). And now, “having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (*Idem*, 15). Through death he had destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil (Heb. ii. 14); and now, the captives being delivered (*Idem*, 15), he openly triumphs over him who had triumphed over all, and leads him captive who before led men captive at his will. The utter and final ruin of Satan’s kingdom and dominion by means of the cross of Christ is openly and triumphantly demonstrated by the resurrection and ascension of him who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for ever more, who hath the keys of hell and of death (Rev. i. 18).

And well do they say—both Psalmist and Apostle—that he ascended *up on high*. Before the world was, he was in glory with the Father (John xvii. 5, and i. 1-14); for the joy set before him, as the author and the finisher of his people’s faith, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. xii. 2); thus suffering all things and entering upon a new inheritance of glory (Luke xxiv. 26, and 1 Pet. i. 11), God hath made him both Lord and Christ (Acts ii. 36), and invested him with all power in heaven and in earth (Matt, xxviii. 18).

This exalted Saviour, whom God hath raised from the dead and set at his own right hand, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and constituted him the head over all things; this Saviour hath the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, given to the Church to be its head—even to the Church which is his body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. i. 17-23)—that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he

might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth (Eph. i. 10). Being God, he hath purchased with his own blood that portion of his glorious heritage which shall be constituted out of the spirits of just men made perfect—and which in the large sense he calls his Church—even the Church of the firstborn (Acts xx. 28; Heb. xii. 23; Col. i. 18). That he might sanctify and cleanse this Church, and present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish, Christ gave himself for it (Eph. v. 25—27). All the members of this mystical body of Christ, at any time upon this earth, are distinguished by this, that they love God, that they are called according to his purpose, and that all things work together for their good (Rom. viii. 28); for they are, every one, foreknown of God, predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, and are all called, justified, and glorified in him (*Idem*, 29-31). God's own Son, having been delivered up for them all, everything else is freely given to them of God; and the obedience, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and intercession of Christ are grounds of an assurance immovable and immortal, that nothing shall ever be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (*Idem*, 34-39).

Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought out by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the benefits thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages of the world (Gen. iii. 15; Gal. iv. 4, 5). And although the covenant of grace, whereby life and salvation are offered to sinners by Jesus Christ, has been very differently administered, under the various dispensations from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and from the glorification of Christ to the present time, it is nevertheless one and the same covenant throughout (Gal. i. 14; Rom. iii. 21—31; Heb. xiii. 8). That dispensation of the covenant of grace, which the apostles of the Lord Jesus, by his express command, have established upon earth, is by far the most glorious of all that have yet been made manifest, and is the last exhibition of mercy to sinners (Matt, xxviii. 19, 20; Heb. xii. 18-28; Acts iii. 21). By it salvation is freely proclaimed to the

whole family of man, and whosoever will believe in the Lord Jesus shall not perish, but shall have life eternal (Eph. ii. *passim*).

It is, emphatically, a dispensation under the power of the Holy Ghost, that blessed Comforter which the Saviour promised his apostles to pray the Father to give unto them—and which should abide with us for ever (John xiv. 16,17)—that divine and eternal Spirit whose advent was the great promise of the Father, the crowning proof of the glorification of the Lord Jesus and of the eternal Sonship of the Word which was made flesh, the consummate unction of the Apostles themselves (Acts i. 8; ii. 4, 83; iii. 13). He is the Spirit of all truth, all life, all holiness. He it is that spiritually and savingly enlightens the minds of the heirs of salvation, and enables them to understand the things of God (Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. i. 17-19). He it is that takes away their hearts of stone and gives them hearts of flesh (Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Eph. i. 18—20). He it is that renews their wills, and by his almighty power determines them to that which is good (Eph. i. 19; Phil. ii. 13). He it is by whose effectual working in us the life of the second Adam, who is a quickening Spirit, supplants in us the life of the first Adam, who was a living soul (I Cor. xv. 45; Rom. viii. 2). He it is without whose enlightening, quickening, sanctifying power, we can neither enter into the kingdom of God, nor find access either to the Father or the Son (John iii. 5; vi. 44; xiv. 6). He it is, blessed be God, whom our dear Master has declared our heavenly Father will give to them that ask him, with a readiness as much exceeding the joy with which we give an egg and not a scorpion, a fish and not a serpent, bread and not a stone, to our son that asketh, as the beneficence of his infinite and perfect nature transcends the best emotions of those whose best estate is only evil (Luke xi. 6—13).

That all the heirs of eternal life, as they pass in successive generations through this vale of tears, may be effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified; that they may be enabled to believe, repent, obey the gospel, persevere in the Christian life, be built up in the comfort and assurance of grace and salvation; in short, that the saints may be gathered and perfected in this life to the end of the world, it has pleased God to bestow upon his Church

his divine oracles, the sweet and powerful ordinances of his house, and a living and perpetual ministry composed of several classes of office bearers in his kingdom; and these oracles, ordinances, and office bearers he doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make effectual thereunto. In immediate connexion with our text, and by way of exposition of its sense, Paul tells us that the gifts which the ascending and triumphing Saviour bestowed on men, and to which he has, in this passage, especial reference, were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers; and he adds that they were bestowed "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (verses 11, 12); unto every one, as he had before said, "grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (verse 7). For the whole body which is to be edified is one, and the Spirit which bestows every grace and every gift is one, and the hope of our calling is one—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, all one, and one God and Father above all, through all, in all (verses 4-6). It is therefore clear that amongst the ascension gifts of Christ to his Church, some of the chief were office bearers, and one class of these here expressly enumerated is pastors.

As it is my present design to speak particularly of the pastor's office, it is scarcely proper to bestow our labor in establishing the distinction received by nearly all Protestants, and expressly asserted in our ecclesiastical standards, between the extraordinary and the ordinary offices constituted by Christ in his Church; or in showing precisely which are permanent and which are not; or in pointing out the precise nature and boundaries of such as are perpetual—all three, it must be conceded, points of great importance, and in regard to which it is very evident the Christian world in our day has but vague and shallow notions. It is worth while, however, to observe that the word here rendered *ministry* is not only used throughout the New Testament in reference to every kind of office bearer mentioned in it, but is applied to many sorts of functions, in the way of service, which even private persons can perform. In this place it is undoubtedly employed to signify all the offices which Christ has appointed in his Church; and the sense conveyed is, that they are all ordained, not in a

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way of honor, but for arduous labor; that the work required is in the proper sense a service of the Church, not a dominion over it; that the great object of it is to perfect the saints and to edify the body of Christ; and that they were all amongst his ascension gifts. And it is not only incredible but absurd to suppose that our Church should first define that a ministry is divinely appointed, and then define that it consists ordinarily and permanently of pastors, elders, and deacons; and yet that it should mean that the word *ministry* can signify nothing but preachers of the gospel.

II. It is a very obvious truth that all office bearers, and especially all such as are ordinary and perpetual, are given by Christ to the Church, and that the Church is not, in any conceivable sense, given to them. And yet the neglect of this truth has been one great reason why such confused opinions have prevailed on the whole subject under consideration. The personal ministry of Christ was surely not utterly barren. He had disciples before he had apostles ; he had many, perhaps multitudes of followers before the descent of the Holy Ghost had fully anointed the apostles for their office and work ; and we are told that after his resurrection and before his ascent to heaven “he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once” (1 Cor. xv. 6). And of the vast crowds that followed him, and heard gladly him who spake as never man spake, who shall presume to say that multitudes did not believe upon him ? To those already united with him by faith, and to his elect throughout the earth and throughout all generations, he gave, after he had singly triumphed over death and hell, the inestimable gift of a living and permanent ministry. But he had a Church in the world before there was either apostle, or prophet, or evangelist, or pastor, or teacher; and he will have his Church around him throughout eternal ages, after all his saints are gathered and perfected, and when oracles, ordinances, and ministry, shall all have fulfilled their work. His bride was equally his undefiled, his only one, before any ordinance was established, or any oracle given, or any ministry constituted, as she is now that we enjoy all these proofs of his care and love ; and if there had never been an office bearer of the race of Adam given as a servant to minister unto her, if angels had

been her only ministers for ever, or the Divine Spirit had disdained all secondary agencies, or were now to reject the whole body of sinful men who are nothing but as he enables them, still, that spotless bride would be the Lamb's wife, by a covenant reaching from the depths of eternity, steadfast as the oath of God can make it, and sacred by the blood of Jesus with which it is sealed. No, no ; there is no lordship, no headship in Christ's Church, but that of Christ himself; there are but servants in the Church for Christ's sake; and their Master's rule is this, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant" (Matt. xx. 27, xxiii. 11). And if we will but keep steadily before our minds this solitary truth—that Christ's people, his Church, are before, above, independent of all office bearers ever given to them, far more so than any commonwealth is distinct from and superior to the authorities which may at any time exist in it, or the form of administration which may at any period prevail in it—it will bear us clearly and firmly onward through all the snares which ignorance, superstition, fanaticism, the lust of power and the pride of caste, have set to entrap God's people into abominable will-worship, or hateful, though perverse men choose to call it "voluntary humility."

Seeing then that amongst the ascension gifts herein expressly named is a ministry, such as I have indicated ; and that of that ministry, also expressly named, are pastors ; while Christ has a Church on earth we may confidently expect to find faithful pastors in it, whom he will raise up, qualify, and send forth, as ordinary perpetual officers therein (1 Peter v. 2-4). The chief functions of their office, as summarily established out of the Scriptures, and held by the purest Reformed Churches, are, 1. To pray for and with their flocks as the mouth of the people unto God; 2. To read the Scriptures publicly; 3. To preach the word, thereby teaching, convincing, reproving, exhorting, comforting, and nourishing their flocks; 4. To administer the sacraments; 5. To bless the people from God; 6. To take care of the poor; 7. To bear rule with other elders amongst their flocks, and in the Church at large. These functions all pre-suppose a

gathered Church, and are directed to the perfecting of its members ; or have direct reference to the work of gathering into the fold those who still wander without God. They are all based upon an authority which is merely ministerial and declarative. They all involve a simple and arduous service or ministration, as distinguished from an inherent, much less an independent subsistence. They all have a direct relation to Christ on the one hand, and to Christ's people on the other. They are all of such a nature as to require peculiar qualifications as well as special authority for their performance; and yet they are at the same time of such a character that no performance of any of them is possible, except in relation to such as voluntarily allow of them, and no benefit can be predicated of the performance of any of them, as resulting necessarily out of their own inherent force and operation. It is an exalted stewardship, but it is no more. If it carries a blessing with it, it is because God superadds that blessing. It is laden with privileges and with mercies for a world in ruins; but to make any of these available, men must receive willingly those treasures, which even after they are poured into their bosoms, multitudes are ready to reject, to defile, to trample under their feet.

It is manifest that unless men were directed, individually, by a divine infallibility, we cannot trust to their individual decisions that they are divinely called to such an office as this; nor is it less clear that nothing less than miraculous powers on their part, or a divine illumination on ours, is sufficient to enable us to decide individually, with infallible certainty, on the value of such pretensions. And yet it is of supreme importance, that both they who minister and they who are ministered unto, should not err in such a case. Nor need they, if they will deal humbly, faithfully, and honestly, with God, with their own souls, and with each other.

