

*The Difficulties of the Christian Ministry, and the Means
of surmounting them; with the Obedience of Churches
to their Pastors explained and enforced:*

A CHARGE,

BY THE

REV. J. RYLAND, D. D.

AND

A SERMON,

BY THE

REV. A. FULLER;

Together with an

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

BY THE

REV. J. SUTCLIFF;

Delivered June 23, 1802,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF

THOMAS MORGAN,

*To the Pastoral Office over the Baptist Church, meeting in
Cannon-street, Birmingham:*

And, also,

**MR. MORGAN'S DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS
SENTIMENTS.**

Birmingham,

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1802.

Order of the Services,

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Mr. SMITH, of *Alcester*, introduced the Services, by reading suitable Portions of Scripture, and Prayer.

Mr. SUTCLIFF, of *Olney*, explained the Nature and Constitution of a Gospel Church.

Mr. KING narrated the Steps which the Church had taken since the Death of their late beloved Pastor; and Mr. MORGAN made Declaration of his religious Sentiments. The Church recognised their free Choice of Mr. MORGAN to the Pastoral Office; who also declared his Acceptance of it.

Mr. BELSHER, of *Worcester*, committed the Church and Minister to the Blessing of God, by solemn Prayer.

Dr. RYLAND, of *Bristol*, delivered the Charge.

Mr. FULLER, of *Kettering*, addressed the Church. And,

Mr. ROWLAND, of *Pershore*, concluded by Prayer.

[On the Morning of the Ordination, the Meeting House in Cannon-street appearing to be too small to contain the Congregation we expected to assemble, the Methodists very kindly offered us the Use of their Chapel, in Cherry-street, where we were comfortably accommodated.]

DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS,

BY THOMAS MORGAN.

TO avow, at present, my belief in the being of GOD, may be considered superfluous; since, the office on which I enter supposes it as a fundamental article.

Though much may be known of God from the works of creation, and the events which are continually transpiring around us; yet, such is the darkness in which the human mind is enveloped, that our notions of him, and of those subjects connected with his perfections, are very confused: Hence, it becomes highly desirable; and considering the goodness of the divine character, humbly to be expected, that man should be favoured with a *revelation* of the will of his Maker.

I conceive that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, from every evidence which external proof, and internal harmony and excellence afford, justify the pretensions they make of coming from God. And, since God has graciously condescended to instruct us in every necessary religious truth, "to the word and to the testimony," I consider it my duty, and privilege, always to appeal, to the exclusion of all human authority, how great and how venerable soever.

Guided by these unerring records, I am led to contemplate our first parent—as proceeding from the hands of his Maker; an innocent and happy creature—as placed in a state of probation; overcome by the tempter, and spoiled of that innocence by violating the command of God—as being the fountain-head of mankind; communicating those propensities to sin, by which all become actual transgressors, and fall short of the glory of God—and, as being the representative of his posterity; bringing death upon himself and them, with all the train of natural evils to which our race is subject.

The scriptures teach me the *unity* of the divine essence; for “Jehovah our God is one Lord:” Yet, they make such a distinction in the infinite and incomprehensible Godhead, as lays a proper foundation for the use of the personal appellations, which they contain, father, son, and spirit; each of whom I believe, to be possessed of those incommunicable perfections which belong to the one living and true God.

If the blessed God designs to save any part of mankind from that curse, which they have brought on themselves by violating the requirements of a law that is “holy, just, and good;”—if a part only of mankind will be finally saved—and if this part is made happy, not because they can claim heaven, but because mercy reaches their case; then I am led to conclude that the divine Being regarded his people with distinguishing love; nor does it in any degree reflect upon the perfect rectitude and goodness of God, that he should sovereignly elect a people, and give them to his son, who, of his free grace, should present them at length spotless and blameless before him in love.

I am led to believe, that to effect the redemption of a peculiar people, the Son of God became incarnate—that by his life and death he left behind him a pattern of perfect obedience, whilst he finished the work given him to fulfil, as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people—and that this truth, though despised by men, is that in which the peculiar glories of the gospel concentrate, that “wherein God has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.”

That there is full redemption in the blood of Christ—that men indiscriminately, are required to exercise repentance and faith as the means of obtaining it—that it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to enforce their compliance, by every motive which can be drawn from the anger or the love of an almighty God; appear evident from the sacred scriptures. But so full of enmity against God, is the human heart; so completely averse from every thing spiritually good; that nothing short of the influences of divine grace, can open the mind cordially to receive the “truth as it is in Jesus.”

When I consider that nothing short of persevering, spotless obedience; or *continuing* to love God with all the heart, is what the law requires as the condition of life;—when I consider that all men have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; I am led to believe that a man is justified, by faith, through the imputation of the perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ; nor do good works, however honourable and useful among men, contribute, in any degree, to our acceptance in the sight of God.

I consider every soul that is regenerated, by the Spirit of God, as born for glory. Though many spe-
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cious appearances of religion are soon lost ; though it is possible for heavenly graces to languish for a season ; yet the renewed heart is made the temple of the spirit ; and that good work, which he begins in it, he will perfect, till the obscure light of the morning shall reach its unclouded noon.

I conceive it to be the duty, and desire of every good man, to have pious respect to every divine command, both moral and positive. The precepts of the moral law, being established upon the basis of eternal fitness, can never be altered. Positive institutions, under the gospel dispensation, are Baptism and the Lord's Supper : the first of which, I believe, can be properly administered, only on profession of repentance and faith, by immersing the body in water : the second, I consider, as a social feast, which, whilst we partake of bread and wine, is designed to recal to our remembrance the death of our Lord, and to unite our hearts in christian affection.

The scriptures teach me, moreover, that God, as the moral governor of the world, observes every thought and work, to award a suitable recompense to every act of obedience or rebellion—that after death an impartial judgment, will pass ; that at the end of the world all those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, at the sound of the trump of the archangel, and come forth—that the wicked shall be sent into a place of eternal torments ; and the righteous enter the joys of their Lord, to go no more out ; amongst whom may I, and the people of my charge, with all the Israel of God, find a place, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

Christian Friends and Brethren!

THE purposes for which we are met, are truly interesting and important. So is every religious exercise, and we should engage in it with seriousness. But some services, comparatively viewed, seem to have in them a peculiar solemnity. Such is that before us.

The immediate design of our coming together is well known. It is to comply with the wish of the members of this christian society, in the Ordination of our brother Thomas Morgan, to be a Bishop or Pastor among, and over them, in the Lord. It is usual on such occasions to explain the nature of the business, and assign some reasons for our conduct. This, I suppose, is now expected. An attempt fully to discuss the subject, would be improper. A few hints must suffice.

We embrace the holy scriptures, commonly called the Bible, as our all-sufficient, and only guide in matters of religion. This divine volume, is a light that shineth in a dark place, to which we think it our indispensable duty, and inestimable privilege, to take heed. Happy in the idea of such a guide, it is our ambition,

ambition, in whatever respects religion, to have our faith formed, and our practice regulated, by its unerring dictates. By these, and these alone, we consider our consciences as bound. Jesus here appears as Legislator in Zion, and Lord of conscience. We apprehend, if any person, or persons, should assume an authority to introduce additional articles of faith, or rules of conduct into the church of Christ, that this would be considered by him, as setting up their threshold by his thresholds, and their post by his posts.

Farther ; we think it the right of every one, with the Bible in his hand, to inquire into, and judge of its meaning for himself. Religion is a concern of a personal nature. The word of God lies open to all. Search the scriptures, is the command of Christ. This should be done with simplicity, diligence, and prayer. Let none adopt their religious sentiments, as they inherit their names or estates, from their ancestors. As we admit of no additions to the sacred code, so we submit to no interpretation of it, merely on the authority of others. Men may be learned, wise, and pious ; yet they are but men. They are imperfect and fallible. So are we. Let us then never yield to those who would exercise dominion over our faith, nor attempt to assume it ourselves. If another differs from me, he only does what I do. I differ from him. Yet let us hold ; let us speak the truth in love. Let us always remember, there is an authority to which we are accountable ; a bar before which we stand. The bar of Jesus. To him we must render an account.

