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MENNONITES
SEMINARY

Delivered November 23, 1794

A
DISCOURSE,



DELIVERED NOV. 23, 1794

THE FIRST SABBATH AFTER HIS

ORDINATION

BY DANIEL DANA, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN

NEWBURYPORT.

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PUBLISHED BY DESIRE.
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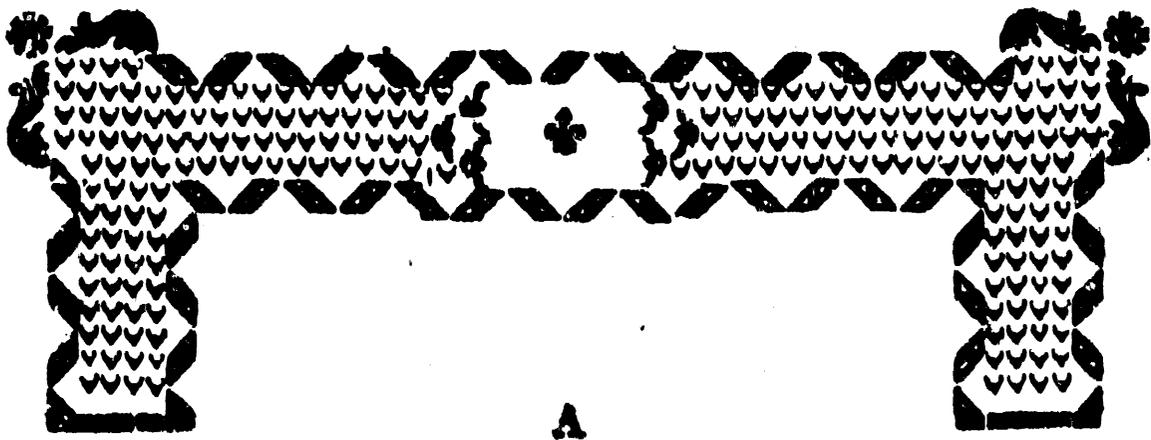
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[1794]

P R E F A C E.

T H E author of the following Discourse is not unconscious, that it is far from possessing that which, either from its novelty or excellence, gives it a claim to publication. Nor is it without some peculiar reluctance, that he has consented to commit to the press, the production of so early a period of his life. But the favourable reception which it met from a respectable number of its bearers, the repeated request of many, whose request had scarcely less than the force of a command, and the advice of some, to whose opinion he thought it incumbent to submit his own, have, on the whole, prevailed. He frankly confesses, too, that the considerations just suggested, together with the solemn and affecting nature of the occasion on which the discourse was delivered, have induced a feeble hope, that it may tend to produce and cherish serious impressions in the minds of its readers, especially of those to whom it is more immediately addressed; and thus to promote that cause, the promotion of which he feels ought ever to be the supreme object of his pursuit, and to supersede every inferior consideration. Such as it is, he submits it to the candid perusal of those into whose hands

bands it may come. With affectionate respect, he would particularly commend it to the kind and solemn reception of the people, among whom Providence has fixed the scene of his ministerial labours. It is his humble hope, that, while it brings to their view the difficult and trying nature, the serious and eternal consequences of the work in which he is engaged among them, it may contribute to call up their awakened attention to that which is the great object of his ministry: and, at the same time, prove a constant remembrancer of the necessity in which he stands, of their candor, their friendly countenance and support, their co-operating efforts and prayers. If, attended by the Divine blessing, it shall be made effectual to excite and fix such impressions upon their minds, he will think himself highly favoured. And, encouraged by so promising a circumstance, he will look forward, with animated hope, to the accomplishment of the first wish of his heart; the wish to be the instrument of promoting their best happiness.

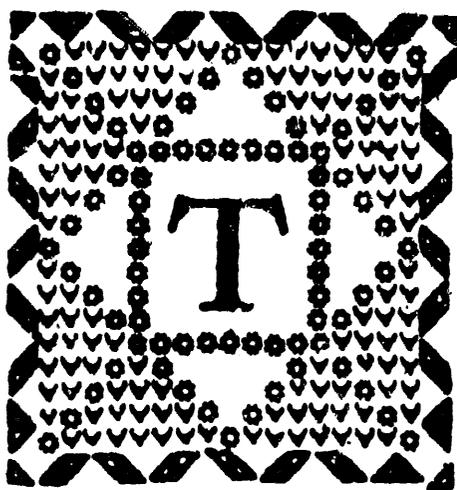


S E R M O N.

2d. CORINTHIANS, II.

LAST CLAUSE OF VERSE 16.

WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?