Does any man assert that he is an apostle, a successor of the apostles, a minister of Jesus Christ, invested with the functions of the apostolic office ? Then his calling is immediately from God, he is divinely inspired, and the proofs of his apostleship are simple, precise, and clearly laid down in God's word. Was he

an eye witness of any portion of Christ's personal ministry ? Has he had personal, divine, and super-human proof of the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ ? Can he prove these two points by raising the dead ? If he can, the question is settled; if he cannot, it is also settled.

Does any man assert that he holds the apostolic, the pastoral, or any other office, in the Church of Christ, by reason of a perpetual succession which has brought down the office power from the Saviour to him, through an unbroken succession of office bearers like himself, and that it is upon the authority of this investiture that he challenges the reverence of the followers of Jesus ? This places the claim wholly on questions of fact; and if the claim is well founded, it can, of course, be clearly and easily made out. Let it be shown that according to the Scriptures this is the way in which the office is, by divine appointment, to be transmitted; that when thus transmitted, the spiritual investiture is complete, independently of the spiritual character of him upon whom the succession terminates, and that of those through whom it has descended; that such a succession has been preserved in the Church throughout all generations, without taint or interruption, man after man, in a right line from Jesus; that the present claimant is one of those upon whom this unbroken succession has fallen ; and that the office he claims is a perpetual office in Christ's Church. In such a case it is altogether ridiculous to attempt to establish by *arguments* any one of the facts necessary to complete the chain of proof; seeing that the whole question is one of fact, and in its own nature to be established only by proof. It is, moreover, little less than impious to tell us that any portion of this chain of title, which from its nature can rest only on facts, must be received as matter of faith, even though it cannot be proved to be true; that is, that we must believe, as matter of faith, that a succession exists, though as matter of fact it cannot be proved, because, as they say, though God promised that the fact should exist, he failed to furnish the evidence that it does exist, or even allowed the evidence to be apparently conclusive that it does not exist; which, though in a Protestant mouth, is precisely the Popish argument

for transubstantiation, the real presence, and the mass. I say nothing in the way of positive objection to this form of the claim to office in the Church, though it can be clearly shown that every assertion upon which it rests is false; but what I say is this, let him who makes the claim give over idle attempts to establish by argument that which rests nakedly in proof, let him omit his Popish appeals to our faith and address himself to the evidence, and then, if he can prove his claim, it is good; and if he cannot prove it, it is an offence to God that he should make it, or that we should allow it.

Does any man assert that, although such extraordinary offices as were connected with a divine inspiration and the power of miracles ceased when those gifts ceased, and although there remain permanent offices, and amongst these the pastor's office, yet as God has promised to raise up these pastors, every one is the sole judge in his own case, and necessarily must be; and that all other evidence, but the convictions of his own mind, is inconclusive and needless? If nothing else could be objected to pretensions of this sort, it is sufficiently evident that the principle on which they proceed defeats themselves. For every child of God is as really called to be a follower of Jesus as any office bearer can be to discharge any function for the edification of God's people; and therefore every particular disciple is as much a judge whether the office bearer is divinely sent to him as the office bearer is whether he is divinely sent at all; and so the government of the Church of Christ, which is admitted in admitting the permanence of offices in it, is subverted in the pretension that the officer is the sole judge of his own call. I confess I do not see how the result would be varied if this pretension were allowed to office bearers jointly, instead of severally; a form in which it is by no means uncommon to urge it by such as assert that church courts are properly composed only of ministers of the word, and that these courts, independently of anything else than their own judgment, and without any call from any particular flock, may regularly and commonly ordain men *sine titulo*.

Absurd as are the pretensions of an extraordinary vocation, in the absence of every vestige of extraordinary evidence; absurd as

are the pretensions founded on a perpetual succession, where no such succession was ever promised or did ever exist; neither are more absurd than the pretension which in its very nature denies the necessity of any proof at all. And yet upon one or the other of these three grounds—obscured somewhat, it may be, to conceal its nakedness—you shall hear continually the most confident assertions that the under shepherds in Christ's flock hold their office power in it.

The true grounds upon which the vocation of a Christian pastor rests, are in their own nature extremely clear, and are plainly stated in the word of God. They have relation, 1. To God himself; 2. To the man's own conscience; 3. To the Christian people; and 4. To those who bear office in the Church. Let us briefly examine the subject in each of these aspects.

1. At every period and under every dispensation, God has been pleased to reserve to himself a great and a direct agency in designating those who should minister to his people in holy things. When the Lord passed through Egypt and smote their first-born both of man and of beast, he saw the blood of the passover on the lintel and on the side posts of the dwellings of his people, and he suffered not the destroyer to come nigh unto Israel. (Exod. xii. 23-30.) As a memorial of a deliverance so striking and so marvellous, God set apart to himself, by a formal statute, the first-born of man and of beast in Israel, as sanctified unto himself. (Exod. xiii. 1-16.) These first-born amongst the sons of God's people, thus hallowed unto him, he exchanged, by a divine ordinance, for the tribe of Levi (Num. iii. 12, 13); and these Levites were publicly and solemnly consecrated and offered up, for the service of the Lord, by Aaron and his sons, with the hands of all Israel laid upon them. (Num. viii. 5—19.) For the priest's office, God selected from amongst the Levites Aaron and his sons (Exod. xxviii. 1), and established in that family an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations (Exod. xi. 15); and, by his command, Moses his servant took Aaron and his sons, and anointed them, and consecrated them to God, in the presence of the whole congregation of Israel convened before the tabernacle and shouting for joy as they beheld the manifest and mira-

culous proof that God was in their midst. (Lev. viii. *passim*, and ix. 23, 24.) As if to render still more signal the proof of the immediate agency of God in all these transactions, he ordained that every stranger, not a Levite, who presumed to intrude into the Levite's office, and every stranger, not of the house of Aaron, who presumed to meddle with the priest's office, should be put to death. (Num. i. 51 and iii. 11.)

The grand truth of the divine interposition in the selection of the ministers of religion, is set in the clearest light by this great example. Nor is it less clearly exhibited in the New Testament than in the Old. The priesthood of the Jewish dispensation was a ministry for sacrifice; and by means thereof believers had access to God, and obtained through that law of sacrifices a legal righteousness. But the Lord Jesus has set aside that mode of the believer's access to God for justifying righteousness, seeing that he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. x. 4); and thenceforward the righteousness appointed for justification is no longer that which is legal, but that which is divine and which is bestowed on us by God, through faith in Christ. (Phil. iii. 9.) For he being a priest for ever, none can succeed to him; and having an unchanging priesthood, no priesthood can follow; and having offered himself a sacrifice, no sacrifice of less worth can any more be accepted; and having by that one sacrifice of himself perfected for ever those that are sanctified, all other sacrifice is wholly superfluous; and having entered into heaven itself there to present his sacrifice and offer his intercession, all sacrifice here below would be at once absurd and impious. There is therefore no priesthood at all any more, but the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor any sacrifice at all any more, besides the one perfect, infinite sacrifice which he made of himself. Instead of the priesthood instituted before his incarnation to exhibit in types and shadows his coming and his work, he ascending up on high has instituted a ministry, as I have before proved, which in the use of the oracles he has given and the ordinances he has established, is designed for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in a threefold permanent work of preaching, governing, and distribution, which he has committed to a three-

fold perpetual ministry of pastors, elders, and deacons. No human being has any more right to intrude into either of these offices without a divine call, than there existed to intrude into the office of a priest or a Levite under the Mosaic dispensation. For it is plainly said that even Jesus Christ himself was "called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec," and constituted one by him who said, "Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." And therefore, much more is it true that "no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. v. 4—10.) So that the call of Aaron was not more really divine than that of every office bearer—and of course every pastor—in the Christian Church should be. And with this agree the words of John the Baptist, "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." (John iii. 27.) And to the same purport is the whole argument of Paul, by which he establishes, out of the Jewish Scriptures, the call of the Gentiles into the Church of Christ, proving that as God had promised to save them if they would call upon his name, and this was impossible unless the truth were preached to them by men sent of God; therefore and because of the express promise to send such unto them, God had thus fulfilled his gracious purposes in divinely raising up a ministry for them. (Rom. x. 12-15.) And in like manner, we are given to understand that those who are not sent of God, nor commanded by him, nor taught of him, may be expected to prophesy only lies in his dreadful name, and that all their labor will be a "thing of naught and the deceit of their heart." (Jer. xiv. 14.)

There is a very close analogy between the methods by which persons were admitted into the visible Church, and called of God to the exercise of religious functions, as compared with each other, under the Old Testament dispensation, and the methods adopted for the same ends, compared with each other, under the New Testament dispensation. Under the former all was by natural generation; under the latter all is by spiritual generation. So that if the ordination of God whereby the natural seed of Abraham constituted his visible Church could with any justice be

called an election, and his superintending providence could with any propriety be said to be the cause of the continuance of that Church in a way of natural generation; how much more now, when by his divine and special grace all the disciples of the Lord Jesus are supernaturally brought to a saving knowledge of him, in their effectual calling, may it be said that every believer becomes a member of the body of Christ by a special divine interposition ! And if the call of the Levites and their seed in the place of the first-born, and the call of Aaron and his descendants, was in that sense divine, that every Levite and every priest in all their generations was truly under a peculiar divine designation, each to his own work about the sanctuary; how much more now, when the work is altogether spiritual, when God has expressly reserved to himself the power to call and qualify and send forth the workmen, and has graciously promised to do it, must it appear evident that this calling, and fitness, and mission from God, is itself divine and spiritual ! And it may be as confidently asserted that every converted man is no more called to be an office bearer in the Christian Church than every man in Israel was called to be a Levite; and that it is as indispensable for him who would be a pastor to have a divine call and fitness over and above that which entitles him to mere membership in the Church, and yet like it, spiritual and special, as it was for an Israelite who would minister in the priest's office to have a call and fitness over and above that which made him an Israelite, though like it dependent on natural generation, to wit, that he was a descendant of Aaron. There might be some difficulty in making out the case that a man was a Levite or that he was of the seed of Aaron; there might be doubts even in his own mind as to either fact; and there might be incidental points difficult of determination; and there must necessarily be some outward method to settle all these questions to the satisfaction of other persons. Still, the ultimate question is, is he a Levite? is he of the seed of Aaron? and so, has he the divine call to this office? In the same manner there may be serious and painful doubts in a man's own mind, whether he is a child of God, whether he is called to be a pastor; there may be great difficulties in settling these questions, to his own

satisfaction and to that of others; and there must be some adequate way in which the people of God may arrive at a satisfactory conclusion on the point. But nevertheless, there must be a divine fitness which precedes worthy membership, a divine call which precedes an authorised entrance upon the pastor's office. And this divine call is, for its substance, a spiritual fitness imparted by the Holy Ghost, for the performance of the great work, the various parts of which I have already pointed out, which is divinely committed to the pastor's hands; and for its manifestation, the settled conviction, in the light of God's word, God's providence, and God's inward work, upon the man himself, upon Christ's people, and upon those who bear rule amongst them, that indeed God has raised up the man to do the work. This great distinction ought never to be lost sight of. It is God alone who can call or qualify a pastor; every trial and inquiry is merely to ascertain whether or not, in the particular case, God has done it, and to add all outward means of usefulness and every seal of lawful authority to him thus chosen from on high, and whom the Church elects and ordains because she believes God has called him. I see no alternative between holding fast to these truths, and subverting the whole doctrine of God's word as to the divine vocation of all the office bearers in his Church from the beginning. But if we really embrace them, there are many consequences which flow from them which it will be hard to reconcile with many prevailing and some almost unquestioned principles and practices. I have heard it uttered in many quarters, and from the midst of nearly every denomination, that in a day like this, when the demand for ministers of the word is so urgent, it may be considered the duty of every pious young man, of fair talents and sound health, to devote himself to that calling, and that the burden of showing he ought not to do so rests upon him. This is even more absurd than it would be to say every man ought to profess to be a Christian, and the burden of proving he is not fit to do so rests on him; for, in one sense, every man is under the highest obligations to repent and believe the gospel; but there is no sense whatever in which any man has any right, much less is under any obligation, to be an office bearer in Christ's Church,

unless he be specially called of God thereto; and then it is his duty to make out the evidence of that call.

