

THREE OFFICES: MINISTER, ELDER, DEACON

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In a recent issue of this journal, Dr. George W. Knight III offered an elaboration and defense of what has come to be known as the two-office view of presbyterian church government.¹ The two offices Dr. Knight regards to be perpetual in the church are those of elder and deacon; the two-office view distinguishes itself from the three-office doctrine of classical presbyterianism in its denial that the ministry and the ruling eldership constitute separate offices, insisting rather that they constitute separate aspects of a single eldership.² Dr. Knight's essay is characterized by the precision, the forceful logic, and the learning the readers of this journal have come to expect of him and it includes much with which I am in the heartiest agreement. Further, there should be little question that Dr. Knight has represented what is today the preponderance of opinion of conservative American presbyterianism and in particular of the Presbyterian Church in America regarding these questions of the essential nature of the eldership and its relationship to the teaching ministry of the church. However, I am not at all convinced that the popularity of the two-office view among evangelical presbyterian elders and ministers can be explained as the consequence of the kind of scholarly inquiry, careful reflection, and mastery of the biblical materials which once distinguished presbyterian thinking about polity. Church government has been largely neglected as a field of study by presbyterians in the present century. The major works on the subject to which appeal is presently made are old and must be admitted to have left the debate in a seriously imperfect state, and present practice in many presbyterian churches in several respects betrays a deep confusion regarding the principles of the church's polity,³ all of which suggests

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¹'Two Offices (Elders/Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching/Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders): A New Testament Study,' *Presbyterian* XI (1985) pp. 1-12.

²There is no biblical term corresponding to 'office' in the sense in which it is commonly used in discussions of biblical church government. I am using the term in its ordinary sense of a status or position in the church occupied by certain people set apart by gifts and calling to the exercise of certain functions and responsibilities. Cf. J. Murray, 'Office in the Church,' *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. II, Edinburgh, 1977, pp. 357-358.

³For example, the opinion of some of our authorities that ordination to the office of ruling elder, unlike that to the ministry, is not perpetual (e.g. Samuel Maresius, *Systema Breve Universae Theologiae*, 1659, XV, LXXVII, p. 660: '. . . elders may oblige themselves only for a time, while ministers have devoted and consecrated

that the prevailing view may well owe its favor to little more than the influence of traditional opinions and to the virtual lack of any vigorous and well-informed debate.

The neglect of church polity as a subject deserving of the most careful biblical and historical study I judge to be a serious error. Problems of practice are ordinarily first errors of principle and it is not at all unlikely that the often severe shortcomings observable today in the leadership of our presbyterian churches may be charged in the first place to unclear or erroneous views of church government entertained by ministers, elders, and people. Thus I welcome Dr. Knight's clear statement of the one view of presbyterian polity and offer this rejoinder in hopes of stimulating much needed study, reflection, and debate.

Though Dr. Knight represents what I have said I judge to be the unstudied opinion of the majority of ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church in America,⁴ as a matter of simple fact the PCA is in practice a three-office church which clearly requires a discrimination of status, calling, and responsibility, i.e. of office, between the minister and the ruling elder.⁵ In this, of course, it is only being true to the universal practice of modern presbyterianism since its origin in the Genevan reformation.⁶

themselves to God for life . . .') would, I am certain, be widely condemned today in evangelical presbyterian circles as altogether too low a view of the eldership (cf. the PCA's *Book of Church Order* 24-6). Nevertheless such a view is *de facto* widely held as may be demonstrated by the abiding popularity of term eldership. Cf. for a further example of this confusion notes 5 and 8 *infra*.

⁴The two-office view came to be, at least theoretically, the distinctive position of southern presbyterianism, having been championed by J.H. Thornwell (e.g. 'The Ruling Elder a Presbyter,' reprinted in *The Collected Writings of J. H. Thornwell*, vol. 4, Edinburgh, 1974, pp. 114-142) and R.L. Dabney ('Theories of the Eldership,' reprinted in *Discussions of R.L. Dabney*, vol. 2, Edinburgh, 1982, pp. 119-157). The two-office view is not, however, original to American presbyterianism, being found as early as A Lasco. Cf. H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, vol. 4, Kampen, 1918, p. 423. For a sketch of the controversy on this point in American presbyterianism following upon the publication in 1821 of Samuel Miller's *The Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder* (revised edition 1831) cf. I. Murray, 'Ruling Elders — A Sketch of a Controversy,' *The Banner of Truth* 235 (1983) pp. 1-9 and Soon Gil Huh, *Presbyter in volle Rechten*, Groningen, 1972. This debate was concluded long before a satisfactory outcome was achieved and this fact explains the confusion and the many ambiguities of practice observable today.