THIS is evidently the effusion of a mind, having in its immediate prospect, some vast and mighty object; "tremblingly alive" to its difficulty, solemnity and moment; deeply impressed with a sense of its own weakness and frailty, and ready to sink under the overwhelming weight of so complicated a burden. And yet the person who makes the exclamation is no other than the great apostle of the Gentiles; one who is justly reckoned the chief of all the apostles; endued by the God of nature,

nature, with uncommon mental powers and capacities; favoured in the course of Divine Providence, with singular advantages of education, and furnished by the Spirit of all grace, with a rich variety both of gifts and graces. Thus privileged, and thus endowed, he was still unable to contemplate his office as a preacher of the gospel, but with the deepest solemnity of spirit. *We are unto God, says this holy man, a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life:—and who (he adds——who) is sufficient for these things?———*What a sacred fear and trembling is here discovered! What a lively and tender sensibility to the honor of his Divine Master, and the interests of the souls of men! what a remarkable degree of genuine, unaffected modesty, self-diffidence, and, I might even say, self-despair, does the apostle, in this passage, exhibit to our view! How excellent the spirit and temper which he exercises, when contemplating an object of such real and supreme magnitude and moment! How exemplary! how instructive to all who are in situations which bear any affinity or similarity to his own! And may we not further remark, how much *more* necessary

necessary and indispensable is this awakened and solemnized state of mind ; how much more befitting are these self-diffident ideas and emotions, to such as, though called to similar duties, are yet qualified for their discharge, but in a degree vastly inferior ! —to such as are furnished with none of the *extraordinary*, and with but a small measure of the *ordinary* endowments and qualifications which the apostle possessed !

My honored Fathers and Brethren ! May I be permitted, on this occasion, to call your attention to a subject which is deeply, which is everlastingly momentous and interesting to us all.—The late solemnities of ordination—the transactions of that memorable day which has completed a connexion between us, such as is most intimate and important ; the weighty and awful charge, which, in your presence, has been committed to me ; these things, no doubt, are yet fresh in all our memories : nor is their impression, it is to be hoped, yet effaced from our hearts. On the present occasion, we seem spontaneously, as it were, to revert back to them anew. Let me be indulged, then, to embrace this early opportunity of endeavouring to excite and fix in your minds and my own, some proper sentiments and af-

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fections, in regard to so serious and momentous a subject. And permit me to hope for your attention and your candour, while, with this object in view, I proceed to illustrate, so far as in my power, the reason which every minister of the gospel has to adopt, in regard to the duties to which he is called, the pathetic exclamation of the apostle: *Who is sufficient for these things!*—This I shall endeavour to do, by bringing into view, some of the principal labors and difficulties, some of the peculiar trials and afflictions attendant on the ministerial office; together with the solemn consequences depending on the manner in which this office is discharged: by bringing into view, likewise, the weakness, frailty, and corruption inseparable from human nature, from which, therefore, the ministerial character affords no exemption.

To begin, then, with the *labours and difficulties* with which the ministerial office is attended; these, if we give the subject a careful consideration, cannot certainly appear otherwise than as numerous and important. In the first place, how arduous is the task of investigating truth, and acquiring such a fund of knowledge as is necessary, in order to the faithful and useful discharge of the duty of a religious

gious instructor ! And this more especially, in those spheres which require a constant attention to duties of a more active nature ; and to which, avocations of various kinds are continually incident. He who would approve himself *a good steward of the mysteries of God*, must not himself be unacquainted with these mysteries. He who would *bring out of his treasure things new and old*, must be at no small pains to collect this treasure from various and scattered sources. He who would *shew himself a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*, must bestow constant and unwearied application in examining, comparing and distinguishing the various declarations of the inspired pages. He who would make himself acquainted with the whole circle of theological knowledge, he who would become *mighty in the scriptures*, (and these are the indispensable duties of every religious teacher) must become so at the expense of much time and study. The science of divinity is not only, above all other sciences, important ; but it is likewise deep, mysterious, complicated ; consisting of a large number of parts, each one of which opens a boundless field for thought and investigation. The sacred scriptures, too, the inexhaustible source, the infallible standard
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of all theological truth, though in many respects, plain and intelligible, in an uncommon degree, are yet, in many others, not a little abstruse, and difficult of comprehension. The languages in which they were written, are now either entirely dead, or else greatly corrupted and transmuted ; so that it is, in many instances, a matter of no small difficulty to ascertain the exact meaning of the terms in which they are conceived. Those parts of them, which are, strictly speaking, mysterious, we can never, with all our pains and endeavours, fully comprehend : and yet their dignity and practical importance are such as authoritatively to challenge our humble, prayerful, and laborious attention. The instructions which these divine oracles contain, it is true, are generally conveyed in a style and manner which are simple, and adapted to almost every capacity. Yet even here, it is to be remarked that these instructions are usually delivered to us with very little regard to any particular order or method. They are scattered throughout, with a rich, a magnificent, a divine profusion. And it requires the most attentive and laborious application, in order to collect and arrange them into one regular and connected system of religious truth, such as shall be intelligible to men in
 general

general ; and particularly, to such as want either leisure, abilities or inclination, to enter deeply into these things themselves.

