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BACCALAUREATE SERMON

Preached Before
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in Summit Street Church
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By
REV. J. P. LANDIS, D.D., Ph.D.



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“Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.” II. Tim. 2:15.

Other valuable admonitions for the guidance of the young pastor Timothy are enjoined by the gifted apostle in the two letters addressed to him, among which are these: “Be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. . . . Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all. Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.” He reminds Titus that a bishop must hold “to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine and to convict the gainsayers.” “Preach the word.”

From the passage read as the special or leading text for this occasion it is clear that the apostle expected his young pastor to be an industrious laborer, earnest in seeking the approval of God upon the work, rather than to be looking after the approbation or applause of men, a workman so sincere and efficient that he need not be ashamed, so dispensing the word of truth that the hearers should each receive that portion which was adapted to his wants and circumstances.

These reflections are sufficiently explicit and comprehensive to point us to the theme of the hour—

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

It is of the utmost importance that the minister of the gospel have a distinct and adequate apprehension of the nature and design of the work to which he is to devote his life energies. It is in this as in other callings, if his ideas of it are incorrect his efforts will be misdirected, and if his ideals are low he will lack enthusiasm, and his efforts will be correspondingly feeble. The eminent Robert Hall said: “The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry our right arm is withered, and nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains.” Doctor William R. Harper held that one of the reasons for the present paucity of applicants for admission to the ministry is

the number of unqualified men now in the profession," and our own Doctor Etter says: "The reason that the ministry is crowded with so many inefficient occupants who fail to give full proof of their ministry is because they have failed to apprehend the dignified and lofty character of their mission." Surely it is the greatest calling on the globe, it is wider and more far reaching in its influence, it has graver responsibilities, it deals with higher subjects and interests than any other. As John R. Mott says: "As one contemplates even the regular functions of this calling, one must be convinced that in vital importance there is no work comparable to the Christian ministry."

This dignity and this importance arise not from any theory of orders, from the laying on of hands, though the ceremony of ordination is not without its value and meaning, but they arise from the character of the functions themselves of his office.

1. In the *first place* it is a ministry of "the truth." Timothy was admonished to handle "aright the word of truth." There is a sense in which all truth is sacred. There is also a sense in which all truth is of God, but still there is a difference. Not all truths at any rate are of equal importance. That Prince Henry of Germany, brother of the present Emperor, visited the United States a few years ago is by no means to be compared in importance and significance to the coming of Christ into this world. The violent death of Abraham Lincoln, though he died a martyr to a great cause, is not to be thought of in comparison with Christ's death on the cross. The truth with which the minister deals is moral truth or religious truth. It embraces the loftiest and most sacred relations and themes in the universe. Mathematical truth, historical truth, scientific truth are immensely important and useful to men, but the being of an infinite personality, his relations to the universe and to rational beings, his claims upon them; the truth of sin and redemption, of the atonement, of forgiveness, communion and fellowship with God; the origin of man as made in the image of God; his sublime destiny as indicated in the scriptures; the duties of man toward God and his fellowmen; justice, truthfulness, love, righteousness, holiness; the great love of God to man displayed in the gift of his only begotten Son, the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ—these moral and religious truths surpass in importance and dignity mere scientific and philosophical truth.

A knowledge of God is more important than any other truth, or all other truth. Comparatively speaking, we can afford not to know the history of Rome, and Greece, and Egypt, and Germany, and France, and even that of the United States, but we cannot afford to be ignorant of God. We can afford to be ignorant of arithmetic, and grammar, and botany, and geology,

and psychology, but we cannot afford to be ignorant of Jesus Christ and his great salvation. We may get on without knowing the constitution of the United States and the statutes of the State of Ohio, but we cannot afford not to be acquainted with the constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, and the laws of God and of his Son, the king of this great kingdom.