It is a kindred error to this, to set on foot plans and doctrines whose radical notion seems to be that in some such way God's action in raising up and sending forth preachers may be stimulated or its frequency increased. Such schemes, to say the very least, seem not so much directed to inquiries for such as God has called, as to experiments which may ascertain if he has not called a multitude besides. And it surely increases the danger greatly, that youths in the first stages of religious experience, of tender years, of circumstances in which a gratuitous education is itself very often a powerful temptation and the station of a minister of the gospel a seduction nearly irresistible, are, to a great extent, the objects of these experiments. Suppose them to succeed perfectly, and the result is, almost inevitably, a class ministry; and what is worse still, an eleemosynary class ministry.

I readily concede that it is not only a clear duty, but a high privilege, to aid such as need it, of those whom God calls to be pastors to his people; and that there is every way a great reward in so doing. But I greatly doubt if it is the best way to accomplish this important end, either to throw the door wide open, and invite all to enter, that those we need may come in with them, or to cultivate the idea, as is constantly done, that God calls a very great majority of his ministers from this class, and to talk as if he called few or none from any other; or to proceed as if it were not an immense evil for men to find entrance, who are not called of God; or as if it were not a fearful calamity to weaken, in such poor youths as are called of him, the spirit which leads them to struggle for self-support; or to set aside, virtually, the tribunals of God's house, in any part of the work of training and settling ministers of the word; or to train them, because they are of this class, in any respect differently from other candidates. It is easy for us to multiply ministers of the gospel, but it is impossible for us to multiply such as are called of God. This is the great truth which men are ready to neglect, to deride. And the results of every attempt which we can make, in disregard of it, must always be disastrous. We may supplant a ministry called of God from

all classes by a ministry raised up by ourselves from a single class; but have we thereby added anything but a principle of disorder, an element of disease ?

If it were only that what we did amiss in training and ordaining our preachers was superfluous, the evil might be endured in silence. But if there is the remotest danger that our Church may gradually recede from its ancient position, as its ministry is gradually transmuted in all its relations to society; if there is any reason to fear that men called of God are liable to be set aside from their true stations by men patronised by influences stronger than the church courts; if there is any, much more if there is a steady and evident, increase of idle, unprofitable, self-seeking ministers, who, by prevailing interpretations, exercise all the powers of pastors called of God, without performing a solitary function of the pastoral office; if men exclusively engaged in secular employments, yea, even ordained to them under pretence of being evangelists, openly usurp the powers of diocesan rebuke, and are countenanced in their flagitious breach, both of covenant and of decency, by the highest institutions and tribunals of the Church; it is indeed evident that something is sadly wrong, and it is high time that some voice of warning should be lifted up, even at the risk of that concerted outcry with which, from the days of the silversmiths of Ephesus, all those who find their craft in danger, are ever ready to overwhelm every mover of reform.

If our candidates who are gathered into our seminaries could be there subjected to a system of training which would correct the evils of the system by which many of them were brought there, and reveal distinctly that which man had done and that which God wrought, there would be much less reason for apprehension. A very general impression prevails that this is the case; and while it follows, nearly as a matter of course, that any young man who enters one of these seminaries may complete the ordinary course and period of study, it is still more generally a matter of course that he who has done so is licensed by his Presbytery. Thus, in the case of our beneficiaries, the ultimate decision which puts them into the ministry may virtually be considered, in many cases, the vote of Presbytery, or the recommendation of a com-

mittee, that they ought to be aided, and that perhaps when they began their course at grammar school; and in the case of those, not beneficiaries, who go to the seminaries, it may in many instances be considered the act which took them under the care of Presbytery. What I mean to assert is, that our present system, so far as the seminaries enter into it, provides no sort of adequate barrier by which the inevitable mistakes of the beneficiary system, and the loose mode of proceeding which that system has tended to introduce in regard to other candidates, may be corrected in a subsequent stage of training. This vice is inherent in the system upon which the seminaries are projected; even if the mode of instruction there, the men who give that instruction, and the course of study adopted, were all such as to reduce that evil to its minimum. That these are all in fact worthy of this commendation, he would be a bold man that would undertake to assert. I will venture, with deference, to say that I have a strong impression that so far as secluded, cloistered residence at these seminaries is a part of ministerial training, it is unfriendly to health, to propriety of manners, and to growth in grace; that, moreover, the whole plan of training in them is defective in its professional and moral aspects, especially in the latter; that the course of instruction in them has no sufficient relevancy to the actual duties to be afterwards performed, and especially not to the immediate controversies, movement, and aspects of the age; and that, on the whole, they cannot be relied on, either as a means of keeping improper persons out of the gospel ministry, or as sufficiently establishing the fact that persons really intended by God for religious teachers are therefore fit for their work, because they have been trained in them.

There is another and most serious aspect of the subject, which deserves to be placed by itself. There may be great errors of principle and of action, which yet being honestly directed to the end avowed, and that being the important one of training a ministry of the word, for the actual service of God, we must respect the intentions, even while we feel obliged to dissent from the soundness of the opinions and the wisdom of the means in question. But it is too manifest that the office of a gospel minister is, in our

day, as in all others, and as in all other Churches, perhaps in ours sometimes, sought by persons who habitually make it a means to other ends; who take it up as a living, or who resort to it as a respectable profession without any purpose to devote themselves to its duties. Men, some of whom seem to have no more settled idea that there is a special call of God indispensable before one becomes a public teacher of religion than that such a call should precede the public teaching of any art or science; others of whom seem to have no more difficulty in taking up or laying down the fearful responsibilities of the pastoral office than in changing their garments, no more trouble in evading the obligations of their ordination vows than if those vows had been taken in jest; while others still appear to have no more sense of fidelity to any particular denomination than if all the differences between the Churches were riddles contrived to amuse children. And yet every one of these persons, so far as our Church is afflicted with them—if, indeed, any such still linger amongst us—may presume to sit in judgment upon the momentous question whether or not God has called every candidate that may have the misfortune to be brought before him, and may take upon himself to settle, so far as his voice and influence go, the most difficult and important matters that belong to the doctrine, the government, and the discipline of that Church whose confidence he has abused, into whose ministry he has intruded, and whose entire spiritual power, his example is calculated to subvert. Calvin has observed concerning Paul, that when he wishes to prove his apostleship he almost always alleges his call, together with his fidelity in the execution of his office; and then he adds these memorable words, “If so eminent a minister of Christ dare not arrogate to himself an authority to require his being heard in the Church, but in consequence of his appointment to it by a divine commission, and his faithful discharge of the duty assigned him, what extreme impudence must it be if any man, destitute of both these characters, should claim such an honor for himself!” (*Inst., Book IV., Ch. 8, Sec. 10.*)

Having thus spoken, I ought to add, that while I solemnly believe that the methods now in use touching beneficiary education

for the gospel ministry are not without great danger, and that the general system of ministerial education is both defective and hazardous ; and while I dare not say that by these and other means persons who ought never to have turned their attention to the office of public teachers of religion, may not have been introduced into it, and that some who may have been truly called of God are not tolerated in systematic covenant breaking for which they ought to be subjected to discipline ; and while there appears to me to be a state of opinion upon the whole subject of a call of God to the pastor's office, and the proper modes of ascertaining this and training the person for the work to which he is called, by no means satisfactory ; still, it is also my deep and joyful conviction that through the rich grace of Christ the great body of our ministers are men evidently called of God, and that they would have been a rich blessing to any age of the Christian Church. I pray God, and I thus labor, that it may never be otherwise ; and I beseech my brethren to bear with a plainness of speech whose only object is the common good.

2. It has been already stated that the grand and ultimate fact is, the call of God; and that everything else should be directed merely to the satisfactory ascertainment of this fact, to the best preparation of the person for the work, and to his official investiture, upon scriptural grounds. I take the first and an indispensable proof of this call of God to be the inward testimony of the man's own conscience.

I cannot conceive that an upright man, who was prevailingly convinced that he was not of the seed of Aaron, could have allowed himself to exercise the priest's office, even though all Israel supposed him to be lawfully entitled to it; much less can I believe that a truly religious man could do such audacious perfidy with the doom of death recorded against him by the Ruler of the Universe. So if we believe, as I think I have proved out of the Scriptures, that God as really calls his pastors now as he did his priests before ; we are as plainly bound as any ever were, to know that this vocation has fallen upon us. But as the dispensation of the grace of God through Jesus Christ is, to us, one altogether spiritual, as our entrance into his Church is itself upon spiritual

grounds and unto spiritual ends, so God's call to us is a spiritual call, and it must therefore needs be by a spiritual work, not only real, but, which is the immediate point, convincing also.

