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Sermon Delivered November 7, 1821, at the Ordination of the Rev. John A. Douglass

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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 7, 1821,

AT THE

Ordination

OF THE

REV. JOHN A. DOUGLASS,

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN WATERFORD.

BY ASA CUMMINGS,

Pastor of the First Church in North-Yarmouth.

PORTLAND :

PRINTED BY THAYER, TAPPAN & STICKNEY.

1822.

NOVEMBER 7, 1821.

DEAR SIR,

The undersigned, a Committee chosen by the *Congregational Church and Society in Waterford*, in their behalf, tender you their cordial thanks for the Sermon, and the Fellowship of the Churches, this day by you delivered, at the Ordination of the Rev. JOHN A. DOUGLASS, and respectfully request a copy of the same for publication.

LINCOLN RIPLEY,

LEANDER GAGE,

CHARLES WHITMAN

REV. MR. CUMMINGS.

SERMON.

MALACHI, II. 7.

FOR THE PRIEST'S LIPS SHOULD KEEP KNOWLEDGE, AND THEY SHOULD SEEK THE LAW AT HIS MOUTH: FOR HE IS THE MESSENGER OF THE LORD OF HOSTS.

THE author of this book lived in a time of great degeneracy. On no other supposition can we account for the extreme severity, with which he treats the Jews; or perceive any appropriate meaning in those pointed interrogations, with which his prophecy abounds. What more cutting reproof for ingratitude could there be, than the allusion which is here made to the sovereign pleasure and distinguishing goodness of God, in singling them out from all other nations, to record his name, and establish his true worship among them, contrasted with existing abuses? "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? yet I loved Jacob." On the Jewish nation God had conferred peculiar favors and privileges, when there was nothing in their character to afford ground for the preference. He made them the depositaries of his law, and the ministers of his worship, with all its significant ceremonies and sacrifices, so strikingly typical of the atonement to be effected by the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." These favors bestowed on them by a gracious God, gave him a claim to eminent obedience, gratitude and love. But they had now become altogether venal and merce-

nary, grudging the most inconsiderable service done for religion. "Who is there among you, that would even shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on my altar for nought." If they attended on the instituted worship of God, it was with a criminal reluctance and disgust. "Ye say, what a weariness is it!" They even went farther, to throw the most marked contempt upon divine institutions. "Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick: should I accept this at your hands?" Priesthood and people appear to have been sunk in like degeneracy, and to have co-operated in perverting and degrading the institutions of Jehovah. The priests, in particular, are threatened with exemplary punishment, with disgrace and ruin, unless they "lay it to heart," and so discharge the duties of their office, as to 'give glory to the name of God.' They are reminded of the purity and the qualifications of the ancient priests, and of the blessed effects which followed their exemplary walk, and the punctual and persevering discharge of their official duties. "My covenant was with Levi, of life and peace: and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did *turn away many from iniquity.*" In this connexion follows our text, in which priest and people are introduced, and their reciprocal duties enjoined: *For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.*

These words present us with three distinct heads of meditation, suited, it is thought, to the present occasion.

I. An indispensable qualification in a minister of the word.

II. An indispensable duty of the people.

III. This qualification of the minister urged, and this duty of the people enforced, by the high and sacred character, which he sustains.

Let us, first, meditate on the qualification of a minister brought into view in the text, as indispensably requisite. *The priest's lips should keep knowledge.* What is the *knowledge*, which it is necessary for him to possess? To obtain a satisfactory answer to this question, we must inquire what that is, in which the people are to be instructed. They are to seek the *law* at his mouth. The *knowledge* with which he is to be furnished, and the *law* which they are to learn of him, correspond to each other, and, in this passage, are of paramount signification. What, then, is the import of the word, *law*, as used in the Scriptures?

The law of God, is an expression of extensive import, and is frequently used to comprehend the whole system of true religion, as contained in the books of Revelation. At the advent of Christ, and previously to that time, it could include no more than the scriptures of the Old Testament. In these were contained the moral law, not only as summed up in the ten commandments, but dispersed through all the several parts, including the duties which every rational creature owes to God and his neighbour: also, 'the ceremonial law, or the rites of external worship, relating to the priests, sacrifices, sabbaths, feast days, washings, and the whole of the temple service: and the political law, which regulated their intercourse with each other, as members of society. These scriptures contained predictions and promises of a Messi-

ah to come, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. He is the substance of the ceremonial law, and the great subject of whom the prophets spake, to whom the pious Israelites were directed for a better righteousness than their own, and through whose atonement alone shadowed forth in their sacrifices, they could obtain acceptance with God here, and the enjoyment of everlasting blessedness hereafter.

‘Since the days of the prophets, Messiah has been born of a woman—has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself on the cross, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The ceremonial institutions of the Jewish economy, having received their fulfilment, have been abolished; like shadows they passed away, when the good thing to come, signified by them, had appeared. The Jewish polity has been annihilated in the ruin of their city and nation, for their rejection of Messiah. The *law of God*, then, as written to us, excludes the Jewish rites of worship, and their peculiar civil ordinances. All the *moral* duties enjoined on that people, are still in force, and, together with the doctrine of Christ’s righteousness and atonement, are revealed in a more clear and perfect manner, in the scriptures of the New Testament. The whole system of religion, therefore, as contained in these scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, excepting those religious ceremonies, and political regulations, which are abolished, constitutes, at present, the law of God.’

The daily practice of christians, assigns to the expression the same comprehensive meaning. The Psalmist prayed, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” What is the import of this daily ejaculation, in the mouth of the christian suppliant?

certainly nothing less than, that God would illuminate his mind, and give him right perceptions of the whole of revealed truth. When we sincerely adopt the petition, we pray for a right understanding of the whole word of God.

That the whole of revealed truth is properly termed the law of God, or a system of divine laws, appears, further, from a consideration of the nature of law, compared with the contents of Revelation. We may define law to be a command, direction, or precept, whose requirements or prohibitions are enforced by the sanctions of reward and punishment. Now what considerable portion of Revelation does not include, in some form or other, these essential qualities of law? Some parts of it are direct, explicit and formal prescriptions, with the promise and threatening annexed. Others contain the same thing by just and unavoidable implication; and every part tends to illustrate the nature of God's moral government. In this remark we comprise the narratives, those portions which present us with the history of nations and individuals. They are admirable, and even necessary illustrations of the nature of divine law, inasmuch as they render the subject more intelligible than it could be without them. In these histories we see how a moral creature is governed. The law is applied to human actions; and hence we learn that it is something more than the names of abstract qualities framed together in a proposition. We learn, too, the certainty of its sanctions, by having exhibited before us instances of the just punishment that never fails to follow disobedience; and of the full and prompt reward which Almighty God bestows upon his dutiful subjects. The life of every individual, whose history is there related, contains something proposed either for our imitation, or for our warning. As we read, we

virtually hear the voice of God pressing it upon our consciences, *to go and do likewise* ; or else to flee for our lives from that sinful path, which, having conducted others to ruin, will, if pursued, as certainly terminate in our destruction. What more is necessary to law ? Here is precept, too plain to be misunderstood ; and sanctions, too awful and impressive to be disregarded.