To know the facts or truths of nature as revealed to us in botany, and geology, and biology, and chemistry, and zoölogy, and astronomy is highly useful and important, and of great dignity, but nature is after all only finite, while nature's God is infinite. To know the ten thousand impersonal objects, the blind forces of the universe, and the physical laws of their operation is a great thing, but to be acquainted with the infinite Person, to be on terms of communion and intimate fellowship with him, to walk with him, to be inspired by him—the one who called into being these objects, who gave them their laws, who is behind or within these forces by a personal immanence—this is transcendently greater and more glorious. Now, it is these transcendent truths, these all-important, these divine truths which the minister is to handle. He is to make God known to men in a way they do not and cannot of themselves and by nature know him. It is true the minister cannot have a monopoly of these great truths, but he should at least be more familiar with them, know them better, appreciate them more than others do, so that he can, with more effectiveness, expound and illustrate to men the truth concerning God, his Son, the Holy Spirit, and all that long line of blessed doctrines which are connected with the work of Jesus Christ and the operations of the Holy Spirit in the earth.

Medicine is a great and worthy profession, both as to the wide fields of knowledge to which it introduces its students and the beneficence in the practice in its alleviation of physical suffering and restoration to bodily health. Your profession, viewed simply from the intellectual standpoint, introduces you to a still wider field of knowledge. If you are to be an *intelligent* expounder of the Word you must acquaint yourself with history—particularly the history of Egypt, of Assyria, of Babylonia, of Persia, of Lydia, of Greece, of Rome, and then that wide and fertile field, the history of the Christian church, which again brings you into contact with all modern history.

Likewise, if one is to have a knowledge of Biblical truth in its internal and external relations—and no truth is really understood until it is so apprehended—if one is to comprehend the teachings of the Word in something like a unity, we at once are obliged to call to our help that hand-maid of theology, philosophy. The intelligent student of God's Word, as well as

the teacher of the same, will be constantly, at every step, coming in contact with the terms and ideas of spirit, personality, power, free-will, cause, creation, moral government, sin, faith, right, duty, and so on, the very attempt to define or comprehend which immediately lands you in philosophy.

Such chapters as Genesis ten introduces you into ethnology and anthropology. Genesis first and second, not to speak of other parts, will bring you in contact with geology and biology. The eighth and nineteenth psalms, together with other passages, introduce you to astronomy. This is enough to show that to the intellectual and broadly comprehensive student of the Bible almost the whole realm of knowledge will furnish him help, will assist him to a fuller, broader comprehension of Biblical truth, will liberalize him, tend to make him sympathetic with all truth, and furnish him a world of useful illustrations when seeking to teach others. It is not a mere figure of speech, therefore, or a piece of rhetorical license, when I say that all the sciences above adverted to are but so many chapters in the great science which it is the preacher's business to know and teach—the science of God.

Law is a worthy and lofty science. High claims are made for its dignity by its votaries, and rightly. It is in the realm of the ethical, it is a moral science. But the sphere of morals is higher than physical forces and operations and their laws. Now, moral forces, moral laws, questions of obligation, duties, rights are among the very staple ideas of the Bible. The student and teacher of the word of truth is perforce compelled to be dealing with these higher ideas continually.

But religion takes us up into a still higher realm, the highest of all. We have now ascended into the very heaven of thought and life. We are face to face with God. I do not mean this in a mystical sense. I mean that we have reached and are breathing in the spiritual realm, the supersensuous world. We are face to face in thought, in contemplation, in experience with realities of which natural science and philosophy as such know nothing, for these verities do not come within their purview. After all, spiritual things are the greatest things, the only permanent, abiding things. The unseen underlies the seen. The world, the universe, was not made as an end in itself, nor yet for material purposes, but to serve spiritual ends; that is, that which relates to spirit, which includes, to be sure, intellectual, moral, and religious elements.

Henry Ward Beecher somewhere said one of the chief differences among ministers of the word lies in their varying capacities for realizing spiritual verities; that is, really grasping them, seeing and feeling them as realities. These spiritual things of which I am speaking are to some persons shadowy,

Indistinct, afar off, unreal, while to another they are, as it were, entities. They almost take bodily form, at least they are actual realities. A minister should have a genius for spiritual things. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned," says the Word.

