

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

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## Doctrinal Theology.

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### THEOLOGY.

Theology in the narrower sense of the term is the doctrine of holy Scripture concerning the true God.

Theology in this sense must be distinguished from Natural Theology, which is a chapter in Philosophy, primarily inscribed in the book of Nature, "*the heavens declaring the glory of God, and the firmament showing his handiwork, day unto day uttering speech, and night unto night showing knowledge,*"<sup>1)</sup> so that "*the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*"<sup>2)</sup> Thus it is that the fundamentals of natural theology swell the volumes of ancient philosophy, and the statement of modern ethnology that "there has not been a single tribe, no matter how rude, known in history or visited by travelers, which has been shown to be destitute of religion,"<sup>3)</sup> says nothing that is new to us who have it from higher authority that there is among all heathen some knowledge of God, since "*that which may be known*

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1) Ps. 19, 1. 2.

2) Rom. 1, 20.

3) Brinton, Religions of primitive peoples, p. 30.

## The Pulpit.

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*SERMON delivered at Bethlehem Church, St. Louis, Mo., on the 10th Sunday after Trinity, 1889, at the ordination and installation of Rev. F. Adams, first pastor of Grace Ev. Luth. Church, St. Louis, Mo.*

ACTS 20, 28.

In Christ our Lord dearly beloved:

God, our heavenly Father, has at last fulfilled our prayer and granted what we so long have wished for, an English Lutheran missionary and pastor, who is to reside in our midst and devote all his time and strength to the building up of an English Lutheran congregation in this city, standing in doctrine and practice on the same foundation with the German Lutheran Synod of Missouri. I doubt not, you all return thanks to the Lord for this His grace and goodness. But having an English Lutheran missionary and pastor in your midst, you are not thereby released from all obligation to work for your English Lutheran congregation. From this day both you and your pastor must unceasingly pray God to bless your united efforts in the faithful performance of your respective duties. Therefore I intend on this occasion to encourage our new missionary for English home mission and your new pastor to do his duty among you and in his field of labor, and also to exhort you all to value and receive his labor as God requires of you. I shall therefore call your attention to

THE PASTOR'S DUTY,

and endeavor to set forth,

- I. *What his duty is, and*
- II. *What should move him to perform it.*

## I.

Our text is taken from the words which St. Paul addressed to the elders of Ephesus. He desired to exhort them to diligence in their work as pastors and therefore reminded them of their duties while holding their pastoral office. What Paul charged these elders or pastors to do, must be done by all pastors. What, then, is the duty of a pastor? *St. Paul says*: "*Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock.*" Following the example given by the inspired apostle, I must first of all, my dear brother, ask you to "*take heed unto yourself.*" For how can we expect you to take heed to *the flock*, if you do not even take heed unto yourself? But what does this mean: "*Take heed unto yourself!?*" Nothing less than that you should make the salvation of your own soul the main object of your life. By the grace of God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, you have been brought to a living faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "*Take heed,*" lest you yourself pluck such faith from your heart and cast it from you. Put on the armor of the Lord and battle bravely against the foes which seek to rob you of this gift of God, against the world, the devil, and your own flesh, and remember that loss of faith sweeps from your soul all hope of salvation. Never neglect an opportunity offered by your Savior to grow in faith, in knowledge, in charity, in holiness. Continue instant in prayer, but above all, cease not to pray that you may by the power of God be kept through faith unto salvation (1 Pet. 1, 5; Phil. 1, 6.).

Thus taking heed unto yourself it is your duty as pastor also to take heed *unto all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseer.* In other words, you are to care for the spiritual welfare of your congregation. But what is the flock to which you are to take heed? Paul tells us by immediately adding, "*to feed the church of God.*" The congregation to which you are called, and all who will be gathered into its fold while you are its pastor, is, then,

your flock. Christ Himself compares the church to a flock, of which He is the chief shepherd, having in His employ assistants, servants, rather, the ministers of the gospel, to each of whom He entrusts a small flock, which is a part of the whole.

To this flock, then, to which the pastor is called, he is to take heed.—Let us not forget that Paul tells pastors to take heed “*to ALL the flock.*” A flock may contain not only healthy, but also ailing sheep. So a congregation may have in its midst such members as are sound and strong in their Christianity, and some who are but weak. The strong in faith are not to be neglected on account of the weak in faith, neither must they receive attention at the cost of the weak in faith. The pastor is to take heed to all.—The flock or church of God contains not only grown people, whom Christ terms His sheep, but also young people and children, whom Christ receives as His lambs. The pastor should attend to both. He must not believe that those in riper years than himself are well able to take care of themselves without his assistance, neither must he look upon young people and children as too insignificant for his attention. Should any thought of this kind arise in you, then turn to John 21, 15, 17, where Christ bids Simon Peter: “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.” Read the words of St. John (1 John 2, 13): “I write unto you fathers, because ye have known Him, that is from the beginning. I write unto you young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because you have known the father.”

