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THE PULPIT

AND INTELLIGENCER OF THE

ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN

CHURCH.

CONSISTING OF

SERMONS BY THE MINISTERS

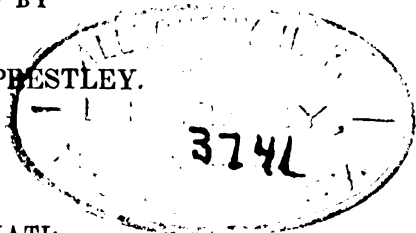
OF THE FIVE SYNODS.

AND

DENOMINATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

EDITED BY

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SERMON IX.

THE GOSPEL MINISTER.*

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“And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in great trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”—1. Cor. ii, 1-5.

“As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man,” is an inspired saying, which was evidently designed to teach that in nature there is a certain general resemblance in the features and expressions of the countenance, and in the emotions and workings of the heart, which everywhere evinces the common origin of man, their real relationship, and the perfect propriety there is in applying under similar circumstances, the same principles of government and conduct to their consciences and their lives. In grace to the exercises of the spiritual life in Abraham, Isaac, David, Paul, and the whole body of saints in every age, are so divinely similar in their nature, their tendencies, and their actual fruits, that beyond a doubt one spirit operates, one hope is indulged, and one joy is felt in them all from first to last, as the one great family of the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. So too is the ministry of the everlasting Gospel, whether we contemplate a Noah preaching righteousness to a world of ungodly before the flood,—or Elijah crying aloud against the idolatries and abominations of his day,—or a

*A sermon preached before the Associate Reformed Synod of New York, in Hebron. N. Y., June 13th, 1846.

Jeremiah weeping over the sins and coming woes of his people,—or a Haggai stirring up his captive countrymen to do mightily for the Lord of Hosts,—or a John the Baptist preaching repentance in the wilderness of Judea,—or a Paul declaring everywhere as he had opportunity, the unsearchable riches of Christ,—or a Luther opening up floods of living light upon a world that for ages had sat in darkness and in the region and shadow of death—or a Livingston, Bruce and Welsh preaching and praying for souls, as those who must give account,—or a Whitefield and Edwards, and a multitude of faithful men, down to our own day, finding out and proclaiming, as with trumpet tongues, the whole counsel of God in the glorious Gospel of his grace,—all, all seem commissioned by the same voice, encouraged by the same word, animated by the same hope, nerved by the same Spirit, and aspiring to the same blessed and momentous end, viz., the bringing of God's salvation to their own souls and the souls of their perishing fellow men everywhere and for ever and ever, to the praise of the riches of that grace, by which they all alike ever felt impelled to cry out, "We are what we are."

Opening up, then, the holy Scriptures, with this similarity, or perhaps identity of the servants of God in the leading exercises of their minds, and conduct of their lives before us, it is proposed to direct attention in this discourse to the *matter*, the *manner*, and the *great end* of the ministry of the apostle Paul, as the model of a Christian minister.

Corinth, to whose converted inhabitants this epistle was addressed, was one of the most refined and influential, though corrupt and licentious cities in the world. It first received the Gospel at the hands of the apostle, about eighteen years after the ascension of our Lord, and thence forward, during the space of eighteen months, that devoted man preached its glad tidings there, and with such fidelity, and such tokens of the Divine blessing upon his labors, that a large and flourishing Church was established, and multitudes were hopefully brought from every age, sex and condition in life, to the experience of saving grace. At the end of that time, however, the apostle, in his eagerness to make known the riches of grace more widely abroad, was compelled to seek other regions

as he was moved of the Holy Ghost. But on leaving Corinth a melancholy change gradually crept over the affections and energies of the brethren; divisions sprung up, lukewarmness was indulged, scandalous practices were winked at, the name of Christ was exposed to reproach, and at length the apostle himself was traduced and impeached by false teachers, who had surreptitiously obtained a footing in his place. On hearing all this, and touched to the quick at the thought of injury to the cause he loved, and to souls he had begotten again in Christ Jesus, he immediately wrote this epistle from the city of Ephesus, commending the Corinthian saints for their early faith and zeal,—reproving them for their evil deeds—magnifying the grace and truth of the Lord Jesus,—and then, in one of his noblest and most powerful strains, he vindicates the authority and asserts the purity, the excellence, the end and the glory of the ministry, which he had received of the Lord Jesus, saying, in mingled simplicity and rebuke, as he calls up remembrance of the past, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom declaring you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