The gospel is, indeed, styled good news, yea, glad tidings of great joy ; but it does not place rational creatures above law. It recognises and enforces the same rule of conduct as the Old Testament ; and by new, and more commanding motives. Our Saviour, to render the moral law the more easy of application, that it might be written on the tablet of our hearts, engraven on our memories, impressed on our consciences, and remain the constantly abiding regulator of our affections and conduct, was careful to sum up the whole in two comprehensive precepts, enjoining *love to God*, and *love to our neighbour*. If the gospel does not contain any commands that are entirely new, yet, as a system of salvation, it has its leading precepts ; for nothing is so frequently enjoined, as repentance of sin, and faith in Christ. These duties are enforced by promises of rewards the most glorious, and by threatenings of punishment the most dreadful. They are duties, which a rational being, a moral agent may no more hope to neglect or evade with impunity, than if mercy had no place in the bosom of Jehovah. “Thou shalt do no murder,” is an article of the moral law, not a whit more binding, than under the gospel, is the command, to “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” And the same authority which has declared, that “no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him,” has pronounced in a manner equally decisive and peremptory, that “he who believeth not the

Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The whole word of God, then, is the fountain, whence the preacher must draw; the store house, whence he must furnish himself; the mines at which he must labor; here he must dig for the *pearl of great price*. Hence he must supply his treasures, from which he is to bring out "things new and old." It is, too, a mine of infinite riches. Ages cannot exhaust it, "nor custom stale its infinite variety." Or, to speak without figure, in the Bible is embodied all that knowledge, which is of most intimate and permanent concern to man, respecting his Creator and Redeemer, his own origin, character, duty, destination. To the study of this volume the preacher should be devoted. It should be the subject of his daily reading and meditation, accompanied with prayer for divine illuminations. He should possess himself of its weighty truths, trace out their harmony, relations and influence.

First of all, his lips should keep knowledge of God, the author of divine law, the great and glorious Sovereign, who promulgated it, and once engraved a compendium of it upon tables of stone, hereby indicating to us its unchangeable nature, and the everlasting permanency of its obligations. This first article of religion he will impress on his hearers, not simply by maintaining that there is one God, but by just and affecting representations of the perfections of God, whose existence he asserts, and by enforcing the obligations that hence arise on the part of the creature. He should be able to make manifest the right of Jehovah to prescribe laws to his creatures, and require their obedience: a right, which results from the wisdom, power and goodness, which were exerted in giving them being; and from that ever watchful Prov-

idence which every moment sustains them. To him the attributes of God should not be subjects of cold, unfeeling speculation. They should be so contemplated, as to excite corresponding emotions in the heart. His power and majesty should over-awe the soul, and make the creature feel that he is a worm. His eternity and wisdom should excite admiration ; his justice, heart-felt approbation. His truth should command our trust, his immutability, our unchanging confidence, and all his perfections, our supreme love. Some of these attributes the preacher may see impressed on our globe, and engraven on the sky, and will gladly tell his hearers how, and where to trace them. But more interesting illustrations of all the divine perfections, may be drawn from that part, which he is permitted to scan, of the government, which God maintains over moral beings, and the fundamental laws of which are written in the Bible. Lost in wonder he will frequently be ; and especially on perceiving that even the guilt, the criminality, the wretchedness of man, should furnish occasion to the Almighty for the display of an attribute, which otherwise we might never have known, as belonging to his character. Had there been no transgressors, we might never have heard of the *mercy* of God ; that attribute alone, which now keeps us from despair ; and in preparing to exercise which, there is the developement of a wisdom and goodness, which angels cannot fathom, how ardently soever they may *desire to look into it*.

Hence, principally, must he also derive his knowledge of *man*. Much of human nature he may learn by watching the operations of his own heart and mind, and by observing the phenomena exhibited by others. He may discern his intellectual faculties, and many of the purpos-

es for which they are to be employed. He may know that he has affections, may be able to distinguish actions ; but how shall he ascertain their remoter bearings ; how shall he determine their moral qualities ; how affix to them their just degrees of praise and blame, but by consulting the oracles of God, and comparing them with the perfect law ? Without it he may know something of his condition as a creature ; but can he know his relations, as a sinner ? “ By the *law* is the knowledge of sin ; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.” The commandment is so “ exceeding broad,” as to bring under its condemning sentence the sinful desires of the heart. Would he know whence this sinful heart ? Let him take down his Bible, and trace its origin. With the holy book spread open before him, with conscience awakened, and solemnly charged to pronounce an impartial verdict, let him compare his actual condition with what is there recorded of man in his fallen state. Let him there learn *how*, and from what, he fell. “ God created man in his own image.” This cannot have reference to his bodily form ; for “ God is a spirit.” It must therefore be spoken of his spiritual and immortal nature—his intellectual and moral qualities. His understanding did not labor under its present darkness, and was deluded by no false perceptions. His will had no perverse inclination ; his affections were pure and holy. He possessed the “ positive qualities of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.” This was his character, as he came from the forming hand of his Creator. Is it asked, whence then had he the inclination to disobey ? We profess not to be able to give any other answer than that which is furnished by the Scriptures. The moment,

however, that the design to disobey was formed, he was, to all intents, a rebel, and must have been so in the sight of God, though prevented, by natural inability, from approaching the prohibited tree. Let the reader confine himself to the simple narrative, and all is plain, and easy of comprehension. If over-curious, he will involve himself in perplexity. "God made man upright ; man hath sought out many inventions," are intelligible propositions ; but the moment you attempt to refine upon these, and go still farther back to find the author of sin, you will be thrown into a distressing dilemma. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," is a simple (and why not satisfactory ?) account of the origin of evil. It is, at any rate, a statement, the truth of which no reflecting mind will want arguments to confirm. Man cannot reflect, without feeling himself a wanderer from God. He cannot read the Bible, with his consciousness about him, and not feel a painful conviction of his relation to sinful Adam. He carries with him internal and external marks of being in a fallen state. From the very ruins consequent upon his apostacy, we may gather intimations of his former greatness, when made "a little lower than the angels." In his lapsed condition he has understanding sufficient to comprehend the directions and rules prescribed by the Almighty, and to which he is commanded to conform his heart and conduct. He has conscience to feel his obligation ; yes, he is conscious that the laws of God are reasonable, that he ought to obey ; that the punishment threatened against disobedience is just, nothing less than what the truth and holiness of God requires that he should inflict. In view of motives of eternal weight, as the promise of

immortal happiness, on the one hand, and everlasting misery, on the other, he is free to choose and act as he pleases. And yet he chooseth that wherein God delighteth not ; he prefers the way of transgression, conscious, meanwhile, that he is erring, that he is contracting guilt, and meriting punishment. How shall we account for this, but from latent depravity of heart, strengthened by habit, and universal as the posterity of Adam ? This is a part of the knowledge of man, which the preacher's lips should keep and inculcate. He should hold up the law, strictly so called, in the reasonableness and justice of its requisitions, in its extent, perfection and spirituality, as a mirror, in which man may see his entire deformity ; and having thus taught him his situation as a sinner, he must also impart the knowledge of a