From this you see, my friends, that you can not receive the labor of your pastor according to the will of God, without permitting him to take heed to you all. You young people and children must not suppose the pastor to be here only for the aged, as if Christianity were a matter to which you need not attend before you become gray; neither should the more advanced in years despise the pastor’s labor, as if

their age and experience in life and Christianity put them above needing the assistance of a young man. No, if you belong to the flock, to the church of God, it is the pastor's duty to take heed unto you also, no matter what your age, wisdom, or experience may be.

Now, what is meant by taking heed unto the flock? Paul tells us, saying: "To feed the church of God." The flock is fed for the purpose of sustaining life in its members, and that they may become strong and defend themselves when attacked, and resist all that might otherwise do them harm. But what is the food which the pastor is to give to the congregation? It is not earthly, bodily, but spiritual food, it is the word of God, whereby the soul may be strengthened and kept in faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation. The way in which the pastor is to give this food to his flock, the church of God, *is by teaching and preaching the word* and administering the holy sacraments. By teaching children in a parochial school the word of God and instructing them in the way unto salvation by impressing the simple bible truth contained in our Lutheran Catechism into their hearts and minds, by proclaiming in public sermons to young and old the revealed word of the Old and New Testament, a pastor "feeds the church of God." That is the reason why Paul requires of every pastor in the first place, that he be "apt to teach." And in order that all may know that it is the duty of the pastor, as such, to teach only God's word, the apostle bids Timothy (2 Tim. 4, 2): "Preach the word." He is not to preach anything that might seem reasonable or agreeable to himself, but must strictly preach the *word of God* as it is contained in the Bible, and he is not to deviate one line from this rule of doctrine. No matter if he make friend or enemy, no matter if such course seem to open a large field of labor before him or to cut off all hopes of working progress in the Lord's vineyard, his line of duty is marked out for him by the divine command, Tit. 2, 1: "But speak thou the things which

become sound doctrine." If he should ever teach or preach that which he knows to be contrary to the Holy Bible, he would become a wolf that destroys and devours the flock of God, instead of feeding it. And if fear or favor of men should ever move him to cede any doctrine of the Bible, he would be guilty of robbing the flock of that food which the chief Shepherd Himself has provided for it. It is his duty to teach and preach in such a manner, that he may one day say to his congregation (Acts 20, 26. 27): "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

So the Bible shows, that the congregation must not suppose their pastor to be here only for the purpose of helping you to while away your leisure hours; neither are you to expect him to elevate the standard of your community in social matters, in politics, art, science, etc. Officially, as pastor, he has nothing to do with such things. Then, again, you must not censure him for teaching you and requiring you to receive all the doctrines of the Bible. There are many doctrines in the Scriptures which no man can fathom. They may seem foolish to the reason of natural man, or to be far behind the times and unsuitable for our present age of reason and advanced stage of intelligence. But you must not require your pastor to drop or conceal such points. On the contrary, if he shows you, that what he preaches is taken from the Bible, you are to receive it as God's eternal truth, which you may not deny or resist wilfully and pertinaciously without cutting yourselves off from the flock of Christ. God's word and not man's reason must reign supreme in God's Church: that is the rule to which the congregation should bind itself and its pastor.

Now, what is this word of God with which the pastor is to feed the Church of God? It is twofold, it is the Law and the Gospel. The law is that portion of God's word which tells us what we must do and not do, and how we

are to be. If we study the law, we shall find, that God requires full and perfect freedom from all sin, and unspotted holiness. He judges not only our actions, but also our thoughts and the desires and inclinations of our hearts. No living being can be sincere and yet say (Prov. 20, 9): "I have my heart clean, I am free from my sin." No, every single soul must cry out over its own sins and the sins of its fellowmen and say (Ps. 106, 6): "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3, 23). So the pastor must, from the law, show that all men are sinners, and that our human nature is naturally depraved, and it is his duty to point out sins in particular, where he meets them. The pastor's duty is enjoined in the words (Is. 58, 1): "Cry loud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." If he fails to do this, he prevents his flock from seeking salvation.

So then, my dear friends, if you wish your pastor to do his duty, do not try to detain him from preaching the law. Let him lay open to you the sinfulness of your hearts; do not become angry at him for pointing out your sins to you; for by so doing he is to benefit you, while, if he neglect his duty and fail to preach the law, he will do you no good, but prevent you, as far as he is concerned, from being concerned about the salvation of your souls.