I. What then was the great *subject matter* of the apostle’s ministry? “Jesus Christ and him crucified,” says the text. And this we may believe, not in mere general and unfelt descriptions of our blessed Lord—not in cold dissertations upon the excellence of his character—the patience of his sufferings—the benevolence of his nature, and the goodness of his life. Nor was it in fine spun speculations upon the beauties of virtue and the nobleness of devotion to God, as seen in his entire life and death as a martyr to a good cause. No, my brethren, no. Glorifying in the cross of Christ as the only power that, reaching down from heaven to earth, could ever break the chains that bind immortal beings to pollution and to everlasting woe, he dared not tamper with the truth of

God, and thereby place in jeopardy the souls of men. But rather hiding himself behind that cross, he labored to make known the grace and glory of him that suffered there for the redemption of the ruined and the lost, and he did it by exhibiting everywhere the fall, the depravity, and the lost state of man—the utter hopelessness of justification by the deeds of the law, and the absolute impossibility of escape from the wrath that is to come, by any might or merit of created arm; and then rising in the tenderness of his nature as a man, and the grandeur and glory of his office as an ambassador for Christ—he proclaimed the free grace of a sovereign God, the strong work of a redeeming Savior, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit; crying out, in view of the incarnation, obedience, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and ever gracious offices of Christ on the sinner's behalf, "CHRIST, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;"—CHRIST, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,"—CHRIST, the "only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,"—CHRIST, in the heart, the hope of glory, and in the Gospel, the light and life of the world—aye, CHRIST, the all in all, for redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

So, brethren, so the apostle preached, continually holding up in word and in doctrine the cross of Christ as the remedy for sin,—the death of Christ as the atonement for sin, and the resurrection of Christ as the witness—the proclamation from the eternal throne of an end of sin; and that then, and thenceforth until the earth's remotest bounds were reached—and the world's last hour had come, salvation might be infallibly had to the very uttermost by all that will come unto God by Christ.

And such should be the preaching of every minister of the everlasting Gospel still. I know, indeed, some men are prone to dwell upon general topics, in which there is little of the diseases and woes of the soul, and less of the grace and all-sufficiency of Christ. And dreadful and ruinous as is the fact, yet fact it is, that natural, and lukewarm, and worldly minded men love to have it so. The less there is of the

thunders of Sinai—the less of the plagues of their own hearts the less of alarm in their sinful and ruined state,—and the more of what is curious, or exciting, or wonderful, though there be not one word of Christ, or one morsel of food for a dying spirit, the better the sermons and the more able and popular the preacher. But, my brethren, I know also that the very name of a Christian minister is *preacher*, because he is bound to preach the Gospel to every creature. The very business of a minister is to proclaim, everywhere as he has opportunity, that men are dead in trespasses and in sins—that the wages of sin is death,—that the wrath of God abideth already on every one that believeth not—and that the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin. The very design of a minister is to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And now, by all that is authoritative in a divine command or significant in a divine design—aye, by all that is saving in grace and damning in sin, the ministers of the living God are bound to set forth Jesus Christ as, in the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth. And for this purpose they are bound to baptize every sermon in his name—perfume every service with his merits—bathe every means of grace in his spirit—build every work on him from its foundation to its topmost stone—aye, know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Nor has this cause ever failed of success. Look at facts. When in the early days of the Christian dispensation, the vast body of the Jews were madly bent upon their infatuation and their sins, what broke the spell of delusion, and in one day brought three thousand souls into the Church, of such as should be saved? What but the announcement of the single Gospel fact, that “God has made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,”—that, “with his right hand he hath exalteth him to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel and the remission of sins,” and that now he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” When, too, the darkness of ages had well-nigh blotted out the last traces of Gospel truth from the sight of the world,

