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1819

THE DESIGN, RIGHTS, AND DUTIES OF LOCAL CHURCHES.

A

# SERMON

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DELIVERED AT THE INSTALLATION

OF THE

REV. ELIAS CORNELIUS

AS ASSOCIATE PASTOR

OF

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## SERMON.



1 TIM. iii. 14, 15.

THESE THINGS WRITE I UNTO THEE, HOPING TO COME UNTO THEE SHORTLY :  
BUT IF I TARRY LONG, THAT THOU MAYEST KNOW HOW THOU OUGHTEST  
TO BEHAVE THYSELF IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE CHURCH OF  
THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.

It has pleased God to carry into effect his purpose of redeeming men, by the instrumentality of a visible society organized exclusively for that end. This society, commencing its operations soon after the fall, and extending them through every intervening age to this time, and destined to labour in the sacred cause till the last day ; has been denominated the Church of God. It is in the text called a house, as embodying in one family the children of God, and as the seat of their social labours, protection and enjoyment.

By a change of figure, it is denominated the pillar and ground of the truth ; to denote, doubtless, the actual efficacy of the church in upholding from age to age the cause of God.

The first form of the church appears to have been patriarchal, in adaptation to the most simple state of human society, as existing in tribes, originating in a common ancestor, and united by ties of blood and mutual interests and dangers.

In the church thus organized, the common ancestor was the priest to instruct his descendants and uphold the divine worship. The life of the patriarch, extending in the first ages to nearly a thousand years, rendered a written revelation less important, and gave to his precepts and example, authority for the maintenance of truth and the instituted worship of God.

The next form of the visible church was one, which was accommodated to the exigencies of a nation. The progress of society from the pastoral to the agricultural and commercial state, amalgamated tribes and constituted nations. By these changes, and the reduction of human life to an hundred and twenty years, the efficacy of patriarchal instruction and authority was destroyed, and families having no common head, scattered abroad, and soon exchanged the knowledge and worship of the true God, for the fictions and impurities of idolatry.

To counteract this propensity of man to depart from God, and to provide a substitute for the patriarchal system, the Jewish church was organized—an extended association of families, *each* of which was made responsible to the *community* for its fidelity, in upholding the instituted worship, and for the fidelity of *each* the *whole community* is made responsible to God. To the church of God thus organized was given a territory, to be held upon the condition of constancy in the maintenance of the true worship; and to aid the church in her work, a written revelation was committed to her care, and forms of worship were prescribed. When the temporary purpose of this dispensation was answered in the preservation of religion until the time of the Messiah, and the desire of nations had come, and by the offering of himself had made propitiation for sin, intending to give to his

atonement a more extended operation in the salvation of man, the external form of the church was again changed, in accommodation to the exigencies of the world. This was done, by requiring individuals in all nations, possessing the requisite qualifications, to associate under the laws of Christ, for the advancement of the great designs of his kingdom. Wherever, therefore, a number of individuals, possessing the required qualifications, associate to maintain the ordinances of the gospel, they become a *society incorporated by the God of heaven with specific chartered privileges*. This is the foundation of local churches. Each church is a body corporate for the exclusive purpose of promoting the benevolent designs of the Most High God, with reference to the salvation of man.

The organization is such as may embody, and ultimately will embody, the population of the world.

It will be the object of this discourse, to illustrate the prominent designs of the Most High in the organization of local churches, and the requisite qualifications for membership.

One obvious design of local churches is the consummation of holiness in believers and their preparation for heaven. Christians are imperfect; and though God in a moment, could efface every stain of sin, it pleases him to accomplish the work progressively by the interposition of moral influence. The church is the society where this influence is to be exerted, the school of instruction and discipline. There, is the sacred light of truth to shine, restraint to operate, and impression to be made upon the heart. There, are the prayers of the saints and their praises and confessions to be offered. There, is to be enjoyed, mutual fellowship, watchfulness,

exhortation and aid : and there, the Lord commandeth his blessing even life forever more.

In accordance with this primary design of the church, apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, are said to be given for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Local churches are designed also, to secure the purity and perpetuity of revealed truth. The propensity of man to change the truth of God into a lie, is notorious. To counteract this determination of a rebel world to forget God, the reiterated miraculous interposition of Heaven has been steadily required, until the sacred canon was complete. When that event was accomplished, the lively oracles were committed to the church, with the responsibility of contending earnestly for the doctrines, precepts and ordinances, contained in them. It is in reference to the agency of the Church in maintaining the doctrines of the bible that she is called the salt of the earth, the light of the world and the pillar and ground of the truth.

Local churches are organized also for the preservation of the Sabbath and the maintenance of the public worship of God.

It is not enough to secure the salvation of man, that truth is revealed, and continued from age to age in the bible. To be made effectual, it must be communicated ; and for this purpose, a system of moral administration must interpose its instrumentality. But in a world lying in wickedness, the besetting influence of sloth, the temporising of fear, the craving of avarice, and the repellen- cy of a heart, averse from God, will prevent among men the spontaneous formation of any abiding measures, for the religious instruction of mankind ; or even, for the

preservation of the system, which God has instituted. The tide of worldliness, unobstructed, would roll over the Sabbath, and extinguish the fire upon the altar of Jehovah. To churches therefore is committed the work of preserving the Sabbath, and of perpetuating the worship of God;—Not by physical power, but by that moral influence, which the word and institutions of heaven, continued by the church, exert upon the consciences of men, and upon the laws and habits of civil society.

Another design of heaven in the organization of local churches is, the continued existence of these religious corporations themselves, by means of an efficient system of religious instruction, for the rising generation. The saints are not permitted to continue, by reason of death. If the God of mercy intended the salvation of but one generation of men, no prospective arrangements, for the salvation of succeeding generations would be needed. But, as the work of redemption is to be continued, the appropriate means must be transmitted. The pious of one generation pass off the stage, in about thirty years. In that short period were no precautionary measures employed to prevent, might the cause of God become extinct. The church however will live: the gates of death will not prevail: but it will be continued, as seed time and harvest are continued, by appropriate enterprise, for that purpose. This enterprise is to be directed, primarily, to the education of the children of the church, and of such others, as are voluntarily committed to her care. To every church is committed the superintendence of that education of children, upon which her continued existence depends. As fellow workers with God, the members of every local church are bound to raise up another generation of believers to serve him

when they are dead; and no church has answered the end of her existence, which does not accomplish this.

But to uphold the worship of God, and to lead in the great work of religious education, professional instructors are required, qualified by piety and knowledge, for their employment, and devoted exclusively to their work.—In secular concerns, the demand in the market, will produce a supply. But it is not so, in relation to competent instructors in religion. If none were intrusted with the work of rearing up ministers for the sanctuary, and no forethought were exercised, and no systematized exertion, brought into steady operation, the wastes of death, and the demands of accumulating population, could not be supplied—churches would mourn the bereavement of pastors without a prospect of having their loss repaired, and the regions of the shadow of death, would every year become more extended, hopeless and dark. The public instruction, by means of which the church of God has hitherto been continued, has not been the result of a common course of nature; but rather, of the deliberate prospective labours of the church herself, for that end. The Jewish church supported one tribe out of twelve to be dedicated to the purposes of her religion; and in this tribe maintained her schools of the prophets. The primitive churches regarded it as a primary object of their organization, to thrust laborers into the vineyard, and as soon as they obtained a settled rest, reared institutions for the education of pious youth for the ministry. All the seminaries of modern Europe, were founded with a primary reference to the preparation of men for the ministry. And, scarcely had the Fathers of New England escaped the edge of the sword, in this new world, before, anticipating the wants of future

ages, they laid the foundation of literary institutions, to provide pastors for the church of God. Every college in New England, and nearly every one in the United States, was founded in anticipation of the future wants of the church, and with a view to supply them, by rearing up qualified instructors. To local churches is committed still, the work of providing religious instructors for succeeding generations and for the world. Every church is an organized education society, instituted by the God of heaven expressly for the preparation of pious youth for the ministry. It may be proper for churches, by formal resolutions, to recognize neglected obligation. But it does not depend on the vote of a church, whether it shall be her duty or not, to cooperate with other churches, in providing an able, evangelical ministry for the perfecting of the saints, and the conversion of the world.

