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The Pastor and His Office

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alle Inhaber des von Christo gestifteten Amtes stehen auf gleicher Stufe und sollen die Pflichten des Bischofsamtes ausüben. Wenn wir auch einen Unterschied in der Regiergabel konstatieren müssen, wie sich diese sogar im Apostelkreis offenbarte, so darf sich doch kein Pastor dem entziehen, daß er wirklich Führer, Leiter, Aufseher in seiner Gemeinde ist, und zwar allen ihm anvertrauten Seelen gegenüber.

Dies tritt noch mehr hervor in dem letzten Schriftnamen, den die Inhaber des göttlichen Gemeindeamtes nach der Schrift führen, nämlich in dem Namen *Wächter*, *συναγωγος*. Dieser Name findet sich wiederholt im Alten Testament, sonderlich Hesek. 3, 17: „Ich habe dich zum Wächter gesetzt über das Haus Israel“, und Kap. 33, 6: „Zur Hand will ich von des Wächters Hand fordern.“ Aber daß diese besondere Funktion der Inhaber des göttlichen Amtes auch im Neuen Testament gilt, geht unter anderm aus Hebr. 13, 17 hervor: „Gehorchet euren Lehrern und folget ihnen; denn sie wachen über eure Seelen, als die da Rechenschaft dafür geben sollen.“ Von diesem Worte hat man mit Recht gesagt, daß es jeden Prediger des Evangeliums in das Wort und auf die Knie treiben sollte, damit die Vorbereitung auf jede Predigt, jede Bibelstunde, jeden Kranken- und sonstigen seelsorgerlichen Besuch mit äußerster Gewissenhaftigkeit geschieht. Und gerade weil diese Arbeit in rechter evangelischer Weise geschehen soll, bedarf es um so größerer Sorgfalt. Allerdings muß auch das Gesetz gehandhabt werden, sonderlich bei einem Menschen, der sich als ein hartnäckiger und böshafter Sünder zeigt; aber das Wächteramt des christlichen Predigers soll auf das engste verbunden sein mit seinem Pastorenamt, mit seinem Dienst als Seelsorger. Nicht um die Seelen aus der Kirche und Gemeinde zu treiben, ist er als Wächter gesetzt, sondern um sie recht zu locken und zu reizen und zu ermahnen. Und eben darum heißt es mit Recht: Wie jede Predigt auf den Knien erbeten werden sollte, so auch die Weisheit, in jedem Falle, wo das Wächteramt zu Recht besteht, wirklich das Evangelium in seiner vollen Süßigkeit zu verkündigen.

P. C. F r e y m a n n.

The Pastor and His Office

“Our office is a different thing now than what it was under the Pope; it has now become earnest and salutary. Hence it involves much more trouble and labor, danger and trial, and secures but little reward and gratitude in the world; but Christ Himself will be our reward if we labor faithfully.” So Luther wrote in the preface to his Small Catechism four hundred years ago. Does the pastor of today think in such terms of his pastoral office?

A pastor is normally as human as the congregation which he serves; the same influences which affect their lives also affect his. A pastor must live in the world as it is, “in the midst of a crooked

and perverse nation," Phil. 2, 15; he must encounter its peculiar temptations and battle against its besetting sins and stand up over against its ridicule and mockery. Nor can he altogether escape the evil influences of the world's environment and the *Zeitgeist*; he would cease to be human if he could. The office of the ministry does not surround a pastor with a halo which makes him immune to the temptations of the flesh, the world, and the devil. The levity and the superficiality, the quest after leisure and pleasure, the materialistic spirit and the religious indifferentism, all these characteristics of our restive age cannot leave even the Christian pastor altogether untouched. *The National Preaching Mission*, this attempt to bring about a spiritual awakening of the American churches during the past months, was largely a confession that the spiritual leaders had failed their people. In making this statement, we do not mean to say that we have been blameless and have lived up to our opportunities and responsibilities. Among those who have walked on this earth since the fall of man there is only One who could say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" John 8, 46. We well know that the pastor has always been the greatest problem in the Church.

In our own churches our people are looking to their pastors for spiritual leadership at a time when the whole world is in unrest, at a time when the religious situation in our country is worse than it ever has been during our lifetime, at a time when our Lutheran Church with its pure Gospel is given the greatest challenge to fulfil its mission that it ever has had in this country. *In this critical period our pastors dare not fail us.* The responsibility which God and the Church has placed upon them calls for great consecration on their part and for a right understanding of the present religious needs. We shall therefore do well at this time to learn anew to think of the pastoral office in the terms of the holy Word of God.