In every act we can perform on earth we are entitled to expect before we can be required to perform it, and we are bound to have before we venture to perform it, the testimony of a good conscience; and the clearness and force of our conscientious convictions should be analogous to the magnitude, the perplexity, the difficulty, of the contemplated duty. For a man then to presume to be an ambassador for Almighty God, and that touching questions no less awful than the glory of his throne, and the endless states of his rebellious subjects, without a settled conviction in his own soul that this fearful trust is laid on him by the King Eternal, is insane audacity. I say not, he must be convinced he ought to be sent—Moses plead hard against his mission ; the conviction must be that he is sent. I say not, he must judge that he is fit to be sent, for no man is fit. I say not that this or the other motive, as many will assert, or any motive at all, beside the simple one of obedience to the voice of the heavenly monitor, should mingle with the inward fixed conviction ; nor that this proof or the other proof, as many will contend, or any proof at all, beside the testimony of consciousness itself, should beget within us this strong assurance that it is God's Spirit which has wrought us for this self-same thing. I say not, there may not be doubts and perplexities, trials very sore, and temptations of the adversary, fightings without and fears within, and troubles on every side; for if these things be not, it is either that grace is overwhelmingly abundant, or that Satan judges us to be workmen that he need not fear. Nor do I deny, that like as the kingdom of heaven itself is but as a grain of mustard planted in the broken heart, which must be watered by many a tear, and watched amid long and anxious vigils, as its roots strike down and its branches spread strongly and widely abroad; so this inward testimony of a divine vocation may be a whisper to the soul, almost inaudible in the profoundest stillness of the spirit of man, lost, restored again, strengthened, repeated struggling amidst the passions that toss us to and fro, and fighting against the sins

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that would quench it, following us, if need be, as God followed Jonah, till out of the belly of hell the right of the Almighty Disposer is confessed. Paul, “trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Upon Paul, blind and helpless, waiting for the promised manifestation, God’s disciple laid his hands, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” Immediately, when it pleased God to reveal his Son in Paul that he might preach him among the heathen, he conferred not with flesh and blood, but preached Jesus and the resurrection. And yet three years after this most distinct and divine appointment to the Gentiles, Paul, in a vision of Jesus Christ, even earnestly set forth his peculiar fitness to proclaim the riches of grace amongst the Jews, and it required a second explicit declaration from the glorified Saviour that his mission was not to the Jews but to the Gentiles. And thenceforth how abounding are the evidences scattered over his life and crowded into his writings, that with an immovable conviction he rested in his call to preach Jesus, and to preach him amongst the Gentiles; and how sublime is the testimony he has left us that this inward assurance is from God, that it is sufficient to bear us up amid every danger brought upon us by the vocation it attests, to make every sacrifice that vocation requires a light thing compared with the obligation to be faithful in our calling, and to crown, by the grace of God, our career with triumph, and with the foretaste of that glory which is to be revealed in those who make full proof of their ministry, with their eyes and their hearts set on the appearing of the Lord (2 Tim. iv. 5-8).

It cannot be denied that we are liable to be deceived in this matter, as well as in that of our personal interest in Christ, and indeed in every other which concerns our inward state and exercises; and that we are so, is precisely one chief reason why the testimony of our conscience cannot be sufficient evidence to others, and why it needs to be enforced even to ourselves by other and concurring proofs. The human heart is not only desperately wicked, but is deceitful above all things, and the most difficult

part of knowledge is to know ourselves ; and sin itself is not only infinitely deceitful, but is also most deceivable, and therefore to the extent that it reigns in us it subjects us to the risk of being deceived and of deceiving ourselves. What I have before said plainly shows that the danger of being deceived by others into a conviction that we ought to preach the gospel, is by no means imaginary; and all who have endeavored to fathom the wiles of Satan, and who have wrestled earnestly with the plague of their own hearts, well know that the danger of self-delusion is real and constant. It is for this reason, amongst others, that kindness to those who are seeking the pastoral office, as well as fidelity to the Church of Christ, demands a degree of faithfulness on the part of teachers and church courts far beyond what is commonly exercised; it is upon this ground, in part, that ordinations *sine titulo* which have been such a curse to our Church, are always so dangerous, seeing they proceed in the absence of one of the main evidences of any call at all to the work, namely, the testimony of God's people.¹ It is from a deep conviction of this

¹ There is very great difficulty in proving that any *ordinary* office bearer in the Church of Christ can be lawfully or even validly ordained at all, without he is ordained to a determinate office ; and the only ground upon which the ordination of evangelists can be justified, is that their office is an *extraordinary* one. But it is clear that the getting of this office as *extraordinary*, and then using it not at all, but in place of it using the *ordinary* office of a minister of the word, is either a piece of rash and inconsiderate ignorance, or else is mere fraud and covenant breaking, and so is both void in law, and punishable besides as an immorality. As to the validity of ordination to the ordinary office of bishop, pastor, or minister of the word, without designation to any particular church, consider (1) That the thing is utterly unwarranted by precept or example in the word of God, and is contrary to the constant practice of the apostles (Acts xiv. 23, xx. 28; Tit. i. 5; Rev. ii. 3). (2) It was absolutely forbidden in the ancient Church ; the Council of Chalcedon pronounced all such ordinations invalid, and the Council of Ephesus even decreed that a real bishop could be considered entitled to the name, title, and honor of one only by courtesy, but not at all to any office power, except as he stood related to some particular charge. (3) The election of the people is an absolute and indispensable element of collation to office power, and therefore without this an ordination to such power is strictly invalid. (4) Every term, bishop, pastor, elder, by which the ordained person is desig-

truth that I have earnestly, but without success, labored to have some provision made in our discipline, whereby persons who have been unfortunately deceived in this matter, and of whom it has been discovered, by themselves or by others, after they were ordained, that they never were called of God, might be relieved from the dreadful temptation to continual hypocrisy, and from the degrading sentence of deposition for what was perhaps as much their misfortune as their sin, and in which, whether one or the other, the Church herself was an accessory before the fact.

Still, however, this is no sort of reason why those who have no belief that God has called them should venture unbidden to meddle with holy things; but is only a reason why those who believe they are called of God should more carefully examine themselves and the grounds on which they rest. It will generally be found, in practice, that a mistake on this point is very apt to involve a previous mistake as to our interest in Christ at all; and while cases are extremely common in which men who have proved that they were not Christians at all, have deceived themselves into the belief that they were divinely called to be ministers of Christ, it is very seldom that a sincerely pious and faithful child of God is allowed to deceive himself upon that point. And the reason is obvious: for if there was no testimony besides, the Spirit of God is a faithful witness to all who will listen to the still small voice in which he communes with the soul; and the testimony of

nated, is a relative term, and therefore to use them of one who has «o church, people, or flock, implies, as John Owen well notes, as real a contradiction and impossibility, as to make him a father who has no child, or him a husband who has no wife. (5) It is wholly inconsistent with the whole office, duty, and work of the ordinary ministry of the word, every part of which, and especially the whole power of rule, supposes a state of case the opposite of that supposed when a man is ordained *sine titulo*, and at large, without any to rule over or amongst, or to care for, feed, and edify; especially is the thing absurd and unscriptural of such as are thus ordained in the immediate view and intention of secular offices and employments, agencies, professorships, etc., which one could perform as well without as with ordination, and which he cannot perform and at the same time discharge his proper work, to any particular flock. The whole thing is manifestly repugnant to the fundamental principles of Presbyterian Church Order, and is in a high degree dangerous to the Church.

that Spirit with ours that we are God's children is hardly more plainly promised than the convincing power of the same divine Comforter that we are chosen to bear office in his Church.

3. I come next to speak of the part which the Christian people have to perform immediately in the vocation of ministers of the word, considered with special reference to the effect which their determination ought to have upon the question whether or not God has called such or such a person to that ministry. The Apostle Peter says of those who believe, and to whom Christ is precious, that they are living stones out of which a spiritual house is built; and he calls them not only a chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar, or rather indeed a purchased people, but also a holy and even a royal priesthood. (1 Peter ii. 5, 7, 9.) That is a wondrous commonwealth, in which every individual member is not only a king, but a priest! And yet it is more wondrous still that all these royal priests, being once bond slaves of Satan and citizens of his kingdom of darkness, were redeemed by the precious blood of the only begotten Son of God, translated into the kingdom of light, and made joint-heirs with Christ Jesus! Over this kingdom, nation, people, there is no head nor king, save only the Lord Jesus Christ. He calls them unitedly his body, his Church, his bride; he permits no authority to be exercised amongst them but his own; whatever exercise of his power amongst them he prescribes to be exerted by any secondary means whatever, is only in a way purely ministerial and declarative; and this sort of power is primarily and fundamentally committed by him to the Church itself, and its exercise to such as are lawfully called thereto; and all officers who claim to exercise any portion of this power and authority primarily invested in the Church, to whom all office bearers are given, must either exhibit the miraculous proofs of an extraordinary vocation, or they must receive their investiture from the Church in the way of the divinely appointed exercise by her, of her own functions; and the sole end of the exercise of all power and rule in the Church is the edification of itself. (Rom. xv. 1—3; 2 Cor. x. 8, xiii. 10, iv. 5; Eph. iv. 14, 16.)¹

¹ The 9th chapter of the II. Book of George Gillespie's *Aaron's Rod*

The unity of the Church of Christ is one of the plainest doctrines concerning it which is taught in the Scriptures; and its division into sects and parties is one of the greatest evils which has ever been allowed to overtake it on account of its sins. Though the visible Church universal is thus unhappily rent, yet each particular portion or denomination of it is still able to appropriate to itself in some degree those great principles and reasonings which rightly apply to the whole, if all were united in one general fold. Thus we by no means assert of our branch of the Lord's purchased people—what is boastfully and foolishly asserted of themselves by some others—that we constitute *the Church of Christ* on earth. But our received faith is, that into how many parts soever our Church may be divided for convenience sake, or from necessity, either as congregations or as larger portions, still, the whole of these parts constitute but one Church. It follows that all the office bearers who may be more particularly attached to any one portion of this Church are in the same sense

Blossoming contains an argument, which I judge to be unanswerable, upon the proposition : *That there is an Ecclesiastical Government in the hands of church officers.* If this proposition be made out—and it seems impossible to deny it—many very grave consequences flow from it: and amongst them the fundamental ones, that it is a kind of treason against God for any man, or any association of men, to usurp the functions of this divinely instituted government; and that it is a sort of treachery to Christ on the part of this government to divest itself of any part of its authority, or commit to others even co-ordinately with itself, the duties which God has devolved on it. There is a very rare Scotch tract entitled "*A Treatise of Ruling Elders and Deacons*"—concerning which the tradition is that it was written by Alexander Henderson. The only copy of it I have ever seen has the imprint of 1652. It contains seven short chapters about ruling elders, and five shorter still about deacons; the whole, including a Preface and an Address to the Christian Reader, occupying 84 pages 32mo. The scriptural institution and the indispensable necessity of the ruling elders in the constitution of church courts, are very clearly made out and strongly insisted on. I would have had this tract reprinted, but that four pages are lost, in the copy at my disposal, at the end, chapter vi. I will give a few short extracts: "The I. is of those who either out of ignorance or disdain do call them *lay elders*, as if they were a part of the people only, and not to be reckoned amongst officers of the Lord's house," &c. (Ch. i.) "Every elder in the Lord's house is a

office bearers of the whole body, as the particular part is one portion of the whole; and, therefore, the action of any particular portion, as a single congregation, in virtue of which any particular office bearer is set apart, is necessarily taken as decisive of the entire question concerning his vocation as completely as if the whole body had acted upon every case, which is physically impossible. And this is the more evident when it is considered that in the nature of the case the same principle is applied to every conceivable state of the Church, however small it may be, or however great; for each particular congregation is supposed to have everything which the whole Church has: the same officers, the same ordinances, the same kind of powers, derived from the same divine source; every one in all respects like all the rest, and like the whole united into one; so that if it was possible for the whole Church to be met in one place on one occasion, there would be absolutely nothing, except a vast increase of what every single congregation should possess. Thus contemplated, we see, not only the evil, but the folly and uselessness of divisions

ruling elder, because the power and exercise of rule and government belongs to every elder," &c. (*Idem.*) "It is true that by the sloth, or rather by the pride of teachers, whilst they alone would seem to be somewhat, and by the policy of Satan and inadvertence of the Church, these officers were for many ages together out of use in the Christian Church. But certain it is, that both the Jewish Synagogue, and, after, the Christian Church had *seniors*, or elders, *without whose counsel nothing was done in the Church.*" (Ch. ii.) "Whilst we speak of elders, of which the Assemblies of the Church are made up, we mean all sorts of elders: ministers, doctors, and ruling elders." (Ch. vi.) "In all Assemblies of the Church, ruling elders being thereto rightly called have power to sit, write, debate, vote, and conclude in all matters that are handled therein." (*Idem.*) "The things which be handled in the Assemblies of the Church be either matters of faith, matters of order, matters of discipline, or that which concerneth the sending of Church officers," &c. (*Idem.*) It is immediately following this quotation, after seven lines, that the four pages were missing when I got hold of the tract. My own impression is exceedingly strong that in the Presbyterian Church in this country the church courts omit a very large part of their duties, and that ruling elders, as divinely instituted members of all those courts, are neither personally nor officially in the position which they ought to occupy.

amongst Christians; since the Lord Jesus has erected his Church upon such a model as to provide perfectly for its indefinite extension and at the same time to secure its perfect unity. And when it is considered that the seal which each particular congregation gives by its call to the vocation of any office bearer in the Church bears with it the highest and the most impressive evidence which can be given of human sincerity, in this, that they take the person to be their teacher, or ruler, or distributor, that they commit their own highest interests into his hands, it is plain that no greater security is possible.