⁵The language of the *Book of Church Order* is ambiguous. On the one hand, very clearly, the ruling eldership is referred to as a distinct office in such statements as 'Every church shall elect persons to the offices of Ruling Elder and Deacon . . .' (24-1) and ' . . . the presiding minister shall state . . . the warrant and nature of the office of Ruling Elder . . .' (24-5). On the other hand, 7-2 and 8-1 explicitly affirm that there is but one office of elder which comprises within itself the two functions of the ministry of the Word and rule.

⁶J. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, iii, 8; The Genevan Ecclesiastical Ordinances in P.E. Hughes (ed.), *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, ET: Grand Rapids, 1966, pp. 35-42, 47-48; The Form of Presbyterial Church

There are, to be sure, several incidental features of the PCA's practice of polity which reflect a two-office theory. The most historically significant of these is the liberty granted to ruling elders to participate in the ordination of ministers by the laying on of hands.⁷ The more obvious two-office features of PCA practice are the frequently expressed concern that there be an equal number of ministers and elders in the representative assemblies of the church ('parity') and, yet more, what has become a virtual shibboleth, the insistence on the atrocious nomenclature 'teaching elder' and 'ruling elder,' the PCA's own contribution to the modern assault on the English language by the sacrifice of euphony in the interests of propaganda.⁸

However, it must be admitted that these 'two-office features' are of trivial importance in comparison to the three-office principles and practices which form the structure of PCA polity. Ministers are members of a presbytery and subject to its discipline, elders are members of a congregation and subject to the discipline of the session. Ministers alone may administer the sacraments or, as a rule, preach the Word, though ruling elders as other men may preach if licensed by a presbytery to do so. Ministers are required to meet certain standards of theological education, elders not. Most decisively, if a ruling elder should enter the ministry, he must be ordained again. Surely these elements of PCA church government are incompatible with the view that the eldership is a single office divided only by such practicalities as an individual elder's giftedness, opportunity, training, and chosen function. It is inconceivable to me that a church government built from the ground up on two-office principles would display such features. This unstable mixture of two-office and three-office elements and this domination of three-office elements in what is ostensibly a two-office church government certainly demonstrates the need for a careful reexamination of the biblical evidence.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

That reexamination must begin with the data of the Old Testament. It is, in my opinion, a matter of the greatest significance, that Dr. Knight subtitled

Government of the Westminster Assembly (Chapters on 'Pastors' and 'Other Church-Governors'); H.J. Wotherspoon and J.M. Kirkpatrick (rev. ed. by T.F. Torrance and R.S. Wright), *A Manual of Church Doctrine According to the Church of Scotland*, London, 1960, pp. 99-102.

⁷This relatively minor matter gained significance when it became a focus of the debate between Hodge and Thornwell over the nature, warrant, and powers of the office of ruling elder, Hodge affirming the church's historic refusal to permit ruling elders to participate in the ordination of ministers (*The Church and its Polity*, New York, 1879, pp. 271-294), Thornwell arguing for their right to do so (*op.cit.*).

⁸It is interesting to observe that the *Book of Church Order* is not so scrupulous in this respect, regularly preferring the terms 'minister' or 'pastor' (e.g. 10-6; 12-1-2; 13-2,4,5,6 *passim*).

his essay 'A New Testament Study.' Old Testament evidence entered his argument only incidentally. But that evidence is of crucial importance, is fundamental to the construction of classical presbyterian polity, and undeniably is the presupposition of much of the polity of the New Testament Church.⁹ A simple demonstration of the significance of the Old Testament materials for the determination of questions surrounding the nature and number of church offices is furnished by the fact that 'elder' is an Old Testament title and office and is introduced without comment in the narrative of the establishment of the apostolic church (Acts 11:30), strongly suggesting that the office being there referred to was simply the Old Testament office carried over into the new order.

When the Old Testament data are collected several conclusions emerge, none of which is favorable to the two-office view.