SAVIOUR, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace." This is a doctrine inexpressibly welcome to the creature bowed down with the weight of conscious guilt. The Lord Jesus, therefore, in his person and offices, is the great theme, which will employ the best powers of his mind, and waken the tenderest sensibilities of his heart. He will exhibit ' Jesus Christ and him crucified, who delivers from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; ' will display to the view of his flock that wonderful assemblage of divine and human perfections, which meet in that mysterious person, who is David's Lord, and David's Son, and which qualify him to be the Mediator between God and man. He will represent him as the image of the invisible God ; in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily : in whom the bright effulgence of the Father's glory was tempered with all the sinless properties of humanity ; whose person com-

bined the perfections of both natures ; for " his name shall be called Immanuel, God with us." He will insist on the gospel method of justification through faith in the blood of Christ ; and guard the doctrine from those unauthorized and shocking inferences, which would make Christ the minister of sin, by showing that salvation by grace, so far from diminishing either the number or force of our moral obligations, multiplies and strengthens them, and supplies motives to a devout and holy life, which could not otherwise exist. *For the love of Christ constraineth us.* While he denies all merit to works, he cannot fail to inculcate them in the most forcible manner, unless he gives partial views of Christ ; for the truly gospel minister holds up Christ, not only as High Priest and Advocate, but as Teacher, Example, and Ruler. That *Teacher* spake as never man spake, not only as it regards the simplicity and authority of his instructions, but in respect to the pure and sublime morality which he every where inculcates. He reprobates and condemns every impure thought, and every feeling, which is not the offspring of genuine benevolence. The 'law of Christ, in its doctrines, prescriptions and motives, is fitted to destroy the power of sin, and is rendered effectual to this end by an inward and divine operation, which begins and matures in the hearts of men the temper and the happiness of the sons of God.' The gospel minister will hold up his divine master as an *Example* also, in whom all human virtues as well as divine perfections were embodied, and shone with engaging lustre ; that his flock, ' beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image.' He will point them to him as their *Ruler*, and urge their individual obedience to his commands. He

will dwell on the growing extent of the Redeemer's kingdom, and show, that he must rule, till he hath put all enemies under his feet ; that his religion is destined to prevail, will gradually extend its influence, and multiply its trophies, till it becomes universal ; when the " church being completed, the Mediator will assume the character of Judge, will display his divine power, discernment and justice, in raising the dead, in unfolding to view the moral character of each, in pronouncing and executing the final sentence, which dooms his enemies to hopeless punishment, and instates his friends in the happiness and glory of his eternal kingdom."

We have just glanced at the leading contents of the Bible, that system of legislation, which it is the preacher's business to expound and enforce. It will be seen by a little reflection on the Lawgiver, the subjects, the matter of the laws, and him who "is the end of the law for righteousness," that his labor is one of no common magnitude. In view of them, the apostle gave it in solemn charge to Timothy, to *study*, to give attendance to *reading, to meditation, and prayer* ; and if to Timothy, who was from his childhood acquainted with the holy Scriptures, and supernaturally endowed with gifts of the Holy Ghost, with what force does the charge apply to the modern minister, who enjoys no miraculous teachings !

A little regard to the contents of the Bible, the different times when it was written, and the varieties of manner in which instruction is communicated, will be sufficient to convince us, that, in order to its complete elucidation, an acquaintance with other branches of knowledge is absolutely necessary. The sacred books were written at different and distant periods, including a series of more than fifteen hundred years ; during which the style of

writing would be likely to vary with the changes of custom, and with every variation in the state of science and literature. In them instruction is given in almost every possible form besides that of direct prescription, by history, prophecy, allegory ; by allusions to customs and manners, which have long since become obsolete : by illustrations, taken from the productions and appearances of nature, and the various employments of men ; indeed, by innumerable bold and striking images and figures. Now how shall a preacher handle, in the most profitable and successful manner, the prophetic parts of Scripture, without a knowledge of their accomplishment, so far as it has taken place ? And how can he determine their accomplishment, but by a knowledge of history ? How show the meaning of a metaphorical word, without understanding its original import ? How shall he ascertain the instruction conveyed by an allegory, without a knowledge of the forms, or customs, or whatever be the resemblance, on which it is founded ? How discern the appositiveness of illustrations taken from the productions and appearances of nature, without a knowledge of the geography of the country, and of the scenery by which the speakers and writers were surrounded ? Individual persons and things may be incidentally mentioned or alluded to, in a manner inexplicable by us, till we learn from other sources their connexion with some important event, which materially affected the condition of mankind, at the time. There is, in short, no species of knowledge in any branch of science, which might not be desirable to the interpreter of Scripture ; he might make it all contribute to the illustration of sacred truth. Suppose him to be possessed of true piety and devotion, could he but behold the luminaries of heaven with the

eye of the philosopher, to him they would in language doubly emphatic, declare the glory of God. Could he survey the productions of nature with the eye of the naturalist, he would perceive new reasons for admiration and praise. Could he look into the human frame with the ken of the anatomist, he would adopt, with a feeling before unknown, the exclamation of David : "I am fearfully and wonderfully made ; marvellous are thy works, O Lord !" Or could he, guided by the clue which directs the mineralogist, dig beneath the surface, and explore the bowels of the earth, he would find indubitable traces of the same power, arrangement, and wisdom, "which guide Arcturus with his sons." It is thus that a knowledge of nature fills the mind with sublime conceptions of its stupendous Author ; conceptions, which, sanctified by grace, give a more exalted character to devotion.

"How beautiful upon the mountains" must be the feet of that preacher, who, with a heart glowing with love to Christ and to souls, brings also to his work a mind thus richly stored ! Verily, he shall lay the whole universe under tribute to Christ. "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift."

"The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,

"And Saba's spicy groves pay tribute there."