That pastors should be intruded on Christian congregations, whether by church courts, by prelates, by patrons, or by the civil power, without the consent of the congregations themselves, is so monstrous an absurdity, and so utterly without a shadow of support from the word of God, that it is truly wonderful such assumptions should ever have been put forward, or tolerated; much less that they should still continue to disgrace and corrupt so large a portion of the nominal Church. In our own principles, and to a great degree in our practice, nothing of this kind is allowed; and therefore I need say little in regard to a usurpation which, wherever it exists, necessarily sets aside and makes nugatory one of the principal evidences of the divine mission of the pastor, by silencing the voice of the Christian people. It is to be greatly lamented, however, that practices not only exist, but are extending in our Church, which in their principles differ but little from the worst forms of patronage; such as the usurpation of the election of pastor, in many of our largest congregations, by the pew owners and occupiers, without regard to the Christian character of the voters, and to the exclusion of all beside themselves; and the exclusion, in other cases, of all Christians who are not heads of families; and in others still of all but males. Nor can it be denied that a system of patronage of another sort has been rapidly extending in our Church, by means of which ministers are constantly settled in congregations under the influence, direct or indirect, of the Professors in our Theological Seminaries, and the action of our Board of Missions; which, in its legitimate sphere, it is not perhaps possible, nor even desirable,

to discountenance entirely; but which requires an unusual share of wisdom in its exercise, and is therefore correspondingly liable not only to mistakes but to abuse. That our Theological Professors should, any of them, be safe depositories of an influence of this kind, when they are themselves, to a great extent, amongst the fiercest partisans in the present controversies in the Church, will scarcely be asserted by any but those who approve not only of all their opinions, but also of all their methods of propagating them.

I take it that if the testimony we are in search of is of any value, it is an unbiassed testimony to be rendered in God's fear, by Christian people, gathered in Christ's name, and having a title to his promise to be in their midst; and it is this which both by precept and example we are taught in the Divine Oracles to require. When Peter desired that some witness of the life, doctrine, and resurrection of Jesus should be ordained in the place of Judas, he stood up in the midst of the hundred and twenty disciples convened in Jerusalem, and proposed it to them in a body; and as such they chose two from amongst themselves, and then by an extraordinary appeal to God designated which of these should be numbered with the eleven. (Acts i. 15, 28) When the first deacons were elected, it was the whole multitude of the disciples who chose them, and this by the direction of all the apostles. (Acts vi. 1—6.) And when Paul and Barnabas ordained presbyters—doubtless both pastors and ruling elders “in every church”—the words used by the inspired penman “distinctly mark,” as Calvin well notes, “the manner in which this was done, namely, by the suffrages or votes of the people.” (Acts xiv. 23; *Inst. Book IV.*, Ch. 3, Sec. 15.)

In our ecclesiastical standards, no provision existed for more than a century and a quarter after the first planting of our Church in America for the ordination of any office bearer in the Church, except upon his election by a particular church; and in this they agreed with the great body of Presbyterian Churches the world over. As their provisions stand at present, they contemplate no removal of a minister of the gospel from one Presbytery to another, except in immediate connexion with his installation as pas-

tor of some congregation; and in the only contingency in which they allow the ordination of licentiates at all, without a call from some church, they require them to be ordained as *evangelists*—a class of officers confessedly extraordinary, and expressly declared to be for laboring “in frontier or destitute settlements;” and exact of them a vow that they will undertake this work and discharge its duties. (*Form of Government, Ch. XV., Sec. 15.*) How this provision, first introduced formally into our system in 1821, has worked, and what are likely to be its effects, both in depriving the congregations of permanent pastors, and in crowding our church courts with nominal evangelists, may be inferred from the fact, that considerably less than one-half of all our ministers of the word, are reported in 1844 as sustaining the pastoral relation; in other words, that more than half of them are in a position never contemplated by the great and general provisions of our Church Constitution, and utterly inconsistent with their exercise of any power of rule, under any system pretending to be representative or free. And so long as even a few Presbyteries conveniently situated to the Theological Seminaries may choose to receive under their care candidates from all quarters of the Church, and may see fit to ordain their numerous licentiates *sine titulo*, and send them over the Church as missionaries, as professors, as agents, as teachers, or in search of settlements; it is easy to see that this *ministram vagum*, which is abhorrent to the whole spirit of Presbyterianism, can be repressed only by an energetic and general resistance. I do not doubt that many of our seven or eight hundred ministers of the word who are not pastors, are laboring painfully in the work of evangelists; nor that many are virtually, though not formally, pastors; nor that many others are trying to do good in various ways; nor that a goodly number are disabled by age and infirmities; but still, after all possible allowance is made, the number is large for whom little excuse can be made; and as regarding nearly the whole mass, the truth still remains, that having never been called to the work of the ministry by any body of Christian people, or having laid aside the pastoral office, however worthy they may be, they are destitute of any scriptural or presbyterial ground upon which to rest

any claim to the exercise of a large part of the functions of a pastor, and more especially those functions which belong to him as a ruler in the house of God.

The plan which has been adopted by our own and some other Presbyterian Churches, of licensing "probationers for the holy ministry," has for one of its avowed objects this, "that the churches may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the talents of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed;" (*Form of Govt.*, Ch. XIV., Sec. 1) and it is "when any probationer shall have preached so much to the satisfaction of any congregation, as that the people appear prepared to elect a pastor," that the necessary steps for his ordination are to be taken. (*Idem*, Ch. XV.) All the principles and arrangements connected with this peculiarity of the Presbyterian system, are based on the admission that this testimony of the Christian people is an exceedingly important element in ascertaining the fact of every man's call of God, and altogether indispensable in determining his right to be an ordinary instructor or governor, not only of any church in particular, but of all the churches in general. So that the habit of ordaining men without any such evidence, is not only a snare to their consciences, and a grievous departure from the scriptural model, but it is the foundation of a double injury to the Church, in giving to it ministers who have not been able to produce the complete proof of a call of God, and in placing over it instructors and governors who were never chosen by it, and this in total disregard of its own covenanted bond of church union. Nor is it the least remarkable effect of such proceedings, that by this creation of a class of rulers who are invested with power over all the churches, without having a particle of authority in any particular church, a kind of prelatical dominion is established in the bosom of Presbytery, more obscure in the principles on which it rests, and more absurd in the pretensions to which it gives birth, than a moderate Prelacy itself would be, if engrafted upon our system. For it is more rational, and more obvious, that one pastor might be chosen to a permanent presidency over the rest, and then be invested with certain limited and defined, though they were exclusive powers; than that multitudes who are not

pastors at all, should be invested co-ordinately with all the powers of pastors, and rule over congregations to which they bear no definable relations.¹

The grand object of “the work of the ministry,” divinely announced in the very context before us, is “the perfecting of the

¹I presume it will hardly be questioned that it has always been the common doctrine of all foreign Presbyterian Churches that ministers of the word, when they are ordained, ought to be assigned to some particular ecclesiastical charge; nor that it is the received theory of church order amongst them generally, that the moment such a minister is without an ecclesiastical charge, he is without the least right or power to sit in any church court, or exercise any rule in the Church as a minister of the word. A recent and memorable instance illustrates this in the Church of Scotland. The Rev. Dr. Welsh, who was Moderator of the Scottish Assembly of 1843, and a member of the Free Assembly of 1844, and constituted that body as its presiding officer at its first meeting, sat in both those Assemblies as a ruling elder, by delegation as such; and this notwithstanding he was one of the Theological Professors in the University of Edinburg. It is well known that the original Secession under *Ebenezer Erskine*, and the subsequent one under *Thomas Gillespie*, in Scotland, had both, but especially the latter, direct relation to the question of ordaining and inducting pastors without a real call. *Witherspoon*, throughout his *Characteristics* and the *Apology* for that work, everywhere holds this proceeding as monstrous in itself, and one cause of the corruption of the Church of Scotland; and this same *Witherspoon* was, more than any other man, the author of our Church Constitution, under which his name is used to justify what he not only abhorred, but had like to have been deposed for ridiculing and denouncing. In the year 1768 the *Secession Church* of Scotland decided this question point blank, that *McAra*, minister at Burntshield, having demitted his charge, and having no charge of any congregation, ought not to sit and judge in any ecclesiastical judicatory, and that his name should be dropped. And in 1773 this decision, upon full consideration, was affirmed upon general grounds as unquestionable Presbyterian doctrine. (See *McKerrow's History of the Secession Church*, pp. 546-51, Glasgow, 1841.) The conclusions and grounds of the Synod are given at large by *McKerrow*; and I must say that it affords a singular gratification to me, to find every general principle therein settled precisely in accordance with all I have contended for in this country in regard to the nature of scriptural Presbyterian order, and the offices of ruling elder and minister of the word: although I did not know of the existence of *McKerrow's* book, nor of this important decision of this question, until after my opinions had been several years published.

saints," "the edifying of the body of Christ" (verse 12). He who cannot in his ministry "build up the saints," cannot have from God any part of "the work of the ministry," least of all that part to which the preaching of the gospel appertains. But, beyond all controversy, the saints are the best of all judges whether the ministrations on which they wait fructify them or not. Their call and their rejection are therefore alike decisive, so far as the case depends on their testimony. Again, he who cannot, in the work of the ministry, edify the body of Christ, cannot be called of God to that ministry. But, surely, the church must decide for itself whether or not it is edified by the ministrations offered to it. Its decision, therefore, is conclusive, so far as the case depends on its call. It is impossible to escape from this direct testimony of the word of life. It does not follow that every man who could edify the church and build up the saints, is therefore called of God to some public ministry ; for to labor after both these precious objects, is in some form or other the duty of every member of the household of faith. The *positive* testimony of the Christian people is not therefore conclusive, as I have before shown that two previous testimonies are indispensable. But it is otherwise of its *negative* testimony. Many may have neglected through ignorance to seek this trial of their call, who might have obtained its testimony; and it is doubtless this conviction which justifies us in acting as if their call of God could not be questioned. Many may have obtained it after their ordination; a course dangerous and irregular, but not therefore fatal. But he who cannot obtain it, seems to me to be shut out of the ministry by the direct prescriptions of the word of God. Nor am I able to conceive it possible that any character or amount of proof can sufficiently attest the divine call of any human being to be a Christian pastor, if he is unable to obtain this attestation of the Christian people. For how is it possible for us to believe that he has been appointed of God expressly to perform a particular work, for which nothing but divine grace can fit him, of whom it is made certain that God has not given him the grace needful to the accomplishment of the work ?

