

work you are called to do. That you have such a conception of the gospel ministry, in the main; we assume and believe: your reception by the College Board is the attestation of their confidence that you have, and that you desire the work for the work's sake, and for the Lord's sake, and not from any selfish or worldly motive. But it is hardly to be supposed that your conception of it before entering college could be as clear as to methods and details as is desirable in those who are beginning in a tentative way the actual exercise of that ministry. It is of vast importance, then, that your ideal should be corrected and rounded out, by the teachings of Christ, and of the New Testament. The names by which the ministers of the gospel are spoken of in the Bible, are sufficiently suggestive—pastors, or shepherds,—evangelists, prophets or preachers,—watchmen, overseers, &c., they are reminded that they are to “catch men,” to “watch for souls as they &c.,” “to warn them from me,” says God, to be “ambassadors for Christ, to beseech men in God's name, and pray them in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.” This is serious work—sacred work—responsible work; and while I am sure there is no danger of your ever thinking yourselves priests or confessors, having the destinies of immortal souls in your keeping, and dispensing absolution and those awful sacraments and rites *in extremis*, which are supposed to open the kingdom of heaven to those who receive them, it is imperative, if you would be successful, that you feel the solemn responsibility that attaches to the exercise of such a ministry, concerning which even Paul exclaimed as he thought about it, “who is sufficient for these things?” Such a sense of responsibility need not, ought not to depress you, but rather to stimulate you, for the same great apostle who so cried out, recovers himself, in almost the same sentence, and exclaims with almost equal fervor of spirit,—“our sufficiency is of God.” “I can do all things through Christ, &c.,” he says.—Cowper, you know, in “The Task,” has sketched for us his ideal of a preacher, such as Paul,—

“simple, grave, sincere,

In doctrine uncorrupt, in language plain,  
And plain in manner, decent, solemn, chaste,  
And natural in gesture, much impressed  
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,  
And anxious, mainly, that the flock he feeds  
May feel it too: affectionate in look,  
And tender in address as well becomes  
A messenger of peace to guilty men.”

A beautiful ideal; just a little sombre, perhaps,

wanting, if anything, in that glow of enthusiasm, and hopefulness, which we can fancy lighted up Paul's countenance when he wrote in the very same connection to which we have already referred. “Now thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge of us in every place.” But we have a still better guide as to what a minister of Christ ought to be, in the epistles which St. Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, his own sons in the gospel, and which have been inserted by Divine direction in the sacred Canon specially for the guidance of young men like ourselves, (as also indeed for those who are older,) who are just entering upon their sacred calling. The candidate for the Christian ministry can have no better *rude mecum* than those pastoral epistles. You will, I am sure, find yourselves turning to them every day, with ever increasing profit and delight.

2.—Never forget that you are, for the time being, at least, ministers of Christ, as truly before ordination as after ordination, if the Lord has called you to this service. Ordination, as I understand it, does not make a man a minister, but only recognizes him as such; the Lord alone can call him to be an overseer of his flock, and to feed his church. You will not be pastors, or elders, in the New Testament sense of the term, until some church invites you to its individual oversight, and you accept the charge. Our usages may make it undesirable that you should baptize or preside at the observance of the Lord's supper—although my personal view is, that all such acts are the acts of the local church, which may delegate anyone it pleases to perform them in its name, or rather, in the name of its Divine Lord and Master. But notwithstanding these seeming disabilities, you will be *de facto*, the ministers of Christ, and the pastors of the congregations to which you are sent, for the time being, and the people will look up to you as such. You will see the little children straightening themselves up under a sudden impulse of what is proper, as they catch sight of you when approaching; the workman will hurry to remove his pipe from his mouth and to check his hat to you as he passes; fathers and mothers will welcome you to their homes and assign you the place of honor at the table; the young ladies will court your smile and company, and old men who might have passed for your