Great controversies have existed, respecting the nature of a christian church. An intimate acquaintance with these, would tend very little to godly edifying,

fyng. Suffice it at present to say, we suppose a christian church to be a society of professing christians, voluntarily united for spiritual purposes: Professing christians. Such as avow faith in Christ as a saviour, and subjection to him as a sovereign. These voluntarily unite. Men are not born christians. They are made such by the holy spirit. They are not members of a christian church by natural birth; but become such, by their own act and deed. Possessing one common principle, the principle of love; having drank into one spirit, the spirit of Christ; they naturally associate. A number of persons thus disposed; baptized on a profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and harmonious in their views of doctrine, discipline; and worship, form a spiritual partnership. Their ends are spiritual; such as the honor of Christ, the advancement of his cause, and their own profit. The grounds on which they proceed are rational and scriptural. Rational; as two, five or more persons, throwing their various talents and abilities into one common stock, by a combined effort, with ease may accomplish purposes, totally beyond the ability of an individual. Scriptural; hence we find, in the New Testament, that wherever the doctrine of the cross prevailed, whether in Judea or elsewhere, churches were formed.

Civil governors have nothing to fear, but every thing to hope from such societies. While a christian church disclaims all dependance on the magistrate as a magistrate, and totally denies his authority to legislate within her walls; she disseminates principles which serve to counteract all he has to dread, and diffuses a spirit which tends to promote all he can desire. While, jealous for the rights of conscience, she exclaims,

“Render unto God the things that are God's;” with an affectionate concern for the public good, she will not fail to add, “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.” A christian church is equally adapted to every nation, and every clime. Political questions, and civil interests, are none of her concern. She interferes not with the courts of kings, nor solicits the aid of princes. She only asks to be let alone. And in return engages to seek the peace of the city where she dwells, and pray unto the Lord for it.

True, we dissent from that form and constitution of a church, established by the law of the land. Nor are we ashamed of the cause in which we have embarked. Our conduct is the result of reflection, of conviction, of conscience. We judge not the consciences of others. To their own master they must answer, and before him stand or fall. So must we. Impressed with this solemn idea, we claim the right, we solicit the liberty of thinking and acting for ourselves in matters of religion. The part we act, we think it easy to defend. Among many reasons we could assign, we conceive our conduct fully justified by that of those who founded the church of England. They dissented from the church of Rome, once established in this country. Upon the common and acknowledged principles of the perfection of scripture, and the right of private judgment, they acted. So do we. When they plead their own cause, they plead ours. In replying to the charges brought against them by the Roman Catholics, they vindicate the part we act. Whether these principles of the perfection of scripture, and the right of private judgment, have been embraced in their full extent, and maintained in their genuine consequences, may be matter of dispute. We think

think not. Acting under the influence of this sentiment, we find ourselves obliged to dissent from the church of England, as by law established. Cheerfully we own, that the established church is honored with a noble list of worthies. Their names we love. Their memories we revere. But one is our master, even Christ. Numbers in that connexion, are zealous for truth, and are patterns of holiness. For their usefulness, we pray; and in their success, in turning sinners from darkness to light, we rejoice. Yet, not their faith or their piety, but the revealed will of Christ, is to be the rule of our conduct. There is a world where light shall be perfect, and love eternally reign. Pleading thought!

Among the various privileges enjoyed by us as Protestant Dissenters, we reckon the liberty of choosing our own officers in our churches, as one of no small magnitude. In a christian church, as delineated in the New Testament, there appear to be two, viz. Bishops and Deacons. It is the place of the former to watch over the spiritual concerns of the church; and the province of the latter to manage the worldly affairs of the society. Now, the power of choosing such as we approve; such as we have first tried and proved; such as appear to possess the qualifications necessary for such stations in the church: together with the power of rejecting them, when they act unworthy of their character, is a privilege so evidently our native right, and so plainly consonant to the practice of the primitive church, as recorded in the New Testament, that we stand astonished at the manner in which it is surrendered by multitudes. We are well persuaded, that were persons more alive to their rights as men; especially their interests as christians, they would never

rest satisfied, until they attain so desirable an enjoyment.

The immediate business, as was before observed, for which we are met, is the ordination of our brother Thomas Morgan, to be a Bishop, or Pastor, in the society now assembled. You, christian friends and brethren, have for sometime enjoyed his public ministrations, and private converse. Satisfied that he possesses a ministerial talent; that his doctrine is sound; and his manner of life becoming the gospel, you have invited him to take the oversight of you in the Lord. May he be among you, the repairer of the breach, and the restorer of paths to dwell in! By the Ordination of our brother, we mean, the solemn investment of him with the office, to which he is by you invited, accompanied with prayer, and the imposition of hands. Upon this head, we have instruction and example in the New Testament. No instructions are given to the churches, respecting the business of Ordination. But in the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, ample directions are laid down. Hence it seems natural to infer, that the work of Ordination belongs to men already in office. Apostolical example looks the same way. Thus when Paul and Barnabas made an extensive tour among the churches, *they* ordained them elders in every church. Acts xiv. 23. So respecting the office of Deacons, of which you read in Acts vi. and beginning; the Apostle addressing the church, says, "Look ye out seven men, whom *we* may appoint," i. e. put into office, invest with authority, ordain over this business: thus he that runs may read. The people chuse; the Apostles ordain; how plain, how simple are the principles and practices of the primitive churches of Christ!

It is highly proper, that a business so solemn and important, should be accompanied with the most serious and fervent prayer. Brethren! I have the happiness to say, that you have been instant in prayer. May you abound in this; in every christian exercise more and more! When the desirable life of your late very dear Pastor, and our highly esteemed brother, hung in suspense, you offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death. True, you were not heard in that you feared. The cup was not suffered to pass from you. You felt the stroke. And not to have felt, would have been a reproach. Yet, you bowed with submission. You continued to pray. God has heard your prayer. Your language this day may justly be, "We will love the Lord, for he has heard the voice of our supplication: because he hath inclined his ear unto us, therefore will we call upon him, as long as we live." Still you are dependant. Nor would you wish to be otherwise. Persuaded I am, we shall all unite in a sincere and affectionate address to the throne of grace. But, when the solemnities of this day are over; when we who are come from a distance, are returned to our respective stations, continue instant in prayer. Pray without ceasing.

Ordination in the times of the Apostles was also attended with imposition of hands; and we apprehend there is sufficient reason to continue the practice. Not that by this we can convey any extraordinary gifts, or additional qualifications to the person ordained, fitting him for the work upon which he is entering. No; Our hands are empty. Yet it seems a solemn and significant rite; a fit sign or token of his being set apart to a particular office. But however fit or significant it may

may appear, we should not dare to practise it, if we did not apprehend we had scriptural authority. Paul, when writing to Timothy, 1 Ep. v. 22, says, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." This, we believe, is generally understood as a caution to be careful whom he introduced into public stations in the church; or in other words, whom he ordained as officers. Now, it can hardly be supposed, the Apostle would have expressed the business of Ordination by this phrase, if he had not considered the laying on of hands as essential unto it; and why this should be considered as an exhortation peculiar to Timothy, and not equally binding in the present day, we do not understand. Example corresponds with precept on this head. Thus, when Paul and Barnabas were set apart to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, it was attended with laying on of hands; Acts xiii. 3. So when Deacons were ordained, hands were laid on them; Acts vi. 6. Nay, this seems to have been a ceremony practised in ancient times. When Moses ordained Joshua to be his successor, he laid his hands upon him. Num. xxvii. 23.

No doubt, in this auditory, there is a great variety of sentiment; some may approve, and others as much disapprove, what has been advanced. To all present; to myself I would say, let us aim to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. A just view of christian doctrine and practice, is an important matter. May the divine Spirit impart all needful wisdom! Amen.

C H A R G E.

My dear Brother!

BEING called, by your own request, to address you on the present solemn and pleasing occasion, I would recommend to your most serious attention, that very interesting passage, in

2 Cor. vi. 4—10.

In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; by honor and dishonor; by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

HERE is a Text, my Brother, which will serve us both, for a subject of close Meditation, through our whole lives. May I be assisted so to enter into it, and illustrate it, as to fix your mind, and my own, most abidingly upon it! For there are few portions of the word of God, which exhibit more completely the
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character of a faithful Minister of Jesus Christ. Well may we, indeed, be deeply humbled, while we attentively survey this charming portrait, and compare therewith all our own attainments: but, Be it so! The impressions of self-abasement will do us no harm. When delineating the Christian Character to our people, we never wish to confine ourselves to such descriptions as may encourage them to conclude, that they have fully attained all that is to be expected of them; nor would you, I am persuaded, wish me so to depict the Ministerial Character, at this time, as to describe barely what you are, instead of shewing really what we ought to be. As a person who wished to excel in the art of writing, or painting, would account it a very great advantage to have patterns set before him, which approached the nearest to perfection; so have we reason to rejoice, that Paul has here presented us, with such an admirable and attractive example. And you perceive, that he speaks of others, as well as of himself; nor does he appear to confine the description to the Apostles, nor to such extraordinary characters as Timothy and Silvanus; but includes those faithful ministers, who occupied the pastoral office, in the primitive churches.

