

happy one, blessed to each and all—be our work great and greatly prosperous—may our gates be praise and our walks salvation; may the divine benediction be on us always; may the words I shall speak from this pulpit be “a savour of life unto life.” I expect trials; I know they will come. When the storm sweeps over the forest every tree will sway and bow before it. And we are blown upon by so many winds that each one is reached at some time. I am glad that, for storm is the nursing mother of true manhood. Disappointments are the salt of life. In fight we lose fear and gain skill. I have never found that I could count on all men as my friends. I have had men to love me and men to hate me, and have felt as thankful for my foes as for my friends. “I am debtor both to the Greek and to the barbarian.” A ministry—a christian ministry let alone by all; heard with indifference; never scoffed at by any Sadducee; never stoned by any Pharisee; never prayed against by any lean-sould formalist; that would indeed be a sad thing—a bitter thing—an accursed thing, from which God in his mercy save me. For remember, friends, I am here to do what I know of God’s will, and to speak what I know of the counsel of God. I am here to speak words of truth-telling to the minds and hearts of men—words that shall strengthen the weak and comfort the sad and win sinners to the cross of Christ. I am here to brighten the old man’s evening of life, and tell him of the nightless heaven, and the Christ who has purchased the home for the man and the man for the home. I am here to help the strong bear the burden of life in the heat of day, and to teach the young how to equip themselves for the strife and the work of the world. Let me tell you, in as few and as plain words as I can, what is my conception of the work and office of the ministry. I utterly repudiate all and every pretension to what is called the priestly character or any attempt to stand between the soul of man and God. The priest declares that his particular function is to communicate salvation to man by outward means, baptism, penitence, communion, absolution, extreme unction, and the like; with that monstrous pretension I am at war. And the minister is not in the place of Vicar, either for man or for God—is not even a special mediator between sinner and judge. He may succeed to the spirit of the apostles, but not to the office; he may be in the line of their thought—may be perpetuating and developing their great work; he may be

servng the same master with equal knowledge and zeal and inspiration, but in no other way can he with show of reason or modesty claim to be in the line of Apostolical descent. But while I disclaim the lordship of any man’s conscience or the mastery of any man’s faith, so neither should the minister be, so *neither shall he be* in my person, the slave of any man, or any number of men—of any set of opinions, or any combination of creeds. A minister robbed of his freedom—compelled to utter the shibboleth of a congregation or a church—what is he? I will tell you, painting from the life. He is a mean little man, with a mean little soul, that every day gets meaner; he slinks about from house to house, speaking smooth things to find favour; his sermons are homilies cut out from the writings of the Fathers, or some modern divines whose orthodoxy is not suspected. If a new thought should chance to shoot into his mind like a sunbeam piercing a fog, he examines it carefully, not to find the truth of it, but the chance of its acceptance with the people. He sees that men in their love of wealth and haste to be rich have hardened their hearts, and deadened their conscience—taking “the interest table as their creed—their pater noster and their decalogue” have grown proud and altogether godless—but he is afraid to preach against this pride and love of wealth—afraid to lift his voice and bid them “weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them” because Dives, who gives a handsome contribution, would be offended. He is afraid to lift his voice against any popular and appointed evil, for he must preach to please the people, since he must please the people if he would live. He will not venture to depart from the old and well-defined lines. If by mistake he utters a doubt of a venerable doctrine he will at once apologise and promise to offend no more. He is at times a man of war, but is always careful to fight with only men of straw. He is no true minister. He is false to his calling, false to himself, false to those who hear him, and false to the Christ whose Gospel he should preach—he is even more to be despised than the people who have taken away his manful right of freedom. Such a degraded and degrading position as that, by the grace of God, I hold in contempt. I have one master, even Christ. High heaven is my court of appeal. “Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause: for the love of Christ constraineth us.” There is