Thus, then, the nature and dignity of the ministry are vindicated by our reflections on it as a ministry of "the truth."

2. The greatness and dignity and nature of the ministerial office appear when we remember that the minister is an ambassador for Christ. Paul said: "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us." An ambassador's office in the political world is looked upon as a high and very worthy and responsible office, a position of great dignity. To represent the government of the United States at the court of St. James, or in Paris, or in Berlin, is esteemed as a high honor. The ambassador represents the wishes, the rights, the prerogatives, the interests of his government, his nation. He has the authority to speak for and transact the business of his nation with the nation to whom he has been sent. The United States is a great nation. It has great commercial and political relations with the nations of the whole world. It is one of the great powers of earth, whose voice is heard and respected around the whole belt of the globe. In the recent Russo-Japanese war, when those two great, strong, independent nations were in the terrible throes of that bitter struggle, when the President of the United States laid his hands—speaking figuratively—upon the shoulders of the two determined sovereigns and said: "Your Majesties, is it not about time you would lay down your arms, stop this bloody fray, and make peace?" those potentates made their bow and availed themselves of the kindly offices of the United States to bring the dreadful struggle to an end. Such is the dignity and influence and power of the nation which President Charles Eliot is asked to represent in Great Britain. But what is this government of the United States in comparison with the Kingdom of Heaven? What are our national interests as compared with those of the King of kings and Lord of lords? Our earth is one of the smallest of all the known worlds, and our Government controls but a fraction of its surface and its population.

But the Kingdom of God is spread territorially in this world over North and South America, over Europe, Australia, and parts of Asia, Africa, and other islands of the sea, and is destined in the will and by the promise of God to cover the whole world. The Kingdom of God, however, is one. God has not two moral or spiritual governments. His rule beyond the skies, in the heaven of heavens, and here on earth is one, and although

that rule is not yet fully established in this world, though his will is not yet done as it is done in heaven, there is the same divine sovereign here as there, the principles of love and righteousness, of holiness and peace, so far as they do prevail, are the same; the same laws of absolute obedience and trust are in force here as there; the same characteristics, as expressed for example in the beatitudes, are required of the subjects of the kingdom here as there. God's moral rule extends over the whole universe wherever there are moral beings. What must be the numbers of the angelic hosts, the numbers who have gone up from this world who have made their robes white in the blood of the lamb? the vast numbers, presumably, in other and distant realms of the universe over all of whom God holds rule. How vast must be the interests of a kingdom of such enormous extent, containing such inconceivable numbers. What a thought it is to be even a member, a subject of this great kingdom! But to be an ambassador of the king of such a kingdom, represent his interests, his rights, his claims, to have share in such transactions is an honor and responsibility almost beyond conception. The church, the visible organism, represents on earth this kingdom. The minister, the missionary, the Christian worker in any recognized capacity, works through this organization. The church, while not precisely the same thing as the kingdom, stands for this kingdom. This gives a glorious dignity and significance to the church. Now, the minister is a bishop, an overseer, a steward of the vast and important interests of the Kingdom of Heaven as represented in and by the church. The church is the greatest institution, the most widely extended, the most powerful, the most persistent, the best on the face of the globe; this notwithstanding her admitted shortcomings and imperfections. She is greatest in her origin, in her scope, in her purpose and aim, in her achievements. A proper conception of the nature, aim, power, achievements, and prospects of the church will serve to give a more exalted and accurate and enthusiastic view of the Christian ministry.

The church is the custodian of the "word of truth," which the pastor is admonished to divide out aright, and the pastor is the chief organ in the propagation of that truth.