I

That Christians living in the same locality unite for the purpose of organizing a Christian congregation and calling a pastor who shall shepherd Christ's sheep is not due to a mere custom that has been continued down through the centuries, but is done in obedience to Christ's own arrangement. Pastors and religious teachers are gifts of the ascended Lord for the perfecting of the saints, Eph. 4, 8. 11. 12; 1 Cor. 12, 28. When Paul had preached the Gospel to certain cities in Asia Minor, he later, at the risk of his life, returned to these cities, confirmed the souls of the disciples, exhorted them to continue in the faith, and "ordained [appointed] them elders [pastors] in every church," Acts 14, 19—23. Therefore Paul also directed Timothy to supply

that which was still lacking in certain churches, to wit, the appointing of elders or pastors, Titus 1, 5. Paul speaks of those especially "who labor in the Word and doctrine," 1 Tim. 5, 17. Of the elders, or pastors, of the church at Ephesus, Paul says that God Himself had made them "overseers to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," Acts 20, 28. Over against the Judaizing false teachers, Paul makes much of the fact that he was "an apostle not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father," Gal. 1, 1. The divine call invests a Christian pastor with divine authority; he is the under-shepherd of the Great Shepherd of souls. He therefore who desires "the office of a bishop [pastor] desires a good work," *καλὸν ἔργον*, a work beautiful or excellent in its very nature and characteristics. In our materialistic age, when even many calling themselves Christians are not fully conscious of the right proportional value of things temporal and things eternal, the office of a Christian pastor has in their minds lost much of its former real glory.

A low or even wrong estimate of the office of a pastor may be due to the attitude taken by the pastor himself toward his office. If a pastor himself is not convinced that there is no higher, nobler, holier calling than that of a shepherd of souls, how can he expect that others should be so convinced and give him that honor which is due him, not because of his person, but because of his office? If a pastor reluctantly continues in office, regretting that he had not chosen some other calling, which, he thinks, would assure him a better income and more pleasure and satisfaction, then surely he cannot blame others for not thinking and speaking in exalted terms of the pastoral office. Of course, we cannot believe that a man who is thus minded can be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4, 1, 2. With him there will not be found that consecration manifested by Paul, who had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart because of the unbelief of his kinsmen according to the flesh and who went even so far as to say, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," Rom. 9, 1—3; or the consecration of a Moses, who said, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written," Ex. 32, 32.

II

Pastors, being human and being subject to the temptations of their flesh, the world, and the devil, even as other Christians are, and being assailed by these enemies even in a greater degree and in a more subtle manner, are exposed to the peculiar dangers of their time.

The age in which we live is in an increased measure char-

acterized by moral laxity, taking "moral" in the wider sense. Men have set up their own standard of what is right and wrong; the prevailing circumstances, we are told, govern the present moral standard. God's immutable Law is ignored; popular opinion decides. What formerly was sin is no longer accepted to be sin. As a result popular opinion grants to the pastor (and to his family) more "freedom" of action by removing some of the former restrictions. Over against this the Christian pastor must remember that God's specifications have never been changed. The right attitude toward the pastoral office, that consecration to which we referred in a previous paragraph, presupposes not only sincerity of faith and of purpose, but must manifest itself also in an exemplary devotion to the task at hand.

Church-members often demand that their pastor be a great orator, a good mixer, a man of pleasing personality, — let the pastor covet these things; — but the Lord requires only one thing, faithfulness in the use of all the gifts which He has given to His servant, 1 Cor. 4, 4; and since the Lord Himself has distributed His gifts in different measure, He judges accordingly, saying, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," Luke 12, 48. Faithfulness calls for service. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." The great exemplar, or pattern, for such service, service that is sincere, unselfish, continuous, self-sacrificing, is Christ Himself, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many," Matt. 20, 26—28.