1) The office of the elder in the Old Testament church was uniquely representative. There is no record of the institution of this office. No doubt it grew naturally out of the patriarchy of family and clan, but in any case it is fully in place by the end of Israel's sojourn in Egypt (Ex 3:16,18). The elder-ship arose from the people and spoke and acted on their behalf (Ex 17:5,6; 19:7; 24:1-11; Lev 4:13-15, Deut 21:1-9, 1 Sam 8:4; 2 Sam 5:3; 1 Kgs 20:7,8). Frequently the body of elders is regarded, by the principle of representation, as the whole congregation of Israel (Ex 12:3,6,21; 1 Kgs 8:1,2,3,5, 14,22,55,62,65). In Joshua 20:4,6 trial before the elders is equivalent to trial before 'the' assembly.¹⁰

⁹J. Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, vol. 2, Edinburgh, 1960, p. 305: '... the polity of the New Testament was [founded] upon the model of the Old Testament ecclesiastical government.' Cf. Dabney, *op.cit.*, pp. 128-129. The relationship between the polities of the Israelite and apostolic churches needs more careful delineation. Indeed a full biblical-theological study of church polity remains to be written and is most assuredly a *desideratum* as likely to throw light on a variety of vexing questions of principle and practice. Voetius suggested that Old Testament polity was a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, while New Testament polity mixed only aristocracy and democracy. *Tractus Selecti de Politica Ecclesiastica*, vol. 1, Amsterdam, 1885, p. 204.

¹⁰Cf. D. Bannerman, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church*, Edinburgh, 1887 pp. 101-103. Herein lies the basis for the presbyterian judgment that neither Matt 18:17-18 nor 1 Cor 5:4-5 places the exercise of church discipline in the hands of the congregation rather than the elders (Matt 16:18-19). To tell the elders, to assemble the elders is to tell and assemble the church in its representative form. According to E.P. Clowney, 'The "two or three" gathered together in Christ's name to judge of an offense would, in Jewish usage, most naturally be elders. When matters were brought for judgment to the "assembly" they would be determined not by popular vote, but by a session of elders of the people, carrying out judgment before God and the people (e.g. Deut 19:13).' 'A Brief for Church Governors in Church Government,' unpublished paper, p.6. So Calvin (*Institutes*, IV, xii, 2) on Matt 18:17: '... to be called to the tribunal of the church, that is, the assembly of the elders.' So it was in the Jewish Synagogue, E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. 2, rev.ed., Edinburgh, 1979, p. 431.

The eldership appears throughout the narrative of Israel's history, sometimes with greater prominence (during the periods of the wilderness, the judges, and the exile and after) sometimes with less (the period of the kings), and it survived into first century Judaism and receives frequent mention in the Gospels and Acts (e.g. Luke 20:1; Matt 21:23; 26:3,47; 27:1; Acts 4:5,8, 23; 6:12; 23:14; 25:15).

2) The function of the eldership in Israel was rule and judgment. Though little detail is furnished in the Old Testament it appears that elders served as judges in court to render adjudication of disputes and punishment of crimes (Deut 25:1,7; 19:12; 22:13ff; Josh 20:4,6), as administrators of the civil code (Num 11:16ff; Ruth 4:1-12), and as a senate providing counsel and leadership in matters of state (1 Sam 4:3; 8:4; 2 Sam 3:17,18; 5:3; 1 Kgs 20:7,8; Ezra 5:9). There is no evidence that the ministry of the Word or the teaching of the law was ever assigned to this office or that ability to teach had any bearing on qualification for it (Ezek 7:26; Jer 18:18).

3) On the contrary, there was another separate and distinct office in the Old Testament church to which was entrusted the ministry of Word and sacrament. This was the levitical office and within it the priesthood. In blessing the tribe of Levi Moses said: 'He watched over your word and guarded your covenant. He teaches your precepts to Jacob and your law to Israel. He offers incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar' (Deut 33:9,10). The priests and Levites shared with the elders the responsibilities of judgment and rule (Deut 17:8-13; 21:5; 1 Chron 23:4) but this was adjunct to their primary calling as ministers of the Word in both its forms — Scripture and sacrament — and superintendents of Israel's worship (Lev 1:5ff; Ezek 7:26; Ezra 7:10-11; Neh 8:7-9; 15:11ff; 16:4ff; 1 Chron 15:11ff; 16:4ff; 23:4,5,13,28-32; 24:19; 2 Chron 15:3; 17:8-9; Mal 2:4-9).¹¹ Drawn from the tribe of Levi, a tribe set apart to the Lord (Num 3:5-13), and thus constituting a separate membership, the levitical office was not assigned the distinctly representative character of the eldership and was organized according to a set of regulations which pertained to itself alone. It does not go beyond the Old Testament evidence to say that the elders were of the people in a way not so of the priests and Levites who were claimed by God to be his own ministers in Israel and were granted a direct ministerial authority not assigned to elders (e.g. Num 6:22-27).

