

The Rev.
Samuel Mylius
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Ill.

MAN SAVED

BY

THE FOOLISHNESS

OF

PREACHING.

AN ORDINATION SERMON.

BY

JOHN NIEL McLEOD, D.D.

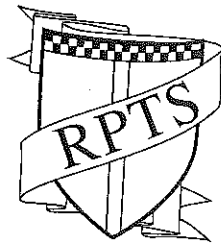
Pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, New York.

NEW YORK:

R. CRAIGHEAD, PRINTER, 112 FULTON STREET.

1849.

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Extract from the minutes of the Session of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ryegate, vt.
Sept. 21st, 1848.

Resolved, "That Messrs. Wm. Buchanan and Robert Symes be appointed a Committee to solicit from Dr. McLeod for publication, a copy of his excellent Discourse, delivered at the ordination of our pastor, Rev. Robert A. Hill, on the 4th Sept. 1848."

RYEGATE, Sept. 21st, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—In accordance with the above resolution, we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully solicit from you a copy of your Discourse for the purpose specified. A compliance with this request will much oblige,

Yours, &c., &c.,

WILLIAM BUCHANAN.
ROBERT SYMES.

In cordial response to the preceding request, the author, after some time of unavoidable detention, sends to the press the following Discourse.

NEW YORK, March 20th, 1849.

DISCOURSE.

“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”
1st CORINTHIANS i. 21, last clause.

It is said of the distinguished William Pitt, once prime minister of England, that on a certain Sabbath morning he was invited by his friend Wilberforce, who was then a member of the British Parliament, to accompany him to one of the evangelical churches in the city of London. The invitation was accepted, and the friends proceeded together to the Old Bedford Chapel in which Dr. Scott, the eminent commentator, had once officiated. His successor, the preacher of the day, was a man of kindred character, and the subject presented at the time was the plan of salvation in its practical applications. Mr. Pitt was observed by his companion to be giving the utmost attention to the speaker, and when the service was terminated, he eagerly asked him, what he thought of the discussion. The reply is said to have been in substance as follows: “I listened with attention to the preacher, and I admired his earnestness, but I did not comprehend a single idea he presented.” And why were the simple truths of the Gospel in their experimental bearings, so unintelligible to the statesman? It was not from want of mind, or of intellectual cultivation, or of the power of attention, or of any of the other elements that enter into the constitution of the wisdom of this world, for all of these he possessed in a very high degree. It was simply from a want of spirituality. The Gospel had not been his study, nor had his soul, at least at that period, felt its saving power. He was, of course, a stranger to the experiences of the sanctified, and did not comprehend them

when exhibited by another. Nor is there anything to surprise in all this ; for as well might we expect that a man born blind would comprehend a discourse on the nature of light, or the beautiful coloring of the rainbow, as that the unsanctified mind should understand and appreciate the nature, adaptations, and characteristic glories of the Gospel of the blessed God, as it unfolds to man the plan of his redemption, by the death accomplished upon Calvary.

The confession of the great civilian is a striking illustration of the truth revealed by Paul,—“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* And yet, in reference to that very Gospel which the world so generally regards and treats as undeserving of its notice, a voice from heaven declares as in our text,—

“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

The word “foolishness” is frequently employed in this chapter, and it is designed to express emphatically, the estimate which the unbelieving world forms of the preached Gospel. The learned Greeks viewed the doctrine of salvation by the cross of Christ, as that was contrasted with their own philosophy, as something unmeaning and contemptible. “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” † And so unbelievers of every form regard and treat it now. God’s estimate of it, however, is the very opposite. He honors and uses it as his own chosen instrumentality to save. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.” ‡ When, therefore, the name “foolishness” is applied, as in our text, to the preaching of the Gospel, it is not to express what the Gospel really is, but what unbelievers of every age think it to be. But in so esteeming it, they make a fatal mistake. The folly is all their own, and multitudes of them will awake to a discovery of their error, when it is too late to correct it.

* 1st Cor. ii. 14.

† 1st Cor. i. 23.

‡ 1st Cor. i. 18.

An analysis of the text will find it containing the three following propositions :—

I. It is the pleasure of God that some men shall be saved,—“It pleased God to save.” II. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ,—“It pleased God to save them that believe.” III. The preaching of the Gospel is God’s main instrumentality in saving the believing sinner,—“It pleased God to save them that believe—by the foolishness of preaching.” Such are evidently the doctrines taught. We do not attempt to discuss them now. We simply raise from them the following inquiry, and give it a brief response :—

What is that preaching which, it is God’s pleasure, shall be the means of man’s salvation ?