This paragraph, my Brother, presents to our view, the *Difficulties* to which the first preachers of Christianity were exposed; the *Means* by which they surmounted them, and evinced under them their fidelity to their Lord; the *changing Scenes* through which they passed, and different *Lights* in which they were viewed by men; and the *Objects* which they principally regarded, in all they did or suffered.

Every part of the Subject demands our serious attention, and is calculated to warn, direct, instruct and animate us, in the important work, to which we profess to have been called of God.

Let us review, (in the first place)

I. The DIFFICULTIES to which the Ministers of the Gospel were exposed, in the earliest age of the Christian Church.

They expected to meet with circumstances of a trying nature. They actually had much to *endure*. Their *patience* was abundantly exercised, by *afflictions, necessities, distresses, &c.* And can we look for an absolute discharge from any similar encounter? Is the state of mankind so entirely changed, that we can perform an embassy for Christ, in a revolted world, without any fear of opposition or ill usage? No, my Brother, though the Church of Christ never enjoyed rest, in such a degree, or for so long a period, as in this country, for more than a century past; yet we cannot tell what measure of persecution we may endure before we die. Let us be prepared for the worst; and pray for the same mind to be in us, which he expressed, who said, *I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

The Apostles and their associates were exposed to *stripes, imprisonments, tumults.* At one time the Magistrates frowning, at another the Mob excited against them. They were imprisoned, after having many stripes laid on them; at Philippi; assaulted by lewd fellows of the baser sort, at Thessalonica; the Jews followed

followed them to Berea, and stirred up the people; at Athens, the philosophers encountered them; and at Ephesus, the craftsmen gave the alarm, that the Church was in danger. Human nature is still the same, and if providence restrain not our enemies continually, we may soon see how great a fire a little spark can kindle. Many of the inhabitants of *Birmingham* are better able than I am, to describe the terrible ideas contained in the word *tumults*. May God, in his merciful providence, prevent their being thus understood, in this neighbourhood, any more! But if he should screen us, all through life, from *some* of those evils to which the first teachers of Christianity, and many of their successors were exposed; we must not expect an entire exemption from the whole train. They had to endure *toils, watchings, and fastings*; and shall we never voluntarily forego our ease or enjoyments, for the sake of doing good to souls? They were frequently deprived of rest, of sleep, of food; and shall we presume to require a fulness of all external accommodations to render the service of the Lord tolerable? Let us be thankful for every providential advantage we enjoy, to facilitate our spreading the knowledge of God our Saviour, and gladly improve it, for that sacred purpose.—Let us bless the Lord for all our temporal comforts, and be concerned to use them for his glory: but never may the difference of our circumstances from theirs that went before us in the same work, prove a snare to our souls! Instead of being seduced, by these means, from a life of diligence and self-denial; let us rather be excited to be sober and vigilant, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

And, in one way or other, we must expect a share of Afflictions. Though you may have but little to dread

dread from Persecutors, yet you must surely meet with Opposers. Men of corrupt minds will labor to draw off others from the truth. Yea, false brethren will speak perverse things; and so distort the truth, as to make their representation of the Gospel more palatable to the carnal mind, than you can dare to render it. While loose professors, if you will not countenance them in their *illegal* conduct, will more than insinuate that you are not *evangelical*. If you are afraid to venture very near the borders of Antinomianism, you may expect that some will charge you with inclining much to Arminianism; and if you preach the doctrines of free, sovereign, and efficacious grace, to the exclusion of boasting, and the destruction of self-righteous hope, others may charge you with being unfriendly to good works. However, betray not the truth to its enemies, either on the right hand, or on the left. *Keep in the midst of the paths of Judgement. Contend earnestly for the Faith, once delivered to the Saints*; but use scriptural weapons alone, in the contest. If others rail, *render not railing for railing*; for it will be a shame unto you, if they cannot out do you, in that practice. *Avoid profane and vain babblings, jests, sneers, dogmatical assertions and anathemas. If reasoning out of the scriptures, opening the word, and alleging the divine testimony, will not satisfy your hearers, they must take the consequence of following those, who adulterate the gospel, to draw away disciples after them. But the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing such as oppose themselves; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

You will have need of Patience with your own People; even as we, my dear Brother, need that the chief Shepherd should have much patience with us. If you do not often think of that, you will be ready, at times, to exclaim, as did Moses to Israel, *How can I myself alone bear all your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?* However, you are not alone. God hath appointed Deacons in the Churches of the Saints, to be Helps unto the Pastors; and, I trust, he has furnished this Church with such as are *faithful men*, partakers, at least, of the Holy Spirit; and our prayer is that they be abundantly filled with his grace! And He himself will be with you, who expressed his approbation of the Angel of the church of Thyatira, by saying, *I know thy patience.* If you wish to please him, therefore, *Let patience have its perfect work*; both in bearing with others, and in enduring whatever burden or cross the Lord shall see good to lay upon yourself. Remember what *Dr. Cotton Mather** tells his Son. In your entrance on the ministry, “You will find yourself entered into a wine press, and I must give you *Austin’s* advice, *prepara te ad pressuras*, prepare thyself for the pressures, but let every one of your pressures bring forth the wine of the kingdom! May the spirit of martyrdom be upon thee, then shalt thou be crowned with the martyrs of the Lord!”

I wish you, my Brother, to consider

- II. The MEANS by which the first preachers of Christianity surmounted their Difficulties, and evinced their sincerity and fidelity to their Lord.

* See his *Manuductio ad Ministerium*, republished in 1781, by my Father, with many valuable additions. I would earnestly recommend the frequent perusal of this publication, to young ministers in general.

By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and the left. These are the weapons of your warfare. These are the seals of your divine commission. Thus must you approve yourself unto God.

By pureness. Purity of Motives must be regarded, as well as Purity of Conduct. Let us look well to the Springs of action. The question which the Lord put to the Jews, concerning their fasts and feasts, during the Babylonish captivity, must be applied to us, by a faithful conscience, respecting all our ministerial services: *Did ye at all do it to ME, even to ME? saith the LORD.* All is spoiled, unless this enquiry can be answered aright. At the same time, all our pretensions to purity of principle will be unworthy of credit, if they are not confirmed by purity of behaviour. May you be enabled to maintain an irreproachable, venerable character, unstained by the pollutions of the world. We must be *clean who bear the vessels of the Lord.* Let us remember, that we are commanded to *be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing.* Let us, therefore, by the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

By knowledge. It was observed, by the last prophet of the Old Testament, that *the Priest's lips should keep knowledge, they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts:* and surely this must, be equally true of every faithful Minister of the New Testament. If you would *walk before God, in peace and equity, and turn many away from*

from iniquity; the law of truth must be in your mouth, and iniquity not be found in your lips. You must be taught of God, that you may learn wisdom, and have the knowledge of the holy; thus shall you be fitted to teach others *the good knowledge of the Lord, even the truth as it is in Jesus.* And as a thorough acquaintance with divine things is indispensably necessary; so may almost every kind of knowledge be used in subserviency to the Gospel. I would encourage you, as opportunity shall be afforded, to *seek and intermeddle with all wisdom;* but ever beware that more trivial sciences do not call off your mind from your main object. Remember that *the wisdom of the prudent is to understand HIS way.* Who would chuse a Physician, for his knowledge of navigation; or a Counsellor, for his acquaintance with chemistry; or a Commander, for his skill in botany? But better might any one claim respect in either of these characters, on account of his being versed in a science the most foreign from his profession, than a man presume to stile himself a Minister of the Gospel, who was ambitious to know any thing in the world, in preference to Christ and him crucified. May that, which ever continued the chief object of research to the most learned of the Apostles, be your constant pursuit, "*That I may know Him!*" O may our whole conduct, my Brother, correspond with his profession, *yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.* And may our knowledge appear to be spiritual, and not merely speculative, by its humbling us, instead of puffing us up! May we know, experimentally and practically, *the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, bring made conformable to the design of his death.* I might here observe, that next to your being well instructed in the things

things of God, the knowledge of mankind, both as creatures, and as sinners, will be of essential service to you, in the work of the ministry. The word of God in general; and a special attention to the different modes of address used by the inspired writers, and to scripture history and biography; with a careful observation of your people, and the study of your own heart, will, in this respect, be of great utility.