If he has enriched himself with the treasures of ancient wisdom, he will come and lay down all at the feet of Christ. If 'with the Magi, he turn the hallowed page of Zoroaster,' he will summon them to come with their offerings to the Saviour. At his bidding also, the discoveries of modern philosophy shall pay generous homage to Him, whose natural government they illustrate. Nothing in the whole circle of mind or matter,

will be allowed to withhold its tribute from Him, "of whom, and to whom, and through whom are all things ; and for whose glory they are and were created."

Such a minister will be able to silence the atheist, if that monster exists ; and drive him to the dilemma, either to acknowledge his Creator, or deny his own existence. He will be able to shame the deist, by showing that his objections to Revelation are equally valid and weighty against that system of natural religion, the excellence and equity of which he is free to acknowledge. He will be able to defend the positive ordinances and institutions of religion, against the sneers of unhumiliated pride, by showing the uses to which they are subservient ; as they "sensibly ratify invisible blessings, assist our contemplation, pursuit and enjoyment of them."

Some acquaintance with the philosophy of mind is, for obvious reasons, indispensable in a religious teacher. Without it he will very often venture beyond his depth. In Theology, as in other sciences, there are subjects on which questions may be raised, which no finite intelligence can answer. There are limits, which finite minds cannot pass. To know where these boundaries lie, is the great secret of improvement in knowledge. To know when a question is proposed, whether it be capable of an answer, is one of the most valuable attainments. If it be one that lies beyond the reach of our faculties, all the time and labor expended upon it, will not only be lost, but involve the mind in the most uncomfortable perplexity—time and labor too, which might be successfully employed upon useful and practical truths ; and for no other have we time and labor to spare. These are sufficiently numerous to require our intense

and persevering application. There is indeed, one answer to every query of the kind above alluded to—it is that which resolves it into the will of God ; and numerous are the inquiries to which no other answer will be attempted, except by the conceited novice, or the proud, imposing dogmatist. How soon might we lose ourselves in contemplating the mode of the divine existence, or the origin of evil ! Still it should be remembered, that truth is truth, and fact, fact ; and whenever either is substantiated, it were madness to withhold our assent, however perplexing to our reason the circumstances attending it. The fact we may state, the truth we may insist upon ; may show its necessity, explain its uses, describe its influence and effects, and its relation to other truths ; but no further are permitted to go.

What we have already said does not comprise a complete account of the qualification of a minister required by our text. The words enjoin something more than the bare *possession* of knowledge, viz. a readiness to communicate it. Knowledge must not only be treasured up in his mind ; but must dwell on his lips, ready to be dispensed as occasion may require. This, we apprehend, implies something more than fluency of utterance ; for the most fluent are not always the most convincing, nor are their words always followed with the most lasting effect. The same truths are not equally applicable to all classes of persons, nor to all times and occasions, even though these truths be fundamentally important. And there should be as great a diversity in the manner of inculcating, adapting and applying the same truths, as there is in the characters which the preacher has to address. Now these characters are as numerous, as the diversities to be found among men. It

is his province to address all, high and low, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, and all the intermediate grades, with all varieties of habit, passion, prejudice—with various degrees of guilt and hardness. To indulge any reasonable hope of “rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving every one his portion in season,” he must have some knowledge of human nature, in the common sense of the expression ; must have seen and observed man in a variety of situations. Among men of the same rank in life, there is a great diversity of intellectual character ; and they possess different degrees of susceptibility. The attention of some to religious truths would be soonest roused by an exhibition of skilful reasoning ; of others, by tracing analogies between natural and spiritual objects. Some would be captivated by the graces of style ; others, by plain common sense ; and not a few, are accessible chiefly through the imagination. The heart, too, is the seat of various passions and affections, which are not to be overlooked by the preacher. Some, however depraved, have a kind of native ingenuousness, in whom the sense of obligation to serve God, would be soonest produced by appeals to their gratitude, by a feeling description of the goodness of God, in what he has done for them. Before some, he must continue to paint the odiousness of vice, till they hate their own image. To others, he must present religion in her angel tints, and heavenly beauties ; till they become enamoured of her charms. And multitudes are so sottish, so lost to feeling and to duty, that he must break upon them with the thunders of the violated law ; must waken their fear, the only emotion of which they are susceptible, by lighting before them, the flames of that pit, in which, persisting in

their hardness, they will burn forever. Taking for his model that divine preacher, who spake as never man spake, he will not shrink from pressing upon them the upbraiding and terrifying appeal, "ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

To all these exigences, it is the arduous task of the preacher to suit himself. It is his imperious duty to do it as far as practicable. For this he has the authority of the example of St. Paul, who "became all things, to all men, that he might by all means save some." To the Jew he became a Jew; to the weak, as weak; to them who were under the law, as under the law; to them who were without law, as without law—not without law to God. He did not carry the principle of accommodation so far, as to overstep the commandment of God. But within this consecrated limit, there was ample range for the exercise of his faculties, particularly judgment, both as to the matter and manner of his addresses. In making known the religion of Jesus to any people, he would select that truth first, which was least revolting to their previous notions; and clothe his ideas in such language, as was least offensive to their prejudices. In this he acted like a master in his profession; for unless he could gain a hearing, his efforts to propagate the gospel would be fruitless; and by pressing the least offensive truth first, the way would be prepared for leading them to embrace a second, a third, and so on. And as to language, it was indifferent to him, whether to use his own, or to associate the religion of Christ, with that which in their view had been consecrated by the use of their deified poets. In imitation of the Apostle, it is the preacher's duty to

consult the various tastes, and even to respect the prejudices of his hearers, provided his object be to gain them over to the truth, and not to please man. He should be familiar with the best models of fine writing, with the ornaments and graces of style, that his discourses may not disgust men of refined and cultivated minds. He should be acquainted with the best specimens of reasoning, not only that he may be able to satisfy and confirm the inquisitive, and such as are not contented with bare assertion; but that he may confute and convince gainsayers, and expose the sophistry of those arguments which profess to prove religion an imposture, or any of its doctrines untenable; to detect the fallacy of those, who to promises undoubtedly true attach conclusions unquestionably false. While he guards against that coarseness and vulgarity, which would disgust the learned, his instructions should be characterized by a plainness and simplicity, adapted to the capacities of the ignorant; to whom, if necessary, he must give "line upon line, and precept upon precept." In short, he must leave no effort untried to gain access to the heart; he must constrain men by the love of Christ, and persuade them by the terrors of the Lord, to become reconciled to God.