To this we answer—The approved preaching of the Gospel involves,

I. *A distinct declaration of the great facts of the Christian system.*

If ever there was a moral system of which it might in truth be said it is founded on fact, Christianity is that system. Facts the most important, and the best authenticated that ever transpired in the history of the universe, lie at its foundation, and are everywhere incorporated with its superstructure. And these facts form at once the basis and the aliment of saving faith. These facts respect God and man, the present and the future life, and the arrangements of the mediatorial system for the salvation of the apostate and ruined sinner. Many of them may be inexplicable to the finite understanding in the present state of being, but faith receives them as realities, because God announces them, and the sanctified mind recognises them as of unspeakable interest to itself, and the rest of the intelligent universe.

Of the great characteristic facts of the true religion, we mention the three following specimens :—

First. The fall and ruin of man by the breach of the covenant of innocency.

When we look over the history of man through all past time, we find that he is both a sufferer and a sinner; de-

praved and guilty, as well as miserable. So he lives. So without Christianity he dies, and this fact is universal. If there be a God he must be displeased with man; and the misery he permits or inflicts directly upon him is the correction or punishment of his offences. Irrespectively of holy Scripture, we can understand neither how man became a sinner, nor how God is to be vindicated from the charge of being the author of his sinfulness, and consequently of injustice in the infliction of his punishment. So soon, however, as we cross the threshold of divine revelation, we meet the fact that God made man originally an upright moral agent, intelligent, pure, and free. That he constituted him the federal head and representative of his posterity, and entering into a covenant with him, placed him in a limited state of probation, and guaranteed to him, and to all the race descending from him, his own favor for ever, as the reward of obedience. On the other hand, and as an additional inducement to maintain his standing, denouncing death involving all the opposite, in case of his infidelity. The principle of representation is thus introduced in God's dealings with mankind, and on it is erected a constitution as benevolent as it was wise and sovereign. Adam was a perfect man. He fully understood the will of God. He was entirely able to obey it. His personal happiness was at stake. He was a parent, on whose conduct the welfare of innumerable millions of his own children was depending. He was a great public character, and there was thus a combination of personal, parental, and public responsibilities, such as never could be found united in any other human being, resting upon him as incentives to obedience. If he sins and falls after all this, it is by the abuse of his own free agency. The fault is his own. And God is just in the infliction of the threatened punishment. The fact, however, is, that Adam broke the covenant, incurred the penalty, and through the righteous imputation of his first sin to us, "We sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." As the branches of the tree are in the stock, so was the entire race of man in Adam—the first father and public head. And as the tree of the forest falls as a whole when the axe is laid

to its root, so fell the tree of human kind with all its branches, when the divine curse threw down the parent stock." In Adam all die.* "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation."† "By one man's offence death reigned by one."‡. Men may dispute about the explanation, but the fact is universal, "that all have sinned." Every individual man, in his natural state, is as really ruined by sin, as is each fallen angel whose rebellion was his own act, though performed in concert with his fellows. And while no one is at liberty to reject God's explanation, the main thing undoubtedly is, for every one to be impressed with his own danger and loss, that he may seek with earnestness the chosen and adequate remedy. The human race is an apostate, guilty, condemned, miserable, and helpless race. This is a revealed fact, substantiated by the experience of all ages. It is a fundamental article of Christian faith, and there is no approved "preaching" which does not proceed upon this foundation. We who preach the Gospel must tell the sinner that he is lost, undone, and must be miserable for ever, if he remains an unbeliever; and this ultimate fact of our holy religion he must believe, and act upon it, if he hopes to enjoy a share in the great salvation.

A second fact of Christianity which we mention, is—The death of Christ to secure the salvation of man, in pursuance of the arrangements of the Covenant of grace. And here the principle of representation again appears. As Adam represented all the lost, so all the saved are represented by the second Adam, Jesus Christ, while a grand federal arrangement of the adorable Trinity controls and regulates the whole transaction. The breach of the covenant of works, with all its terrible results, gave occasion to the exhibition of the covenant of redemption. And what a glorious conception is here! The Three persons of the immaculate Godhead, perfectly independent of all their own creation, and infinitely happy in themselves, and in their association with each other,

* 1st Cor. v. 22.