But I have already said that the word of God which the pastor must preach does not only consist of the law but of the gospel also. Were the pastor to do nothing but preach the law, he would sadly neglect the flock entrusted to his care; instead of feeding them, he would starve them to death. By the law comes knowledge of sin, but it can not save from sin. It shows the disease, but is not able to cure. It makes man hungry for salvation, but may not bring salvation. All this must be done by the *gospel*.

When, therefore, Paul makes it the duty of the pastor to feed the flock, he has in mind most especially the preaching of the gospel. The gospel is that part of God's word which tells us of the work of salvation performed by our Savior Jesus Christ. It tells us how the Son of God, by whom all things were made, became a man for our sake; how He, the holy One, fulfilled all the law for all men; how He, the innocent One, suffered Himself to be abused and sacrificed on the cross for the sins of all men; how God became reconciled to the world through the satisfaction made by His Son for our sins, and how God is willing to forgive all our sins and receive us as His children and heirs of heaven, if we but be reconciled to Him through faith in His Son. But the gospel is not a mere history of facts, it is also a power of God. I have said God desires us to be reconciled to Himself through faith in His Son. But how are we to come to this faith, we, who can not by nature receive the things of the Spirit of God? The gospel is the means through which God plants faith in our hearts. It is the incorruptible seed of which we may be born again unto life in Christ, for (Rom. 10, 17) "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is the food that makes the weak in faith strong, it is the oil that keeps the light of our faith burning. The gospel (1 Cor. 1, 18), "the preaching of the cross, is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God," it makes us wise unto salvation.

This gospel, this breath of life, which quickens the sinner from spiritual death, which strenghtens and keeps us in faith to eternal life, this gospel must be that, with which the pastor feeds the church of God. May you, then, my dear brother, never forget that your whole pastoral duty is comprised in the charge pronounced by the Lord Himself (Mark 16, 16): "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." All that you say or do, your teaching, rebuking, reprovng, exhorting, must be done to



pave the way for the glad tidings that forgiveness of sin was prepared for us by Christ's obedience unto death, by which the troubled hearts are comforted. Lift up your heart and vow to God and this congregation (1 Cor. 2, 2): "I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Doing this "you will both save yourself and them that hear you."

And as for you, my dear friends of this congregation, do you with meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1, 21.) Never get tired of hearing that old, old story. Hear it with pleasure. Above all, let it enter into your hearts, that it may be the seed of living faith in you. It is the power of God to save you. Pray God that you may never resist this His power, but be saved by His gospel from the death, into which sin has cast you. Feed upon the gospel of Christ, that you may become strong sheep of the flock of God, and ready to resist those who would separate you from your good Shepherd Jesus Christ. There are many that will attempt to rob you of your faith; there is the devil, there is your own flesh, there is the world with its persecution, its allurements to sin, its false prophets. Let me call your attention especially to the latter.

Christ Himself warned us: Beware of false prophets, and all the apostles never weary of telling the Christians to beware of false prophets, that is, men who pretend to preach God's word, but who really corrupt God's word by their own imaginations. Such men are dangerous. They offer poison to the flock which should have healthy food. They bring death into the church of God. That is why Christ calls them ravening wolves. It is of such false prophets that Paul speaks immediately after our text (Acts 20, 29), calling them "grievous wolves not sparing the flock, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." And he then proceeds to tell pastors, v. 31: "*Therefore watch.*" And so, my dear brother, I must tell you: "*Therefore watch.*" Show your congregation the errors into which

they are apt to fall. Be a faithful shepherd in this, that you protect your flock against the false doctrines of false prophets. And do you all examine diligently all that you hear, examine it by the light of God's word, and if it does not bear this examination, reject it as you would poison.

Having shown you the main parts of the pastor's duty, let me now add a few words to show you:

## II.

*What should move the pastor to perform his duty.*

As a rule people practise a profession in order to gain a livelihood, and to accumulate money. Now is it this that should move a pastor to do his duty? No! It is true (1 Cor. 9, 14): "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel," and "he that feeds a flock should eat of the milk of the flock" (v. 7). It should not be necessary for a pastor who labors in the word and doctrine, to seek a living by other means, but should receive what he needs from the church. But that is not what should move him to serve as a pastor; for St. Peter (1 Pet. 5, 2) warns pastors: "Feed the flock of God which is among you. . . not for filthy lucre." As love of money should not move a person to perform the duties of a pastor, so should the love of sway never be his motive. Luke 22, 25. Christ tells His ministers that they should not be as the kings of the gentiles, who exercise lordship and authority; and Peter admonishes them (1 Pet. 5, 2. 3): "Feed the flock . . . neither as being lords over God's heritage;" and as Paul speaks of all pastors, saying to the congregations (2 Cor. 24): "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy."