This distinction of office and calling between priest and elder continues to be observed in the Judaism of the first century (Matt 21:23; 26:3; Acts 6:12). At the same time the term 'elder' is also found employed as a generic designa-

¹¹The Levites and the priests as ministers of the Word are found in close connection with the prophets (e.g. Jer 2:8,26; 23:11,33; Lam 4:13). Jahaziel, a Levite, prophesied in the days of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron 20:14) and Jeduthun the Levite is said to have been 'the King's seer' (35:15). The elders, on the other hand, are never connected to prophecy in this way. Cf. Clowney, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

tion for all the members of the Sanhedrin, some of whom were priests and/or scribes.¹²

In sum, in the language of the presbyterian debate, Old Testament church government was unquestionably 'three-office' in that the eldership was a ruling office only and was clearly differentiated in membership, status, calling, and responsibility from the office of Word and sacrament. Once again, this fact must be given its due in a discussion of the evidence of the New Testament in so far as 1) the functions of both Old Testament offices — eldership and priesthood — are carried into the apostolic church; 2) Nowhere is it said in the New Testament that the ancient pattern of separate offices for rule and for Word and sacrament has been overturned or rendered obsolete, or that it did not derive from the intrinsic necessities of the life of the church of God; 3) the terminology of church office is at many points the same; and 4) the office of elder is introduced without comment in the narrative of the establishment of the apostolic form of the church and at a time when the church was still virtually entirely Jewish and thus accustomed to think of the eldership and the ministry of the Word as being separate and distinct offices and callings.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Sometime prior to the events described in Acts 11:27-30 a body of elders had been formed in the Jerusalem church. Without introduction or explanation and in this Jewish setting the term evokes the Old Testament image of a senate of rulers and counselors not of teachers, all the more as in this primitive period the apostles and prophets, so far as can be ascertained, were providing the ministry of the Word. The differentiation of apostles and elders in Acts 15:2,4 only further strengthens this presumption in its close approximation to the formula 'priests and elders' so familiar in the gospels and Acts as designating the composition of the Sanhedrin.

It cannot be denied that elsewhere in the New Testament, also in keeping with Jewish usage, the term 'elder' is given a wider application and in at least several instances embraces ministers of the Word (1 Tim 5:17). But this generic use of the term for all church rulers — including as in the Old Testament those whose function as rulers is adjunct to their proper calling as ministers of the Word — for several reasons does not appear to be evidence of any epoch-making alteration in the ancient polity of Christ's church.

1) The term 'elder' is extended to include even apostles (1 Pet 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1). This suggests that in the search for some embracive term for the leadership of the church, 'elder' was readiest to hand in so far as church

¹²Cf. Schürer, *op.cit.*, pp. 219-218; Matt 15:2 ('the tradition of the elders' refers to the legal interpretations of the scribes).

governors, ministers, and apostles shared this one responsibility, that of rule, the sole function of the elder *per se*. Nevertheless, it is obvious that, while an apostle was *ipso facto* an elder, the reverse was by no means the case, and accordingly it must be demonstrated, not merely assumed, that the designation of ministers of the Word as ‘elders’ indicates that they shared with church rulers a single office.

2) This reservation is strengthened considerably by Paul’s straightforward discrimination of the gifts of rule and teaching in his discussion of the Holy Spirit’s manifold provision for the church in Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. There is nothing in his remarks to suggest that the gift or function of teaching is practically or officially to be linked to that of ‘rule’ (Rom 12:8 *proistēmi* as in 1 Tim 5:17) or ‘government’ (1 Cor 12:28, *kubernēseis*). Indeed, it stands Paul’s argument in both cases on its head to conclude that one must possess an ‘ability to teach’ (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24) in order to rule the church. One’s position and function in the church, the Apostle insists, is determined by the gift one has been given (Rom 12:3,6), and to some is given the gift of rule. What is this but the ancient calling and function of the elder?