But the whole earth is destined to experience the illumination of the gospel. The means to be employed for this purpose are the translation and dissemination of the bible, the preaching of the gospel, the planting of churches, and the establishment of schools among the heathen.—The work is vast, and without the guidance and energy of permanently organized bodies, cannot be done. But the work *is in the hands* of permanently organized bodies. God has committed it to local churches; these are missionary societies to be continued from age to age to urge on the work of evangelizing the world. The primitive churches understood the duties of their calling, in accordance with our views of the subject: and did through every vicissitude of poverty and distress, make vigorous exertions to propagate the gospel. The protestant churches, environed by the Papists, and in

strenuous conflict for existence, could have but little time or strength for a more distant warfare. Awaking also in a world without form and void, they had enough to do to reduce the chaos to order, and to fill the void with bibles, and pastors, expositions, and sermons. They made exertions at home, unparalleled since the apostolic age. But even they, under the patronage of the High Admiral of France, sent five ships to the Brazils with missionaries and supplies to establish in South America the protestant religion. The enterprize failed. But they evinced their sense of obligation, and have doubtless reaped in heaven their reward. It is only to be added, that, churches of all denominations at this day are beginning to perceive their duty, and to place themselves in a posture of readiness to perform it.

The requisite qualifications for membership in a church of Christ, the next subject of consideration, are, personal holiness in the sight of God, and a credible profession of holiness before men.

This is clearly indicated by the design of the church. Is the church organized to consummate the work of righteousness in the hearts of believers, to maintain the purity, and secure the perpetuity of truth, to rescue the Sabbath from profanation, and the worship of God from extinction, to guarantee her own continued existence by an efficient system of religious education, and to bless future ages by providing pastors, and missionaries, and bibles, till the earth is full of the knowledge of God? And can there be any doubt to what description of persons this work has been committed? The Scriptures recognize but two classes of men, distinguished by the state of their hearts with respect to God and his law, his gospel, and his providential government. The one denomi-

nated the friends, the other the enemies of God; the one holy, the other unholy; the one righteous, the other wicked. All men are included under one or the other of these opposing terms. There is no middle ground known in the bible. No third party, neither friends nor enemies of God, neither holy nor unholy, have ever been found.

It is the friends of God then, undoubtedly, who are required to associate, and are invested with chartered privileges; and credible evidence of holiness, must be the appropriate condition of admission to visible membership in the church of Christ. If there could be any doubt on the subject, the recorded history of this sacred institution would put an end to it. In the first age of the world, we find Cain and his offering rejected, and Abel, offering to God by faith an acceptable sacrifice. We find the "sons of God," a name through the scriptures appropriated to those who made a credible profession of religion, existing as a community distinct from the children of men, and forming at length criminal alliances of marriage with their daughters; by means of which the power of the church as a religious community was destroyed; and the earth was filled with violence, which brought down the exterminating flood.

When the church, in prospect of this judgment, was to be preserved, borne on the bosom of that deep, which swept away the ungodly, to whom was the work of preservation committed? It was committed to Noah, whom God had seen *righteous* before him, in that wicked generation.—When the darkness of idolatry had again spread itself over the earth, and the foundations of a new dispensation were to be laid, to whom was that great work committed? To Abraham, who received

circumcision as a seal of the *righteousness of the faith*, which he had before he was circumcised, and of whom it was testified by the Searcher of hearts; "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." To Isaac was committed the same charge, while Ishmael, who mocked, was cast out. To Jacob in succession it descended, while Esau, the profane, despising and alienating the patriarchal priesthood, is rejected.

When the patriarchal form of the church was succeeded by the Jewish, the qualification of personal holiness was *demand*ed. The profession, which the members of that church were required to make, is a profession of true religion. "And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Can all this be done without holiness?

The profession which the Jewish church actually *did make*, is a profession of true religion. Moses is directed by the Most High to say unto the people; "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people." And when Moses proposed the above terms of divine favor, all the people answered together and said; "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do." In reference to a renewal of their covenant with God, Moses says to the Jewish church, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people." If this is not a profession of true religion, language is inadequate to the making of such a profession. In the time of Asa, the church covenanted again, to seek the Lord God of

their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul. "And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them."

Whenever by their overt transgression, or neglect of duty, the credibility of their profession was destroyed, they were reprov'd and denounced as hypocrites. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth." Their attendance upon the instituted worship is denounced also as an abomination, while the immoralities of their conduct demonstrated the insincerity of their profession.

The continuance of formal worship without piety is threatened with the most terrible judgments. "Wherefore the Lord said forasmuch as this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; therefore, behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Now, if the Jews, as a community, were not required to profess, and in their covenant with God, did not profess true religion, how could drawing near with the mouth only be considered a crime? When the members of this church are recalled from their backsliding by the prophets they are directed to return in the exercise of holy affections. "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me and thou shalt swear the Lord liveth in truth. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and take away the foreskins of your hearts ye men of Judah, lest my fury come forth like fire and burn that none can quench it."

Whenever an individual, family, or tribe, demonstrated by obstinate disobedience, their irreligion, they were to be excommunicated. On this ground, the generation that left Egypt, was excluded from Canaan. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." When the members of this same church, had, by crucifying the Lord of glory, filled up the measure of their sin, they were broken off by unbelief; and those who succeeded them in the same church, both Jews and Gentiles, stood by faith. Hence, when John the Baptist, in anticipation of the excision of the great body of the Jews from visible membership, came to prepare the way of the Lord before him; that preparation consisted, in forming subjects for the continuance of the church, under her evangelical form. But what was the required preparation? It was repentance, and fruits meet for repentance. When our Saviour himself, opened his ministry; he promulgated the same terms of discipleship: "From that time, began Jesus to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The commission, given by our Saviour to his apostles, at his ascension, directs them first to make disciples, and then to baptize them, inculcating universal obedience. The qualifications for discipleship, Jesus had before disclosed. They were love to Christ, above father or mother; daily self-denial; real religion. The apostles, then, were to preach the gospel, and by the blessing of God to make disciples, who, as such, were to become visible members of the church of Christ.

In this manner, the apostles understood their commission, and practised upon it. When under their preaching, men pricked in heart demanded, "what must we do to be saved?" the answer given was, "repent and

be baptized ;” “ believe, and thou shalt be saved.” All the instances of adult baptism, and of admission to the church, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, proceed on the ground of a credible profession of religion. Accordingly, individual professors, and churches collectively, are denominated by a variety of epithets applicable exclusively to persons of real piety ; and applied to them with propriety, only upon the supposition, that they professed real religion. They are addressed as “ beloved of God ;” “ saints, whose faith is spoken of throughout the whole world ;” “ full of goodness ;” “ the sanctified in Christ Jesus ;” “ children of the promise ;” those in whom God has begun a good work which he will carry on ;” “ faithful brethren, who love all saints,” whose hope is laid up in heaven ;” “ the elect of God ;” “ begotten with the word of truth ;” “ the sanctified of God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ and called.”

Whenever instances of immorality, or impiety, or apostacy occurred, by which the credibility of their profession was destroyed, they were dealt with first, as fallen brethren, but if incorrigible, excommunicated as deceivers.

The obligations of brotherly love, originate in the supposed existence of the temper of Christ, in the hearts of his professed people. They are required to love one another as Christians, with a pure heart fervently ; for which love, there could be no foundation, but upon the supposition of a credible profession of real religion.

The nature of the sacraments, evince also clearly, the qualifications required of those who are to partake of them. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, is not merely a memorial of an absent friend and benefactor ; but the token of a covenant, in which we avouch the

Lord Jehovah to be our God ; and which is renewed and sealed as often as we sit down at his table. But who can with propriety seal a covenant, which he has never made ? and who, without holiness, can truly avouch the Lord Jehovah to be his God ? It would be to swear falsely—It would be lying unto God over the broken body and flowing blood of the Saviour.

