THE PULPIT.

Synodical Sermon.

PREACHED LAST EVENING BEFORE THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, IN SESSION IN NEW-YORK, IN THE CHURCH OF SEVENTH STREET, BY REV. A. R. VAN NOSTRAND, D.D.

The Synodical Sermon, preached by the Rev. Dr. Van Nostrand, before the Synod, at the Second Reformed Dutch Church, (Rev. Dr. Berg's,) last evening, of which the following is a brief synopsis, was founded upon the text of Scripture:

"Forbidding to marry."—1 Timothy, iv. 3.

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not."—2 Corinthians, iv. 1.

The subject-matter of the discourse was—*The Christian Ministry*. The views advanced by the learned speaker are extremely high Church, and, as will be seen, are largely founded upon the similarity supposed to exist between the authority of Christ and the Apostles and that of the Priesthood.

The *first* position assumed was, that the Aaronic Priesthood and the Gospel Ministry were both instituted immediately by the Son of God; and that they were based on the same sacred and divine authority. The Father discussion of this position proceeded to illustrate from the Scriptures that ever since the fall of man the office of mediation between God and man had been performed by Christ alone; that, in the patriarchal times, the Father had been the priest, dwelling in tent and tabernacle, in the flesh that the latter had thus interposed, so that, in many instances, before Christ had visited our world, manifested in human form, and assumed the office and of messenger of the Father, the glorious form, this was, perhaps, necessary, by the fall that had taken place, the sin of Adam's transgression, and the fall of the race in him, all direct and immediate intercourse between the Father and sinful man ceased. From that time, the government of the world had been committed to the Son, and his visitations of Godhead in human form were all instances of his assuming our nature in the fulness of time.

"IT WAS AT THIS POINT, the speaker, that Christ fully organized his visible Church under the Levitical dispensation. He selected Aaron and his sons to minister in the tabernacle, and at his altar, the visible symbol of his presence in the Most Holy Place between the cherubim, and near the Mercy Seat.

"Speaking of the prophecy of Haggai, respecting the glory of the latter temple, that the desire of nations should come to it, and the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts, Dr. Van Nostrand said that this had been fulfilled when the Eternal Word, the Desire of all nations, tabernacled in our flesh, although strictly it was but an enlarging and rebuilding of the Second; was honored by the presence of the Son of God, when He received his kingly power by going into it and taking out its Governor.

"Not only will the Christ, the Messiah, the King and Ruler of the Israelites, but "all concerning the flesh of Christ" was one of them. But the design with which He came among them in the latter case was for different from his appearance centuries before, as their deliverer from Egyptian bondage. He now came to redeem and save them, not by the overthrow of their earthly oppressors, but by the sacrifice of himself, as the atonement for their sins, to redeem them from death, and especially them to God. He now appeared among them whom he had once delivered in a state of deep humiliation; yet, notwithstanding his still more merciful mission, He who at first had delivered their fathers, now became the object of their scorn on the Cross, and died amid their revilings and scoffs. This, however, had filled up the measure of their iniquities, and of his forbearance.

At his death, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain;" the signal was given that God had left it, that he had rejected *them* (the Israelites) as his Church. But, having risen from the dead, before ascending to Heaven He had reorganized his Church, by establishing in it a new ministry and new signs and seals of his covenant. The ceremonial law was established, was made obsolete, in place of the Passover, he established the Lord's Supper, and in place of Circumcision He had substituted Baptism; and to show that the Jews were no longer his covenant people, and that "the middle wall of partition was broken down" between the Jews and Gentiles, and that the Gentiles, the chosen of God, would be accepted in whatever place he might be.

But what would now claim the speaker's more special attention was, that the Son of God, who had established the Levitical priesthood, had also established the Gospel priesthood, and instituted the ministry of the Gospel. Immediately before Christ's ascension to Heaven He gave to his eleven apostles the commandment, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," adding the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The speaker then said he proved that it was given, not merely to the eleven, but to all those who should succeed them in the ministry, and to prove that the Apostles so understood it we find the fact that they ordained ministers to preach and baptize, and administer the government and all the churches, and acknowledged them as commissioned by God. Nay more, the apostle Paul, said the speaker, had declared that the Gospel ministry was the Ascension Gift of Christ to his church, having, as it is said, "ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men. He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Here, then, was the origin of the Gospel ministry and the source of its authority. The Son of God who on Mount Sinai had established the Aaronic priesthood, had also the Lord of his church, on Mount Olivet set aside the priesthood, instituting instead the Gospel ministry to feed and to rule in his church till the end of the world.