† Romans v. 18.

‡ Ibid.

enter into a mutual engagement to provide, purchase, and apply salvation to the helpless and undeserving sinner. And as the provisions of this wonderful scheme are unfolded by the revelation of its author, the great facts of the incarnation, voluntary obedience, unparalleled sufferings, and painful death of the Son of God in our nature, are progressively made known, as furnishing the only consistent mode by which the promised redemption is secured. Nowhere else but in the Gospel revelation and history, do such facts as these appear: they are as worthy of God, as they are efficient in securing their blessed object. It is true "that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."* And it is also true, that "Jesus Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." †

Creation is an astonishing fact, for thereby a universe was brought into being by a word. Providence is a fact of no less interest, for by it the Creator manages with ceaseless care, and yet with perfect facility, whatever his hands have formed. The incarnation, too, is a fact as wonderful as it is mysterious, for in it God became man without ceasing to be God. But after all, the grandest fact that ever transpired on the theatre of our earth was the voluntary death on Calvary. It was not enough to effectuate our redemption, that the divine Jesus should humble himself in human flesh—that he should teach, in his public ministry, pure and saving truth—that he should set the best possible example—and that he should endure an amount of suffering, intense beyond the conception of the creature,—but he must also *die a propitiation for our sins*. This death he actually endured. It is no fiction, but a reality, on which Christian faith reposes with joy.

The death of Jesus Christ as the price of man's redemption, is the glory of Christianity. And it will require in man the

* John iii. 16.

† Philippians ii. 6-8.

perfect faculties of the celestial state, and eternity itself, to study, know, and appreciate its beneficent results and bearings on the saved sinner himself, and on the rest of the universe.

To exhibit the fact of Immanuel's death is one of the main parts of that "preaching of foolishness," by which it is God's pleasure to save them that believe. The Christian minister, as the servant of God, declares this fact: he announces its efficacy for salvation. He expatiates on the infinite evil and awful demerit of sin which it exposes, and he presses on the mind and affections, the immeasurable love of God which it manifests. Thus he leads the fallen sinner to the cross as presenting the only way of escape from his ruined condition, and commends to him faith in the person of the crucified Saviour as at once his duty, his privilege, and his salvation.

A third specimen of the characteristic facts of Christianity, which the approved preacher declares, is the mediatorial exaltation of the Son of God in human nature, over all persons and things. So important is the fact of the resurrection of Christ in the estimation of Paul, that he speaks of it as if it embraced the whole of Christianity. We have seen the Saviour on the cross. If he died, he rose again. And from the cross and the tomb he ascended in triumph to the throne—the Father's throne of universal government, and nothing inferior. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."* It was becoming that in the nature which had been humbled, the Mediator should be also exalted, for the humiliation in all its parts was voluntary and appointed, and of course rewardable. The exaltation too, was promised in the stipulations of the covenant of grace, by Jehovah in the person of the Father, and the promise must be accomplished. On this exaltation Jesus had his eye as a grand source of encouragement, during the

* Revelations iii. 21.

whole course of his life, and at the closing scene of his triumphant death. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God."* The "joy proposed" was the exaltation of that same human soul which had borne the agony in Gethsemane, and that same human body which had bowed the head upon the cross in death, to the promised honors and felicity of the celestial throne. The government of Messiah, "the Prince of the Kings of the earth," is a present fact in which the church and the rest of the universe have occasion to rejoice.

Behold the mediatorial throne! From it, its blessed occupant sends the Holy Spirit to regenerate, instruct, comfort, and guide to heaven all the heirs of life. From it he commissions holy angels to exercise their ministry of love and care, over all his ransomed people. From it he controls and manages evil angels, and bad men and communities on earth. From it he directs the movements of his own church, which he holds in the hollow of his hand, and makes her existence the occasion or the instrument of all the good which the world enjoys. And from it he commands the homage and service of the nations of the earth, as the Lord to whom they are accountable, and whose law is the universal rule of rectitude and judgment. Verily all is safe, that appertains to the divine glory, the salvation of the election of grace, and the real interests of all the rest of creation, while the reins of government are in the hands of Jesus Christ. "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written,—KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS."†

Such are examples of the great facts of our holy religion, which it is the preacher's office to declare to the world. The unbelieving and careless may regard them as "foolishness," but in reality they are the most important which human powers can consider. What are all the facts of physical science, or of mental philosophy, or of the history of human progress, when compared with these? What are the facts of geology

* Hebrews xii. 2.