Let me add—the preacher's knowledge of divine truth should be *experimental*. How shall he explore the depths of depravity in others' hearts, who never felt his own? How expose the various forms of impalpable treachery, deceit and malignity, if these things have lain undiscovered in his own bosom? How describe the nature of convictions and terrors, of which he was never conscious? How paint the feelings of a sinner under the condemnation of a law, whose denunciations

he never felt directed against himself? How speak of subsiding anguish and rising joy on a view of the Saviour, unless his own troubled conscience has been soothed by the cheering words, "thy sins are forgiven thee?" How show the influence of that truth which makes free indeed, unless his own soul has exulted in gospel liberty? How exhibit the blessings and benefits procured by the Mediator, unless they are put into his possession by saving faith? How describe the believer's joy and peace in his intercourse with his Creator, the animating and purifying influence of a hope laid up in heaven, unless he recognises in his own soul the recovered image of his Maker; and in his experience, many happy hours of communion with his God and Saviour; and in his increasing stability and sanctification, a hope, which is an anchor to his soul, drawing him upwards towards heaven?

I forbear to enlarge; for already I seem to hear the youthful minister tremblingly inquire, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Let us, therefore, proceed to the next thing enjoined in our text, which is,

II. An indispensable duty of the people.

They should seek the law at his mouth: that is, they should attend punctually on his instructions, particularly, in the house of God. The duty is so obvious, that not a word need be said to convince you that it is absolutely binding. It is the positive command of God, which settles the point unalterably. It is clearly implied too in those qualities and attainments, which God requires of every minister. For what are all those acquisitions, which the preacher must watch, and labor, and study to obtain? Not for himself merely. It is the benefit, the present and eternal welfare of his people, principally, that

renders them indispensable. He is to employ his week in study, meditation and prayer, and on the Sabbath carry the results to the house of God. There they are to meet, and cordially receive them; if not, how shall they be profited? On whom shall his doctrine drop as the rain, and distil as the dew? Or who will be begotten again unto a lively hope by the word of truth?

The necessity of religious instruction to the salvation of the soul, is another reason for attending on the public dispensation of the word. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Men cannot be saved then, unless they believe. But how can they believe in him, of whom they do not hear? And how can they hear, if they absent themselves from the place, where a Saviour is proclaimed? They must know the only true God, and Jesus Christ his Son, or they cannot inherit eternal life.

The impossibility of obtaining adequate religious instruction, without attending on the word preached, is another motive to the duty. To this affirmation there are some exceptions, which we need not stay to enumerate. We advance it only as a general truth, applicable to such as have it in their power to attend. With these limitations, it is a most solemn truth, demanding the attentive consideration of all who live in a gospel land. Men in common life, busied as they are with their accustomed avocations, have not time nor facilities, to prosecute religious inquiries to any considerable extent, or to become proficient in divine knowledge. God, foreseeing this, has separated an order of men from their fellows, for the purpose of training up mankind, by a course of religious instruction, for heavenly blessedness. To the labors of this order, it should be remembered, those laymen are indebted, who have made respectable attainments in theology. The in-

stitution of the ministry answers, as a means, the great purposes of enlightening and saving men, in the same way, as the division of labor in obtaining the ordinary objects of human pursuit. When would that man become rich, who should determine to use nothing which was not the direct product of his own ingenuity and labor?—who should attempt to construct all the implements with which he works?—who should raise his own raw materials, manufacture, and shape them to the proportions of his own body?—who should build and navigate his own vessel, project his own chart, construct his own compass, and import all the foreign commodities, which he has occasion to use? The thing is impossible. Proceeding in this way, a long life would be over, before he could have brought from foreign climes a single article, even “the green beverage of his morning meal.” Men must, from the necessity of the case, labor for one another—each individual for the whole community; and the unskilled and unlettered may be as much benefited by works of art, as the artist himself. The compass is as safe a guide to the seaman, as though himself had balanced the needle, and impregnated it with magnetism. By the aid of his chart, he may sail as secure from danger, may as well avoid the shoals and rocks, as if himself had drawn the lines and erected the beacons. If none but he, who discovered the magnet, or constructed the compass, had made use of them, what would now be the state of navigation and commerce? If every man were his own artist, what would be the state of the arts? If every man were his own physician, what would be the state of medical science? Look at the savage tribes, and you will know. The same principle pervades the religious community. Here, also, one class must labor for

all. If every man were his own teacher, what would be the state of religious knowledge ? Some must be devoted exclusively to its pursuit, or no adequate knowledge of religion would ever be obtained ; and unless it is sought of these by the people, it follows as a consequence, that they can never be adequately instructed.— This consequence will remain after all allowances for the right of private judgment, and all exceptions against implicit faith, are made.

The prodigious waste of labor which will accrue from deserting the sanctuary, furnishes another reason for attending. The instructions which the priest has toiled all the week to prepare, may serve as well for hundreds, as for tens. No reason can be drawn from the nature of truth, why the same message may not prove a quickening word, yea spirit and life, to as many as can sit within the compass of a speaker's voice, as well as to one individual. The droppings of the sanctuary may fall on bodies animated with immortal souls, as well as on senseless wood and stone. When, therefore, the house of God is deserted, the preacher's labor must be lost, and the design of a preached word must fail. Of what avail will it be to his flock, that he has exhausted his bodily strength in drawing from the deep fountains of divine truth a portion for them ; that his anxiety for their eternal welfare has encroached upon the hours for repose ; that with agonies of mind he has thought over their situation, in order to prepare a suitable message for them ; and that he has watered this message with his tears, if, when he goes to deliver it, few or none come to receive it ? All these affectionate labors for their good, will be lost to them ; and it is a loss they can poorly sustain.

The feelings of a minister on being deserted in this way, supply a powerful motive to attendance, to all who are susceptible of feeling. If left to vent his voice against the posts and walls of the Lord's house, what can soothe his anguish under the complaint, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought?" What can be more disheartening, what bear with such insupportable weight upon one who considers the destinies of immortal beings? In desiring to have his ministrations attended, a preacher may be actuated by motives, that will not bear examining. It may flatter his vanity, to behold a crowded audience; it may feed his pride to have multitudes hanging upon his lips. And it behoves him, as he would avoid the guilt of treachery to his master, and the doom of a man-pleaser, to guard against an undue fondness for popularity. Still his motives may be pure; it may be—wo to him if it be not—an affectionate regard to their best interests, that animates his zeal in calling upon sinners to crowd the temple gates of Jehovah. It may be that he would make ready a people prepared for the Lord, that causes his heart to leap, when he can go to the house of God with a *multitude* that keep holy day. It may be a holy gladness which is felt, when he hears it said by one to another, "come, let us go up to the house of God;" for there Jehovah is accustomed to meet his people. There he sheds the influences of his Spirit, and gives the word effect. There he sends the arrows of conviction, and fastens them in the sinner's heart. There he applies the balm of Gilead, and soothes the troubled conscience. There is the gospel Zion, where the Lord commandeth his blessing, even life forevermore.