The *second* main division of his discourse was more especially devoted to the proper *qualifications* for the office of the ministry. The speaker held that, as no one had been permitted to assume the office of the *Priesthood* unless called to it by God, so, under the Gospel dispensation, no one might rightly assume the *Gospel ministry* without being also called to it. The special signal given to the first apostles on their definite appointment to the office of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The argument deduced by some that, because we had no positive evidence that these who received the Spirit on that occasion were ordained by *men* to the ministry before they were blessed to preach the Gospel, therefore there was no ordination necessary now, was controverted by the speaker.

In the first place, said he, the Scriptures furnished no proof that they were *not* ordained, and we could draw no certain inference from this silence. He might reply further, that those men had been ordained by God, and that they were thus qualified; also, that they had acted in concert, and with the approbation of the Apostles. Men acting in such concert now, and under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, attested by the gifts of the ministry, would be acting in a willing cheerfully to obey, as "called by God," to the ministry even now.

He believed fully that when God called a man to do any work He also qualified him to do that work, numerous Scripture instances in proof of which were cited. Among the indispensable qualifications for the Gospel ministry, prominence was given to the following: That he who seeks it should be a truly regenerate man; that he has duly repented of sin, and been enlightened by the Spirit to see the glory and the grace of Christ; and that he has by faith, received the Lord Jesus Christ, as his all-sufficient Saviour.

It must not be supposed, however, that every truly regenerate man was called to the ministry. There was his interest and of the Holy Spirit, by which alone a man was drawn to a devout consideration of the subject, and of the ministerial work, as appointed by God to be the chief means of the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. One who experienced this would be filled with tender compassion for the souls of men who are dying without Christ.

The speaker then said that the importance of the work of God to a man to serve him in the Gospel ministry was a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and a strong love to them, enabling a man to say in truth with the Psalmist: "Oh how I love thy holy law! it is my meditation all the day." And so feel that they are indeed the Word of God, the foundation of all his rule of faith and practice. Still another qualification was, the possession of suitable *mental* qualifications and knowledge, and grace to teach others. These, being called inward call of God, there was the outward call of the Church through its rulers, to which Christ, it was said, has permitted the power of admitting by or excluding from the ministry, duly authorizing them to judge and decide upon the qualifications of applicants for admission to the work of the ministry.

He said that the Church, in its proper constituted more especially the sacred character of the ministerial office. In this connection great stress was laid upon the impact of the second precept of the *Decalogue* (which the speaker said was still in force, and binding on all men), stating the exposition of the Heidelberg and Westminster Catechisms of this commandment, in the following words: "That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word;" and "That the duties required in the second commandment are the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word."

The jealousy with which God had maintained the ministerial office of the Priesthood was here dwelt upon, and the instances of Nadab and Abihu, and Aaron gives the attention the displeasure and the vengeance of God toward the lawless usurpers of this sacred office and its peculiar functions. The judgment visited upon Nadab and Abihu for offering in their censers strange fire before the Lord was also introduced, as an illustration, and as Christ had inflicted these punishments under the old dispensation, and as He was the head of the same Church now which existed then, we must conclude that He is no less jealous now, and that he therefore continues to resent as strongly, though in a different way, any alterations in his institutions, or contempt of them. For this reason we were told that these things "happened to the Israelites for examples, and are written for our admonition." The passage, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified," (from Leviticus,) was quoted by the speaker as in spirit addressed to the ministry to—to those who attempt to lead in the worship of God, and to minister in his name, in the administration of the ordinances, as well as the government and discipline of the Church.

The speaker then said that God had left it, "at his pleasure" that God had left it, that he had rejected *them* (the Israelites) as his Church. But, having risen from the dead, before ascending to Heaven He had reorganized his Church, by establishing in it a new ministry and new signs and seals of his covenant. The ceremonial law was established, was made obsolete, in place of the Passover, he established the Lord's Supper, and in place of Circumcision He had substituted Baptism; and to show that the Jews were no longer his covenant people, and that "the middle wall of partition was broken down" between the Jews and Gentiles, and that the Gentiles, the chosen of God, would be accepted in whatever place he might be.

But what would now claim the speaker's more special attention was, that the Son of God, who had established the Levitical priesthood, had also established the Gospel priesthood, and instituted the ministry of the Gospel. Immediately before Christ's ascension to Heaven He gave to his eleven apostles the commandment, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," adding the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The speaker then said he proved that it was given, not merely to the eleven, but to all those who should succeed them in the ministry, and to prove that the Apostles so understood it we find the fact that they ordained ministers to preach and baptize, and administer the government and all the churches, and acknowledged them as commissioned by God. Nay more, the apostle Paul, said the speaker, had declared that the Gospel ministry was the Ascension Gift of Christ to his church, having, as it is said, "ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men. He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Here, then, was the origin of the Gospel ministry and the source of its authority. The Son of God who on Mount Sinai had established the Aaronic priesthood, had also the Lord of his church, on Mount Olivet set aside the priesthood, instituting instead the Gospel ministry to feed and to rule in his church till the end of the world.