The sacrament of baptism, as applied to infants, has the same reference to the perpetuity of the church by securing fidelity in the religious education of children, that the Lord's supper has, to the continuance and consummation of holiness, in the hearts of believers. The parent, and the whole church, at the baptism of an infant, renew respectively their covenant with God, to be faithful in the work of religious education. The parent devotes himself anew to God in this work ; and dedicates his child to God : and the token of his covenant with God is applied to the child, as a memento to the parent that the child is depraved, and must be washed in the blood of Christ ; is devoted to God, and must be trained up in his nurture and admonition. It is successively applied to each child, because each is a sinner ; because as the charge increases, the duty of education becomes more important, and difficult, and because, parental worldliness and sloth, demand reiterated admonition. By every baptism, also, all the families of the church, who are engaged in the same work of religious education, are admonished of their duty, and of the vows of God that are upon them ; while to the church collectively, which is pledged to watch over the families of the faithful associated in her communion, it is an ordinance of frequent and perpetual recurrence to keep awake the eye of inspection, and to fortify with ceaseless vigor, the heart

devoted to God, in this great work : while as an index it points, with constant repetition, to the dear objects of her care. But how can those who give not up *themselves* to God, give up their *children* ? or how can those, who do not perform *themselves* the duties of religion, engage to command their household after them, to fear the Lord and keep his commandments.

Finally, the discriminations of the last day, decide what are the qualifications for membership in the church of God. The family on earth, and in heaven, are one : and all in the church below, who possess, in the sight of God, the qualifications, which he has required, will be openly acknowledged and accepted in the day of judgment. But, in the day of judgment, the righteous only are accepted of God ; and the wicked are turned into hell.

Then will he root up in his field every plant, which himself did not plant there. Then will he separate the tares from the wheat. Then, with his fan in his hand, will he thoroughly purge his floor. Then will he send forth his angels, and gather out of his kingdom whatsoever offends.—Then will he say to them on his left hand, depart, ye cursed, and they shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

The positions illustrated in this discourse justify, it is believed, the following inferences.

1. It is the policy and duty of civil governments, to favour the exertions of churches for the support of religious institutions.

It does not appertain to them to impose creeds, or to prescribe ceremonies of worship, or to inflict civil penalties for offences, merely ecclesiastical. Nor is any in-

jurious preference to be given, to one denomination, above another.

To governments appertain however, the selection and application of the most effectual means of public safety and prosperity. But it is by the moral influence of religious institutions only, that civil laws can avail, to form the most perfect state of human society. Civil Laws cannot reach the spring of action, and prevent social evils that annoy, or coerce social virtues that enrich society : and religion, by her moral influence alone, cannot arrest the arm of violence, or punish encroachments upon life and property.

In free governments also, where the people legislate and administer by delegated power, the laws cannot be executed beyond the sanction of public opinion, however corrupt that may be : while in despotic governments, the laws will often be made and executed, with a severity, which renders it difficult to decide which is most dreadful, the outrage of crime, or the terrific reaction of law. It is only the influence from above, maintained by religious institutions, breathing their benign influence into systems of legislation, and extending their all pervading efficacy through every relation of social life, that men are qualified, and inclined, to enjoy the blessing of a free, mild, efficient government.

Unless lawgivers would hold their places as *sinecures* then, and abandon the people to the evils, which governments are instituted to prevent, they will be disposed, and as men of principle, will feel bound, to promote the civil welfare of the community, by giving to religious institutions every practicable facility, for exerting a vigorous moral influence upon the minds of men.

This was the policy of the fathers of New England :

and explains the origin, nature and design, of ecclesiastical societies. They were formed, not to control the churches, and not to become churches; and much less to destroy them: but to afford to the churches, with the advantage of system, and under the cognizance of law, an efficient cooperation.

In their great zeal of good intention, they sometimes indeed proceeded farther and legislated directly for the church; which always created mischief, as the other part of their system, the simple cooperation of ecclesiastical societies with the churches, in the support of religious institutions, always produced a benign effect. No such state of human society, civil, moral, literary and religious, has ever existed to such an extent, and for so long a time, in our world, as has been formed, and continued, by these means in New England: and whoever shakes the corner stone of this system, will bring to the dust, the noblest edifice ever reared by divine and human cooperation; and will transmit to posterity, evidence of preeminent folly, and ceaseless occasion of execration and regret.

2. Every person, believing himself to be the subject of true religion, and able to afford to others, credible evidence of the fact, is bound to confess Christ before men; and to enrol himself as a member of some visible church.

It is the revealed will of God, that his people should exist in a visible organized form: both, for the more advantageous enjoyment of personal privileges, and for their more efficient cooperation in the preservation and extension of the religion of the gospel. Every believer needs the aid of ordinances peculiar to the church; and is not at liberty to neglect the means of his own edification. He owes to his Saviour, the influence of his example;

and has no right to put his light under a bushel. He needs the confidence for action, which the public profession of religion only can inspire; and the facilities and excitements to action, which organized social enterprise alone, can afford. The friends of their country, when she is invaded, may as well refuse to enrol themselves in an army, and trust to individual zeal and prowess; as the friends of Christ may stand alone, in their conflict with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. The Captain of our Salvation has commanded his friends to embody, and to act publicly as the Lord's host. He allows of no exception to this general order. He required an open profession of religion when the loss of property and reputation, were the certain consequences; and death itself stared every man in the face who should confess him before men.

Prevailing doubts, concerning the reality of personal religion, may occasion the delay of a publick profession for a time, but he who *believes* himself to be a christian, and will not assume the responsibilities, and perform the duties, connected with a public profession.; affords fearful evidence, that he is ashamed of Christ, and that Christ in the day of judgment will be ashamed of him.

3. A church of Christ cannot be constituted, or continued, without personal holiness in the members.

We do not say that every member must be holy; but if none are pious, it cannot be a church of Christ. If a small number only are pious, in alliance with an overwhelming majority, by whom their designs are overruled, and the end of a visible church defeated, they do not so sanctify the visible community, as to constitute it a church of Christ. In such alliance, the pious, instead of acting as pioneers of the cross, will be led as captives in

chains, to grace the triumphs of error—will serve as a decoy of others, to the unhallowed community, and as a quietus to the consciences of worldly men, who will feel safe, as long as pious people dare to continue, and act with them.

Baptism in infancy cannot constitute adult membership in the visible church.

It neither secures, nor evidences, the existence of personal holiness, in those who are baptized, when they come to years of understanding. And we are not at liberty to suppose, that God has required personal holiness as a qualification for membership in his church, and for purposes essential to its existence, and which unholy men never did, and never will accomplish, and then that he has contravened his own appointment, and insured the defeat of his own designs in organizing the church, by admitting the unholy to membership, by means of a rite administered in infancy.

The children of the church baptized in infancy are the objects of her peculiar care, and if in any sense church members, they are not in any *such* sense, as supersedes the necessity of a credible profession of religion, when they come to years of understanding. If they are members of the church at all, it must be on the ground of membership in the family of the faithful, so that when family membership ceases, their connection with the church must cease of course.

I cannot but believe, however, that language more accurate, and less liable to produce mistake and controversy, may be employed, than that which denominates baptized children church members without intending in reality what is included in the term as applied to adult membership.

A regularly ordained ministry, an orthodox creed,

and devout forms of worship, cannot constitute a church of Christ, without personal holiness in the members. Much less can civil associations of men, though formed for religious purposes.

The attempt which is making to confound the scriptural distinction between the holy and unholy, the righteous and the wicked, and to abolish the revealed terms of membership in the church of God, and to form churches without reference to doctrinal opinion, or experimental religion, is the most pernicious infidelity that was ever broached. It breaks the spring of motion, in the centre of God's extended system of good will to men, and stops the work of salvation.