What, then, should move a pastor to perform the duties of his office faithfully? St. Paul gives two motives in the words of our text: 1) "*over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God.*" Who is it, then, that gives pastors to the church. According to our

text it is God. The pastor is called by the congregation, that is true; but the congregation acts as God's instrument, through which God calls. It is the Holy Ghost that makes men pastors or overseers. The pastor is, therefore, in the Lord's service, he is a servant of God in a special sense. Should a person be backward in serving such a Master? Never! Should not the pastor seek God's favor? But how can he expect God to favor him, if he refuses to do what God has commanded? There is no master so just and powerful to punish the disobedient as the Lord. And, again, who is so able and willing to reward a faithful servant as the Lord? Does not heaven and earth belong to Him? Is it not altogether impossible for God to lie? (Hebr. 6, 18.) And has He not promised (Matt. 25, 21) to make him who has been faithful over a few things ruler over many things, and to receive him into the joy of the Lord? Should not this gracious promise move a pastor to serve his divine Lord faithfully?

So it should be with you also, my dear brother. You must ever remember, that the Holy Ghost, Almighty God, has made you overseer of this congregation and placed you into this field of labor. You are, then, not at liberty to come and to go at your pleasure. This flock has been entrusted to your care by your Lord and Master, and it is He, and He alone, who is to decide when your labor in this part of the church is to cease. Never forget, that God made you overseer of this flock. Let this truth encourage and move you to do your duty with all diligence. The work to be done will often seem too hard, and you will as an English Lutheran pastor and missionary meet with many obstacles where you have not expected to find them, and you will be tempted to take your hand from the heavy plow. But in such moments look forward to the joy prepared in heaven for faithful pastors; think of the everlasting future where you shall rest your weary limbs in the bosom of Him who has graciously received you into the number of His as-

sistants and who is *your* Good Shepherd. If the delusive pleasures of this world should seek to draw you from the work which your Creator and Savior commanded you to do, then remember that the world and all its pleasure will soon pass away, but that you will one day be placed before the judgment seat of your Lord, to give an account of your stewardship as shepherd of His flock. How terrible if He should find you wanting and drive you from His face. Therefore, never forget that the Holy Ghost hath made you overseer.—

But you, my dear congregation, should also be mindful of these truths. Sooner or later you will find that your new pastor is but a man, wrestling against his flesh and blood; you will see that he can not please all. Then remember that God made him your overseer, and beware lest you forget God's word (1 Chron. 16, 22): "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Do not by threat or bribe try to degrade the servant of God to a servant of man. Though he is responsible to you for what he does, yet in the first place he is responsible to God. Do as Paul tells you (1 Thess. 5, 13): "Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake." As he labors in the word and doctrine, let him be counted worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5, 17). He needs all the encouragement you can give him. I am confident that I have not spoken to you in vain.

The second motive for a pastor to do his duty is contained in the words: "*feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.*" What, then, is it that God has committed to the care of the pastor? Is it gold and silver and precious stones? Or is it an empire, or is it the world, or is it even heaven with its treasures? No—all this cost God no more than the word he spoke while creating it. But that which God entrusts to the pastor had to be purchased by God Himself. And the price He paid was nothing less than God's own blood. What can we think of more precious than God's blood? And yet even

this was the price at which He purchased the church, over which, my dear brother, He has made you an overseer. Should not that move you to do your duty with all care and diligence? What?—If God hastened to lay down His own life for the souls here present, can you for a moment hesitate to place all your time, all your care, all your labor, all your thoughts, yea, all your prayers and wishes at the service of these precious jewels which your Lord has entrusted to your care? O never forget that if the whole world were placed under your hands, your responsibility would not be so great as it is now, even if your charge comprised but one person; for that one person has been purchased by the blood of God. Labor faithfully, then, that you may by the grace of your God be the instrument to bring into the mansions of your divine Master that which He bought at so high a price. Fear not, the Lord is with you. He will give Spirit and power to the word you shall preach; He will strengthen and keep you by His Holy Ghost to do His work. Let this be your comfort under all trials.

And you, my dear friends and members of Grace congregation, do not forget that you were purchased with the blood of God, purchased from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil. God purchased you, that you might be made to enjoy eternal salvation, to which He desires to bring you through the ministry of your pastor. Do not resist His grace. Attend diligently to the word of God preached by this His servant. Pray the Lord to give him wisdom and power and zeal; pray to God to give you understanding and willingness to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1, 21). Then He who has purchased both pastor and congregation will, when the proper time shall come, place you as precious jewels before His heavenly throne and feed the shepherd and the flock with never ending joy and bliss, for the sake of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. God grant it. Amen.

C. L. J.