By long suffering. Behold, saith James, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be you also patient; let your heart be established, by faith in his word, who hath promised, *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* There must be a time for praying and waiting, before the time of rejoicing: and, it is often the case, that the richest harvest is the longest in ripening. Long suffering will be requisite in your intercourse with those who are already in a state of grace. But let us remember how much we have exercised the long suffering of our indulgent Lord. Such as have been kept most faithful and unblemished, till the greater part of life is certainly elapsed, must, when they look back on the years that are past, exclaim with David, "*Thy Gentleness hath made me great!*" He felt the gratitude of one who well remembered that he had been a feeble, sickly child; that with constant attention and gentle nursing, had been reared up to the strength of manhood. Oh, you will feel the import of that phrase, if twenty or thirty years hence, you should look back on the care of your heavenly Father, and find you have been enabled to abide steadfast in his service. Let us
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often think of his patience and long suffering towards us, that thus we may be induced to imitate so tender an example. Nor doth he extend his long suffering merely to his children; it is displayed even towards his enemies; it was manifested to us, while as yet we were among the number of his enemies. This consideration will keep us from being overcome of evil; and will induce us to labor to overcome evil with good. It will help us meekly to endure insults and provocations; blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that despitefully use us.

By kindness. Merely to suffer long, and not be provoked to avenge ourselves, must not be considered as adequate conformity to the example of Christ. *The kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour*, should constrain us to a higher imitation of his benignity; (The same word is used in Titus iii. 4, as in our text, and imports doing hurt to no one, but laboring to profit all we can.) *Being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat; being reviled, we bless;* said the Apostle. O may the same mind be in us. It was the last of seventy Resolutions found among the papers of President *Edwards*, "Let there be something of Benevolence in all I speak."

By the Holy Spirit. The writer of this epistle, and many of his cotemporaries, were partakers of the extraordinary and miraculous influences of the divine Spirit. Now if *they*, who were dignified with such endowments, and could work miracles in proof of their mission, had yet so much patience, long suffering and kindness, which they were obliged to exercise, both towards their enemies, and towards those that attended on their ministry; surely *we* may bear the contradiction

tion of sinners, and have compassion on them that are dull of hearing, and slow of heart to believe. But the *ordinary*, gracious, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit are the most important. Woe be to the man who enters on the work of the ministry without them! He will be very unlikely to save others; and, if he remain a stranger to them, he will be sure, by his very preaching, to sink himself into deeper damnation! *If any one have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;* and he will be a poor minister who is not possessed, in an eminent degree, of the Spirit of Holiness. But when a man is evidently sanctified by the truth, the doctrines which are according to godliness will be fitted to his lips. Oh that we both may be filled with the Spirit; and be ever careful not to grieve that divine Agent, who alone can prosper our ministrations; and by whom our own souls must be sealed to the day of redemption!

By Love unfeigned. The fruit of the Spirit is Love. Yea, God himself is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. For Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. The whole Law is summed up in one word, Love: how shall we prove that it is written on our hearts, but by Love unfeigned? Supreme Love to God, and disinterested Love to man, must habitually influence the true minister of Christ: nor will any thing else enable him to go through with his arduous employment. Let the Love of Christ constrain you. The consideration and imitation of his unspeakable Love to you, and your fervent Love to him in return, will make you willing to endure all things for the Elect's sake, that they may obtain that salvation, by which their Redeemer shall be eternally glorified. O

my Brother! let the blessed cause of Christ, and the precious souls of men, be infinitely valuable in your eyes. How beautifully are the nature and properties of Love, or pure disinterested Benevolence, described in the thirteenth chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians! You know it is the same word in the Original, with that rendered Love in our text; and the term Charity, used by our translators, is often strangely misunderstood. *Love suffereth long; and is kind; Love envieth not; Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

By the Word of Truth. May you, my Brother, like Apollos, be mighty in the Scriptures. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom. Prove the Orthodoxy of your sentiments, by finding a use for every part of the word of God: for, I think, nothing would be a shrewder evidence, that you had not got the right clue to lead you into the just interpretation of scripture, than if your creed had a natural tendency to make you shy of many parts of the Bible. But the Confession of Faith, which you have now made, before many witnesses, confirms my previous persuasion, that your principles will never lead you to decline giving full scope to either the doctrines or the exhortations of the divine word: Never may you *shun to declare the whole counsel of God!* Keep not back from the people, over whom the Holy Spirit hath made you a Bishop or Overseer, any thing that would be profitable to their souls. Labor to lead them into an acquaintance with all the *privileges* of the children of God;

God; and be equally assiduous to instruct them in the knowledge of their *duties*. Be careful to *speake the truth in love*; and endeavour to *handle the matter so wisely* as not to give needless offence: for *the wise in heart shall be called prudent, and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning*. But never may you be as many, who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God may you speak in Christ: having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by the manifestation of the truth, commending yourself to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.

By the power of God. For, in the contest to which you are called, by mere human strength, shall no one prevail. God must hold you up; or you cannot stand your ground; much less can you put to flight the armies of the aliens, and subdue obstinate rebels to the dominion of your blessed Lord. The arm of JeHoVaH must be revealed, or the gospel report, though so worthy of all acceptation, will never be cordially believed. But you know who hath said to his Ministers, *Lo I am with you always to the end of the world*: and he is able to uphold, protect and succeed you. He hath *the key of David*; he openeth and none can shut. Though Abaddon, like a strong man armed, may have long taken up his abode in the soul, as in a fortress secured by bolts and bars; yet omnipotent grace is able to break in pieces the gates of brass, and to cut the bars of iron in sunder. Nothing, my Brother, is too hard for the Lord. He will work, and who shall hinder? Ask not, How shall these slain live? but prophesy, at your master's bidding, to the dry bones in the valley; and regard not who ridicules the attempt, while your hope of success is, not from the
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good-will of man, but from the power of God, who raiseth the dead.

Finally, If you would overcome all opposition, and be more than a conqueror at last, it must be, *by the armour of Righteousness, on the right hand and on the left.* You must *endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* And remember, that however those who fight against you may use unlawful weapons, yet the weapons of your warfare must be, not carnal but spiritual, if you would have them effectual to demolish the strongholds of the devil. Nor must you expect, that you will have occasion to defend yourself, against attacks merely from one side; you will often be beset on either hand: I have sometimes compared the Religion of the Gospel to a Bridge over a dangerous gulph, defended by a wall on each side. The enemy, who is full of wiles, confines his attack, for a time, to one side of this bridge; where he endeavours to throw down the parapet, that heedless souls may fall over into perdition; but while the friends of truth are engaged to oppose him, being all attention that not the smallest breach should be made on the right hand, the foe artfully withdraws his agents to the opposite side of the bridge, and makes a dangerous gap in the wall on the left hand; that many may fall into the gulph, and be drowned, ere his opponents are aware of the danger. You can very easily apply this representation. Forget not the caution I wish to convey by it. But whatever foe you oppose, use only *the armour of righteousness.* Never willingly misrepresent an adversary. Ever remember, that *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* Avoid personalities in controversy. Expose the sophistry of false reasoning; but do not insult your antagonist, nor indulge a spirit of bitterness towards

towards the erroneous. Recommend the truth by shewing its blessed tendency, and especially by exemplifying it to the uttermost.

Consider

III. The changing SCENES through which they expected to pass, who were called to this work before you; and the different LIGHTS in which they were viewed by men.