The church, as a collective body, is the organ of God's moral administration,—a chartered community, formed for the exclusive purpose of giving efficacy and perpetuity to the revealed laws of the divine government. The Bible, without churches to give efficacy to its precepts and institutions, will no more accomplish the gracious purposes of heaven, than law books will accomplish the ends of civil government, without an organized administration. The concerns of agriculture and commerce, and science, and the arts, may be left to the spontaneous impulse of ambition, interest, and necessity. But not so the concerns of religion. In a world of revolt and alienation from God, no spontaneous care of his cause is to be anticipated; but rather a common, extended, powerful, habitual opposition. To propel such a cause, from the beginning to the end of time, with all its attendant self denials, toils, expenses, and sufferings, against the buffetings of such a stream, requires the steady, vigorous action, of a constantly organized body; animated by a love stronger than death, and which many waters cannot quench.

For this purpose, the Church, composed as far as man can judge, exclusively of the sanctified in Christ Jesus, is organized. But the *specific character* of her members, is as indispensable to her chartered efficacy, as her organized existence itself. The administration of civil government, may as well be committed to the known enemies of a nation, or the command of her armies, to officers in opposing hostile ranks, as to commit to the hands of unholy men, the great work for which the church of God is instituted. To men withheld from the appropriate duties of their station by aversion, sloth, business, or pleasure, is committed the administration of the divine practical system, for accomplishing the salvation of the world. In such hands the work will stop. The constant energy of love in the heart, quickened daily by new supplies of grace, is scarcely adequate to the impulse required. In the hands then of the unholy the work will not be done. It will be opposed. The faith delivered to the saints will be contended against. The Sabbath will be encroached upon by its unhallowed defenders. The work of rearing *pious* youth for the sanctuary, will cease: and *talents*, and *science*, and *taste*, will constitute the primary accomplishments of the ministers of Christ. The religious education of children will be neglected: and as to the heathen, the *virtuous heathen*, they will be left to their almost equal privileges with Christians, to find their way to heaven without the gospel.

The system of action, which would break down the sacred inclosure about the church, and throw the church and world together in one common field; and which to accomplish its purpose, would bring into competition the rights of churches and of congregations; and by design-

ed invidious excitement, arouse and direct the stream of popular indignation to roll over the church, is a system of practical infidelity, armed with the principles of a most efficient persecution. It is not only robbing the church of her chartered rights; but it is making their existence and exercise a crime. It is rendering that piety, bestowed upon her for the salvation of others, as well as for her own, an occasion of contumely. It is defrauding her of that confidence and affection of the surrounding community, in which her light has shined with benign influence, and in which without the designed excitement of invidious feeling, she might expect to reap in due time the fruit of her labour.

*All the churches of our Lord, and all ecclesiastical societies, and all men who wish well to the civil, as promoted by the religious order of our fathers, have more cause to fear and to execrate such a system of aggression than all the infidel books that were ever propagated:* And though accomplished, by giving to ecclesiastical societies the spoils of the church, it is done at the peril of the existence of these civil associations. Ecclesiastical societies are the offspring, though not members of the church. Where churches exist, and are faithful, a moral influence is exerted on the community, which produces a voluntary cooperation on the part of those who are not pious, for the support of divine institutions: resulting in what is termed, the congregation. But, let the church be overwhelmed, and amalgamated with the world, or rather let the world itself without religion, become the church, and speedily, there will be neither church nor congregation. The mainspring broken, the system will run down. While the impulse of past religious enterprize continues and fashion operates, continued by the existence of real

churches, and opposition to truth produces energy, the splendid forms of religion may remain; but let the power of religious action be spent, and the system of demolition be carried through, and the form itself of the church would cease; the Sabbath would be blotted out; and infidelity and profligacy would fill the void.

The ordination of pastors, and organization of churches, without reference to doctrinal belief, or experimental religion, is a complete annihilation of the church,—as really a blotting out, of God's revealed practical system of saving men, as that revision of the Bible, which draws the obliterating pen across the doctrinal contents of the whole. The one is the destruction of the book of laws; the other, of the organized system of administration for giving them efficacy: and both together, constitute the most efficient system of infidelity with which the church of God was ever assailed. Every church whose rights are thus invaded, while struggling for existence among the waves, has a claim upon the sympathies, the prayers, and the charities if needed, of every other church in the land. The stream which beats upon her, is one whose action may be directed to any point in our country, and which with relentless impartiality, will overwhelm any church of any name, disposed to maintain the doctrines of the Bible. *All the churches of our land have cause to feel the assault which is made upon their christian liberty, and to stand in holy alliance defensive, to resist aggression, and guarantee to each other an inviolable integrity.* If any church through fear, shall be disposed to temporize, she may obtain the enviable privilege of being last destroyed; but more probably, will be among the first to fall; as timidity and indecision seldom fail to court aggression, and to render resistance unavailing.

4. Local churches have a right to require a confession of faith, and christian experience coincident with their own, as the condition of membership in their communion. A belief of the truth, attended by appropriate affections of heart, is a part of the evidence which is indispensable to constitute a profession of religion credible. If then, churches have no right to interrogate a candidate for admission, concerning the articles of his belief, and the exercises of his heart, they are deprived of the means of preserving the church as a society of faithful men : for, external actions, without any reference to belief or experience, do not furnish credible evidence of piety. Beside, the object of association in all cases, is the increase of *strength*, for some given purpose : and substantial agreement in the main design, is, in the nature of things, indispensable to the attainment of any end whatever, by means of association.—The builders of Babel, were obliged to desist for the want of a common medium of ideas, as the means of concert in action. But how much more had their confusion been confounded, though possessing a common language, had they differed as to the position, form, and materials of their building. Association in this case would have been accumulated weakness instead of strength; each arresting the other's hand, and pulling down what the other had built. The same is true, and more eminently true, of divided counsels, in associations for moral and religious purposes. How can two walk together except they be agreed, is a question, which carries its answer upon the face of it. And a 'family, or city, or kingdom, divided against itself, is brought to desolation,' is an inspired declaration, the truth of which has been confirmed by immemorial experience. A method, more infallible to de-

feat all efficient action in behalf of religion, in *any* form, could not be contrived; than to constitute churches, indiscriminately of heterogeneous and warring materials. Every church would be, in this case, another Babel. No building of any form or size could go up; the association would answer no purpose, but that of causing its members to do nothing. As long as Christians differ in their views of doctrine, and discipline, and experimental religion, too widely to admit of minding the same things practically, they ought to associate in churches by themselves; that those who agree, may promote by harmonious action, that good, which a more comprehensive organization would most assuredly prevent. But it has been said, that God has made it the duty of men to commemorate the death of Christ; therefore, a church can have no right to prescribe terms of communion, that would exclude many well-meaning moral men.—The church does not prescribe the terms of communion. It is God who has prescribed them, and given to the church, the charge of perpetuating her existence, and accomplishing the end of it, by a succession of qualified members. And though it be the duty of *all men*, to be qualified to join the church, it is the duty of *none* to do it, till they *are qualified* by becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus, nor is it the duty of any church to receive them, till they afford credible evidence of the change. But of the credibility of this profession, the *church*, and not the applicant, is the constituted judge. If she errs in her judgment of evidence, and excludes the qualified, she must answer it to God. But the abuse of a right is no evidence of its non-existence.—No corporation could preserve itself, and its interests, upon the principle that the applicant, and not the chartered body, is to judge of the qualifica-

tions for membership. Would monied men invest their capital in chartered communities, in which the borrowers, at their own discretion, may become a majority of the board, and control at pleasure the whole concern? And has God committed the care of the true riches, to associations of pious men, and then given to the men of the world, the right of membership at their own discretion, and thus of changing the character and defeating the end of the institution?

5. Local churches with their pastors, agreed in their views of doctrine and christian experience, have a right to associate for mutual defence and increased efficiency in the propagation of religion, and to agree upon standards of doctrine, and modes of discipline, in accordance with their understanding of the Bible.

