

The Reformed Pastor
Lectures on Pastoral Theology

John Williamson Nevin

Edited by Sam Hamstra Jr.

Pickwick Publications
Eugene, Oregon

THE REFORMED PASTOR
Lectures on Pastoral Theology

Copyright © 2006 Sam Hamstra Jr. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Write: Permissions, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401.

Pickwick Publications
An imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 West 8th Avenue, Suite 3
Eugene, Oregon 97401

ISBN: 1-59752-383-6

Cataloging-in-Publication data

Nevin, John Williamson, 1803–1886

The reformed pastor : lectures on pastoral theology / edited by Sam Hamstra Jr.

p. ; cm

Princeton theological monograph series 53

Includes bibliographical references

ISBN 1-59752-383-6

1. Reformed Church—United States. 2. Theology—History—19th century. 3. Mercersburg theology. I. Hamstra, Sam. II. Title. III. Series.

BX9559 N49 2006

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

Table of Contents

Introduction by Sam Hamstra, Jr.	vii
Nevin the Pastoral Theologian	vii
Nevin's "Lectures on Pastoral Theology"	ix
Nevin the Pietist	xii
Nevin and Technique	xix
Nevin the Specialist	xxi
Conclusion	xxvi
Notes	xxvii
Lectures on Pastoral Theology by Rev. J. W. Nevin, D.D.	1
First Lecture—The Highest Office	3
Second Lecture—The Call to the Ministry	8
The Internal and External Calls	9
Pre-Requisites for Pastoral Ministry	11
Moral and Intellectual Qualifications for Pastoral Ministry	12

Third Lecture—Personal Holiness	15
The Necessity of Cultivating Piety	18
The Personal Benefits of Piety	22
The Practical Benefits of Piety	27
Piety and the Assurance of Salvation	30
Fourth Lecture—Evangelical Motives	36
Divine Commission	42
Sense of the Dignity of the Work	43
The Glory of God	45
Love for People	46
Confidence in the Cross	47
Attachment to Christ	48
Distinction in Heaven	49
Fifth Lecture—Fields of Labor	51
Home or Abroad	51
Financial Support	54
Preaching (First Department of Pastoral Work)	55
Matter of Preaching	55
Sixth Lecture—Manner of Preaching	57
Characteristics of Effective Preachers	57
Catechism (Second Department of Pastoral Work)	61
Visitation (Third Department of Pastoral Work)	67
Visitation of the Sick	69
Visitation of the Poor	73
Visitation of the Awakened	76
The Pastor and Relationships with Others:	78
Promotion of Peace	81
Enemies	81
Benevolent Institutions	82
Seventh Lecture—Conclusion	84
Bibliography	86

Lecture One

The Highest Office

The highest office with which it is possible for a man to be invested in this world is that of the *Christian ministry*. No one can hesitate to admit this, who believes the Gospel to be true, and reflects seriously on the origin and nature of the office, its relations and bearings as they are presented to our view.

The main design of the ministry is the edification of the church. This may be said to comprehend in a certain sense all that is important in the history of the world. In the midst of the universal desolation which has been created on earth by sin, God has undertaken to erect for himself a new spiritual creation: a kingdom of light and glory, having its seat in the character of its subjects, by which the empire of darkness is finally to be overthrown, even in this world; and which is destined to endure with glory, honor, and immortality, world without end, when the earth and heavens shall be no more. In this interest is comprised, of course, all the hope of the human race. Apart from it the affairs of the world have no significance or value. From the beginning down to the present hour, the great system of Providence has

been administered with steady reference to it as the soul of all that belongs to man's history or destination.

To serve the great design, Jesus Christ, in the fullness of time, assumed our nature, carried our griefs and sorrows in the days of his flesh, and poured out his life finally upon the cross, to make expiation for our sins, and to reconcile us to God. In the fulfilment of the same work, he rose from the dead, ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and took his mediatorial place in the heavens; where he ever liveth to make intercession for all that draw nigh to God in his name; and from whence he carried forward the government of the world, solemnly laid upon his shoulders, in full and complete subservience to the interests of the church, till the end shall come. [For the accomplishment of his work, he gave the church an outward and visible form, and established a peculiar system of ordinances and powers, in the proper use of which it should be advanced continually more and more in its own life, and extended in its limits, until at last it might become universally triumphant. Among those arrangements the ministry holds a prominent place. It forms, we may say, the life and soul of the entire system. Here a particular class of men, divinely designated for the purpose, is set apart from the bosom of the general church, age after age, to preside with special authority over its spiritual interests, and to carry forward in its behalf the counsels of the Master's mind for the attainment of the great ends for which it has been instituted. Under every view in which such an office can be contemplated, its importance must appear truly vast and solemn.