They had to pass *through Honor and Dishonor*; and their great concern was to escape the snares of both: being neither unduly elevated by the one, nor inordinately depressed by the other. By some, they were owned and respected, as the servants of God: and you, my Brother, cannot but wish to be found, and must be willing to be acknowledged, one to whom this character justly belongs. But surely you will dread being idolized by any, and put in the place of your Lord. Far sooner would you wish that they should undervalue the servant, than that they should rob the master of the glory due to his name. Nor will any be more likely, after a time, to think too meanly of you, than those who, for a season, think more highly of you than they ought. In the same city of Lycaonia where Paul was taken for a god, they soon stoned him, and drew him out of town, supposing he had been dead: while he was more shocked when they were about (to sacrifice) to him, than when they designed to murder him. However, it was the more common lot of him and his associates, to be *made as the filth of the world, as the off-scouring of all things*; and, I suppose, you will meet with more to vilify you, than to idolize you.

Yet Religion is too good to be often opposed, without being first misrepresented. The enemies of the truth will, therefore, try to justify themselves to others, by misrepresenting you; and to themselves by wrong conceptions of you. But go on, like your predecessors, *through evil report and good report*. It is sufficient for the servant to be as his Lord. Some said, He was a good man, and others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people. And, however careful his ministers ought to be, and are, to cut off occasion from them that seek occasion, they cannot expect to escape the defaming of many. But let not misrepresentation and calumny discourage you, from a steady perseverance in duty; God will wipe away your reproach in due season: and they, whose judgment is most to be regarded, will bear witness to your good report.

The Apostles were treated as *Deceivers*, while they were really *true*. Keep close to their steps, and be content with their lot. When charged with selfish sinister views, go on to seek the good of others. Often may the servants of Christ force the consciences of their enemies to speak *for* them, even while they give their tongues a license to speak *against* them. Live down their slanders, and leave your reputation to the care of a faithful God.

They, who first published the gospel to a benighted world, were considered *as unknown*, by the proud and prejudiced; it sufficed them, that to God, as well as to those who were the seals of their ministry, they were *well known*. Enjoying his approbation, it was a light thing with them to be judged of man's judgment. Some supposed them to be beside themselves; (as long before, the captains of Israel had treated the young prophet who was sent by Elisha to anoint Jehu, as a *mad*

mad fellow) while others admitted that they were sober and well-meaning: but said Paul, *We are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.* However obscure the situations may be, in which some faithful servants of Christ are placed, the God of heaven hath his eye upon them for good. They are employed in nobler work than princes or kings. However their views may be mistaken or misrepresented, God knows and approves the principle from which they act; for it is *the Love of Christ* which constraineth them, to beseech men to be reconciled to God.

We are considered, says the Apostle, *as dying, and behold, we live.* We live in frequent meditation on death, but that neither makes us unhappy, nor prevents any enjoyment that is worth the name. It keeps us from idolizing things below, while it stirs us up to the due improvement of time, and excites our attention to that life which we expect beyond the grave. The primitive preachers of the gospel were exposed to unnumbered dangers, in their attempts to spread the knowledge of their blessed Lord; but no difficulties could dismay them, whose life was hid with Christ in God. Their antidote against the fear of death is thus described, *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.* As to the Apostle of the Gentiles, he was in *journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, perils by his own countrymen, perils by the heathen,*

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then, in perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; but out of them all, saith he, the Lord delivered me. Yea, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, when all forsook me; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the Lion. And the Lord, he adds, shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We are chastened, he here subjoins, *but not killed*. Though their enemies sought their destruction, yet the Lord used them only as instruments of correction, and left not his servants to their will. Hence though Paul was in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; at five several times, he received of the Jews, forty stripes save one; he was thrice beaten with rods; once was he stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, and was a night and a day in the deep; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often; in hunger and thirst, in fastings often; in cold and nakedness; yet he remarks, *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed*. Is not this formidable enumeration, my Brother, sufficient to warrant Mr. Whitefield's conclusion, that "A man is immortal, till his work be done."

* They were esteemed as sorrowful; leading a life of hardships, and supposed to be poor, gloomy, melancholy beings, who knew nothing of true enjoyment. They really had many painful exercises of mind; and were often filled with sorrow, from sympathy with their afflicted brethren, and from compassionate concern for the miserable condition of perishing immortals; they

they were grieved at the sins of others, and, above all, they sorrowed for their own defects, and endured a daily conflict with indwelling sin: and yet they were *always rejoicing*. They encouraged one another to *rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice evermore. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; yea we glory in tribulations; we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement. Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, &c.* Such was their language, my Brother, and you have the same solid ground for joy.

While considered *as poor* in this world, and often obliged to labor with their hands, for their own support; being also deeply sensible of spiritual poverty and insufficiency in themselves; they were instrumental in *making many rich*, by bringing them to the knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Surely the possession of all the wealth in the world could not afford such satisfaction, as the like success would impart, to a mind which, like theirs, is in unison with the mind of God our Saviour! When *the day cometh which shall burn like an oven*, how many rich men shall weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them! Their *gold and silver* were cankered in their chests, and *the rust of them shall be a witness against them, and eat their flesh as it were fire.* "By this it is manifest," will the Judge declare, "that you loved the treasures, which you had not an heart to use, more than you loved Me, or my brethren, and the propagation of my cause." But how will many a poor Minister of Christ rejoice in that day! When surrounded by hundreds, who are made kings and priests unto God, they shall exclaim, with transports of grateful affection, "This, O Lord, is the man, whom thou

didst employ to make us acquainted with the true riches!"

Such Servants of the living God have been often despised, *as having nothing*, because they could call no great worldly possessions their own; but with much more justice may they be considered as *possessing all things*: For all things are assuredly working together for their good. All events that befall them, under a divine superintendence, are rendered subservient to their real benefit. Yea, all the affairs of time, being adjusted and over ruled by their glorious Lord, shall issue in the production of an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, which they shall for ever enjoy, with him who is Heir of all things. In respect of things spiritual, they know that in themselves, they have nothing, and are nothing; but it pleaseth *them*, as well as the Father, that all fulness dwells in Christ. They readily confess, that they have neither wisdom, righteousness, nor strength, except in Him alone: but *Christ*, to them, *is all*; and he is *in them all*; and they, ere long, shall be *filled with all the fulness of God!*

I close with noticing,

IV. The OBJECTS they principally regarded, in all they did and suffered.

Their great concern was this alone, (O my Brother, let it also be ours!) to *approve themselves unto God, as his Ministers*. They were careful, indeed, not to give just or needless umbrage to Men. *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed*. As Paul exhorted others, in his former epistle, *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: even as I please*
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all persons in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but that of many, that they may be saved. He acted herein, not from a selfish, but from a benevolent principle; disinterestedly aiming at the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls: *for he acknowledges, if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* But, he solemnly avows, respecting himself and his brethren, *as we were allowed of God, to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.*

But God's Approbation was that which they earnestly sought to obtain: and this must be, in like manner, the object of our constant pursuit. Should we gain the approbation of Men, and not be approved of God, what could that avail us? Very little, now; less, on a death bed; nothing, yea, less than nothing, at the last tremendous day! Whereas though men should suspect, or censure, or condemn us; while yet God approves of us; all will be well in the final issue of events. Were the applause of men to be made our object, though we should seek it with unremitting diligence, yet might we seek it very probably in vain: our high estimation of that airy good would not ensure success to the most laborious assiduity in tedious chase. But God's Approbation is infallibly secured, to all who sincerely engage in his service; if all we do, be rightly directed to his glory, and if all be done in the name of our Lord Jesus, we cannot miss the attainment of our end: for we do not serve a hard, nor a capricious master. If he approve, we shall be likely to succeed in our Work: for though it be arduous, and most important; yet he can crown our efforts with glorious success. And, were they not to be productive of all the benefit

benefit we could wish to others, the Lord will nevertheless accept and reward all those that are faithful and diligent in his service. *One soweth, and another reapeth; but, both he that soweth, and he that reapeth shall rejoice together, in life eternal.*

Study then, my Brother, to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Do you ask, How shall his Approbation be secured? The answer is obvious, By our acting in all things, as his Ministers, or Servants. His Work is honorable and glorious: but, of all services for God, that in which we are employed is the most noble and delightful. Gospel Ministers are called to subserve God's grand and gracious purpose of glorifying all his perfections, in the Salvation of sinners; by restoring them to the enjoyment of his favor, through the Mediation of his only-begotten Son; and bringing them again, by the effectual agency of the blessed Spirit, into a state of voluntary subjection to his will, and genuine conformity to his image: that thus they may glorify and enjoy him, truly on earth, and perfectly and eternally in Heaven. This was God's wise and merciful design, in instituting the gospel ministry; and this must be the design with which we discharge all our professional services.