The evil consequences of religious ignorance, supply a powerful motive to the duty we are enforcing. We can

never sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in providing so simple and efficacious a method of instruction for his ignorant and erring creatures, as he has by sanctifying a sabbath, and instituting a ministry. The sabbath is a most merciful institution. Its blessed effects on a community by whom it is hallowed, cannot be fully estimated. It brings all classes together, where they mingle in the same services, and virtually acknowledge their equality in the sight of God. Parents may lead their little ones to the house of prayer, to be instructed in their duty, and formed to habits of virtue. Here they will be warned of those vices, which they should avoid, and dissuaded from those courses that are ruinous to character and happiness. They will be exhorted to filial obedience, and encouraged, by every motive, and in every method adapted to influence their tender minds, to a life of piety. Being taught to fear and love God, their consciences will become enlightened, and they will soon feel the force of moral obligation. This will prove their best security in the hour of temptation. With a knowledge of right and wrong, and a conscience ready to pronounce judgment on their conduct, they will not, as they advance towards maturity, rashly hazard the consequences of opposing her decisions.— They will dread those “compunctious visitings,” which harass and corrode the guilty bosom. They will uniformly feel a powerful restraint from vice, and motive to duty.

With such a community, upon whose order and happiness we would gladly dwell, contrast another, who disregard the sabbath and a preached word. Comparatively ignorant of the great God, they are not awed by the terrors of his power and justice, nor feel that he is

an avenger. They are hardly susceptible of being moved by the revelations of his mercy ; for they do not feel their need of it. The great motives to obedience, which are drawn from the eternal world, from threatened pains, and anguish of everlasting duration, and from the promised glory and felicity of heaven, have little influence with them. Casting off the fear of God, they learn to despise the authority of man. They fall into vicious practices and habits of nameless varieties, and pursue them with little remorse. Conscience is deposed from the judgment-seat, or else sits an ignorant, indiscriminating arbiter. A dreadful apathy and insensibility pervade all branches of society. In vain will you search for the closet, where the devout saint retires to hold communion with his God. In vain for the family altar, where the morning and evening incense rises, with sweet perfume, to the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of all the faithful families of the earth. It were presumption to believe that God is adored in the closet and family by those, who uniformly, and unnecessarily forsake the assembling of themselves together in his sanctuary. Children and youth grow up ignorant of the truths and obligations of religion. The progress of degeneracy is rapid—the descent to hell easy ; and the baleful effects of such ignorance display themselves in various fatal errors and practices. But the evils of religious ignorance are not confined to this life. We must follow its surprised and disappointed subjects beyond the grave. We must view them as naked spirits before the bar of God—that God, of whom in this world they refused to hear. There they find the vengeance, of which they would not be forewarned, insupportable. There, contrasted with the ineffable purity

of God and angels, they perceive their own pollution—pollution, from which they might have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. But here they declined having their souls searched, refused to apply to atoning blood ; for they refused attendance at the house of God, where the knowledge of him, of the Saviour, of themselves, and their duties, is weekly taught. Theirs, therefore, is the doom of gospel sinners. Their ignorance will afford no reason for the mitigation of their punishment ; it is not the ignorance of heathens ; but an ignorance they might have avoided—might have overcome. “O,” said the weeping Jesus, over the devoted city, “O, that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace : but now they are hid from thine eyes !”

How vain are all those excuses for absence from the house of God, in which men plead unpleasant weather, bad travelling, bodily fatigue, and the like ; or even that more plausible one, “I can read my Bible, or a sermon at home, and gain as much instruction, as I could in the sanctuary.”

Those who are detained from the house of God by a necessity, which they cannot overcome, may make their own habitation a sanctuary, and expect a divine blessing in the diligent and devout use of such means of grace, as they possess. Leaving these out of the question, the excuses, on which we are animadverting, are, virtually, an impeachment of the wisdom of God. The creature assumes the province of determining that the means, which God has selected to impart saving knowledge to his creatures, are not well adapted to the end proposed. Disregarding, therefore, the divine institution, he follows one of his own. We here suppose, that the objector

does actually read his Bible, or sermon, instead of roving about, or dozing away holy time in sloth. But will-worship is a species of homage, which God abominates. He has hallowed a sabbath, and instituted a ministry, and commanded attendance ; and the glory of his character requires, that he should honor his own institutions. His own institutions he will honor, by bestowing his grace upon those who reverently observe them, and withholding it from those who despise and condemn them, to follow the dictates of a wayward will. We can expect a blessing only in the way of obedience, and let none attempt to justify their absence from the house of God, by excuses which the attending preacher might plead with as much reason as themselves.

Alas ! that there should, in our day, be any necessity for urging so plain a duty ! It was not always so in New-England. In her infancy, when there was but here and there a solitary temple erected to Jehovah, our fathers could employ the whole of Saturday in journeying to the house of God, and Monday in returning to their dwellings ; and find themselves amply repaid for the expense of time and fatigue, by the pleasure of worshipping with the saints—of joining in those intercessions which have power with God—of mingling in those praises which elevate the soul, a prelude to the songs of heaven ! To them how amiable were the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts ! How did their souls long for the courts of the Lord ; and their heart and flesh cry out for the living God ! Surely they loved the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honor dwelt. How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed !

It was not my object, at this time, to urge attendance at the house of God by considerations drawn from the

pleasures of public worship ; but rather to insist upon it as a duty enjoined by God. The same divine authority, which requires the priest's lips to keep knowledge, commands the people to seek the law at his mouth. The duties are reciprocal, and equally binding on both parties. This will further appear, when we,

III. Urge this qualification of the minister, and enforce this duty of the people, as indispensable, by considering the high, and sacred character which he sustains.

He is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. This character not only requires peculiar qualifications, but invests him with certain prerogatives, and places those to whom he is sent under positive obligations.

A messenger, or ambassador must be *loyal*, heartily devoted to his Sovereign, and *familiarly acquainted with his instructions*, both in their spirit and letter. He must be a native citizen, or a naturalized and adopted subject. A sovereign would not, without necessity, employ a foreigner, or one who had a predilection for another master, or who was ignorant of the language, in which he pens his instructions, on an important embassy. With a loyal and friendly disposition, a foreigner might understand, generally, the spirit and purport of his commission, by means of a translation furnished to his hands by another ; but if in the progress of his negotiations, he should be disputed on any particular article of his instructions, how could he satisfy himself or his antagonist, but by referring directly to the original ? So, we conceive, to him,

“ —who negotiates between God and man,

“ As God's ambassador, the grand concerns

“ Of judgment and of mercy,”

an acquaintance with the tongues in which the Scriptures were originally written, is, if not absolutely indispensable, yet highly important. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are the "ultimate and unalterable standard of truth, by which every doctrine must eventually be tried. Why has God preserved them with a care hardly short of miraculous, but that they should be studied? Are ministers to treat as beneath their notice, those original records, which their God has not thought it beneath him to consign for their use to the safeguard of his wonder-working providence? No. God has preserved his blessed book, that it might be read in the original; and that his children might be able to assert and maintain his truth inviolate, by having direct access to the fountains themselves. And thus he frustrates a deep stratagem of hell, to bring the original Scriptures into gradual disuse; and then, by discrediting the versions, to bring Christianity itself into embarrassment and shame."