This distinction between rule and teaching has very important implications. It teaches us that in 1 Tim 3:1-7 the Apostle either limited his view to the office of minister, here generically designated elder — as aptness to teach, he has elsewhere taught, is not a prerequisite for the status and function of a church ruler — or, as is perhaps more likely, he enumerated the entirety of qualifications which may pertain to the office of elder, aptness to teach being required if one is a minister as monogamy is required if one is a married man (v. 2). In 2 Tim 2:24, on the other hand, the reference in context seems plainly to be the minister in distinction to the elder (2:2,14,15,25; 4:2-5).¹³

Further, the emphatic distinction between the gifts and functions of rule and the Word suggests, contrary to Dr. Knight,¹⁴ that it is by no means likely that the term ‘pastor-teachers’ in Eph 4:11 embraces those who rule but do

¹³It is in any case clear why from the beginning reformed authorities usually did not look to 1 Tim 3 or Titus 1 for the biblical warrant for the office of ruling elder for in both those passages the teaching function is prominent, a function which was neither the calling of the ruler nor, according to Paul’s unmistakable connection between gift and function in Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12, that for which he was required to have a particular aptness. Calvin found the warrant for the ruling office in Rom 12:7-8, 1 Cor 12:28, and 1 Tim 5:17 (*Institutes*, IV, iii, 8; xi, 1) and he was followed in this by the Westminster Assembly. Bernhardus DeMoor, in his massive summary of reformed thought, mentions as constituting the biblical warrant for the office of ruling elder, 1 Tim 5:17, Eph 4:11 (according to some), Rom 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12:28-30, the example of the Levites who were helpers of the priests, and its manifest usefulness (e.g. more easily to avert tyranny in the church and better to promote the godly submission of Christian people). *Commentarius Perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium*, vol. 6, 1771, pp. 271-272. Cf. I. Murray, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴*Op.cit.*, pp. 9-10.

not teach. In a list of ministers of the Word such as Paul gives there, and given the purpose of these various ministries which he states, i.e. 'to prepare God's people for works of service' — which is never the task of the ruler in Scripture, but of the minister of the Word — it is altogether improbable that Paul has in view church governors among the 'pastor-teachers.' Even if church rulers are included among those elders designated 'pastors' in Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet 5:1-3, which is by no means certain,¹⁵ the distinctive title in Eph 4:11 throws the emphasis upon the teaching function which, according to Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12, would seem specifically to exclude those who rule only.¹⁶ But this further requires the conclusion that here Paul lists the pastorate or ministry among the various offices of the Word in the apostolic church and in that way distinguishes it from the office of rule. Thus the pattern of the Old Testament emerges again. Pastor-teachers share with the elders the rule of the church but as an adjunct to their proper ministry. Elders *per se* occupy a separate status as the rulers of the church and do not share the office of the Word. The minister, who must meet qualifications of character and spirituality no less than those of a ruling elder and who in addition must be a faithful student and teacher of the Word of God, surely must be competent to rule the church. But there is another class of men who, though without public gifts, nevertheless possess the godliness, experience, spiritual judgment and force of character which fit them to rule the church and it is chiefly to them that the Lord entrusts that responsibility.

The New Testament evidence suggests to me that the distinction between church governors and ministers is far more pronounced, far more a matter of explicit status, calling, and function than one might gather from 1 Timothy 5:17 considered by itself. A collocation of the main passages bearing on the discrimination between the two orders suggests that a church ruler has neither the status nor the calling to minister the Word or sacrament and belongs to a distinct and separate class of church officers. He shares his single duty of rule with the minister, but he is in no sense a pastor-teacher.

One further argument may be advanced in support of the thesis that the apostolic church from the beginning recognized a distinction of office be-

¹⁵Dr. Knight appeals to the religious use of the term 'shepherd' in the Old Testament (*ibid.*, p. 9), but it is not clear that the title is ever granted to elders, though it is used in connection with priests and prophets (cf. Jer 2:26 with 2:8 [NIV has 'leaders' for 'shepherds']; 23:1-7,9,10,11,33; and cf. Ezek 33:30-33 as the context of chapter 34).