No local church can be compelled, by other churches, to associate. Each in herself is independent of any jurisdiction from without, exercised without her consent. Still, it may be a duty, which every church owes to herself, to other churches, and to God, to associate for purposes of increased safety and efficiency, in answering the various designs of her organization. All the reasons which dictate the association of individuals of a given district, in local churches, for local purposes, dictate with equal clearness the expediency of the association of churches, of a more extended district, for more extended general purposes. The elementary companies which constitute an army, may as wisely claim independence, and refuse to act in any but occasional concert, mutually solicited as the exigencies of war may demand, as for local churches, in the vicissitudes of their warfare, to depend entirely upon the temporary interpositions of churches, unallied but for momentary purposes. If the

conduct of a local church affected none but herself, she might with less responsibility stand alone. But her conduct exerts, in many respects, a powerful influence, good or bad, upon sister churches: and though she cannot be compelled to do it, she is still bound in equity, to consult them, with regard to such parts of her administration, as involve their interest as well as her own.

If any churches are persuaded that the mode of organization for mutual aid and enterprise, is revealed, let them obey the dictates of conscience; and if others suppose, that no form of alliance is prescribed, let them obey the dictates of an enlightened discretion. Only let the end be obtained, of association and concentrated action, and it is enough.

That local churches have a right to submit their difficulties to councils of sister churches, for advice and decision, is certain from primitive example. The right also, to agree beforehand, upon the churches and pastors to whom the reference of difficulties shall in all cases be made, and to bind themselves in mutual covenant, that the decision of such standing councils shall be final, is an essential attribute of christian liberty; and every analogy of the human character, dictates the superior efficacy of known stated tribunals, for the adjustment of ecclesiastical, as well as for the adjustment of civil causes. The principles of evidence in both cases are the same. The effect of harmonious, or of continually conflicting decisions, would in both cases be the same. The consequences of passion and prejudice, transfused into a council, or civil court, would be the same; and the consequences of having civil or ecclesiastical officers responsible for their conduct but to a popular board, usually under their entire control, would, in both cases, alike

secure impunity in transgression. The constitution of a stated council voluntarily adopted, is no more a surrender of religious liberty, than the reference by law of secular disputes, to a stated civil court instead of a mutual arbitration is a surrender of civil rights; and no more constitutes an ecclesiastical despotism, lording it over God's heritage, than civil courts constitute a civil despotism, lording it over states and nations. The cry of popery, against stated ecclesiastical councils, is just as senseless, as the cry of despotism would be, against the constitution of the United States. The one, is a voluntary civil compact, for general purposes, that independent states could not achieve but by union: and the other, is a voluntary compact, for religious purposes, that independent churches cannot achieve, but by union.

The independence of the New England churches, as asserted by our fathers, did not, as might easily be shown by documents, preclude the existence of a voluntary alliance of churches, for ecclesiastical purposes. It consisted in the perfect independence of every church, as respected the right of other churches to decree for her articles of faith, or forms of worship; or to thrust themselves in as rulers and judges in her cases of discipline, without her consent. But it did not preclude the right of churches, to avail themselves of each other's aid, by any form of association, which they might deem either scriptural or expedient.

Notwithstanding the torrent of invective poured out against *creeds*; after the most deliberate attention to the subject, I have not been able to perceive any rational ground of objection against them. There are in every science elementary principles, without the knowledge of which it can never be understood. The same

is true in theology : for the God who governs the natural world according to stated general laws, administers the concerns of his moral government, by the operation of general principles.

It is fashionable, I am aware, to decry system in theology ; but why the Most High should be pleased to observe *order* in the government of the *natural world*, so as to lay the foundation for demonstration and system in philosophy, and at the same time, be supposed to govern his moral kingdom by laws obscurely revealed, including no general principles, connected by no dependencies, and excluding the possibility of system in theology, is an enigma for those to explain who choose to decry creeds, and to speak contemptuously of system in theology.

What is the precise ground of objection to creeds ? Does the Bible contain no important, elementary principles ? Are these incapable of being understood ? Can they by no means be exhibited in a brief, connected form ? or can their meaning be correctly expressed in no other language than the precise terms in which they are revealed ? or do the Scriptures prohibit a concise exhibition of revealed truth ? How then can the Scriptures be translated ? or what right have we to preach the gospel, or to publish sermons, or commentaries ?— Or how can Christians communicate to each other verbally, their various opinions concerning the meaning of revelation ? It is not the object of creeds to supplant the Bible, but to ascertain, for purposes of concentrated effort in the propagation of truth, how pastors and churches understand the Bible. If churches were formed only to worship an unknown God, or to blow the trumpet of an uncertain sound, they would need no con-

fessions of faith ; however they might be pleased to adopt, and feel themselves bound in conscience to propagate their articles of unbelief. If churches had nothing to do but to print and distribute the received version of the Bible, without note or comment, they might dispense with standards of doctrine : or if men attached invariably the same ideas to the language of the Bible, creeds would be superfluous, and the profession of a *general belief in the Bible* would suffice. But as men differ indefinitely, as to the import of Scripture language, a profession of a belief in the Bible, as the means of informing those who have a right to know, in what *particular* sense we understand the Bible, has now become an intelligible profession of no one truth which it contains : and to profess that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, a phrase which in the apostolic age, had a known and definite meaning, does not now, when diverse and opposite meanings are attached to it, communicate any intelligible profession of our belief on that point : and all pretension of giving an account of our faith, in that manner, is an artifice for concealment, unworthy of honest men ; and an indignity offered to the understandings of those, who desire to know in what manner we understand the doctrines of the Bible.

If men believe nothing, let them profess nothing : and if they intend to do nothing to defend, and propagate the truth, in any form, let them not become members of the church of Christ ; but if they have adopted opinions which they believe to be true, and which they feel constrained to propagate, why should they not frame intelligible symbols of their faith, as the means of securing harmonious and efficient action ?

In the nature of the case, I have been able to per-

ceive no adequate cause, for the virulent invective employed against creeds ; but when I have compared the creeds of the reformation with the Bible, and have perceived their general coincidence with the unperverted dictates of revelation, and their efficiency in uniting the churches, and preserving the truth, I have not been surprised, at the torrent of declamation which has been poured forth against them : though I have not ceased to feel astonishment, at the misrepresentations of them, which men of veracity in other respects, have felt themselves at liberty to make. An invading enemy, is always prejudiced against fortified positions, and standing armies; and would much prefer an open country, and an undisciplined militia. And if the good natured people invaded, would consent to adopt the same prejudices, and to act upon the defensive, without concert or fortifications, they would much oblige the invading enemy ; who, both before and after their subjugation, would doubtless eulogize them, as preeminent in liberality and the social virtues.

Creeds and associated churches, create a rugged warfare to the invader, and reward him with slow gains, and stinted victories, of doubtful continuance. Who ever knew a professor of religion of lax morals, who was not opposed to evangelical discipline ? or one buffeted for his faults, without reformation, who did not cry persecution ? Or an attempt made to unite churches, for the defence of the gospel, which did not arouse the energies, and call forth the declamation of those, who avow their opposition to the doctrines of the reformation. Not a movement can be made on this subject but instantly the Pope is at the door ; the dungeons of the inquisition are under our feet, and the chains, the rack,

and the stake, and the fire are prepared. Strange indeed, it is, that the friends of truth, should fear those associations of churches, which the enemies of truth regard, above all things, with aversion and dread. Strange that the prevalence of the same creed, and the same principles of association by means of which, the power of the Pope was broken, and half his dominions wrested from him, should be regarded with terror, as the sure means of establishing in this land, his iron hearted despotism. I cannot read such declamation, without deep and continual sorrow of heart, that the friends of truth should be deceived and alarmed by it : while the enemy, laughing at our credulity, moves on in firm phalanx, to divide and conquer. Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.

7. Churches of different denominations, who regard each other as composed generally, of members giving evidence of personal holiness, though differing in their forms of worship and modes of administration, and to *some extent in their views of doctrine*, are bound to regard each other with christian affection ; to abstain from all acts of mutual aggression ; and as early, and as far, as may be, to mature a system of efficient cooperation, for promoting those interests of the Redeemer's kingdom which are common to them all.