† Revel. xix. 16.

which carries us beneath the surface of the earth; or of astronomy that elevates us to the heavens; or of mathematics, or of law, or of politics, or of any other department of mere human learning, when contrasted with the facts of Christian theology, which bring as at once to God, and heaven, and eternity, and the way of life by Jesus Christ? Truly, habitual contact with such mighty subjects should elevate and purify the soul, and make it like its God. There is power in the pulpit, when he who occupies it feels the importance of the facts he declares, and presents them in their commanding interest to the immortal minds he reaches.

II. *The approved preaching of the Gospel involves an explanation of Christian principles.*

The main use of facts is to illustrate principles. For this purpose they are recorded in history, and mentioned in public speaking. Is a fact of importance announced in my hearing in the preaching of the Gospel? the natural inquiry of my mind is, upon what principle does it apply to me, and am I interested in it for myself as well as others? The Christian religion is a system of *principles* as well as *facts*. And all its prominent facts illustrate as well as carry into practice, those great principles of Jehovah's moral government, and of the system of redemption, in the application of which God is glorified in man's salvation. Of these principles, the following are examples:—

First. Salvation is exclusively of grace. Is it a fact that man is fallen and ruined, that Christ has died for his redemption, and that He who was once dead, now lives and reigns to secure the benefits of his death to the appropriate objects? The *principle* upon which this great deliverance comes is *purely gracious*. Independent in his own being, blessedness, and perfection, the most high God could not be under any other obligation to his creatures, than such as is the result of his own revealed arrangement and promise. If, therefore, he makes an arrangement, and reveals a promise of salvation to the sinner, it is to him a matter of entire favor. This is *grace*—favor to the unworthy. God has no grace for holy

angels, for they do not need it. He has none for devils, for they are excluded from the saving arrangements of the mediatorial system; and he has none for men in hell, for their day of hope is passed for ever. But to the heir of life, everything that he enjoys, from the daily bread bestowed in answer to prayer, to the crown of glory itself, comes as a matter of grace. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."* "By grace ye are saved."† "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Some men in the world mistaking the revelation of God entirely, may expect heaven on the ground of their own good character. And even Christians may confuse their minds with false theories in religion, whose inevitable consequences are to mingle human merit with the grace of God, in the matter of salvation. But there is no well-instructed believer in Jesus Christ who does not feel, know, and acknowledge, that he is utterly unworthy of so great a blessing as eternal life, and that if he enjoys it at all, it is as a pure favor from the God of Heaven. Deliverance from that inconceivably terrible reality—*perdition*, and the fruition of that chief good—*eternal life* by Jesus Christ, cannot be the acquisitions of human works, nor the purchase of human merit, but they are a pure gratuity from Jehovah the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The security and satisfaction even of the saints in glory, are perfectly consistent with a blessed sense of dependence on the throne of grace.

Secondly, we mention *the principle of substitution* as one of the characteristics of the evangelical system, which approved preaching will explain. Man cannot save himself. Could he have done so, the immensely expensive arrangements of the mediatorial system would have been needless. If he cannot save himself, he must be saved by another. That other is Jesus Christ; and the principle upon which he acts, is that of substitution. One of the most glorious manifestations of the sovereign grace of God, is seen in the appointment of his own Son as the voluntary Substitute of the election of grace. In

* Romans v. 21.

† Ephes. ii. 8.

that awful exigency of the human race, when the apostasy had done its work, when the curse had been actually inflicted, and when the case of the sinner seemed as hopeless as that of rebel angels, then, God was pleased to make it known to men and angels, that the principle of substitution was admissible in his moral government. The intelligent universe now see, what they could not discern before, that "God can be just, yet justify the ungodly that believe on his Son." They behold with unutterable joy the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, coming forward to act as the chosen Substitute, and God is glorified in the exhibition of a plan which is as consistent with his own character, as it is suited to the helplessness of the fallen sinner. "It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the only mediator between God and man, and to constitute him the Head and Representative of all the elect." All the promises of God to the elect are made upon condition that Christ shall fulfil the law, and satisfy divine justice as their Substitute, so that the condition upon which the things promised shall be confirmed, is not to be performed by the elect, but by the surety; and that same establishment which is to them a covenant of free grace, is to Him a covenant of redemption."*