4. The point which remains to be considered is the relation

which the question of any man's call to the pastoral office bears to those who already hold office, of whatever kind, in the Church of Christ. This is a point so long and so ardently debated in the Christian world, that whoever undertakes to decide upon it rashly must be very presumptuous or very ignorant. Unhappily, there are important differences of opinion in regard to some aspects of it in our own Church, and much excitement and contention have latterly been provoked in its consideration. The principles which I have long adopted and constantly avowed, have not found favor with the party now predominant in the Church; and I have not escaped the common fate of all who ever contended for God's truth against prevailing error and defection. Indeed, I had no right to expect anything else. For men who were almost silent and wholly inactive during the long years that Pelagianism was eating out the vitals of religion in our Church, until others had nearly won the victory; and who stood by in blind or carnal indifference, while Popery was spreading like a flood through the land, until others had roused the public mind to the impending danger, might reasonably be expected to resist the spirit of reform when it touched them with a fury corresponding with their indifference towards errors, which, as they only endangered the Church of God, but did not affect their position, had no terrors for them. This zeal for what is wrong has no more deceived me than their former indifference to what is right; nor does it any more affect my conduct. I confess, with sorrow, that many good men who had a right to speak with plainness and authority, have felt it to be their duty to act towards me and towards this controversy in a manner which has given me great pain. Of these, I will say with David, that their smiting and their reproof "shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head;" and while my reverence for their persons will not allow me to resent their harshness, my allegiance to our common Master forbids me to turn back from the work he has set before me; since even the burden of their reproaches is as nothing compared with his frown. They are right when they say that I have no title to lead in this or any other matter, that I have no peculiar claims either on the indulgence or affection of the Presbyterian Church, and that she has

more than rewarded me for all I ever did or could do for her. But I think they are wrong—and that the time will come when they will own it—in calling in question my fidelity to that Church, my soundness in her faith, my sincere desire for her purity and success; and especially wrong in traducing me, as if I was not honest in my convictions, and fair and open in all my modes of promoting what I judge to be right. For anything more, it is my part to state the grounds of my opinions, and leave it for the people of God to decide concerning them. Touching this present point, I will proceed to do it, simply and briefly.

As it regards all church power, it cannot be too often repeated that there is none lodged in any human hands otherwise than simply as a trust committed to them by the Lord Jesus. The whole extent of this trust is, that they declare, obey, administer, and enforce in his visible Church, morally and spiritually, the revelation which he has made in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and the grand rule of all possible official acts is the edification of the body of Christ, the perfecting of his saints. This power is subject to a threefold division, namely, of doctrine, of discipline, of distribution, the administration of the sacraments being in one respect a symbolical teaching, and of course annexed to doctrine;¹ and its exercise is committed to a threefold ministry

¹ “Unto the *pastors only* appertains the administration of the sacraments, in like manner as the administration of the word ; for both are appointed by God a means to teach us, the one by the ear and the other by the eyes and other senses, that by both knowledge may be transmitted to the mind” (*Second Book of Discipline*, Ch. IV.). I cite this to show two facts: (1) The *ground* upon which the administration of the sacraments belongs to doctrine and not to government; and (2) To show that *pastors only* amongst ordinary officers have this right strictly speaking; and this is still more distinctly asserted in the same venerable formulary (Ch.V.), in which *doctors or teachers*, as such, are declared to be incapable either of stately preaching the word or administering the sacraments, or celebrating marriage, even though they are confessed to be ordinary, perpetual, and teaching officers on the one hand, and by order, elders on the other. But they are not *pastors* ; therefore the Scottish Church excludes them from everything into which our ministers *sine titulo* (which is our nearest approach to that class of officers) not only intrude, but are scandalised at the idea of any one questioning the propriety of their doing so.

of preachers, governors, and distributors, commonly called ministers, elders, and deacons. The whole power ecclesiastical granted by God the Father through the Mediator, Jesus Christ, is granted unto his gathered Church, not to be exercised by it directly, which is neither scriptural nor possible, but by such as have lawfully committed to them the spiritual government of the Church. The order of the Church, that is, its actual government, both in its model and in its action, flows from this power; and the power itself is subject to a twofold use or exercise, or if the expression is preferred, there are two kinds of power which have one and the same authority, ground, and final cause. These two kinds of power are, 1st. That which must be exercised personally and individually by one single officer; and 2dly. That which must be exercised jointly by several officers, constituted into a court of the Church. These two powers are called in ecclesiastical writers and standards the power of *order* and the power of *jurisdiction*. These distinctions and definitions are so simple that it seems impossible to err concerning the matter that may be actually in dispute, how much soever men may differ as to where the truth lies. I assert that the Church has no power except as a trust. If any man disputes this, or the consequences that flow from it, that is well; but let him either admit or deny the fundamental proposition. I assert again that every power of *jurisdiction* is a *joint power*, and that not one of them is capable of exercise by any single person; nor by all persons unitedly, except they are gathered into a court of Christ. Whosoever will, let him dispute this great truth and all its consequences; but let him deal honestly with God and man, and either admit or deny the proposition itself.

Now, since it has pleased God to commit to the deacons no functions but such as may be performed severally by each one of them, he has not constituted any court of his Church out of them; or, in other words, as they have no authority to perform any act

So far was the Scottish Church of old from tolerating anything of this sort, that *Baillie* tells us (Vol. I., page 169, *Letters*), in a detailed account of the famous Scottish Assembly of 1638, that "a man who found not a present place, behoved to be deposed, for we would hear of no minister without a place."

of power whose exercise is necessarily joint, they cannot constitute a court in the scriptural sense of one, nor properly sit as members of any court constituted by other office bearers. There is no other reason beside this adequate to explain why deacons may not constitute a court; and when the light of this peculiar feature of the order of God's house, as illustrated in their case, is thrown upon the powers and duties of other office bearers, it reveals with singular clearness the nature and extent of their powers, and the character of the distinction to which they are subject as joint and several powers, or powers of order and powers of rule.

Every minister of the word has the power to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments by himself, and as a power of order, which cannot, indeed, in its nature and by its terms be exercised jointly, that is, by a court. It is true the extraordinary conduct of many preachers, in dividing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as it were, into three or four separate parts—one person distributing the bread, another the cup, and another perhaps making the prayer, all at the same table—might lead to the belief that this sacrament could be jointly administered, and, therefore, that it did not belong to the power of order, and therefore my distinction and definition are false. The only answer I have to make is, that the practice, however venerable and respectable it may be, can no more be defended than a similar practice could be if applied to the sacrament of baptism, and three or four men were to administer the same baptism. And if it were possible to prove the contrary, the only effect of the proof would be that the sacrament of the Supper could never be administered except by a church court, since every joint power is a power of jurisdiction; whereas it is perfectly clear from God's word that all the courts of the Church put together have no power to perform this particular function, or any other one appertaining to the ministers of the word distributively in their separate right. If it were true, therefore, as appears to be the doctrine of the Seminary at Princeton, that "Presbyterial ordination is ordination by a presbyter or presbyters," it would not only follow, as they immediately assert, that it is not "by a Presbytery in our technical sense of the term;" and also, as they say in the same passage, that any one minister

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has a full right to ordain; but it would also follow that no church court, nor any other authority except an individual presbyter, would have any more right to ordain than to preach the gospel or to administer a sacrament, and thus prelatical ordination would be proved by our own teachers of theology to be the only scriptural, valid, or even possible ordination. To adduce as a conclusive reason in support of the exposition which arrives at such a result as this—the argument that as ministers of the word only have authority to preach the gospel, they only can confer that authority—is a very singular instance of mysticism. For, in the first place, such an argument could prove nothing as to the point now in my mind, to wit, the question between ordination by a single person and by a church court; and at the most could only prove that the court must be composed entirely of preachers, and not at all that each of them could separately ordain; which is a doctrine perfectly novel in our Church, denied in our standards, and precisely the opposite of that stated in the Scriptures (1 Tim. iv. 17). And, in the second place, the argument, according to the common testimony of the human race, in all the affairs of life, is, as a general proposition, wholly unfounded; and in spiritual matters it has just the same sense to say a man can ordain another because he is ordained himself, as to say a man can baptize another because he is baptized himself; or to say the formal reason why a man may dispense the Lord's Supper is that it was dispensed to him; as to say the formal reason why he can ordain a minister is that a minister ordained him. And as the question relates to the evidence which is to be furnished, or the authority which is to be conferred upon one seeking to arrive at the conclusion of the matter in regard to his own call to the ministry, it would be altogether preposterous to say that the crowning evidence of a call from God, as contemplated by the Scriptures, though now somewhat varied by prudential human arrangements, is the judgment and the act of any one of the tens of thousands of ordained ministers that the candidate for ordination could get to set him apart to his work. Such doctrines are not in the Bible, nor, God be thanked, *as yet* in our standards.

The final testimony, therefore, which we want, to the fact that

we have been divinely called to preach the everlasting gospel, is that of a divinely constituted spiritual court, met in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and acting by his authority. That such courts are established by God in his word (1 Tim. iv. 14; Acts xv. 2, 4, 6), that ordination, or the solemn setting apart of men to public church offices is a permanent institution (Acts vi. 3, 5, 6; Tit. i. 5 ; 2 Tim. v. 21, 22), that presbyters are the persons who must compose the courts which ordain (1 Tim. iii. 22; Acts iv. 23, and xiii. 3), that such as are to be ordained must be lawfully called (Rom. xii. 14, 15; Heb. v. 4; John iii. 27), that they must be duly qualified, both as to life and abilities (2 Tim. iii. 2-6 ; Tit. i, 5-9), that they must be tried and approved by those who ordain them (1 Tim. iii. 7—10 ; 2 Tim. v. 22), that the ordination is by fasting and prayer with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery (Acts xiii. 2, 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14), these are all matters which are either expressly commanded by God, or are drawn by plain and necessary consequence from what is revealed by him for our guidance in relation to the solemn subject before us. It is thus that the pastors of God's people are to be set apart to his service, and consecrated to him by a high and irrevocable act of official authority, ascertaining and sealing the fact of their divine vocation. I do not presume to say that if this act be unauthorised, that is, if God never called the man whom the court ordains, it has any validity at all in his holy eyes ; but outwardly and formally the act, when lawfully performed, is, as it regards all outward relations of the subject, final and conclusive; so much so that the Church may not question the lawful acts of him who is ordained, nor the court repudiate him except by a formal deposition from his office, nor he desert his vocation except under the pressure of irresistible necessity. He is given away to God, to be used in the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ; and this is his grand, perpetual business upon the earth. He is an ambassador for God, called by him, and commissioned in his adorable name. These are awful things. Let no man venture lightly on them. Let no man withdraw himself lightly from them.