Nor will it suffice, that with this ultimate end in view, we have once entered upon our important work. The frequent repetition of the actual intension, yea the constant eyeing of the divine glory, is highly necessary, to preserve the enjoyment of peace of conscience, and to render our sacred employment pleasant and profitable. As the Servant of the Son of God, you must ever act in subordination to him; submitting cheerfully

to his authority; conforming punctually to his directions; depending humbly on his gracious aid; and, I repeat it again, aiming with singleness of eye at his Glory. O my Brother! *If thine Eye be single*, Jesus Christ assures thee, that *thy whole body shall be full of Light*. Thus shall your Lord be with you in all circumstances, assist you in all duties, bear you through all difficulties, support you under all trials, supply all your wants, and counterbalance all the censures and frowns of men, by his celestial smile. In life, he will encompass you with his favor as with a shield; in death, he will hold up your head above the swellings of Jordan; and to all eternity he will be your exceeding great Reward!

May you then, my dear Brother, who have this day been solemnly set apart as the Pastor, Overseer, or Bishop, of a Church of Christ, gird up the loins of your mind, and prosecute your work, in the strength of the Lord God.

With *Difficulties* you may expect to meet; and such as you could not encounter, in your own strength. But you know who hath said, *My Grace is sufficient for thee*. It was found sufficient for Paul and his contemporaries; though, separate from Christ, they had no more might than you; and the opposition they endured was more formidable, than any which your gloomiest fears can forebode. When you meet with trials, think of those which were sustained by the Apostles of our Lord. You may be tempted to exclaim, "*This is very hard to be borne!*" but ask yourself, Is it equal to bearing many stripes, and then lying all night in the stocks? Or, is it to be compared with the sufferings of the martyrs of Jesus? If, however, your troubles were comparable to theirs, you would have sufficient reason
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for confidence. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* His strength is undiminished; he is as willing to communicate it as ever; and it is displayed to the fullest advantage in the weakness of his servants.

Reflect by what *Means* they surmounted every obstacle, and evinced their fidelity to their Lord. By what *Weapons* did they obtain the victory over all their foes? They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the sword of the Spirit. You have access to the same armoury of God: nor has Satan made such improvements in his infernal art of war, as to render ineffectual the use of these arms.

Your predecessors were viewed in different *Lights* by different persons; they went through various *Changes* in their external circumstances, and even in the frame of their own minds. They had seasons of dejection and trial, as well as of elevation and triumph. You may expect the like. But remember, none of these things could shake their attachment to their gracious Lord. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* They that lived under an inferior œconomy could say, *Thou, O God, hast proved us, thou hast tried us, as silver is tried; we went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.* And thus, my Brother, shall your severest trials enrich yourself, as well as be subservient to your making many rich: while you join the Apostle in his sacred triumph. *I am persuaded; that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,*

nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Approve yourself, therefore, unto God. Let this be invariably your chief concern. Aim at the honor of the glorious Immanuel, and at the extension of his kingdom of Grace. Gather out of his store-house those seeds of truth, of holiness, and of happiness, which it is your business to disseminate among mankind; implore his blessing on the seed sown, and give all the honor of your success to the Lord of the harvest. Be satisfied with his approbation; and be assured that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. *Well done; good and faithful servant!* will make you rich amends for all the labors you can undergo, for all the sufferings you can endure.

He who was with your immediate predecessor, who succeeded his labors, who cheered him under all his trials, and bestrewed with the flowers of paradise his path through the valley of the shadow of death, will, both in life and in death be also with you. May you follow our beloved *Pearce*, even as he followed his divine Lord! We wish you a longer course; we scarcely can wish you a lovelier walk, or a more blessed exit. Your divine Master hath assured you, that where he is, there shall his servants be. Multitudes unnumbered, who came out of great tribulation, are now put in possession of the promised bliss. Follow on, my Brother! and in due season you shall join that company, who, with palms of victory in their hands, surround the great, white throne. May a large train of your own spiritual children attend you there; while others participate and increase your joy, who converted under

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the late dear pastor of this church; or other faithful ministers of Jesus, shall have been fed, during the latter days of their pilgrimage, by you, with the word of truth! There *Pearce* has been already joined by our perfected brethren from India; who were called home from their Mission, when the fields of Bengal were first ripe for harvest. They expect *Carey*, and their other surviving Associates, with a train of Baptized Hindoos. There has my dear Correspondent,* the late president of Schenectady College, in America, already found the men, whom he knew chiefly by my description; enjoying the company of his glorified Father, whose works they had read with such pleasure and profit below. Sixteen years was I favored with the distant friendship and epistolary instruction of the Son, and, more than double that time, have I been charmed and edified with the invaluable writings of the Father. The former pleasure I shall enjoy no more! But, God forbid I should be deceived as to the expected bliss of spending eternity in their society! O glorious day! when we, my Brother, shall be admitted to that sacred Assembly of redeemed and sanctified souls! and when we shall quit for ever the polluted and polluting throng of sinners, to live with none but saints, all faultless and spotless as the angels of God: so that to him who bought them with his blood, it may be said of them all, as once to Gideon of his brethren, *Each of them is as thou art, resembling the children of a king.* How many can the elder part of this auditory recollect, who are gone before them, to that blest abode! How many of our Christian Friends! How many of the Ministers of Jesus! How many of former ages, the history of whose lives and labors, and sufferings in the cause of Christ, has repeatedly humbled and animated us! The

Lights of the World, who here illumined different countries, and shone in distant periods of time, are all assembled there, and shine with mingled lustre, and with purer rays. Those who had no opportunity for personal intercourse in this world, but who here felt a high esteem for their predecessors, or distant fellow-laborers in the Redeemer's cause, there see, and love, and admire the image of Christ, in those of whom they only read or heard before; enjoying their company all together, without any thing to impede their social intercourse; and without any fear of future interruption: for the language of the Canaan above contains no such painful word, as *farewel!* Unnumbered Millions more, unknown to each other on earth, even so much as by name, find themselves united in sweet society, to which additions are making every hour. From the East and the West, from the North and the South, shall all *the nations of the saved* be assembled, in one sinless, blissful world, where *there shall be no night*, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb shall enlighten them all; for ever and ever. Amen,



S E R M O N,

Dear Brethren,

BEING requested to address an exhortation to you, on this solemn occasion, I the more readily comply, because I am persuaded you will hear me with candour and attention. The passage of holy writ on which I shall ground what I have to offer, is in

Hebrews xiii. 17.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

IT is not usual, I believe, for ministers, in their ordinary labors, to dwell upon the obligations of the people of their charge towards them. They feel, probably, that on such a subject they might be suspected of partiality to themselves; and if such a suspicion were indulged, however just and proper their admonitions might be, they would be but of little use, and might operate to their disadvantage. Nor is it a subject that a humble and holy man would ordinarily choose, even though there were no danger of misconstruction: he had rather inspire in his people the love of Christ, and of one another, hoping that if this prevailed, it would

would constrain them to whatever was proper towards himself. It does not follow, however, that this species of christian duty ought never to be insisted on: the glory of God, the success of the church, and the spiritual advantage of individuals will be found to be involved in it. No man could be more averse to an undue assumption of power than the Apostle Paul: in many instances he forbore to insist upon the authority that Christ had given him; yet when addressing the churches in the behalf of others, he uniformly insists upon the treatment which private members owe to their pastors, as well as upon other relative duties. To this I may add, if there be any one time in which an exhortation on this subject is peculiarly seasonable, it is when the relation between pastor and people is publicly solemnized. I shall therefore proceed to *explain* and *enforce* the exhortation which I have read to you.

I. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO ASCERTAIN WHEREIN CONSISTS THAT OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION WHICH IS REQUIRED OF A PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR PASTOR. The very terms *rule*, *obey*, and *submit* may be grating in the ears of some; and true it is that there have been great abuses of these things; a great deal of priestly domination has been exercised in the name of Christ. Yet there must be *rule* in the church of Christ, as well as in other societies. Without this it would not be a body, growing up unto him in all things, which is the head even Christ, but a number of scattered bones. Or, if all aspired to rule and guidance, the question of the Apostle would here be applicable; *If the whole were an eye, where were the hearing? But now hath God set the members every one in the body, as*
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it hath pleased him*. Christian ministers are called *overseers*, as having the oversight of the flock, and the principal direction of its concerns.