In holy Scripture, the Mediator is everywhere represented as sustaining two fixed relations to the universe. The one is general, and has respect to all creation beyond the church; and the other is peculiar, and has reference to the church exclusively. "And gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body."† "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."‡ Here, a distinction is evidently made between "the all flesh" over which the Saviour has dominion, for a specific purpose, and the "many given him" by the Father. To the former, he sustains the relation of the supreme head and governor, and to the latter, the more intimate relation of their substitute. This relation

* Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, pp. 15, 21-22.

† Ephesians i. 22, 23.

‡ John xvii. 2.

is saving; for to the many given him, he actually gives "eternal life." These are the chosen in him, the many sons he brings to glory, the church purchased by his blood, the sheep for whom, as the good Shepherd, he lays down his life, those given him out of the world for whom he prays; the "whole world" of the actually saved, for whose sins he has been the "propitiation," and the blessed of the Father for whom the kingdom has been prepared, from the foundation of the world.

While the exalted Saviour does conduct a government of unspeakable advantage over the entire created system, and while in its consequences, even the reprobate world receives great temporal benefit from it, the substitution proper is not to be extended beyond those whom the discoveries of the last day shall show to be actually saved. For them he undertook in the council of peace; for them he obeyed and suffered; for them he shed his precious blood; and for them he now appears as the blessed and successful advocate in the "high chancery of heaven."

Take this view of the substitution of Jesus Christ, and all is consistent, encouraging, and glorious in the evangelical system. It is not a system of indefiniteness which really makes salvation a contingency. But it furnishes the needy and miserable sinner a purchased redemption, a finished atonement, and a consistent and satisfactory warrant to believe in Jesus Christ, to the saving of his soul. Upon the understood principle of a substitution which actually secures the salvation of its objects, that great fact of the Saviour's death which is the astonishment of all intelligent beings, is rendered most intelligible, and perfectly consistent with all his relations to God and the creature.

Is the question propounded, why did Jesus die? The answer is—He died, not merely as a martyr to substantiate the truth, nor simply as an example to illustrate the holiness of the law, nor only to make a commanding display of the divine hatred of sin, or the love of the Trinity for sinners—for all this would, of itself, make him the actual Saviour of no human being. Our divine Redeemer is more than a wit-

ness for the truth—more than an example of obedience—more than a remover of difficulties in the way of man's salvation. He is indeed all of these. But he is also the Surety of elect sinners, who, by the sacrifice of himself, "has provided a perfect satisfaction to divine justice for all the sins of those who are reconciled to God." His death paid the whole penalty of the law for those whom he represented, and purchased for them an eternal redemption. "And thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins."*

God has provided salvation for the fallen, disabled, and unwilling sinner, by a qualified substitute. That substitute has secured eternal life for all who shall at last be found in heaven. The life secured is freely offered to all in the Gospel. The sinner, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, accepts the offer, and cordially chooses the great Substitute as his own, in the exercise of a living faith. In the moment of his believing, in which he becomes *one* with Christ, God the Father, by a gracious act of imputation, sets over to his account the perfect righteousness of the Substitute, and thus his salvation is secured. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."† Here is the way of life. And to explain all this to fallen men, is a very important part of that "preaching of foolishness," by which God is pleased to save.

A third distinguishing principle of our holy religion which approved preaching explains, is man's personal responsibility. Although man has been ruined by the fall, and is now but a wreck of what he was in his creation state, he has not been reduced to the condition of an irresponsible maniac, an idiot, or a brute. He is still regarded and treated by God as a rational and accountable being. He has, indeed, lost his spirituality, but he has intellect and heart, conscience and memory, the powers of speech and locomotion. He is, therefore, responsible for all the deeds done in the body, and among others for his acceptance or rejection of the offer of eternal life. And even in regard to his want of spirituality, his

* Matthew i. 21.