and left blinded millions to grope their way amid pretended absolutions and purchased pardons, down to perdition and to woe, what then broke the midnight gloom and brought saving light back to the world again, but a Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and their holy associates and successors, crying for translated Scriptures and a preached Gospel everywhere, "none but Christ, none but Christ?" When, too, Popery or Prelacy, and Moderatism, had hung for centuries like dead weights in Scotland, cankering and corrupting the very life of God in the souls of men, and in the bosom of Zion, what then opened up the windows of heaven, and caused blessings to descend until there was not room enough to receive them? What but the holy bearings of the Livingstons, and Burns, and M'Cheynes, that determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified? In our own country, too, what means it that wherever Unitarianism, and worldly wisdom, led on by the arch enemy of God and men, have labored to undeify the Son of God, and make our dying race believe that the waters of the Ganges are as effective as the blood of Calvary to take away sin, their infidelity and all manner of disorganizations have had horrid success in blotting out the last vestiges of hope for fallen men, while wherever Christ, and his cross, and his crown, his grace and his glory have been humbly and freely preached, these men have felt, and the world has seen the wilderness and the solitary place made glad because of them, and the desert rejoicing and blossoming as the rose? And what means all this, but to tell that, though for a time ministers may be popular, and multitudes pleased, and Churches enlarged by preaching the wisdom of this world, and seeking thereby the honor that cometh from man, yet God is well pleased, and Christ is manifested, and the Spirit is felt, and souls are saved, and the world is blessed with the light and life of the living God, then and only then, when in heart and life, in word and deed, the heralds of the cross "Know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

II. In what MANNER is this to be done?

In the apostle's case it was in a twofold form. First,—*negatively*: for, "I come," says he, "not with excellency of

speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God, and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom,"—that is, he made no display of great learning, no pretension to superior powers, no attempt to gratify the curiosity of the idle, or afford amusement to the worldly; but, *positively*, "I was with you," says he, "in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling, and my speech and my preaching was not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,"—that is, Paul was either of small stature and unprepossessing appearance, and of great sensitiveness before men, through the influence of that fear which oftentimes brings a snare; or rather such were his views of the holiness of his God, the purity of his message, and the responsibility of his trust, in having charge of immortal souls, that whenever he stood up to preach the everlasting Gospel, or act as an ambassador for Christ, or labor as a minister of the living God, it was always "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling;" and speaking under the influence of such feelings, and forced thereby away from himself to his mighty Lord for grace and strength, his work was accompanied with special tokens of saving favor. His ministry was largely blessed to the salvation of men. Aye, his speech and his preaching were "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

And such should be the manner of the Christian minister still; for though multitudes, it may be feared, visit the sanctuary merely to hear some new thing, or to be entertained with the science or oratory of some distinguished speaker,—though many, too, by their desire to be pleased, will tempt their spiritual guides to speak only those smooth things which will allow their consciences to slumber on undisturbed down to eternal woe,—aye, though ministers themselves are too often slothful, and therefore unfaithful in their Master's business, yet preaching is God's grand instrumentality of life to man. And the preacher is God's appointed speaking agent for the weal or woe of the human family. On his arm, under God, whether he feels it or not, hang interests of everlasting moment; and to his guidance are instrumentally entrusted the salvation or perdition of himself and of those

who hear him. If then he be proud or vainglorious and self-seeking—if he be a stranger to the throne of grace, and destitute of an unction from the Holy One—then, though he could speak with the tongue of angels, and have the gifts of prophecy, and could understand all mysteries and all knowledge, yet his ministry would of necessity be a savor of death unto death, and at the last, haggard, and hopeless, and lost, he himself must be a cast-away.

But if in the exercises of his ministry, he is humble and fearful, and trembling under a sense of weakness and utter emptiness in himself, and if this drives him, in the very fear of Satan and himself, away to a throne of grace, with strong cryings and tears that his sufficiency may all be of God, and that he may be strong in the Lord Jesus, and in the power of his might—if, like Isaiah, he can cry out, “Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips,” or like Jeremiah, can weep day and night for the hurt of the daughter of his people, or like Paul, can be in great heaviness and continual sorrow of spirit for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, or like Welsh, whose cloak always lay at his bed-side, that with it he might rise at night and wrestle and labor for Scotland’s bleeding Church, and for himself, as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, and for his dying fellow men, that they might live forever and ever in the joys of heaven, rather than in the woes of hell—O, if he be such a man, watching and praying—aye, knowing nothing in his closet or his pulpit, in his family or his flock, “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”—then, then he shall be mighty through God. His preaching shall be in “demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” His light shall be burning and bright, and multitudes, tasting through his instrumentality, that the Lord is gracious, shall arise, and with unstammering tongues and rejoicing spirits, shall forever and ever shout, “Blessed be him that cometh in the name of the Lord.” But,