The church of Christ, however, is not subject to a despotic government. Ministers are forbidden to *lord it over God's heritage*. The power that was given them, and all other officers, ordinary or extraordinary, was for edification, and not for destruction. There are three things which are necessary, in order that the authority of a pastor be legitimate, and unobjectionable: namely, that he be freely chosen by the church; that the standard by which he rules, be not his own will, but the will of Christ; and that the things which he urges on others be equally binding on himself.

First, It is necessary that your pastor be freely chosen by you to his sacred office. If he had been imposed upon you by any human authority, against, or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove from the scriptures that you were bound to *obey* or *submit* to him. Should it be alleged that pastors are represented as the *gifts of God*, and such as the *Holy Spirit hath made overseers*; I should answer, True; but the Holy Spirit performs this work not immediately, but mediately, by inclining the hearts of his people to chuse them: No one indeed pretends that it is done immediately: Human choice is in all cases concerned; and the only question is, whether it be by that of the people, or of some one or more, that shall chuse on their behalf. The primitive churches elected their own officers. The Apostles ordained them; but it was by the suffrage of the people. The power of

* 1 Cor. xii. 17.

election was with them*, and with them it continued during the purest ages of the church. If the primitive pastors had been chosen by the Apostles, it had also been their province to have rejected or silenced them, as occasion should require; but when false teachers arose amongst the Corinthians, and Galatians, we do not find these churches, not even the purest part of them, applying to the Apostle, but the Apostle to them, for their removal†. The false teachers of primitive times, ingratiated themselves with the people, and despised the Apostles: an incontestable proof this, to every one acquainted with human nature, where the powers of election and rejection lay. If your pastor, I say again, had been imposed upon you by any human authority, against, or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove from the scriptures, that you were bound to obey, or submit to him. But it is not so. You have heard him, and known him; and from an observation of his spirit and conduct, and an experience of the advantages of his ministry, you have chosen him to watch over you in the Lord.

Secondly, *The rule to which you are required to yield obedience and subjection, is not his will, but the will of Christ.* Pastors are that to a church which the executive powers or magistrates of a free country are to the state, the organs of the law. Submission to them is submission to the law. If your pastor teach any other doctrine, or inculcate any other duties than what Christ hath left on record, obey him not: but while urging these, it is at your peril to resist him; for resisting him, you resist him that sent him. It is in this view, as teaching *divine* truth, and enforcing *di-*

* Acts vi. 1-6. xiv. 23.

† Gal. v. 12.

vine commands, that the servants of God in all ages have been invested with *divine* authority. Of the sons of Levi, it was said "they shall teach Jacob *thy judgments*, and Israel *thy law*," and upon this ground it was added, *blefs, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again**. Here lay the sin of Korah and his company, of Elymas the forcerer, and of Alexander the coppersmith: they each, by resisting the servants of God, in the proper execution of their work, resisted God, and brought upon themselves the forest of judgments.

1. Thirdly, *The things which he urges upon you, are equally binding upon himself*. When he exhibits to you the only name given under heaven, among men, by which you can be saved, and *charges* you, on pain of eternal damnation, not to neglect it; remember his own soul also is at stake. And when he exhorts and warns you, if he himself should privately pursue a contrary course, he seals his own destruction.

There are, it is true, those who lade men with heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, to which they themselves will not put one of their fingers; these, however, are *not* the commands of Christ. These, however, instead of being the commands of Christ, which are not grievous, except to unholy men, are mere human traditions: but though they were allowed to be otherwise, the inconsistent conduct of ministers would not exempt either them or you from obligation. Should we enforce the will of Christ upon you, while living in the neglect of it ourselves, woe be unto us!

* Deut. xxxiii. 10, 11.

Yet this will fall upon our own heads. If we be wicked, depose us from our office; but while we are in it, let not the word of the Lord be disregarded on our account.

Let me point out a few particulars, brethren, in which it is your duty and interest to *obey* him whom you have chosen to have the rule over you, and to submit yourselves.

1. With respect to his *public ministry*. Do not fly in the face of plain dealing from the pulpit. Good sense, as well as the fear of God, will, I trust, preserve your pastor from dealing in personal reflections, or any thing designed to offend; but do not be unwilling that he should come close to cases and consciences. You may as well have no minister, as one that never makes you feel. I hope the house of God will continue to be to you what it has been; a rest in times of trouble; a house of consolation; but do not go with merely a desire to be comforted. Go as well to learn your failings and defects, and in the hope of having them corrected. It is not the mere hearer, but the *doer* of the word that is blessed in his work.* I hope you will always exercise your judgments as to what you hear, and compare it with the oracles of God; but if you attend preaching merely *as judges* of its orthodoxy, you will derive no advantage to yourselves, and may do much harm to others. It is the humble christian, who hears that he may be instructed, corrected, and quickened in the ways of God, who will obtain that consolation which the gospel affords.

2. With respect to his *private visits*. You do not expect him to visit you in the character of a saun-

* James i. 25.

terer, but of a pastor; and if so, it becomes you to be open to a free exchange of sentiments on your best interests. No minister is always alike prepared for profitable conversation, and some much less so than others; but if he perceives in you a desire after it, it will be much more easily introduced. Be free to communicate your cases to him. It will assist him in his preaching, more than a library of expositors; and if while you are conversing with him, he should be directed to impart to you the mind of Christ, as suited to your particular case, do not treat it lightly, but submit yourselves to it.

3. In presiding in your *occasional assemblies*. When you meet together as a christian church, for the adjustment of your concerns, he is entitled to your respect. Every society places so much authority in its president, as shall be necessary to check disorderly individuals, and to preserve a proper decorum. It will doubtless become him, especially while he is a young man, to be gentle and temperate in the exercise of authority: and it will no less become you to submit to it. When churches enter into disputes with heat and bitterness, when all are speakers, and respect is paid to no one more than another, they debase themselves below the character even of civilized societies.

4. In the *reproofs* which he may have occasion to administer to you in secret. You do not wish that your pastor should deal in personal reflections from the pulpit; yet there are cases in which reproof requires to be personal; he must, therefore, if he discharge his duty, be free and faithful in telling you of what he sees amiss in you. It has long appeared to me that there is a species of faults in individual members which are not proper objects of church censure, but of pastoral admonition;

admonition ; such as spiritual declensions, hesitating on important truths, neglect of religious duties, worldly anxiety, and the early approaches to any evil course. A faithful pastor, with an eye of watchful tenderness, will perceive the first symptoms of spiritual disorder, and by a timely hint, will counteract its operations ; whereas if nothing be said or done, till the case requires the censure of the church, the party may be excluded, but is seldom recovered. You may easily suppose this to be a self denying work for your pastor. He had much rather visit you with a smile of affectionate congratulation ; yet it may be of the first importance to you, and to the church. Do not render this disagreeable part of his work, more disagreeable by a touchy and resentful disposition ; but receive reproofs with candour. *Correction may be grievous to him that forsaketh the way : but he that hateth reproof shall die.*

II. LET US OBSERVE THE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION ARE ENFORCED. These you will perceive, are partly taken from the regard you bear to yourselves ; *they watch for your souls*—partly from your sympathy with them, *that they may do it with joy, and not with grief*—and even that part which seems to respect their comfort, ultimately concerns your own ; for if they discharge their work with *grief, that will be unprofitable for you.* Give us your serious and candid attention, brethren, while we review these important motives. Consider, *first*, your pastor *watches for your souls.* Your salvation, let me presume, will be his great concern, and while pursuing this, you may well be expected to concur with him, and submit yourselves to him in the Lord. You would

submit to a surgeon, who was performing an operation to save your life; or to a counsellor, who should offer you his advice for the saving of your property; or to a commander, who should lead you forth to save your country; but these are inferior objects, when compared with your soul. Observe the force of every term.

They watch. The word literally signifies to keep awake. Here it denotes vigilance. Ministers are as watchmen on the walls, or in the streets of a city; by whose care and fidelity the inhabitants enjoy security. Their work is to rise early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of care; for so it is, that God giveth his beloved sleep. Aware of your temptations, and dangers, he must have his eyes about him, that he may be ready to give the alarm. He may be thinking and caring, and praying for you, when you think but little of him, and perhaps in some instances when you think but little of yourselves. Do not hinder, but help him in his work.