† Romans viii. 1.

apostasy does not deprive God of his right to command his homage and service. The fall is no excuse for hating God, despising holiness, and rejecting by unbelief, the atonement of Jesus Christ. Never is man more thoroughly thrown on his responsibilities for eternity than when he becomes a hearer of the preached word. If he treats it as "foolishness," he deservedly incurs the dreadful condemnation which is threatened. Every individual man is a subject of God's moral government. He may be "dead in trespasses and sins," but he is still bound to obey the divine law. Every command of God is a part of his law. The commands to believe in Jesus Christ, repent of sin, follow holiness, and pray for the Holy Spirit who is promised to those that ask him, are as obligatory as all or any of the ten precepts of the decalogue. If then the sinner refuses to believe, to repent, to pray, while the Gospel revelation is in his hand, and the warnings of the Christian ministry ringing in his ears, the fault is his own, and God is just in the infliction of the tremendous punishment of unbelief. The sinner is, indeed, connected with apostate Adam, by whose disobedience many were made sinners; and God's new covenant arrangements for the salvation of believers will stand unaltered and secure. But still, if men under the Gospel reject the great salvation when it is in their offer, the deed is their own. Personally, and after due instruction and warning, they choose strangling and death rather than life, and adventure with open eyes on the terrors of the second death. In Christendom, and wherever in the heathen world the doctrine of the cross is preached, unbelief is the condemning sin. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."* This principle of the sinner's responsibility, it is the duty of all who preach the "foolishness which saves," to explain distinctly, and hold up most prominently to the minds of men. "Hear, and your soul shall live,"† is the invitation of the God of grace; and he adds the assurance, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."‡ When, therefore, the preacher stands in the

* Mark xvi. 16.

† Isaiah lv. 3.

‡ John vi. 39.

temple "to speak unto the people all the words of this life," he should tell them with the utmost plainness, that if they live, it is through their own personal acceptance of Jesus Christ ; and if they die, it is by their own personal rejection of the overtures of mercy. Nor, is there anything in all this inconsistent with that blessed truth, that without the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification in the soul, there can be no faith or other exercises of a gracious character. The Holy Spirit, with all his saving benefits, is included in the Gospel offer of salvation ; and unbelief refuses Him, as it refuses the Son and the Father. How honorable, how responsible, how elevating that employment which explains to man the great principles of God's plan of mercy !

III. The approved preaching of the Gospel includes the authoritative offer of salvation to sinners, and of comfort to believers by the qualified minister of Jesus Christ.

It is, indeed, the appropriate business of the Christian minister to state the facts and explain the principles of the Gospel plan of redemption. But he is not to confine himself to this. He is not simply a teacher of divine truth, like the professor of theology in his chair ; or an adviser, like the experienced friend who cautions and persuades. He bears a commission which carries him further. And it is his prerogative to tender the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ to sinners, commanding, as well as exhorting and entreating them to receive it, in the name of the Master whom he serves. This is evident from his revealed character. Who is the minister approved of God ? He is an officer in the church of Christ, by the appointment of her Head. He is a sanctified character of adequate qualifications, appointed to his work according to the due order, and enjoying the special blessing of the Spirit of God. The chosen servant of the Author of Salvation, he is an herald who proclaims the good news of mercy ; a pastor to feed the flock ; an overseer of the Holy Spirit's appointment, and himself responsible for immortal souls. Nay, he is the ambassador sent from the court of Heaven to offer peace with God, to the alien and the

enemy. Of him Paul speaks when he says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."* To no other class of men is such a character given, or function attributed. In Christ's stead, God by them beseeching men, their great business is to persuade the sinner to be reconciled to God. Other religious institutions are all valuable in their place, but the ministry of reconciliation has always been honored of God as his main ordinance for bringing sinners to Jesus Christ, and aiding the saints in their progress towards heaven. Christ is the gift of God. His great gift of love. God the Father offers this gift to sinners of the human family. This offer he makes in ordinary cases, not directly by miracle nor by angels, but mainly by the appointed ministry. And that ministry tenders the offer to the sinner, in the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

In the preaching of the Gospel, the offer of salvation is to be made to sinners *indiscriminately*, for the commission is "to every creature." It is to be made *unconditionally*, for it extends even to the chief of sinners. And it is to be made *freely* and *fully*, for the salvation is actually provided, and the God of grace makes the offer universal, wherever the light of the Gospel shines. The formal and sufficient ground on which the offer of eternal life is made, is the command of God, again and again repeated in his holy word.