III. What was to be the great END of this matter and manner of preaching?

“That your faith,” says the apostle, “should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God;” that is, while some men have perhaps gone into the ministry, and have

preached the Gospel, "not willingly but by constraint, not of a ready mind but for filthy lucre," not from the love of souls and for the glory of God, but for the applause of men and the gains of the world—while, too, perhaps, multitudes may have attended their ministry, not from any personal and absorbing interest in the message separated from the messenger, or in the Master independent of the man, yet the grand design of the Gospel, by the appointment of the blessed God, is to bring life and immortality to light, and the grand and unalterable business of its ministers is to testify in its terms, repentance toward God and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—faith, which is the first-fruit of the Spirit's saving operation upon the heart, and thenceforth working by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world,—and as that without which it is impossible to please God or escape the wrath that is to come,—faith, indeed, which passing by the deeds of the Law, the righteousness of human merits, the name, the wisdom, and the power of the creature, and indeed all confidence in the flesh, cries out in the heart, the closet, and amid the changes of life and the agonies of death, and in the very midst of the eternal throne, and forever serve Christ, the all in all;—while in louder and more challenging and triumphant strains, its genuine subject, though less than the least of all saints, is heard shouting, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world,"—"this is all my salvation and all my desire; thanks unto God for the grace by which, through my Lord Jesus Christ, I am what I am."

This, brethren, this bringing of men to Christ is the end of preaching. And is its importance doubted? What then means the very "chiefest" of the apostles virtually crying out in the name of the whole family of the redeemed, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, being justified," not by might nor by power, not by wisdom or by knowledge, not by merit nor by men, but by faith,—by faith as that mighty power of God which reveals Christ in the heart the hope of glory? What, too, means it that notwithstanding the corruptions and guilt of an ungodly world, the everlasting hills shall stand, and the dawnings of the judg-

ment day be stayed, not only until the "Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world and to every creature," but also until he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness in the beginning shall shine into the heart of all his elect to give, by this faith, the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ? And rising higher still in the scale of redemption's glorious deeds, what means it that in the loud alleluias which forever and ever burst forth from the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of ransomed spirits before the throne, the one theme of their everlasting song shall be, "CHRIST—Christ, the Lamb that was slain—the One worthy to receive blessing, and honor, and glory, and power; "that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and he shall reign forever and ever," the "ALL IN ALL." And what means it all, but to tell on all the authority of God, and the experience of saints, and for the good of men for time and eternity, that knowing nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified, the ministers of the everlasting Gospel must labor to have their preaching a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, —that the faith of immortal souls committed to their care should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord?

If such, then, be the *matter*, the *manner*, and the *great end* of the preaching of the Christian ministry, let us learn—

1. The spirituality and responsibility of the ministerial work. And is it asked what that work is? I answer: It is not to seek, with an anxious spirit and greedy hand, and manœvering life, the honor that cometh from man. It is not to be immersed in the spirit, or pursuits, or pleasures, or gains of a surrounding or ungodly world. It is not to pander to the passing amusements or carnal wishes of immortal souls, steeped, as all by nature are, in sin, and hastening, unsanctified and unsaved, to the judgment bar of a righteous and avenging God. No, brethren. It is rather to "know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified," and to labor by prayers and tears by day and night, from house to house and from man to man, to speak and preach "in demonstration of

the Spirit and with power," simply and only that the faith of man may stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God to their salvation. Else how shall any herald of the cross meet life's last hour with the peaceful and triumphant cry, "I am clean of the blood of all men?" Aye, how else shall he avoid hearing, at the last day, the startling and despairing shriek of misguided or neglected and lost souls, crying, as they go away into everlasting punishment, and pointing to him, "Thou, my fellow man, the seeming minister of thy God, thou didst know my danger and my duty, but thy manner was cold, thy matter Christless, thy aim selfish, thy heart unfeeling, thy work undone, and I am lost, lost forever!" O, minister of the living God, be thou faithful unto death, watching for souls as one that must give account, that thou mayest do it with joy and not with grief.