3. This leads me to say, in the third place, that one of the chief functions of the minister is to "preach the word" as Paul urged upon Timothy. Christ himself commanded, "Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." When he sent out the twelve he charged them, "As ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus himself preached. It is said when "he had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples he departed thence to teach

and to preach in their cities." Paul says, "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Whether we consider the source or the character of the truth to be proclaimed, or the end proposed in preaching, which is the salvation of mankind and the complete establishment in earth of the Kingdom of God, there is certainly no work to which the orator can address himself which can be compared to the preaching of the gospel. Says Dr. Thomas Murphy: "Let it be borne in mind that the ministry was appointed chiefly for the purpose of preaching." "To preach is to deliver God's message of mercy and love and instruction to men." "This is the minister's highest calling, his imperative duty. . . . When he does this, then no tongue can exaggerate the dignity of his work as a herald to proclaim the communications of heaven to a lost world." "To proclaim the messages of God to man is the most noble and solemn thing to which a man can be called."

Doctor Jefferson, of the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, says: "No other work will ever take precedence over this. No progress of humanity will ever render this work unnecessary. . . . So long as the world exists, God will continue to ordain preachers." "The whole world feels that Jesus of Nazareth has the words of eternal life, and the man who understands these words, and who can interpret them in clear and convincing speech to his fellow-men is certain of a hearing." Again he says in his book: "The minister a prophet"; "nothing can take the place of preaching. There is no power under heaven equal to the power of a God-inspired pulpit."

But, brethren, this is no easy work. Some people, some even who wear the title of "Reverend," think to *preach* must be an easy thing. All one needs to do is to turn to a passage of scripture, open one's mouth, and the Lord will essentially do the rest. Many more, knowing better than this, think a few propositions or thoughts jotted down, a few scripture passages gathered bearing more or less upon those thoughts, especially if seasoned with a few minutes of prayer, will put the Lord Almighty under obligations miraculously to transmute this jumble into the bread of life for those who are fooled into thinking the man in the pulpit is preaching. Preaching is more than noise, more than pious bombast, more than lacrymose exhortation. It is even more than exposition, orderly, logical Biblical disquisition. It involves a previous incorporation or incarnation, I may even say, of the truth, which is not done by some miraculous means for us, but which the preacher must secure under the blessing of God by profound, long-continued, ardent seeking after it by study, meditation and prayer,

and then pour this red-hot upon the hearer. Dr. Herrick Johnson's idea of it is none too high when he says in his "Ideal Ministry," "To be like Christ, to stand in his stead, and speak in his behalf, sensible of a divine commission, persuaded that we are his ambassadors . . . thus persuaded, to take the truths of holy Scripture and unfold, illustrate, amplify them for enlightenment and persuasion, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to have them intensified by profound personal conviction, fused in fires of one's own soul, poured upon waiting ears and hearts from lips touched with God's altar-fire, and accompanied by every possible adjunct of effective posture and gesture and voice—this is preaching." I tell you, brethren, much that is labeled preaching, is no preaching at all. It is but a caricature of preaching. I certainly agree with Doctor Jefferson when he says, "The work of preaching is the most difficult thing which the minister is called to do. Indeed, it is the most difficult task to which any mortal man can set himself. It is at once the most strenuous and the most exacting of all forms of labor."

4. The ends aimed at by the ministry, the objects of its ordaining are also the highest. Perhaps we can put these all under the phrase, "the salvation of men." We may say the object of Christ in setting up his kingdom on earth is to save mankind. But too long, alas! too long have we failed to recognize the full beauty and scope of the term "salvation." We have made it synonymous with getting safely to heaven. But is not a much broader idea the true one? Is not Doctor Gladden right when he reminds us that the minister is concerned with the interests of character? Henry Ward Beecher said: "The preacher's real end is to be found in the soul-building that is going on. He is an artist of living forms, of invisible colors; an architect of a house not built with hands—Jesus Christ, the foundation." "He is an artist, not of forms and matter, but of the soul. Every stroke of his brush must bring out some element of the likeness to Christ which he is seeking to produce." Certainly it is eminently worth while to save a man from hell, to put him upon the way to heaven. But salvation ought to do more than that. It should deliver from the power and dominion of sin, from the love and pursuit of sin. It should redeem and reconstruct and build up. Beecher said: "The thing the preacher aims at all the while is reconstructed manhood." The students of Gladden's "Christian Pastor" are familiar with his phraseology on this point: "The preaching that saves manhood—that saves it from being frittered away in the frivolities of life; from being consumed by the canker of avarice, from being blasted by the mildew of idleness, from being wrecked on the breakers of passion, from