We offer salvation to you, sinners of the human race, whatever may be your present character, simply because we know you need it, and because God has sent us as his special messengers, to tender it to you. When we stand in the public place, with the word of God in our hands, amidst the solemnities of religious worship, and under the influences of the Lord's house, and the Lord's Spirit, it is not merely to give you information about religious truth, like the lecturer on other branches of knowledge: nor merely as friends desirous of your everlasting welfare, to give you good advice about the concerns of eternity. But we come as servants of

* 2 Corinthians v. 20.

the Most High God, to propose to your acceptance, Christ "the unspeakable gift." In this offer you have your warrant to believe. And our assurance is, that if you accept it you shall be saved. While, on the other hand, we warn you in the same great name, that if you refuse it, you must perish. The sum and substance of our preaching, therefore, is—"He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Let it not, however, be forgotten, that the preaching of the Gospel by the ministry approved of God, is not to be confined to sinners exclusively. The Gospel is for the comfort and sanctification of the saints. The ministry are Christ's gift to his church, and her edification should be their constant and unwavering aim. The Holy Spirit who abides in the renovated natures of believers as the Spirit of intelligence, of love, of joy, and of peace, is a "teacher." The children of adoption are learners, and the ordinances of grace as dispensed by a holy ministry, are the means which the Spirit employs to make wise unto salvation. Thus the preaching of the cross involves instruction in the whole circle of Christian duties. The Holy Spirit, too, is the "comforter." The same ordinances are the means of his comforts, and it is one of the most pleasing duties of the minister of Christ to dispense consolation to believers in the Saviour's name. As sons of consolation, like Barnabas of old, it is theirs to comfort all that mourn. "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God." It is the river of divine consolations. To this the ministry lead afflicted saints that they may drink and be refreshed. And while they are thus refreshing others, it is their own blessed privilege to drink themselves, that they may be invigorated for public duty, and encouraged to greater diligence, in securing that perfection of personal holiness which fits for the incorruptible crown at last. It is the glory of the Christian religion that it points men to heaven, and prepares them for its enjoyment. The preaching of the cross is not "foolishness." It is the highest wisdom. The sinner who leaves the world unpardoned, will have an eternity of hopeless misery to spend in lamenting his own folly in

the rejection of its offers. While the glorified believer, to whom it has proved the "power of God," having put on the celestial character, will be for ever employed in studying, admiring, and enjoying its momentous truths, its fulfilled promises, its realized hopes, and its blessed and glorious Author.

Conclusion.—It is not my intention, my Christian friends of the congregation, and this large and decorous assembly, to detain you further by any attempts at a more practical application of my subject. The respected brother who will succeed me in tendering to your pastor and to you the charges becoming the occasion, will occupy the ground, no doubt, to your advantage and satisfaction.* I cannot, however, conclude the service without tendering to you, the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation of Ryegate, my warmest congratulations on the happy and auspicious circumstances amidst which we are now assembled. The pastor, of your own unanimous choice, is before you, and you are about to behold him invested with the sacred ministry, and installed over you in the Lord. After a long period of destitution and uncertainty, with your hopes often disappointed, and your very existence as a people threatened, you find your organization sustained, your numbers increased, your prayers answered, and prosperity resting on the cause you advocate. God is, we trust, blessing you with a "pastor after his own heart, to feed you with knowledge and understanding." Be steadfast in your religious principles. Be united among yourselves. Make religion your great concern. Attend with diligence on that "preaching," which, we trust, none of you will be left to treat as "foolishness." Cherish your pastor: we know he deserves it. Nearly fifty years ago, in this same ancient building where we are now assembled for a similar purpose, the first ordination to the ministry in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States, took place. The person or-

* The charges to pastor and people were delivered by Rev. David J. Patterson, of Brooklyn, N. Y.

dained still survives, full of years, of usefulness, and of deserved honors.* But the ordainers † are gone to the other world. Of those, too, who were present on that occasion as spectators, we find some two or three only remaining who are here to-day, to give us their recollections of the scene. But the most of that audience are now gathered into yonder congregation of the dead. And how few of us, who are now in life and health, will be found surviving when another half century has passed away? Brethren, your hope is in the Gospel of the blessed God. Treat it not as "foolishness"—for this will be to ruin for ever your immortal souls—but rather receive and treat it as that which shows you the way to eternal life, and proposes to your acceptance all which that comprehensive term involves.

* Rev. Dr. Wylie, of Philadelphia.

† Rev. James McKinney and Rev. William Gibson.