Far be it from us, by any intimation, to diminish, in the least, the confidence of christians in the excellent version of the Scriptures in common use; a version, which, it is believed, will never be exchanged for a better. All that is necessary to a holy life, a triumphant death, and a blessed eternity, may be learnt from it without mistake. Any man may be sufficiently acquainted with the common law, to avoid the prison and the gallows; indeed, to enjoy the security, the benefits and the blessings of law, in an equal degree with the man, whose study and practice it is: but he would not, for that reason, leave a difficult case of law to the management of any neighbour indiscriminately. Many questions might arise, on which he would find it for his interest and satisfaction to consult the lawyer by profession.

So men may know enough of religion to enjoy its influences, supports and hopes, in an equal degree with the minister, and yet may meet with occasional difficulties, which they will bring to him for solution, and which his more critical acquaintance with the scriptures may enable him to solve. He is to study the original, not to make a display of learning, but for the benefit of his people. He is to bring to them the simple results of his investigations; not the process by which he arrived at them. But investigate he must, closely, critically, prayerfully, or he cannot adequately know the mind of his Master.

An ambassador must proceed *according to his instructions*, and follow the true spirit of his commission. He must not use any discretionary power, which has not been committed to him, though in his own opinion it might save the kingdom of his sovereign from ruin. So the ambassador of Christ must scrupulously follow the directions of his Master. The business which he is employed to negotiate, is an important business. It is to effect the reconciliation of human rebels to their injured Sovereign. He has prescribed the terms, on which he will be at peace, and his messenger is not at liberty to prescribe any different terms. His instructions to all his ambassadors, are substantially the same. To Ezekiel: "Thou shalt speak *my words* unto them." To Jonah: "Go to Nineveh, and preach against it *the preaching that I bid thee*." To all preachers without exception: "If any man speak, let him speak *as the oracles of God*." And it is the resolution of every real messenger of Christ, "what the Lord God hath said unto me, that will I speak." If he adheres to this resolution, those to whom he is sent, must cordially receive

his messages, and accept the overtures which he makes, or take the consequences.

An ambassador must employ himself diligently and faithfully in *the business he is sent to negotiate*. He is not at liberty to neglect the concerns of the kingdom which he represents, in order to amuse himself in exploring the country whither he is sent, in search of curiosities; nor to mingle with the inhabitants any farther, or for any other purpose, than to obtain and impart such information, as shall subserve the objects of his embassy. In like manner, it is required of the ambassador of Jesus, that he be found faithful. He must be intent on the object of his embassy; and avoid every thing which would divert him from it. He must engage in nothing, which is not subservient, either directly or indirectly to his main object. In this his thoughts and desires must centre. To this his plans and labors must tend. With this he must be completely engrossed. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

An ambassador should be a *true representative of the sovereign*, in whose name he acts. The messenger of the Lord of hosts should be irreproachable and holy. From his life as well as his instructions, the people should be able to derive some consistent ideas of the Being, by whose authority he acts. The same mind should be in him eminently, which was also in Christ Jesus. In his character should be combined those excellencies and graces, which belong to a citizen of Christ's kingdom. "In all things showing himself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned." It will be his anxious desire and endeavour to be able to make the appeal of an eminent ambassador of Christ in primitive

times: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe."

The *person* of an ambassador is to be *respected*. An insult or abuse offered to him in his official capacity is an insult upon the sovereign who employs him. The same is true of the ambassador of Christ. He is to be esteemed very highly in love for his work's sake. The office is to be respected and revered, though the incumbent be unworthy. They who despise it, despise not man, but God. The language of Christ to his ministering servants is, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." All contempt thrown upon faithful ministers is considered by their master as thrown upon himself, and will be treated accordingly.

The efficacy of what is done by an ambassador depends wholly upon *the authority of the Sovereign*. The ambassador of Christ does not act in his own name; he comes as a servant, but shows his commission, produces his warrant, *Thus saith the Lord*, for every proposal which he makes to those, to whom he is sent. This renders it authoritative, and they reject it at their peril.

An ambassador, when he has fulfilled his commission, returns to his sovereign *to give in his account, and receive his reward*. If he has been faithful to his trust, has maintained the honor of his sovereign, though unsuccessful in the object of his embassy, he will be received with approbation, and, perhaps, promoted to be minister of state. So the minister of Christ, having performed his errand, will be remanded by his Master to render up his account and receive his reward. His reward will not depend upon the number won over to the

interests of his Lord ; but wholly upon the zeal, fidelity and perseverance, with which he shall have prosecuted the object of his mission. If he shall have proposed the conditions of reconciliation with plainness, and urged compliance with feeling and frequency ; have simply and solely sought his Master's glory, asserted his honor and maintained his prerogatives ; his crown of glory is secure, though a soul be not reclaimed by his efforts. The promise of Christ is pledged, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Under all the discouragements, that arise from his having to treat with a disobedient and gainsaying people, he may, for his consolation, appropriate the language, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord." But the servant of Jesus is not selfish. To him it is distressing beyond description that his labors should be unprofitable to his people. O, my brethren, should God give your pastor grace to be faithful, and admit him to his kingdom at last, still he would not go alone. Inexpressibly painful to him is the thought, that ye should reject the counsel of God against yourselves. The thought of a final separation is too much to be endured. If there is a sincere wish, if there is one supreme desire in his heart, we believe it to be, that you, who are now his hope, may hereafter be his joy, and everlasting crown of rejoicing. AMEN.

NOTE.—Page 24. near the middle, for *promises*, read *premises*.

CHARGE.

BY REV. NATHAN CHURCH, OF BRIDGETON.

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GOD in his holy and wise providence, has called you to the important work of the ministry. By prayer and laying on the hands of the Presbytery, you are consecrated to the sacred office of an overseer over the flock of God in this place. The office, into which you have been inducted, is highly responsible ; its duties arduous, and its effects, lasting as eternity.

We therefore proceed, agreeably to the custom of these churches, and conformably to the divine pattern, to charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, to be faithful in the important work devolving upon you.