being enervated by luxury, from being crippled by the creeping paralysis of doubt, is the kind of preaching which the world will always need. *This* is to save men from sin and sorrow and shame; to save them from losses that are irreparable; to save them for lives of honor and nobility, and for the service of humanity." The minister's preaching, and much of his pastoral effort, will be turned, first, say in the evangelistic direction. Our own Church, with many others, has always stood for the conversion of souls. We have expended most of our energy in this direction. Our Church was born in a revival, we have fostered the revival spirit. Our ministers have sought to be skillful and successful evangelists. I have said to our classes in pastoral theology, that every pastor should be an evangelist, should diligently cultivate the art of winning men to Christ; that it will be an evil day for us as a denomination when we—if we ever do—lose our ability or our zeal in this particular, or even when our pastors generally learn to depend on special evangelists. I do not wish to be misunderstood. There is doubtless a place for the special evangelist. Moody, Whittle, Chapman, Torrey, not to speak of our own Doctor Hicks and Rev. J. E. Shannon, have by their great work vindicated the place and work of the evangelist.

But there is another side to the minister's work every whit as important as, and still more difficult than that of securing the conversion of men, and that is, the moral and spiritual education of his converts, the training of them in holy living, their instruction in the Word. The minister is to teach them the duties of a Christian, of a true man, a member of church, of society, of the state; he is to train him to Christian activity. He is to give him a clear and just vision of his relations to all the interests of the kingdom and of the whole world. He has the task of making true men and true women of his church members—but the help of God to make saints of God of them, who will not shirk responsibility and duty, but who will be always ready for every good word and work. Tell me not this is an easy task. Tell me not it falls below evangelism in importance, in significance, in beauty. William Ellery Channing used to tell the school-teachers that they were engaged in the highest work on earth. He said: "It is more important than that of the statesman. The statesman may set fences round our property and dwellings, but how much more are we indebted to him who calls forth the powers and affections of those for whom our property is earned and our dwellings are reared and who renders our children objects of increasing love and respect?" "The statesman works with coarse instruments for coarse ends; the educator is to work by the most refined influences on that delicate, ethereal essence—the im-

mortal soul." This, too, is the work of the pastor. We can appropriate to our use the title of Horace Bushnell's remarkable book, and say that a *chief* function of the minister's work is "Christian Nurture." If the building of a warship like the Oregon, or the erection of a St. Paul's Cathedral, which is the putting skillfully together of quantities of physical materials which by and by must crumble to earth again, is a great work, what must we say of the building up of a spiritual temple to nobility, to goodness, to virtue; in righteousness, integrity, and honor; in love, and faith, and reverence; in sympathy and truth—in short, in God-likeness—in shaping and molding for usefulness and happiness here and hereafter an immortal soul. What is the chiseling of a marble fawn, a Greek slave, or an Apollo Belvidere to such artistic work as this? Spirit is higher than matter; spirit products are greater than material products. Can there be any greater work than this committed to mortal men or to angels? Do we not in our communion need, not less evangelistic work, but more, *vastly more* of this real, effective pastoral work?