Not only is it of divine appointment, but it has the character of a commission from Christ to act directly under his authority and in his name. This appears from the names which are applied to ministers in the Bible, and also from the terms in which their office is described. They are called "stewards." "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and *stewards* of the mysteries of God." With this, the Apostle intends to induce in them a sense of their high responsibilities. They are called *Ambassadors*. "Now then we are *Ambassadors* for Christ, as though

God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Christ is the *Chief Shepherd*, and ministers are shepherds under him, employed to watch over the flock. They are *sent* forth by Christ. "As my father hath sent me, even so send I you." When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. It is employed in the highest concerns. Christ represents them in the Gospel as standing in the same relation to him, as he to the Father. Ministers are appointed to teach the divine will—to dispense the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven—to labor for the salvation of the *soul*. No mere temporal interests. They must make prayer—dispense the sacraments—visit the sick—be present at death. The office is invested with special force and virtue for its own ends. As a divine institution, it embodies divine power.

Even in a temporal point of view it is of immense account. No institution is more necessary to social order and political prosperity. It stands far above the agency of the press in a Christian land. It is a religious and moral influence, and hence goes beyond any other. Legislation does not reach us so far as the pulpit. There never has been an agency instituted so extensive as this. The ministry also stands linked with all secular interests. The world owes much to it, as it respects learning. Refer to the Middle Ages. Witness all the present time. Almost all our important institutions of learning have grown out of its interests. The conduct of these colleges has almost invariably been in the hands of the ministry. The deviation from this rule has never been found to work well.

This forms, however, the lowest aspect that can be taken. Its importance lies especially in its relation to eternity. It is a divine institution, and as such must be considered as embodying a divine power. As such it must also be considered as carrying with it an objective force or power. "Not even in the light of the sun," says Calvin, "not even is meat and drink so necessary for the

support and cherishing of life, as is the maintenance and support of the ministry of the Gospel church on earth." Well might the apostle spake of it as a *good* work. It is so if we look at its origin, at the qualifications it requires, at the excellency of the Christian dispensation, at its design and nature, at its suitability to improve those who attend on it, in virtue and knowledge, at its rewards, here and hereafter. No office is so honorable and high.

All this rightly considered will produce *humility* in ministers themselves. There is no danger of estimating too highly the dignity of the office. Paul says, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." He should not be inflated with the view that the world is supposed to take of it. This will also produce a sense of *responsibility*, and an anxiety to be found faithful. Men may have some sense of responsibility, as they may have in a civil office: but ministers should have a higher sense than this, and hence they should contemplate the great responsibility of a *divine institution*. This will induce faithfulness in the discharge of its functions. Faithfulness is the first requisite of a steward. This sense of responsibility should accompany us in preparing for the office, in discharging and fulfilling its duties. Another effect of a right view of the ministry will be contempt of worldly honor, wealth and ease. In proportion as men look upon it as a secular interest, they will have more respect to their ease and worldly involvement. But we ought to be lifted up above this feeling. We should stand above all worldly interests. Again, attachment to the work and entire consecration. Under a worldly view it is invested with a high honor. Young men often look to it in this respect. But when men come to be invested with the office itself, a change frequently takes place. The romance of the thing has passed away. The true interest and dignity lies not in its worldly estate but in its spiritual dignity and interest, and these are to be apprehended by faith. If a man has not a proper apprehension of his office as being spiritual, its dignity will sink deeply in his own eyes. Hence, Paul says, "I magnify my office." The man needs to fix

his eyes on the source of the ministry as a divine institution. Hence it is a great thing to magnify the office as Paul did, not only theoretically, but actually in feeling. This may be a criterion to our minds of true faith. The want of this, proceeds from unbelief and worldliness. Again: thankfulness to God for being called to so high a work. We see this strikingly exhibited in the case of Paul. He seems sometimes to set it above his conversion.