The spirit of proselytism, which regards exclusively the interests of one denomination, and is concerned in bringing to heaven men in one way or not at all, and which disregards the feelings and interests of other churches, is a principle of war. As human nature is constituted, there can be no peace among the churches

of our Lord of different names, until it is frowned into non-existence. *Mutual safety is indispensable to peace, and love, and harmonious action, among churches of different denominations.* And with trumpet-tongue, the providence of God is calling upon Christians of every denomination, to cease from their limited views, and selfish ends, and to unite in the conflict which is to achieve the subjugation of the world to Christ. The mischiefs of this spirit have been great, and have been endured long enough, to afford experimental evidence, of its wickedness and folly. From the time the reformed churches commenced the sacramental controversy, the reformation received a check ; and to this moment, the lines in nations, cities, towns and villages, are drawn in many instances between Papist and Protestant, as they were drawn at the reformation. And now, for centuries, the resources of Protestant churches have been exhausted in standing still ; from the balance of each other's action and reaction. While the world have been perishing around them, they have been contending, whether a small remnant of men should go to heaven precisely in this, or some other way. It is time to cease from this limited enterprise. Jesus Christ has need of our harmonious exertion ; and the world has need of it. Never can the world be emancipated, till those who love our Lord, and the souls of men, are released by voluntary suffrage from the diversions, toils, and irritations of a war establishment. All the men on our various posts of observation, and all the soldiers in our armies of reserve, must be poured upon the territories of the enemy, while we, without fear, and undefended, dwell safely side by side. Too long have our alienations been the scoff of infidels, and made us the tools of

designing and ambitious men ; and withdrawn from the cause of Christ that influence upon society which it belongs to his religion to exert ; and which kind feelings and harmonious action would not fail to produce. And may God grant, that this generation may not pass away, before a delegation from all *christian denominations* shall assemble, to attend the funeral of bigotry and heresy, and to lay them so deep in the same grave, that they shall not rise till the trumpet of the archangel shall call them to judgment, to answer for their crimes, and to receive the punishment of their deeds.

7. Local churches are liable to inadequate views of the design and duties of their organization. Particularly, if the views contained in this discourse are correct, more time should be devoted, by the members of local churches to consultation, and social prayer. No secular interest so diversified, extended, important and difficult ; depending on the resources and steady cooperation of so many individuals, of different age and capacity, could be successfully protected and extended without reiterated consultation. And yet how difficult, how almost impossible it is, to convene punctually the members of almost any church, to attend to the public concerns of Christ's kingdom ; and to implore the blessing of God upon their labours. Could a few hours on each day of the universal concert, be employed better, than in deliberation and prayer ? Are thirty six hours in a year too much time to be devoted by every church to the great work of saving men ? for the promotion of which churches were organized and are still preserved.

It is equally manifest, that, in conducting the enterprise of evangelizing the world, the churches of our Lord must revert, in some degree, to primitive usage,

which committed to stated pastors, the concerns of local churches, and to evangelists the work of propagating the gospel. We are not to expect the gift of inspiration, but neither are we to expect that a work greater than that which the primitive church conducted, will move on to its consummation, without the agency of an order of men, wise and pious, exempt from pastoral cares, and devoted exclusively to the work. The resources, required to evangelize the world, within the period assigned for that event by revelation, cannot be committed to incidental management. The number of missionaries to be raised up and supported, the stations to be selected; the fostering care demanded to rear and perpetuate missionary establishments, require imperiously, that the churches put in requisition the time and talents of some of their ablest men. Stated pastors cannot do the work. Associations of ministers incidentally convened, cannot bring to it that maturity of thought, comprehension of plan, unity of design, adaptation of means, and constancy of application, which are indispensable. And were it not, that the exigency itself will produce the remedy, the extended system of missions would be crushed beneath its own weight, and fall into irretrievable confusion and disgrace.\* Local churches, with their pastors, are the primary springs of that river, which is to flow from the sanctuary, deeper and broader,

\* The endowment of professorships in a literary institution, for purposes of science or religion, is not more demanded, than similar endowments for purposes of practical benevolence, in conducting the work of missions: and whoever shall find it in his heart to set an example of such munificence, will establish a claim upon the gratitude of existing generation, not surpassed by any other, and will secure in a most effectual manner, the grateful recollection of future ages.

till it becomes impassable. But another order of men, devoted to the work, are to search out the barren places, and to conduct and distribute the fertilizing waters of this mighty river, until the whole earth shall become as the garden of God.

8. Local churches may perceive in this discourse the infallible means of their own preservation and prosperity.

It is too often said, that the church-universal will live; but that there is no security that a particular church will live. But local churches too may be perpetual. It is only for a church to answer the end of her organization, in the preservation of the truth, in the maintenance of God's worship, in the religious education of children, in the rearing up of Pastors and Missionaries, and to lend a ready cooperation of charity, and prayer, for the evangelizing of the world, and all the promises of the Covenant of grace secure her continuance. The design of God in her formation, as long as that design is accomplished, the ample and appropriate means provided with reference to her preservation, the expressions of divine love and paternal care, the promises made to the prayer of faith, to the maintenance of sound doctrine, to the faithful education of children, to the administration of gospel discipline, and to charitable exertions for the salvation of men, all guarantee, through successive ages, the existence of the church, that so walks in his statutes, as to answer in any good degree, the design of her organization. *Practical fidelity, is the condition of perpetuity*; and though no promise guarantees absolutely, that the condition shall be fulfilled, as absolute promises secure the obedience and perseverance of individual believers, and the contin-

uance on earth of a visible church ; still the condition is a practicable one, and one which has been fulfilled for ages by local churches, and may be fulfilled forever. Such, indeed, is the love and patience of God towards his people, that instead of its being an impossible thing to secure the continuance of a local church, it is usually, only the neglect of duty, and contempt of admonition, for a long time, that prevails on the Almighty to give her up.

This view of the subject is calculated to cheer the hearts of feeble churches, struggling with adversity, and to lift up their hands in the work of the Lord. They possess a charter more valuable than worlds, and are under no necessity of giving it up. The powers of darkness, enraged by their light, stand around the chartered territory with malignant impatience, waiting to reoccupy their possession, and spread over it the darkness of death. But let feeble churches, instead of doing nothing merely because they cannot do every thing, do what they can ; and the voice of Heaven to them is, "O thou afflicted, tossed with the tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires—and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord—and great shall be the peace of thy children—and whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake."

The same view of the subject may animate the churches that are strong, to continue and augment the resources consecrated to the work of Domestic missions. Such labours of love, are not an experiment of doubtful issue, and no work of supererogation ; but the fulfilment of a relative duty upon which God has always smiled, and always will. Let every church that would perpetuate her own existence, and secure the return into her own

bosom of the munificence of Heaven, put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, towards feeble churches, and open wide her helping hand. The considerations which should unite the churches of New England, in these efforts of mutual preservation, are most powerful. They are united by a common origin, a common faith, worship, and discipline; and by the endearing recollection of common toils, and dangers, They have wept, and fasted, and prayed together, through scenes of Indian warfare, and European aggression; and have rejoiced together in temporal deliverances, and in the greater joy of spiritual harvests; and now they are called to the enterprise of sowing and reaping together the harvest of the world. Shall one of these hallowed communities then, waxing poor, be suffered to expire? Shall one of them, an object of lawless aggression, be permitted to fall?