5. This training of the membership of the church—of the individual and of the aggregate membership—must, as already suggested, include that breadth of view and sympathy and effort which will not be circumscribed by the narrow bounds of parish or denomination, but which will embrace the whole world. The minister and the layman both must learn the full meaning of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," and we must learn to *pray* that prayer, not simply to repeat the words. It is the preacher's business to understand, appreciate, and enthusiastically proclaim and deeply instill into his flock the idea that the church is responsible, every member, too, in his individual share, responsible for the conquest of the whole world, for the coming of the kingdom in Africa and Asia and the islands, as well as in America. Oh! how little, how mean, how contracted is the idea of tens of thousands of church members of the nature, genius, spirit, and object of the church? How can Christians read their Bibles and not see that the church is nothing but a missionary; that the command is on all of us to *go*, or the obligation is upon us to give a reasonable reason why we do not personally go, and be *gladly* willing if we cannot personally go to send a substitute, or help send one.

6. Next it is our business to see, and, according to the proportion of our ability, to make others see that the gospel has a message not only for the isolated individual, but as well for man in all his relations, for men in aggregations. No man lives unto himself or by himself. Shailer Mathews, in his

book, "The Church and the Changing Order," says, "The individual Christian, if he approach the ideal of Jesus and Paul, is being made into a man who *cannot* live an isolated life." That is, he takes interest in, and is concerned for all life. He sees that the gospel is adapted to, and intended for society as well as for the individual. Doctor Gladden employs brave language when he says: "Christianity is not merely for Sundays and prayer-meetings, for closet and death-bed; it is for shop and office, for counting-room and factory, for kitchen and drawing-room, for forum and council chamber. Unless it has power to rule all these multifarious affairs of men it is less than nothing and vanity; the sooner the world is done with it the better." "When men begin to comprehend that the law of love is not a sentimental maxim, but that it is . . . the supreme regulative principle of human society, and when they make their business and their politics conform to this law, they will discover that Christianity is not a failure."

Observing men are well aware that the great questions of our time are social. There is a social consciousness rising. "This social consciousness," says Josiah Strong, "is growing, though as yet it is uninstructed." But it must be instructed. Who is to instruct it if not the preacher? Says Rauschenbusch, "Western civilization is passing through a social revolution unparalleled in history for scope and power." Also, "The relation between Christianity and the social crisis is one of the most pressing questions for all intelligent men who realize the power of religion, and most of all for the religious leaders of the people who give direction to the forces of religion."

Has the gospel a message for our times? Do the gospel and the church and the ministry have any relations to society, any relation to the commercial, the educational, the political world? any message for labor, for capital? Do the social laws of Jesus, which Strong defines as the Law of Service, the Law of Sacrifice, and the Law of Love apply to men organized into corporations, companies, labor unions, etc.? or are these institutions each a law unto themselves, or are they not amenable to any moral law? It is well known that men organized into corporate bodies, aggregations of men, will do what no individual man would think of doing. Corporations and other organized bodies of men arrive at the state of persons—have personal qualities and thus, of course, come under the moral law just as individual persons do. Strange if the New Testament should have a message for the individual only, and not for men in masses. Shailer Mathews says the church "must teach if there can be no regenerate society without regenerate men, neither can there be regenerate men without regenerate society."

I have not time to enlarge upon this. The students will recall my discussion of "The Message of the Gospel to Our Times." I simply wish to emphasize the fact that the ministry to-day, if it is not to fail in its great mission, must acquaint itself with the spirit, the trend, the evils, the wrongs of our times, and like the prophets of old cry out against the evils and wrongs, some of which threaten the foundations of society, instruct the public conscience, defend the oppressed, inculcate day and night and everlastingly, in season and out of season, the laws of the great Teacher, which are the laws of the kingdom, the laws of the gospel. A physician cannot intelligently prescribe until he has diagnosed the case. The minister or the church cannot apply the remedy to maladies of the times without a keen and thorough understanding of them. He is set for the redemption and salvation of society in its various forms as well as for the salvation of the individual man. Here is a program big enough for the greatest brain, the largest culture, the most Rooseveltian strenuousness, the most Pauline consecration. The scope of the ministry is wide as the wide world in all its multifarious affairs, deep as the deepest needs of human nature, high as heaven, divine in its origin and divine in its end. God grant that you may be able to make full proof of your ministry.



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