Take heed to yourself, and to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer. Do the work of a pastor, and make full proof of thy ministry. Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, teach, exhort, rebuke with all long-suffering and doctrine. Exhibit in your preaching, the being of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; the purity, extent, and perfection of the divine law, and the sinless obedience which man owes to it. Lay open the glory and perfection of the atonement of Christ, and the free offer of pardon and salvation to all gospel subjects—to all, who will receive it by faith. Neglect not to point out the depravity of man, that they may feel the necessity of pardon, of the new birth, and lie at the foot of mercy for its accomplishment. Urge much the necessity of a holy life, a close and constant attendance on all the duties of the first and second table ; those duties which respect God, and those which respect man ; making Christ and his Apostles, your great pattern of preaching.

Administer the special ordinances of the gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper to proper subjects, refusing the loose and profane, and cordially receiving those, who are weak in the faith. Be frequently

at the throne of grace, with, and for your people. Bless the flock in the name of the Lord our God, who is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; putting his name upon them, that he may bless them.

When called to separate others to the work of the ministry of the gospel of Christ, lay hands suddenly on no man; but have satisfactory evidence, that those, whom you shall ordain elders in the churches, are friends to the Lord Jesus, and experimentally acquainted with the great truths of divine revelation; and are sober, just, temperate, sound in the faith, and able to teach others; that you may not, by introducing the ignorant, the erroneous, and the vicious, into the ministry, be a partaker of other men's sins, and dishonor the cause of religion.

Be careful to maintain a holy discipline in the church, doing nothing by partiality. Strive to understand the state of your flock, and watch over them with tenderness and affection. Feed Christ's sheep, and feed his lambs. Ever be ready to advise, counsel and pray with the sick. Give yourself to reading, meditation, and prayer. Be indeed an example to the flock, having, in all your conduct, a tender regard to the souls of men.

Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience. Faint not in a day of trial, but view yourself as a soldier of Christ. Take the whole armour of God, and fight the good fight of faith, looking unto the Captain of our salvation, who asserts, my grace is sufficient for thee. Remember, the vows of God are upon you. Cleave unto, and live near to him, that he may succeed and prosper your labors, to your consolation and satisfaction in this life, and to your crown of rejoicing in the life to come; in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing. AMEN.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

DEAR BROTHER,

THE day, to which you have looked forward with such anxious and varied emotions, has at length arrived. Most of its solemn transactions are already passed; the recording angel has registered them, together with the motives whence they originated, and the feelings they have inspired, and is about to seal them up till the great day of account. You have been solemnly consecrated to the pastoral office by the imposition of hands by the presbytery. You have received it in solemn charge to take heed to your ministry, that you fulfil it. The oversight of this flock of God, and the care of immortal souls, is consigned to you. By this time you feel yourself borne down with an overpowering sense of the responsibility of the trust, which has been committed to you.

But be not disheartened, my brother. Adapted, as have been the transactions of this day, to overawe the soul, by impressing on your mind what the Lord Jesus requires of his ministers; yet let me encourage you by the reflection, that the glorious King of Zion, who, you trust, has commissioned you to preach the unsearchable riches of his grace, does not always appear clothed in terrors; but while he threatens the most appalling judgments, as the certain consequence of doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, he has not left the humble, sincere, and perseveringly faithful ambassador without strong consolations, powerful encouragements, and animating hopes.

Acting, as we trust, under his authority, and in obedience to his will, we have assumed, with respect to you, the province of superiors, catechists, judges; and having found you, in our judgment, fit for the ministerial office, have laid upon you our hands, and, in the name of Christ, charged on you the strict and conscientious performance of its various momentous duties. You have, in a sense, felt yourself in our power.

But be assured, my brother, the exercise of this day, which is the most grateful to our feelings, if not the most indispensable, is that which

now relieves you from this embarrassment, and raises you to the same official elevation with ourselves. In the name of the Ecclesiastical Council here convened, *I give you this Right Hand*, as a visible declaration, that you do not labor, and suffer, and sorrow alone; but are one among a group of friends and fellow-laborers, who will bear with you the burden and heat of the day: one in a phalanx of Christian soldiers, among whom there is no superiority, except what is conferred by superior loyalty to their Master, and by superior diligence and fidelity in his cause. By this expressive token we welcome you to our fellowship, and joyfully salute you as a fellow-laborer in the vineyard of our common Lord. We acknowledge your equality with us in all the prerogatives and privileges, which the great Head of the Church has attached to the ministerial office. In this respect you are not a whit behind the most honored servant of God.

In acknowledging your equality, however, we express but a small part of that which is signified by this symbolical act. Take once more then, my dear brother, *this Right Hand*; and with it, our hearts—the ardent and sincere affections of our souls. We hereby pledge to you our love and friendship, and the performance towards you of all those kind offices, which are implied in fellowship and brotherly love, and which are enjoined by that religion which we preach, whose essence is love.

You now occupy a station of eminence, which exposes you to public observation, where it is difficult to stand, and dangerous to fall. While others gaze at you on this height, and watch for your halting, we engage to watch, that we may see you established; and to guard your reputation against the calumnies, which are often raised against ministers for inadequate causes. But this concern for your good name shall not degenerate into a mistaken tenderness. Neither friendship, nor love, nor pity, can justify us in winking at the faults of a brother, or in screening him from the lash, when he deserves to feel it. Where the honor of God is concerned, *the Levites must neither acknowledge their brethren, nor know their own children.*

We promise you our friendly advice in seasons of difficulty, and in circumstances of perplexity; for upon such trials it is your wisdom to calculate.

We pledge to you our tenderest sympathy; and many, my brother, very many are the occasions, when it will be the most acceptable service we can render you. You are to carry this people in your bosom, even as a nurse her child. And though, like the fretful infant, they

should murmur and be ungrateful, still you must not abandon them ; but love them and seek their good, whatever be their carriage towards you. You must double your diligence for their salvation, though they should strive to render your diligence useless. ‘ You must watch while others sleep ; must study to paleness and preach to faintness, be instant in season and out of season.’ The cares, labors, fatigues, and perplexities of the sacred function, are so many and so great, that “ under the weight of them,” to use the words of an ancient Father, “ the shoulders of angels themselves might groan.” And, my brother, when ready to sink under their accumulated number and magnitude, while you derive your principal support from the promises of the Master whom you serve, remember also for your encouragement, that you have the sympathy, and the prayers of your fellow servants in the faith and patience of Jesus. Finally, my brother, “ wait on the Lord ; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart : wait, I say, on the Lord.”

BRETHREN OF THE CHURCH—This ceremony must be deeply interesting to you. By it we express the fellowship of the Churches, we have the honor to represent, with you, the church now committed to the pastoral watch of our brother. With our congratulations on this interesting and joyful occasion, receive our exhortations and prayers, that ye would be at peace among yourselves, and with your sister churches : That the *love of the brethren* may pervade all your hearts, and bind you together in undisturbed and delightful union ; that ye would abound therein more and more, and be established in Christ Jesus, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord : To whom be glory forever. AMEN.