2. Let us learn the vastness of the work to be done. "The field is the world," and the command is, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." But how really vast the work is, nothing like facts can fully show. What then is it? I answer:—

In every congregation, and in some great degree directly and solely by ministerial instrumentality, saints are to be perfected in holiness, and sinners to be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, or beyond the possibility of escape there shall settle down on their hearts, the blackness and darkness forever and ever. In the bounds of our own Synod there are vast numbers who are living and dying without God, without hope, and without even the ordinances of grace in the world, while by the prepossession of early education, and the force of conscientious principles, their eyes are directed to us in various instances, with the anxious, yearning cry, "Come over and help us." In the Associate Reformed Church at large, with its Five Synods, twenty-four Presbyteries, two hundred and ten ministers, three hundred and fifteen congregations, and nearly twenty-five thousand communicants, there are over one hundred churches which have not a man to go in and out before them in the Lord, while all around them the field is white for the harvest, and souls are perishing for lack of men to set

forth before them "Jesus Christ and him crucified." In a single city there are upward of 150,000 persons who, it is believed, could not obtain a seat in the house of God even if they were disposed to attend. There are 19,000 colored persons with souls as precious as any other, and only four heralds of the cross laboring to set the Savior forth to their benighted minds. There are nearly 2000 children of Abraham, and not a man to tell them, as his special business, of Jesus Christ as the Messiah of God. There are nearly 80,000 persons blinded by the delusions of the anti-christ of God, and destined, for aught that is being done in their behalf, to all the awful doom of Rome.

In our country, favored, as in many respects it is, above all nations of the earth, there are nearly 21,000,000 of inhabitants, only about 5,000,000 of whom are even nominally connected with Protestant Churches, or are, in any authorized sense, resting for salvation upon the merits of a crucified Redeemer. There are upwards of 1,200,000 Romanists, trusting their salvation to other names than that one only name under heaven, and given amongst men, whereby we must be saved. There are about 60,000 Jews, who are hastening to that eternal world, with that thick veil upon their mind, which effectually shuts out any saving view of Jesus Christ, as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." There are nearly 3,000,000 of immortal beings who are forbidden by Legislative laws, and in some instances ecclesiastical sanctums, to read with their own eyes the wonderful things which God has done, and are therefore without any regular means of knowing "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." There are, it is believed, upwards of 6,000,000 of persons that are altogether destitute of a preached Gospel, hundreds and perhaps thousands of whom are every year going down to the grave, with the startling cry piercing the very heavens, "No man careth for my soul." There were, too, six years ago, 700,000 male white persons, above twenty years of age, who could neither read nor write, and to whom "Christ and him crucified" must be made known, or their all be irrevocably lost.

Beyond the bounds of our own country, too, there are this

day according to the most authentic data, more than 120,000,000 persons in blind, and it may be feared, damning allegiance to the Pope of Rome. There are over 100,000,000 bound by the soul-destroying chains of Mohammed's power. There are nearly 65,000,000, groping their way to the eternal world amid only the darkly glimmering lights of the Greek and Armenian creeds. There are about 6,000,000 of Jews scattered and peeled, and still almost as much as in ages past, the forsaken of God, and the uncared for and the unblest of men. There are more than 630,000,000 that are still bowing down to stocks and stones in the very face of Him who thunders from his eternal throne, the cry, "no idolator shall inherit the kingdom of God." In a word, allowing 70,000,000, as the largest possibly proper estimate of the Protestant Christian world, there are at this moment more than 900,000,000 of persons who are now sitting in all the darkness and death of idolatrous infidelity, and anti-christian systems, while as a generation they are destined to stand in about thirty years before the judgment seat of Him who hath solemnly said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell," aye, that a day is coming on, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from his presence and from the glory of his power."

O, what a work! How ought every man's soul be straightened in him until it be accomplished! Preachers of Christ and him crucified! how ought you to run to and fro until the knowledge of him be increased, and the whole earth be filled with his glory.

Finally, Is it asked what return shall follow faithful endeavors to set forth everywhere, and by all appointed means, Christ and his cross, as the substance and the sum of Gospel preaching? Let it be done, we answer, and there shall be a vast increase of every soul so engaged, in "grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;" for never in anything is it more unalterably true than in this, that "the liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth

shall be watered also himself." Let it be done with a warm heart and an earnest manner, and in demonstration of the Spirit and with power, and then shall the Churches everywhere be crowded with anxious souls and God shall be glorified in having the wilderness and the solitary places made glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Let it be done, and the whole earth filled with the knowledge of God, and then shall multitudes which no man can number be born from above to the bliss of a regenerated state and an endless life. Christ shall universally sit enthroned in hearts made willing in the day of his power, and that day shall be effectually hastened on, when loud voices shall be heard in heaven, shouting as they behold a new-made spiritual and glorious world, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ." "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

"Even so come Lord Jesus." AMEN.