Faithfulness on the part of the pastor requires that, first of all, he proclaim the Word of God in all its purity, the Law and the Gospel, especially the Gospel, publicly and privately, keeping back nothing that is profitable unto those whom the Lord has entrusted to his care, Acts 20, 20. 26. 27. The question has been asked, Has the pulpit lost its power? Many pulpits have. A prominent clergyman said a few years ago that in ninety per cent. of American pulpits the fact of sin is no longer preached, which, of course, means that also the Gospel is not preached from such pulpits. Modernism preaches another gospel, "which is not another," Gal. 1, 6—9. But only by the Gospel of Jesus Christ can the sinner be saved, Acts 4, 12, and only by means of the *doctrine* of the Bible can the truths of the Scriptures be known, false doctrine detected and refuted, an ungodly life corrected, good works taught and encouraged, and comfort given to those who are in need of comfort, 2 Tim. 3, 15. 17; Rom. 15, 4; 2 Cor. 1, 3. 4. Doctrinal preaching is much neglected in our day. Doctrinal sermons require much time and study; others are easier to make and to preach. The purpose

of preaching is not to fill in a half hour in the pulpit with religious platitudes, spiced with a few interesting stories, but to edify Christ's people, Eph. 4, 11, 12. Christians who sit through a year of sermons ought to have their Christian knowledge augmented, their understanding of Christianity deepened, and their faith and love increased. Do they?

Faithfulness does not only extend to the careful preparation of the sermon, 2 Tim. 4, 1, 2, the preaching of the whole counsel of God, Acts 20, 26, 27, the visiting of the sick and the afflicted, Jas. 5, 14, the spiritual care of the individual Christian (*Seelsorge*), Acts 20, 31; Ezek. 33, 7—9, and the reaching out after the unchurched, Mark 16, 15, but faithfulness also requires that a pastor adorn the doctrine which he preaches by a godly and exemplary life, 1 Tim. 3, 1—7; Titus 1, 7—9. When it becomes known that a pastor is not trustworthy, or is a tale-bearer, or double-tongued, or money-greedy, or attends questionable amusements, or keeps questionable company, preferring to associate with the people of the world rather than with his fellow-Christians, or is intemperate, or has a violent temper, or is attending a baseball game when he ought to be at home receiving announcements for Communion, or goes fishing when one of his parishioners is seriously ill and demands his ministrations, or loiters away his time as though he were a man of leisure, or lives unhappily with his wife, or cannot well manage his own household, or does not get along well with his fellow-ministers, and regularly absents himself from their pastoral conferences,—all these things react unfavorably upon the pastor's entire ministry. Said Ambrose: "*Non solum in falsis verbis, sed in falsis operibus mendacium est; mendacium est Christianum se dicere et Christi opera non facere.*" Said Luther: "*Non esse theologum, qui magna sciat et multa doceat, sed qui sancte et theologice vivat.*"

While the men of our day make lower demands upon the pastor as far as moral standards are concerned, they make higher demands upon his educational standard. God Himself makes certain demands in this respect. The pastor, He says, must be "apt to teach," 1 Tim. 3, 2, must "be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," Titus 1, 9. Therefore Paul writes to Timothy: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. 2, 2. A pastor should therefore be a diligent Bible student. The Bible should be the one book that he knows well. For this very purpose he should also study good commentaries and other good religious literature; first of all, that of his own Church. It is deplorable to find that some pastors have few books in their study and, among these, few good books.

A pastor should not, however, limit himself to the study of religious literature. History, nature study, philosophy, language study, the literature of various ages and peoples, political economics, and even some law and medicine,—all these may well be within the scope of a pastor's reading and study and serve a purpose in his professional calling. Said Leonard Bacon: "Every liberally educated man ought to be a better man in his profession than if he were not thus educated. It is naturally and reasonably demanded of the minister of the Gospel, who has enjoyed the invigorating discipline and the liberalizing culture of classical and scientific studies, that all this shall make him more accurate, more skilful, and more powerful in the exhibition of religious truth."

There is yet another reason why the pastor should be a liberally educated man. A very much larger number of people now than formerly attend higher schools, more people read, and all have opportunities to get information which formerly they did not have, as, for instance, by means of the radio, also public lectures. Church-members of today make higher educational demands upon their pastor and apply to him the measure of higher intellectual standards. If a pastor would not disappoint his own church-members, and if he would be respected by the community in which he lives, he dare not altogether be an ignoramus in reference to those things which do not come strictly within his theological studies. But also the spiritual needs of his people demand that a pastor know what his people think, hear, read, what directs their thoughts or agitates and disturbs their minds, what, in fact, is influencing their lives. The mind of today is reflected in the current literature, as also in the lives of the people.