Many who have found it easier and more suitable to them to

create prejudices against me than to answer my arguments or to allow me to answer theirs, have taken a good deal of trouble to spread the idea that my principles on the subject of ruling elders tended to subvert entirely the office of minister of the word; that indeed the ordination I contended for was, at last, a lay ordination, and that my whole scheme of church order was a kind of Brownism run mad ; while at the same time, and indeed from the same quarters, and in the same publications, opposite prejudices have been appealed to, and my principles denounced as the most stringent form of the highest *jure divino* Presbyterianism. I regret to observe in various publications on the dominant side of this whole controversy, a line of argument which I am not able to reconcile with the belief, in an enlightened mind, of the divine institution of a permanent ministry of any kind. While I utterly reject all such loose and unscriptural opinions, my judgment is that the charge of favoring a lay ordination lies most heavily and justly upon those who, while they persist in calling ruling elders *lay-men*, and in arguing as if they were lay-men, yet concede to them the right to unite in ordering the whole work of ordination, of partaking in every substantial part of that work along with ministers of the gospel, and in short of doing everything except merely imposing hands. Indeed, I do not see how, except upon the principles I have stated, presbyterial ordination, which is, as I believe, past controversy, the ordination of the Scriptures, can be clothed either with a divine, or even with an ecclesiastical authority. If the power exercised in conferring it be held in trust from and for the Lord Jesus, then it is obvious enough that the man is ordained by and upon the authority of Christ; but if it is held or exercised in any other way, then, whatever else is done, it is manifest that the man is not ordained by or upon the authority of Christ; and as Christ's is the only authority which can reach the conscience or the soul, it is further manifest that whatever else the man may get by such an ordination, he cannot get any power to bind any man's conscience or to perform with authority any spiritual act. But if this power be thus held in trust, then all the fine theories about like begetting like, and those only being able to confer rights, who may

exercise the same, and ministers only being able to make ministers, fall into one common mass of learned trash, one vast *caput mortuum* of theological trifling ; for, potentially, it is Christ himself who, by the intervention of the stewards of his mysteries, ordains all the office bearers of his Church. And again, if those who exercise in Christ's name this power of ordination, do it as the governing authority in the Church, and because they are invested with the power of rule therein; then it is quite clear that by ordination they may confer rights and powers ecclesiastical, and may bestow upon him who is ordained whatever station or authority is lawful in the Church; but if they ordain as individual persons, or as teachers, merely, or in any way except as a church court composed of church rulers, then it is equally clear that, whatever else they may do, they cannot by ordination confer on any one either a *status* in the Church or any right or power ecclesiastical, any more than they could confer them by publicly reading the Scriptures to the man, by preaching to him, or by administering the sacrament of the supper to him. But if this be so, then it is unquestionable that ordination is an official act of high ecclesiastical power, appertaining exclusively to the rulers of the Church, belonging to them as rulers, and therefore to every ruler, and therefore to ruling elders; but capable of being exercised only when and as they are convened in the name and by the authority of Christ as a church court, and when thus performed carrying with it all the ecclesiastical consequences contemplated in the act itself, and furnishing in addition a presumption of the divine vocation of him who is ordained, which must be always great, and which would amount as nearly to conclusive proof as any presumption can, if the commands of Christ were strictly obeyed in the composition and proceedings of these church courts, and if the persons who constitute them were truly what they profess to be.

It is almost superfluous to say that no power or value is attached to the forms or ceremonies of the ordination, except so far as they conduce to decency and order, being thereto appointed of God. The distinction is so obvious between divine and ecclesiastical effects which may or may not concur, that, to Presbyterians,

nothing more is necessary than the simple observation that, although ecclesiastical acts have, when they are lawfully performed, complete ecclesiastical consequences, yet nothing less than the divine power can give to them any spiritual efficiency. Baptism with water unites us to the visible Church; but without the cleansing work of God's Spirit besides, we may be as far as ever from the invisible and spiritual Church. So ecclesiastical ordination makes us pastors of the visible Church, but unless God has called us and sent us, we are but intruders after all.

Nor is it necessary to do more than remark, that the whole of the present chain of reasoning has reference to the ordinary and permanent state of the Church, and to its ordinary and perpetual officers; for extraordinary officers are always raised up in an extraordinary manner, and extraordinary conditions of the Church allow of many things to be done in an extraordinary way, as the Westminster Assembly has defined and proved out of the Scriptures. The blessed Reformation of the sixteenth century may be taken as a very signal example to illustrate that aspect of the subject; and it is well known that the whole body of the Reformers justified all their proceedings in setting up new ecclesiastical organisations upon the ground of their own extraordinary vocation of God to do that very thing. For the form of the argument as between them and Rome constancy was this: "You are not true office bearers, and therefore cannot have a true Church." "We are a true Church, and therefore have true office bearers." And the whole controversy was essentially in the two statements. It is from the Reformed Churches of that glorious era, and from the extraordinary vocation of the men then raised up by God, that we derive outwardly and ecclesiastically our present organisation; and to attempt to trace it back from them through Rome is to deny their fundamental principles, and to build on facts that are palpably false and doctrines that are utterly unscriptural. And it may not be amiss to add that the divine institution of the office of evangelist, as one extraordinary and special, puts it constantly in the power of the Church to spread itself into every part of the earth and into every condition of society where the gospel is not known; as it is the very essence of

that office to be clothed with powers to gather, to erect, and to organise churches, by virtue of an express and extraordinary investiture from the Church itself. This shows very plainly how absurd it is to suppose that men are commonly at liberty to make, or even imagine, extraordinary contingencies, and then assume extraordinary powers; and it also proves the fallacy of the common argument against allowing ruling elders to unite in the ordination of pastors, because, as they say, the less cannot confer power on the greater. And yet pastors, who are but ordinary officers, never imagine that this sophism has allusion to them when they are engaged in ordaining evangelists and clothing them with the whole powers of the Presbytery itself. It is not possible to deny, however, that in many respects the permanent and settled order of the Church is treated as if it were only provisional or accidental; and in none more than in the calling, the settlement, and the translation of pastors. Nothing is more obviously proper, and nothing is more plainly settled in our ecclesiastical standards, than that the calling, settlement, and translation of pastors shall be as really under the care and supervision of the church courts as their ordination; and the clearest provisions for all these are made in detail, so as to prevent any single important step from being taken, except with the knowledge and the consent of Presbytery. But according to the ordinary *practice*—that sacred and venerable substitute for thought, for reason, and for knowledge—the chief action of the Presbytery ordinarily is to register the facts and ordain or *instal* the preacher; and often the first knowledge it possesses is, that the whole matter has been arranged between one of its congregations and a minister of some other Presbytery, without the consent of either court. One cause of this habitual disregard of the power and authority of the courts is to be found in the very common and dangerous substitution of the relation of *stated supply* for that of pastor; which is itself a result of ordinations *sine titulo*, and of the too common substitution of the office of evangelist for that of minister of the word. But whatever may be the cause of the evil, or whatever its extent, all such irregularities are not only in themselves extremely improper, and in their tendencies fruitful of

mischief, but they admit of no defence, except one which impeaches the binding obligation of the settled order of the Church, or one which justifies a departure from that order, on the plea that the Church is not in fact in a settled state. There are few, probably, who would openly assume either of these grounds; and the great prevalence of conduct which implies one or other of them is perhaps only another proof of lamentable indifference and inattention to the whole subject.

Much might be said, if it were strictly in place here, upon the great duty incumbent on the church courts to provide in the best manner possible for the training of those who appear to be called to bear office in the Church, and especially those who expect to preach the word, which is the most important duty of all; for in this manner, and by means of the repeated examinations upon which the Presbyteries ought to insist, they can arrive at the most satisfactory conclusion upon the great point they are examining, namely, the reality of a divine call, at the same time that they are training their candidates for the highest degree of usefulness of which they are capable. Neither do I judge it to be proper, in this connexion, to discuss that momentous question—which perhaps it is already too late to debate—the best method of training young men for the gospel ministry. I confess, if it was an original question, I would hesitate about the wisdom of putting theological education on the model it has assumed amongst us; and I am so far from believing that model to be perfect that my firm conviction is the whole business of Theological Seminaries like ours is yet but an experiment, one of the most dangerous and immense experiments ever ventured on by any Church. Thus far, at least, it might be possible still to control the subject, that men trained to the pastoral work, and imbued with the true spirit of that work, should be constantly appointed teachers in these schools; the pastors for the Church being trained by such pastors as the Church had already tried, and was satisfied to have all like them; and so the inherent dangers of the system might be averted, if possible, by the peculiar endowments of those who conduct it. I say this might be possible; but I fear it is so no longer. For the local influence of the Seminaries is already

often superior to that of the church courts; and the Seminary at Princeton gives name to the party which at the present moment supposes itself to be predominant in our Church, while the *Review* edited there is the great light of that party in all its ramifications. In the temples of some of the ancient deities there were oracles to which the worshippers without listened as to the voice of God himself; but those who obtained access to the secret places of the degrading worship perceived that they had adored only a delirious pythoness. Surely the analogy is not altogether fanciful to those amongst us who suppose the opinions which are manufactured for them always proceed from persons of learning, excellence, and experience amongst them, who, through long and arduous labors in the cause of the blessed Saviour, have acquired at once the evidence of his favor and a title to the affection of his people; when in reality their party oracles are not unfrequently uttered by those whose title and qualification, such as they may be, for guiding the flock of Christ have been acquired amidst deliberate and long-continued alienation from the work to which they had bound their souls and devoted their lives by solemn vows to God and irrevocable covenants with his Church.

III. The particular object of this discourse being to vindicate the divine vocation of the pastors of the Christian Church, and to illustrate the nature of the evidence which has been divinely appointed to establish that vocation, it is not necessary to prolong it by a discussion of the work, the duties, and the qualifications of these pastors; each of which general divisions would require as much to be said to explain and enforce it with any tolerable fidelity as the whole of what has yet been advanced. In every rational contemplation of the question of a divine call—as for the substance of it—the whole pastoral work to which the individual may be looking must be in some good degree properly conceived of both by himself and all others whose decision is to influence his conduct, before either his judgment or theirs can be of any value. I have therefore, in the beginning, set down in a summary way the general compass and nature of this work, under the great functions of the pastoral office. The fixed purpose to discharge with fidelity, with singleness of mind, and as the great

business of life, the solemn, nay awful, duties of the pastor's office, and that as one who is to give an account of souls at the bar of Christ in the great day, is implied in every honest, much less every pious and earnest, endeavor to enter upon this vocation as under the divine requirement; and its existence is assumed as real in every favorable decision rendered by the Christian people and the church courts. The qualifications for the office are clearly laid down in the Sacred Scriptures, not only point by point in many detached passages, but also in compact and lucid treatises written by perhaps the greatest of the apostles to his own sons in the ministry, teaching them how and what they ought to preach, and what description of persons, with what kind of endowments, the pastors of the Church ought to be (1 Tim. iii., Tit. i.), and in every examination of the proof whether or not a man be called of God—whether that examination be made by himself, by a congregation, or by a Presbytery—these scriptural qualifications constitute the divine standard of judgment. The fact and the proof of a call of God can therefore never be contemplated apart from the nature of the work to be performed, the duties which its performance will enjoin, and the qualifications declared to be indispensable for their faithful and edifying discharge; however we may, as I have herein attempted, independently of any enlarged or express treatment of them, discuss the reality of such a call, and its nature and indispensable necessity, together with the character and amount of proof required to establish its existence in any particular case, and the persons and tribunals who are to render binding decisions upon that evidence, and give to it, by election and ordination, official sanctions and seals.