The *second* main division of his discourse was more especially devoted to the proper *qualifications* for the office of the ministry. The speaker held that, as no one had been permitted to assume the office of the *Priesthood* unless called to it by God, so, under the Gospel dispensation, no one might rightly assume the *Gospel ministry* without being also called to it. The special signal given to the first apostles on their definite appointment to the office of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The argument deduced by some that, because we had no positive evidence that these who received the Spirit on that occasion were ordained by *men* to the ministry before they were blessed to preach the Gospel, therefore there was no ordination necessary now, was controverted by the speaker.

In the first place, said he, the Scriptures furnished no proof that they were *not* ordained, and we could draw no certain inference from this silence. He might reply further, that those men had been ordained by God, and that they were thus qualified; also, that they had acted in concert, and with the approbation of the Apostles. Men acting in such concert now, and under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, attested by the gifts of the ministry, would be acting in a willing cheerfully to obey, as "called by God," to the ministry even now.

He believed fully that when God called a man to do any work He also qualified him to do that work, numerous Scripture instances in proof of which were cited. Among the indispensable qualifications for the Gospel ministry, prominence was given to the following: That he who seeks it should be a truly regenerate man; that he has duly repented of sin, and been enlightened by the Spirit to see the glory and the grace of Christ; and that he has by faith received the Lord Jesus Christ, as his all-sufficient Saviour.

It must not be supposed, however, that every truly regenerate man was called to the ministry. There was his interest and of the Holy Spirit, by which alone a man was drawn to a devout consideration of the subject, and of the ministerial work, as appointed by God to be the chief means of the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. One who experienced this would be filled with tender compassion for the souls of men who are dying without Christ.

The speaker then said that the importance of the work of God to a man to serve him in the Gospel ministry was a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and a strong love to them, enabling a man to say in truth with the Psalmist: "Oh how I love thy holy law! it is my meditation all the day." And so feel that they are indeed the Word of God, the foundation of all his rule of faith and practice. Still another qualification was, the possession of suitable *mental* qualifications and knowledge, and grace to teach others. These, being called inward call of God, there was the outward call of the Church through its rulers, to which Christ, it was said, has permitted the power of admitting by or excluding from the ministry, duly authorizing them to judge and decide upon the qualifications of applicants for admission to the work of the ministry.

He said that the Church, in its proper constituted more especially the sacred character of the ministerial office. In this connection great stress was laid upon the impact of the second precept of the *Decalogue* (which the speaker said was still in force, and binding on all men), stating the exposition of the Heidelberg and Westminster Catechisms of this commandment, in the following words: "That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word;" and "That the duties required in the second commandment are the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word."

The jealousy with which God had maintained the ministerial office of the Priesthood was here dwelt upon, and the instances of Nadab and Abihu, and Aaron gives the attention the displeasure and the vengeance of God toward the lawless usurpers of this sacred office and its peculiar functions. The judgment visited upon Nadab and Abihu for offering in their censers strange fire before the Lord was also introduced, as an illustration, and as Christ had inflicted these punishments under the old dispensation, and as He was the head of the same Church now which existed then, we must conclude that He is no less jealous now, and that he therefore continues to resent as strongly, though in a different way, any alterations in his institutions, or contempt of them. For this reason we were told that these things "happened to the Israelites for examples, and are written for our admonition." The passage, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified," (from Leviticus,) was quoted by the speaker as in spirit addressed to the ministry to—to those who attempt to lead in the worship of God, and to minister in his name, in the administration of the ordinances, as well as the government and discipline of the Church.

The speaker then said Christ resented any intrusion by unsalled men into this office now, just as it was he resented any attempt to injure the Levitical Priesthood. Jesus Christ in giving the ministry of the kingdom of heaven to his Apostles, had by this gift, together with the commission to preach, given to them and their successors—the ordained ministry—the right and authority to rule in the Church in sacred matters. The commission was not given to the whole Apostolate, as some interpret it, but to the pastoral, the ministerial, the ordained ministry. The commission was addressed to the eleven, and through them to their successors, and the ordination of ministers and the administration of the sacraments, and the collection of ministers, and the collection