Notwithstanding, we are not advocating that a pastor know and do a little of everything and not much of anything. On the contrary, in spite of the complex and strenuous life which we are forced to live, the pastor should in respect neither to his studies nor his activities fritter away his time by trying to attend to a multitudinous number of things; he should rather concentrate on that which is essential and which deserves his foremost attention. The idea expressed by the German word *Vielgeschaeftigkeit* is not at all a new one; the old Greeks already had a word for it. And it might be well that the pastor of today write on the walls of his study what a noted author wrote in his diary: *Πολυπραγμοσύνην fuge ceu pestem!*

III

The seriousness of the requirement to be faithful is emphasized by the fact that the Lord demands that a pastor give an account for each soul which has been entrusted to him. The writer to

the Hebrews says: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account," Heb. 13, 17. Paul writes to young Pastor Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. . . . Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry," 2 Tim. 4, 1. 2. 5. "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the Word at My mouth and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand," Ezek. 33, 7. 8. Oh, that every pastor might be able to say with Paul, "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men!" Acts 20, 26.

IV

When a pastor thinks of his tremendous responsibilities and his arduous duties, of the opposition and the difficulties that he must overcome and of the hardships and privations that he may have to endure, he should not forget also to think of the *glories* of the pastoral office. The pastor's calling is indeed a high and glorious calling, standing singularly alone among all the occupations and positions of men. While other men in their daily calling labor for the things which perish with the using, the pastor labors for that which abides in all eternity, the salvation of souls, souls bought with the highest price that has ever been paid, the blood of the Son of God. If the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, Luke 15, 10, how much more ought we to rejoice if through our ministrations one soul can be saved! It is a priceless reward for our labors. When Paul said to the pastors of the church at Ephesus that the Holy Ghost had made them overseers to feed the Church of God, "which He hath purchased with His own blood," Acts 20, 28, he not only admonished, but also encouraged them. Paul speaks of the pastor's work as a *καλὸν ἔργον*, 1 Tim. 3, 1. The various terms which he uses in referring to the pastoral office at the same time denote its glory: "the ministry of the Word," Acts 6, 4; "the ministry of reconciliation," 2 Cor. 5, 18; "the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness," 2 Cor. 2, 8. 9. Comparing the ministry of the Law and of the Gospel, Paul is wrought up into holy ecstasy in describing the glory of the New Testament ministry, 2 Cor. 3, 1—11. He cheerfully made himself "the servant of all that he might gain the

more," and was made "all things to all men that he might by all means save some," 1 Cor. 9, 19—22. Yea, Paul was willing to be accursed from Christ for his kinsmen according to the flesh if thereby he could save them, Rom. 9, 1—5.

All the disagreeable things and hardships that a pastor may have to endure are more than counterbalanced even in this life by the satisfaction which is given through the winning of souls and the serving of one's Master and, finally, by the eternal blessings which are awaiting the faithful pastor in heaven, where the Lord Himself will give him a crown of righteousness, 2 Tim. 4, 8, and where those who have turned many to righteousness will shine as the stars forever and ever, Dan. 12, 3.

V

The age in which we live is not characterized by its dependence upon God and its confidence in Him. Men look to their own wisdom and power for their achievements. Are we not tempted at times—we may be slow to admit it—to achieve great things in the kingdom of God by our own schemes and our own way of doing things? Do we not at times lack faith in the power of the Gospel, Rom. 1, 16, and forget that without Christ we can do nothing? John 15, 5. Are not, after all, many of our failures and discouragements and our depressed spirits and fears, as also our lack of zeal and courage and aggressiveness, due to this? The Christian pastor, after all, is human and has all the frailties which are found with other Christians. With the great apostle he must say: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," Rom. 7, 18. And when he thinks of the accounting which he must give to God, he must, crushed in spirit, exclaim with the great apostle: "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. 2, 16. Thank God that he can also say with the same apostle: "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament," 3, 5, 6. That is our comfort. Even unto us the Lord says as He did unto Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Cor. 12, 9. That is our comfort. With the Lord we can safely rest our case and cheerfully and hopefully continue in that calling which brings to sinful men the everlasting Gospel for their everlasting salvation to the everlasting glory of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

J. H. C. FRITZ.