But there are some general considerations growing out of the subject as it has been presented which are of very great importance, and may be briefly stated. The first is the necessity of arousing the attention of God's people more generally and more earnestly to the fact that the order of his house is not a question left to us, but is one distinctly settled by himself. The Lord Jesus Christ is King in Zion; the whole model and working of his kingdom are matters of revelation; the complete execution of the mission of his Church is absolutely impossible, until she

puts away all carnal devices and puts on the whole armor of light; and we have no more warrant from God to make a church government for him and in his name than to make any other part of his religion. It is idle to talk about church government being *jure divino* in its great principles and not in its details; or as they say, in the *abstract* and not in the *concrete*. The truth is, it is both; for not only are the great principles laid down for us, but the officers and the courts are named; the nature and duties of the one, the qualifications, vocation, and powers of the other are set forth; the relations of all the parts to each other and to the whole are precisely set forth. A government in general, the kind of government in particular, the officers and courts in special, their duties and powers in detail—this is what God has set before us, by revelation, for the Christian Church. And while there is no part of his revealed will concerning which his professed people have been in general and in all ages more foolishly and sinfully heedless, and none by neglecting which and walking in the light of their own eyes, they have more uniformly or more sorely come to trouble, there was never perhaps a period when it was more important to their interest and more clearly incumbent upon them, as faithful to the kingly rights and office of the Lord Jesus, than it is at the present moment, that they should come back to the simplicity and power of the heavenly institutions which they have defiled by their additions and defaced by their mutilations, and build once more, purely and precisely after the model sent down from God. The institutions of man have lost their power; it is time to try again those of our covenanted Saviour. The human mind is tossed to and fro between the extremes of fanatical licentiousness and Popish despotism; it is time for the banner of the free and glorious commonwealth of Israel to be boldly advanced to the forefront of the battle. The barriers of the nations are broken down, the dust of centuries thickens over the shrines of all false gods, the ruins of falling temples and idols send forth the sound of their destruction from the utmost depths and the farthest verge of the kingdom of Satan upon earth. Let us rise up and put on our strength, and in the name of the King eternal possess this vast heritage. Who

knoweth whether we are come into the kingdom for such a time as this; or whether, if we altogether hold our peace at this time, though God bring enlargement and deliverance from another place, we and the Church of our fathers may not be destroyed? (Esther iv. 14.)

This still more forcibly presents the extreme importance of those reforms which immediately relate to our own interior condition. What can such ministers do for us as have mistaken their calling? What good is to be expected of such as have falsely intruded into a work for which they have no heart? What can the best of our ministers do without a charge? What can our hundreds of vacant congregations do without pastors? The first office in the Church of God for dignity, importance, and usefulness, is the pastor's office. If matters go ill with us here, the action of every part of the system is impeded. There is a great class of our ministers—perhaps the most meritorious class of all—who are struggling with poverty and toiling amid a thousand cares and discouragements in pursuits they would willingly avoid, and all that they may by these means be still enabled to preach Christ. These noble and beloved men need and deserve more of their flocks; and the Church at large ought to look more diligently after the comfortable maintenance of the great body of its pastors, equalising better the general support, and discountenancing sternly the metropolitan excess and luxury which are beginning to show themselves in divers places. Unsettled ministers ought to be urged more and more to take pastoral charges, and vacant congregations to settle pastors. Ministers who are immersed in pursuits inconsistent with their vows ought to be subjected to discipline, and be compelled to do the proper work of their calling; or if they will not, let them be deposed. There is doubtless a large class of employment eminently suitable to such ministers as are disabled in the service of the Church, or by advancing years or by bodily infirmities; and these they can gracefully and most usefully adorn, but it is an injury to this most deserving class, as well as a reproach to the name of a Christian minister, for men in the vigor of life, in the perfection of their powers, and without any previous service to the Church, to be

crowding into situations which withdraw them from their proper work, which they cannot fill with a good conscience, and which in a sort belong to others as at once an honorable refuge and a useful charge. And perhaps above all other practical reforms we need the most one in regard to the improvident ordination of ministers of the gospel; a reform which shall put an absolute end to all ordinations *sine titulo*, which shall limit the ordination of evangelists strictly and truly to persons who will be evangelists, which shall constantly demand sufficient evidence of a man's call and fitness before the irrevocable step of his ordination is taken. It is impossible to deny that we have erred, as a Church, grievously, on all these points. The controversy which ended in the schism of 1838 was one of the fruits of those errors; and unless something effectual can be done to arrest their continued operation, it is as obvious to me now that the Church must relapse into some condition analogous to that from which it was so lately extricated, or submit to another convulsion, as it was in 1831 that its total corruption or speedy reform had become inevitable. It is this deep conviction which has filled me with that anxious solicitude to see the office of ruling elder, as one of the grand safeguards of the Church, restored to its scriptural position, and induced me to take the course in regard to that controversy which has subjected me to a system of attack altogether as ferocious as that I had to encounter during the Semi-Pelagian controversy, and what is not to be forgotten, in part from the very same quarters. My trust, my principles, my aims, and to some extent my opponents, are the same now as ten years ago. I certainly do not mean to assert that the Church is exposed to a danger so great or so immediate as she was in 1831; nor that her present condition is analogous to what her condition was at that period. I thank God that neither of these things is true. But unless I greatly deceive myself, the whole state of opinion upon the subject of church order has sensibly receded from the truth since 1838; and the decisions of the Assemblies of 1843 and 1844, coupled with prevailing practices touching the ordination and employment of ministers of the word, afford ample ground for serious inquietude to all who believe in the divine authority of Pres-

byterian church order. For I believe it will be impossible for the most diligent student of antiquity to produce any thing in the early Church half so broad as a foundation for the first beginnings of Prelacy to be erected upon, as the decisions of those two Assemblies furnish. And I mourn to add that the reasonings and conclusions in the former of those Assemblies have not been more decidedly condemned by the stricter sort of Presbyterians than they have been applauded by the highest Puseyite Prelatists. I have not the smallest idea of imputing wrong intentions to any church court, nor of pursuing any irregular or even divisive measures in attempting to correct decisions which I consider extremely dangerous, or to redress measures which I have felt to be both unprecedented and oppressive. Nevertheless I shall not fail, if the Lord will give me grace, of an earnest endeavor in the present as in the former controversy to acquit myself to my friends as a faithful ally, to my opponents as an honest man, to the Church as a diligent office bearer, and to my Master as a servant who values nothing in comparison with his approval.

One of the most impressive considerations suggested by this solemn topic, is the extreme importance to the people of God that they should have pastors after his own heart. The distinct reservation to himself of the vocation and mission of pastors proves to us the importance he attaches to them, the tender care he exercises over his flock, and the utter impossibility of any means or preparation that is less than divine accomplishing the end intended in their institution. When we consider, moreover, the copiousness, the variety, and the conclusiveness of the proof which he has required his people to demand, in order that they may be satisfied that he has indeed raised up their pastors, it is manifest that the subject must be environed with difficulties of a peculiar kind, and that exact obedience to God's positive institutions is the only security we can have, that we are not deceived ourselves, and that we are not helping to delude others. There are few denunciations in the sacred oracles more emphatic or more reiterated than those against false teachers; and even the apostolic office was not free from the intrusion of those who being tried by the flock of Christ were found liars (Rev. ii. 2). No reproach to

religion is so grievous as unworthy ministers; the poison which is most fatal to the Church is that which is distilled in the vessels of the sanctuary; a bad life is the very worst heresy to which a religious teacher can give currency; and unconverted pastors are the sorest curse which can fall upon the flock of Christ. And these are the very things we are justified in expecting, when we lightly esteem the agency of God in this great work and presumptuously set aside the means he has provided against their occurrence. On the other hand, in the very distinctness of his divine appointments, we perceive how surely it is his purpose to keep covenant with those who will keep covenant with him. His arm is not shortened, his ear is not heavy, nor is it in him that it is possible for us to be straitened. The ascension gifts of him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, are not exhausted; and he who spared not his only begotten Son has nothing beside too costly to bestow. And of all outward gifts there is not one more precious and indispensable than pastors sent of God; since, as they cannot preach except they be sent, so neither can we hear except they preach, nor believe unless we hear, nor call on him in whom we believe not, nor be saved except we call on the name of the Lord (Rom. x. 13, 14). Oh, then, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (Isa. lii. 7.) And he will reign in the heavens which have received him until the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began (Acts iii. 21); and then will the Lord himself descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (1 Thess. iv. 16); and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. xiii. 43), and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. xii. 3). Oh, what a work is it to win souls for Christ! What a blessedness to stand with them close by the glorious high throne of the exalted Redeemer in the great day! What a reward to dwell with them,

in his presence, in his fruition to all eternity ! Oh, that God would shed forth upon us abundantly the spirit of this work ! Then indeed would the set time to favor Zion have come, and the glory of the Lord be risen upon her ! (Ps. cii. 13-22; Isa. lx. 1-5.)

ARTICLE VII.

THE EVANGELIST IN FOREIGN FIELDS.¹

The Committee appointed to prepare an answer to the overture touching the powers of the evangelist in foreign fields sent down by the Assembly of 1883, would present the following recommendation to the Presbytery of Lexington, based upon the following grounds:

The overture (see Minutes of Assembly, p. 60) is that—

Chapter IV., Section II., Paragraph 6, Book of Church Order, be so altered as that after the word "ordain," it shall read : "to all the offices required to make them complete ; and also with a view to the extension of the Church, he has power in foreign fields to ordain other evangelists."

The Committee recommend that this overture be answered in the affirmative, with a restriction imposed by the addition of some expression limiting the power of the evangelist in the home field to the organisation of churches and the ordination and instalment of ruling elders and deacons, and recognising the just relation of the joint power of the Church to the work in the evangelistic field, both foreign and domestic.

The first principle which bears upon the subject is the well recognised principle of the parity of the ministry. The term "office" is frequently applied to designate both the evangelist and the pastor. Such an application is, however, loose and inaccurate: the office of both is nothing more nor less than the one equal office of the Christian ministry. In strict accuracy of speech, the term

¹ This Report is published in accordance with the request of the Presbytery of Lexington.