They watch for you. Recollect that you are watched on all sides, but not in this manner. Satan watches you: but it is that he may seize his opportunity to destroy you. He watcheth you, as a wolf doth a sheep-fold; but your pastor, as a faithful shepherd, to protect and save you. The world also will watch you, and that with the eye of an enemy, waiting for your halting; but he, with the tender solicitude of a father, to do you good. Do not oppose him in this his important work!

They watch for your souls. Were your pastor stationed to watch over your health, property, or life, and discharged his trust, with skill and fidelity, you would

would think him worthy of your esteem ; but it is not for these things that he is principally concerned. He would, doubtless, be happy to do you good in any way ; but neither of these employments is his peculiar province. You employ other persons to watch for you, in such matters. Nothing less than your immortal interests, must engage his attention. He watches for that, compared with which, kingdoms and empires are but trifles ; for that, which, if gained, all is gained ; and which, if lost, all is lost, and that for ever. Do not resist him in his work, but concur with him.

Finally, *They watch* AS THOSE THAT MUST GIVE ACCOUNT. How important a station ! There is an account for every one to give of himself ; but a pastor has not only to do this in common with his people, but must also give account *of them*. At his hands the chief shepherd will require it. And what will be the account of your pastor ? Will he be able to say, concerning you, “ Here I am, and the children whom the Lord hath given me ? ” O that he might ! But it is much to be feared, that some of you, who are this day committed to his charge, will in that day be missing ; and what account will he then have to give ? Will he not have to say, “ Lord, some of them have neglected thy word ; some have resisted it ; some have reproached me for preaching it ; some have deserted it, and turned aside after lying vanities ; some who have continued, have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved—hearing, they have heard, and not understood ; seeing, they have seen, and not perceived ; their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed ? ” And how if, when interrogated, he should not be able to acquit himself ? How if it should prove, that he did
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not warn you, nor seek after you, nor care for you? Ah, then you will perish, and your blood will be required at his hand! *Who, alas, who is sufficient for these things?* At all events, for your own sake, and for his sake, do not hinder him in his work. Woe unto him, if he preach not the gospel; and woe unto you, if you oppose him in it! Do not object to his dealing faithfully, both in and out of the pulpit, so as that it is aimed for your good. Do not hinder him in the work of reproof, by siding with transgressors. In short, if you have any regard to your own souls, or the souls of others, obey the counsels of heaven, which are communicated to you through his ministry, and submit yourselves.

Consider, *Secondly*, the discharge of this his work will be either *joy* or *grief*, according to the spirit of the people among whom he labors. You do not wish, I dare say, to grieve and distress a servant of Christ. Better had you never have chosen him, than to break his heart; yet such things are.

If, in his public preaching, he have a zealous, generous, modest, attentive, wise, and affectionate people; constant and early in attending; candid, and tender-hearted in hearing; and desirous of obtaining some spiritual advantage from all they hear; you cannot conceive what *joy* it will afford him. He will pray for you, and preach to you with abundantly the more interest. And this being the case, it may contribute not a little to the success of his labours; for God works not only by the word preached, but by the effects of it, in the spirit of believers. The apostle supposes that some on whom the word itself had no influence, might yet be won by the chaste conversation
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of the godly females*. . . But if he have a slothful, selfish, cold-hearted, cavilling, conceited, and contentious audience, what a source of *grief* must it be to him! The meekest of men was overcome by such a people, and tempted to wish that God would *kill him out of hand*, rather than continue to cause him thus to *see his wretchedness* †.

If, in *adjusting the concerns of the church*, every individual consider that others have understanding, as well as himself, and have the same right to be heard and regarded; if all strive to act in concert, and never oppose a measure from humour, but merely from conscience, or a persuasion that it is wrong, such things to a pastor must needs be a source of *joy*. But if pride and self-will prevail, they will breed confusion and every evil work; and this, if he have any regard to religion, or to you, will be the *grief* of his soul.

If the *Deacons*, whom you have chosen to be helpers in the truth, be wise, faithful, active, and tender hearted; ready to stand by their pastor in every right cause, willing to impart the counsel of maturer years, and careful to preserve the purity and peace of the church, his work will be discharged with *joy*. But, if they mind earthly things, and leave all to him; or though they should be active, yet if it be with the spirit of a Diotrophes; instead of diminishing his load, they will increase it, and render his work a daily *grief*.

If, in the *exercise of discipline*, there be a unity of heart, a willingness to follow God's word, whoever may be affected by it; if like the tribe of Levi, you

* 1 Peter, iii. 1.

† Numbers, xi. 10.—15.

In such matters *know not your father, nor your mother; nor acknowledge your brethren, nor know your own children; but observe God's word, and keep his covenant**, this to an upright man, will be a source of joy and solid satisfaction. But, if whenever a censure requires to be inflicted, no unanimity can be obtained; if regard be had to friends and family connexions, to the setting aside of Christ's revealed will, nothing will be done with effect. The zeal of a few will be attributed to prejudice; and the party, instead of being convinced and humbled, will be hardened in his sin. Thus the work of the ministry will be a burden of *grief*.

Finally, If you be a spiritual, affectionate, and peaceable people, your pastor will perform his work with joy: but if you be carnal and contentious; if there be whisperings, swellings, tumults, party attachments, jealousies, antipathies, scandals; Alas, he may sow, but it will be among thorns; he may preach, but it will be with a heavy heart.

Consider, *Thirdly*, you cannot cause the work of your pastor to be grievous, but at your own expence; it will be *unprofitable for you*. It is to no purpose that you have a pastor ordained over you in the Lord, unless his ministry be *profitable* to you. Every thing, therefore, which promotes this end, should be carefully cherished; and every thing that hinders it, as carefully avoided. But profit under a ministry, greatly depends, under God, upon mutual *attachment*. I do not mean to commend that fondness and partiality that would render you the devotees of a man, or incapacitate you

* Deut. xxxiii. 9.

for hearing any other preaching than his. They that cannot edify, save under one minister, give sufficient proof that they do not truly edify under him. But there is an attachment between a pastor and a people, that is highly necessary; as without it, attendance on public worship would in a great measure cease to be an enjoyment. This attachment, my Brethren, should begin with you, and be cherished by a course of kind and faithful treatment; delicately meeting his wants, gradually inspiring his confidence, tenderly participating his afflictions, and I may add, if occasion require it, affectionately suggesting to him his faults and defects. By these means, he will insensibly be attached to you in return; and will prefer preaching at home, to all his occasional labours in other places. By an acquaintance with your cases, his preaching will be seasonable, and savoury, proceeding from the fulness of his heart. Of such words it may well be said, *How good they are!* But I need not enlarge upon these things to you. Never, perhaps, were they more fully exemplified, than in the person of your late loving and beloved pastor. You loved him, for the truth's sake that dwelt in him; and he, on the other hand, was not only willing to impart unto you the gospel of God, but his own soul also, because ye were dear unto him. May the same spirit be cherished between you and your present pastor!

Love is the grand secret to make you all happy. Love, however, is a tender plant; a slight blast of unkindness will greatly injure it. If you grieve him through inadvertency, come to an early explanation. If unkindness be repeated, his attachment to you will be weakened, and then yours to him will be the same. This will be followed by various misunderstandings,

slights, distances, and offences, the issue of which may be a rooted antipathy; which when it enters, all profit under a ministry is at an end. If he could preach like an angel, all were in vain, so far as relates to your advantage.

From these remarks you see, and feel, my brethren, that if your pastor performs his work with *grief*, it will be at your expence; or, that every kind of treatment that wounds his spirit, undermines your own welfare. Study, therefore, by all means, to render it his *joy*, which will turn to your account: study by a constant discharge of kind offices, to endear yourselves, and your families to him; by an inviting intimacy in spiritual things, to know and be known by him; and by a holy, humble, and uniform conduct in the world, and in the church, to enable him to look the enemies of religion in the face, while he proclaims its holy efficacy.

The reward of a true pastor, is in the people of his charge; in their sanctification and salvation. What else is his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Do not withhold from the labourer his hire! You may be his hope, without being his joy, and his hope and joy for a season, without being his crown of rejoicing in the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming: but need I say that this will be unprofitable for you! If he have a full reward of his labour, you must be his hope, and joy, and crown. Brethren, consider what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Amen.

F I N I S.