¹⁶Dr. Knight is surely correct in his conclusion that the grammar requires that 'pastors and teachers' be taken as a designation of one class of church officer not two, but he seems to draw back from his own conclusion when he writes: 'In effect, we may say that the apostle regards the teachers as belonging to the class or category of pastors' (*ibid.*, p. 10). The effect of the Granville Sharp rule in this instance is simply to indicate that these officers are both pastors and teachers, not to establish any relationship between the two functions. Accordingly, Eph 4:11 could just as well mean that all pastors are teachers also.

tween the ruler and pastor-teacher or minister, though sometimes designating both together with the term 'elder.' By the beginning of the second century it is universally recognized that the beginnings of episcopal polity may be clearly discerned (e.g. Ignatius). This development, so hard on the heels of the apostolic period, is certainly easier to explain if in fact the church was already accustomed to ministers in distinction to elders and to single ministers pastoring congregations also ruled by a body of elders, than if in fact the apostolic church broke new ground and established as one of its revolutionary features the more radical collegiality assumed in the two-office theory.

CONCLUSION

The great advantage of the three-office concept lies precisely in its clear delineation of the calling of each officer. The *Second Book of Discipline* of the Church of Scotland (chapter 2) reads: 'The hail polity of the Kirk consisteth in three things, to wit, in Doctrine, Discipline, and Distribution. With Doctrine is annexit the administration of Sacramentis. And according to the pairs of this division ariseth a three-fauld sort of office-bearers in the Kirk, to wit, of Ministeris or Preachers, Elderis or Governors, and Deaconis or Distributeris.' What is urgently needed today is the faithful discharge of his particular calling by each church officer.

The great weakness of the two-office view, in my judgment, lies in its unwitting diminishment of the special calling of the minister, viewing him as it does first and fundamentally an elder, albeit one who has been given the additional responsibility of teaching, rather than as a minister of the Word who additionally but incidentally shares the rule of the church with the elders.¹⁷ This lower view of the ministry as an order of the eldership has in turn led today to a concept of the ministry in the minds of both pastor and people which is something much less than an exclusive devotion to the Word of God and its public and private proclamation.

If Origen in his day had cause to bemoan the paucity of true 'arrows of God,' no less presbyterians today.¹⁸ How many men at present occupy presbyterian pulpits who can say with Samuel Rutherford, 'The Lord knoweth that I preferred preaching of Christ, and still do, to anything, next

¹⁷'In short, the real effect of the claim that ruling elders and preachers are the same in Scripture is to undermine the Christian ministry as that work has been historically understood. Certainly that was the last thing which Thornwell had in view . . .' I. Murray, *op.cit.*, p. 8. Cf. Thornwell, *op.cit.*, p. 118: 'There was nothing in the nature of the presbyterial office to prevent the individual who filled it from adding to its duties the function of public instruction . . .' and p. 119: 'The eldership, as such, never includes teaching: this is always a superadded function.'

¹⁸In his comment on Ps 36, cited in M. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Grand Rapids, 1970, p. 203.

to Christ himself.¹⁹ It is the work of a lifetime and the whole work of a lifetime to preach the Word of God with the humanity, earnestness, accuracy, insight, and power which the great subjects of the Word and the great issues of a congregation's everlasting salvation require. Only the man who loves to preach and lives to preach will be adequate to such a work, demanding as it does the continual cultivation and full exercise of all his powers. And that holy consecration, I have come firmly to believe, depends upon a man seeing himself to be not an elder, but always and only a minister of the Word of God.²⁰

¹⁹ A. Bonar (ed.), *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, reprinted Edinburgh, 1984, p. 182, Letter LXXXVI. Cf. Thomas Boston, *Memoirs*, reprinted Edinburgh, 1899, p. 56: '... it would be a grievous affliction to me to have a silent Sabbath, the Lord's Word being the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' Or, more recently, K. MacRae: '... I am thankful that I am still able to say that I would not wish to live a day longer in the world if I were able no more to preach the gospel. May the day never come when I shall be of a different mind.' I Murray (ed.), *Diary of Kenneth MacRae*, Edinburgh, 1980, p. 121.

²⁰ The main difference between Rowlands and the preachers of our day is, we should say *fervent prayer* and *deep absorption of mind*. The preachers of the present day have a thousand things to attend to. Their energies are scattered over a wide field, while the energies of our fathers were concentrated upon one thing. We try to do everything; they tried but one thing, and that one thing was preaching.' Owen Jones, *Some of the Great Preachers of Wales*, 1885, pp. 80-81 cited in *The Banner of Truth* 215-216 (1981), p. 2.



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