*My dear Brother,*

I rejoice in your establishment as a pastor of this respectable church, in alliance with our beloved Brother, called to devote himself to the more extended concerns of the Redeemer's kingdom. I rejoice in the prospect of usefulness laid open before you, and in the dawning light of that bright day, which is destined soon to break upon the world. If any considerations could tempt me to regret the lapse of years, and to wish to tread again with youthful foot, the threshold of the sanctuary, it would be to share with you, and those of your age, in the delightful enterprise of propagating the gospel; to rejoice with you in the glorious victories of the church, in which you will probably be a partaker, after many of us, who introduce you to this holy war-

fare, are laid in the grave. The advice which I have to give you on this occasion, will not be miscellaneous, but will be confined to a single point. As your time is to be devoted chiefly to the duties of the pastoral relation, devote yourself primarily to the vital interests of your own and other churches; and especially to the work of promoting revivals of religion. Let the scorner delight in his scorning, but remember, thou man of God, that churches without vital religion, are but the splendid sepulchre of souls, and the gateway to hell. The existence, and vigour, and extension of the cause of Christ, depend upon the outpouring of the Spirit from on high. Revivals of religion are indispensable to guard the churches against that voluptuousness, which is the consequence of national prosperity, and to prevent the idolatry of talent, and the fascinations of science; to maintain that sound doctrine which the unholy will not bear; to maintain the power of godliness, where the standards of doctrine are correct; to maintain an efficient discipline; to give efficacy to the system of religious education; to provide pious and able pastors and missionaries; to augment the number of believers in the churches; to give to religion its appropriate influence upon human society; and to constitute one vigorous heart and soul, by which the life blood shall be propelled, to the extremities of the earth. They are also indispensable to meet the reaction of that instinctive alliance, of worldly policy and hatred of the truth, which increasing discrimination in doctrine and strictness of practice, and ardor of christian enterprise, will not fail to array against the cause of Christ. There is a point of success, in the progress of the church to inherit the earth, at which a conflict must be sustained to determine

whether she shall advance in firm phalanx, around the banner of her captain, or turn her back in a shameful discomfiture, which centuries would not be able to retrieve.

Brother, despise not this formidable opposition, and sleep not on your post. Be prepared for argument or for action as the exigencies of the day may demand. But remember that no adequate security for the churches can be found but in a revival of vital godliness.— Preaching and writing books on the side of error are comparatively nothing, for truth has always laughed at the shaking of such a spear. But a system of deliberate action, emancipated from the restraints of conscience, and moving onward by the impulse of passion, to accomplish the destruction of evangelical churches merely because it can, is not to be stopped in its course by argument. Talents are not to be despised, or literary acquisitions to be neglected; but Leviathan will not be penetrated by such missiles, and the darkness of his deep will not be illuminated by such light. One powerful revival of religion in a great city, will accomplish the overthrow of more error and the propagation of more truth in one month, than ages devoted to literary acquisition or logical discussion.

These means are not to be neglected. But the champions of the cross must write upon their knees, one hand wielding the pen, and the other lifted up in prayer; and while they write the churches must pour out before God, their fervent and effectual supplications. Sermons must be written and preached in demonstration of the Spirit; and the argument of their controversy must be set on fire from heaven, before it will enlighten the dark heart or melt the heart of stone.

Brother, be mighty in prayer; be mighty in the Scriptures; and though weak in yourself, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, to revive in the churches of Christ that spirit of vital godliness, which will raise them from the dust, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Thus, diligent in business, and fervent in spirit, consecrate your days, and you will contribute, in a most effectual manner, to fulfil the promise, which gives to the Son of God the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

## CHARGE,

BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, D. D.

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

BELOVED BROTHER,

THE Redeemer and King of Zion has seen fit, in his sovereign wisdom, to appoint you a Minister of his everlasting gospel, and an Overseer of this flock, "which he hath purchased with his own blood." It is an appointment of unspeakable moment, taking hold on the judgment of the great day, and reaching, in its perpetually augmenting results, to interminable ages. Though as a minister of the gospel you were publicly and solemnly charged, when invested with the sacred office; yet it will not be deemed improper or superfluous that, on this important occasion, we should affectionately endeavour to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance, and to impress upon you some leading considerations, relating more especially to your pastoral duty. The substance of the whole is comprised in the memorable apostolic injunctions, TAKE HEED TO THYSELF;—TAKE HEED TO THE FLOCK;—TAKE HEED TO THE MINISTRY.

*Take heed to thyself.*—Whose heart has not been touched and melted, by the Address of the GREAT SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF SOULS to one of his first ministers: *Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me, more than these? Feed my lambs. Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep.* The Ambassador of Christ must love him, with no common measure of affection; must be his devoted friend and follower, ready for any service, for any sacrifice, for any suffering, appointed by him. The Minister of reconciliation must himself be reconciled to God; to his character, to his law, to his government, to his truth, to the design and administration of his sovereign wisdom for the recovery of fallen mankind. The Christian Pastor or Bishop, who is to

warn every man and teach every man, according to the gospel, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, must himself be a man after God's own heart, doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly before him.

We trust, dear Sir, that you have felt all this ; and that you this day feel it most deeply. If so, you will also deeply feel the importance of taking heed to yourself that your heart be evermore humble, penitent, devoted, being kept continually under the allsubduing influence of the cross ; that you dwell immoveably in God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and beholding his glory, be changed into the same image ; that your breast unceasingly glow, with that divine charity which is the bond of perfectness, and without which, though you speak with the tongues of men and of angels, you will become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal ; that you maintain the sacredness, elevation, and benignity of character befitting a legate of the skies, on an errand of heavenly mercy ; that being crucified to the world, and the world unto you, its riches, its honours, its pleasures, its applauses, never seduce your heart, or turn you from your duty ; that you be a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ; and that, never feeling as though you had already attained, but leaving the things that are behind, and reaching forth to them that are before, you be unremittingly pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

*Take heed unto all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer.* It is a flock which, in no ordinary degree, will endear itself to pastoral affection, awaken pastoral solicitude, and require pastoral vigilance, diligence, wisdom, and energy. Within the memory of some yet living, this Church and Society have known what it is to struggle for existence. They have experienced perils, conflicts, and changes, which have served to exercise their minds, to quicken their sensibilities, to impart to them a particular interest in things, and to diffuse among them an apprehensive and active spirit, capable, under proper direction, of being turned to excellent purposes. God has been their Help ; has favoured them with seasons of refreshing from his presence ; has increased and strengthened them. They have a respect for

religious institutions, a conviction of the importance of the gospel, and a readiness to make sacrifices and exertions for its support and spread. Some of them, we trust, have truly returned unto God, laid hold on the hope set before them, and made advances in the way of everlasting life. Many of them, we fear, after all the instructions, entreaties and warnings which they have received, and with all their convictions of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, are even until now disobedient to the gospel, alienated from the life of God, and under the guilt of having long refused the Saviour and resisted the Holy Ghost. All of them are on probation for eternity, endangered by the corruptions of the heart, by the fascinations of the world, by the influences of spiritual wickedness in high places.

Take heed then, dear Brother, to all this flock, to the aged and the young, the professing and non-professing, the serious and the thoughtless. Take heed, that whatever is good among them be cherished and strengthened; and whatever is evil counteracted and suppressed; that they be not turned aside from the truth, or spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit; that they trust not in their religious privileges and distinctions, nor in any thing short of true renovation of heart and conformity in spirit and practice to the holy doctrines and precepts of the gospel; that their religious sentiments be sound, expanded and charitable; that they indulge not to pride and vain glory, and despise others; that no root of bitterness, springing up, trouble them, and many be defiled; that none of them slumber in fatal security, encompass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, or quiet themselves in refuges of lies; that none of them fail of the grace of God, and perish through remissness or unfaithfulness on your part.

*Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord Jesus, that thou fulfil it. As an Ambassador for Christ, you are to beseech all people to be reconciled to God. As a Watchman, you are to hear the word at the mouth of Jehovah, and give every soul warning from him, never sleeping upon your post, never shrinking from duty. As a Shepherd, you are to feed the sheep and the lambs, to feed them with knowledge and with under-*

standing ; to strengthen the diseased, to bind up the broken, to bring again that which shall have been driven away, and to seek that which is lost ; to guard and defend the flock from the paw of the lion, from the wiles of the wolf, from the stratagems and assaults of every destroyer ; and to go before them, and guide them to the Rock of safety, to the fold of everlasting rest. As a *Steward of the mysteries of God*, you are to bring forth, from his sacred and inexhaustible treasures, things new and old, giving to every one his portion in due season, and withholding nothing that may be profitable. As a *Teacher*, you are to open and allege the scriptures ; not teaching for doctrine the commandments of men ; not exhibiting for the gospel of salvation a vain and deceitful philosophy ; not using enticing words of man's wisdom, but sound speech that cannot be condemned ; not as many who corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, as of God in the sight of God, speaking the truth in love. As an *Elder*, you are to rule in the church, not as lord over God's heritage ; but with all meekness, and gentleness, and firmness, and wisdom to maintain the order and discipline which he has ordained for the perfecting of the saints, for the correction of the disorderly, for the edifying of the body, and for the conviction of the world. As a *Bishop*, you are to preside in, and to conduct the solemnities of divine service, with chastened sobriety and reverence, aiming to exhibit not yourself but Christ, and duly remembering that his house is eminently a house of prayer ; to administer the seals of the New Testament to proper subjects, putting a difference, with all impartiality, between the holy and the unclean ; and to bless the congregation in the name of Jehovah, with sacred care and devout affection.

Finally, the things now entrusted to you among many witnesses, the same you are authorised to commit to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also ; ever taking due heed that you lay hands suddenly on no man.

MY BROTHER, are you ready to cry out, *who is sufficient for these things ?* The responsibility is indeed appalling. But the ministers of Christ must not shrink from it. In delivering this charge to you, we anew charge also ourselves. Upon him es-

pecially, by whom as the organ of the Council it is delivered, it returns directly with all its sacredness and all its weight. For sixteen years he has been, and still by the good pleasure of the Great Shepherd, he continues to be, an overseer of this same flock. With what fidelity and in what manner, amidst infirmities, and temptations, and cares, and labours, he has fulfilled the sacred trust must be referred to a higher, and truer, than any human judgment. Sensible, however, as he is of many and great deficiencies, and humbled as he desires to be for them; yet his conscience is witness, and God is witness, that he has loved this people, and been willing to spend and be spent for them; that he has loved the pastoral work, and had no wish to be discharged from it. And his heart must be dead to its dearest objects, before he can cease to care for the souls of his charge, or to seek their good. But most devoutly would he thank the Lord Jesus, that in his supreme goodness, and in answer to many prayers, he has sent you to take part in this holy and arduous ministry; that while, by his gracious permission and help, something shall be attempted, for imparting the light of his salvation to thousands and millions in distant regions of darkness and of the shadow of death, there may be no lack of pastoral attention to this people.

My Brother, you will be a "true yoke fellow." This heart confides in you; and holds most dear the reciprocated confidence, of which it is assured. This mutual and affectionate confidence must be preserved inviolate, as a perpetual security against any other strife than of love and good works. But there is another and a higher confidence; a confidence which reposes itself in the bosom of everlasting Love, and takes hold on everlasting Strength. The word is sure, *Lo I am with you always. My grace is sufficient for thee. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Blessed, glorious consummation; if, by Divine grace, Pastors and People so acquit themselves in regard to the gospel, its momentous requisitions and objects, as to meet, with mutual rejoicing, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, in the day of his appearing. **AMEN.**

## RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY REV. BROWN EMERSON A. M.

PASTOR OF THE THIRD CHURCH IN SALEM.

THE Church of God is one. The covenant of grace, the broad charter of its privileges, the consecrated channel of its holy provisions, is the same in every age, and under every dispensation. Though "there are differences of administrations," and "diversities of gifts and operations;" yet there is but "one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all!" Every true christian is a lively stone in that temple, which "is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself, being the chief corner stone." The unity of the church is further described by a metaphor, which represents the believer as united to the Head, "even Christ, in whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

This unity of the church is the basis of that christian fellowship, which, like a strong cement, unites the parts of the spiritual edifice, giving strength and beauty to the whole.

The right of giving and withholding this fellowship is vested in the church, and in no case is the exercise of this right more important, than in the election and consecration of pastors. From the primitive age of the christian church, it has been the custom, when men were set apart to the pastoral office, to give them a public pledge of christian and ministerial fellowship.

This custom is sanctioned by the high authority of apostolic example.

The good providence of God having directed this Church and Parish to the choice of you, dear Sir, as their spiritual teach-

er and guide, in connexion with their present much respected and beloved pastor, and inclined your heart to comply with their wish, in behalf of the ecclesiastical Council, here convened, *I tender you this right hand.*

Receive it, beloved brother, as a token, *on the part of the church*, of christian fellowship and affection. We hereby express our confidence in your fidelity to Christ, and other qualifications requisite for the work of the ministry. We give you a cordial welcome to this part of the gospel vineyard, where, we doubt not, you will prove yourself a faithful minister of the new covenant, "in labors, in watchings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

Receive this right hand as a token of *ministerial* fellowship.

We hereby acknowledge you as a brother and fellow laborer "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." As you have been solemnly consecrated to the pastoral office, and have received a charge to fulfil the duties of that sacred trust, we, who are invested with the same office, give you this significant token, as a pledge, on our part, of christian and ministerial friendship, aid, and encouragement; and your accepting the pledge, is regarded as a promise, on your part, to reciprocate the same kind offices. The duties of a christian bishop are attended with peculiar difficulties and dangers, that require the counsel of wisdom matured by experience, and the comfort of that brotherly love, which is like the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, and like the dew of Hermon on the mountains of Zion.

Though I speak as an organ of this ecclesiastical council, I must claim the indulgence of considering this right hand as a token and pledge of *personal* affection.

Since the Lord has cast our lots so near together, and the people of our respective charges are so intermingled and connected with each other, that their interests and concerns are, in a great measure, one, it is of high importance, that we maintain between ourselves the strictest friendship and harmony.

The uninterrupted harmony, which has for many years sub-

isted between our churches and their pastors, evinces a mutual disposition "to follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Let brotherly love continue." My acquaintance with you, and the long tried friendship of your respected colleague, raises the hope almost to assurance, that our ministerial and social connexion will be happy in its results. Most cordially do I welcome you to a part with us in the ministry in this place.

We rejoice, brother, in your readiness to take the joint oversight of this dear church and people, and pray that you may be abundantly endued with that heavenly wisdom, which is especially needful amid the duties and trials of the gospel ministry. It is not, we are persuaded, without a solemn and enlightened view of the magnitude of the undertaking, and of the awful responsibility attending it, that you enter upon this charge. When it is considered, that a faithful minister is "a savor of life unto life," or of "death unto death," to every soul among his people, capable of receiving and rejecting the truth, we may well exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

But it is a great and good work; and if attended with much labor and trial, it is also attended with rewards and consolations.

Go forward, then, dear brother, relying on the allsufficient grace of Christ, and encouraged by the cheering promise, "Lo, I am with you alway." May you be favored with a long and successful ministry, and when called from your honorable station in the church below, may you rise, with all who shall believe through your word, and occupy a distinguished place in the kingdom of glory.

*Brethren of this Church and Parish,*

WE sincerely congratulate you, on seeing the man of your choice installed as your associate pastor and teacher. We feel a lively pleasure in beholding the uncommon unanimity, which has attended your doings relative to this momentous concern. Instead of being left without a pastor, the Lord has given you two of his servants, whose praise is in the churches, who will feed you with wisdom and understanding. Though we regard

them as ascension gifts, yet remember they are but men, and, like all other men, encompassed with infirmities. As they will need, so let them have, your warmest friendship, your kindest attention, your unceasing prayers. Give earnest heed to their ministrations, "for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." To you the auspicious events of this day are fraught with consequences, great as the worth of your souls,—vast as eternity.

Dear Brethren, Stand fast in the liberty, which ye have in Christ. Hold fast the form of sound words, which ye have received, and let nothing shake your steadfastness. Esteem your pastors very highly in love for their work's sake. If you receive the gospel from their lips, and obey it from your heart, the mutual affection between you and them will be much increased in this world, and they will be your rejoicing, as you also will be theirs, in the day of the Lord.