HENCE we are naturally led to remark, that it is the preacher's duty, not only to collect and methodize religious truth, but likewise to communicate it to others. And here it is obvious, that a new and important class of labours and difficulties must meet him. So various are the educations and characters, so endlessly diversified are the tastes and prejudices of his hearers, that it must be extremely difficult to select such subjects of discourse, and to adopt such a mode of handling them, as shall be equally agreeable and instructive to them all.—It is true, that simply to please men, simply to gain the applause of the world, is an object much beneath the dignity of the ministerial character ; I might have said, beneath the dignity of a rational being. And much to be pitied is that man ; *more* to be pitied is that minister, who can content himself with making this his *final* object : whose ambition and whose taste fall thus miserably short of true glory and true happiness.—But to please mankind in order to be under the best advantages to do them good ; to seek their approbation and their confidence ; not by the guilty sacrifice

fice of truth—not by cruelly withholding from them any thing necessary to their salvation and their best improvement ; but in consistence with perfect openness and inflexibility in respect to essential points, and with the express view to promote more effectually their truest, their everlasting interests ; *this* surely is an object very different. Such a conduct, dictated by such sentiments, is truly benevolent and noble : truly worthy the friend of human kind, and the ambassador of heaven. It is even a duty sacredly incumbent on every minister of the gospel, scrupulously to avoid, in every part of his conduct, and especially in the performances of the desk, the giving of unnecessary offence to any one. It is his indispensable duty, so far as in him lies, to please all men for their edification. Yet, to accomplish this object completely, must be a task arduous and difficult in the extreme. Nay, its complete accomplishment must be a thing wholly impossible. For it is evident, from the very nature of the case, that the same subjects, and the same manner of treating them, with which some will be pleased and edified, will be un-instructive and displeasing to others. Some have a set of peculiarly favorite topics, to which they would have the preacher entirely confine himself : and

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much too apt are they to be impatient and displeas-
 ed with him, if unrestrained by the limits of their
 particular reading or contemplation, he endeavour
 to introduce his hearers to the whole generous cir-
 cle of scripture-truths and representations. Others
 will hardly content themselves that he should deli-
 berately investigate and discuss any particular sub-
 ject at all: and are satisfied with almost nothing be-
 side mere general declamation, and warm addresses
 to the passions. Some would have the preacher con-
 fine his attention to explain and inculcate the duties
 of morality; and this without any particular regard
 to those obligations, encouragements and assistances
 to their performance, which are derived from the
 gospel alone. Others are but too apt to brand with the
 odious epithet of *legal preaching*, every exhortation
 to the diligent discharge of the duties of piety and
 virtue. Some think it the preacher's business to be
 continually descanting on the privileges of the god-
 ly: and others seem to think that his duty consists
 principally, if not entirely, in prying into the *mys-*
teries of religion; and discoursing on the most tre-
 mendous and incomprehensible things of the gospel,
 in much the same style in which he would handle the
 plainest and most familiar subject. Some think
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him flagrantly deficient if he is not incessantly thundering out the terrors of the law, and denouncing, in the harshest manner, the wrath and vengeance of heaven against the impenitent: while others, who no less mistake, would exclude from the pulpit, every thing terrible or alarming; and would have the preacher content himself with calling men to accept the salvation of the gospel, without holding up to view those strict precepts and awful sanctions of the law, which alone can effectually convince them that they need such a salvation.—There are some so excessively critical and exact in regard to the manner in which subjects are handled, that they will not allow the preacher the smallest digression from the point under immediate consideration, however pertinent or profitable such digression may be. Others are no less discontented, if he is not continually bringing together subjects which have no kind of connexion with each other; or perhaps, if he does not include within the compass of a single discourse, something upon every part of the extensive system of divinity. Some wish for nothing in a sermon, but cold speculation, and abstract metaphysical reasoning; or at best, nothing but clear unanswerable demonstration from scripture; discarding all plain, pungent, impassioned

passioned addresses to the consciences and affections of the hearers. While some stigmatize the preacher as languid and lifeless, if, instead of devoting his whole attention to excite the passions, he employ a part of his discourse in endeavouring to enlighten the understandings, and convince the judgments, of his audience. Some are pleased only with a low and grovelling style ; while others can be satisfied with such a one only, as is refined and elegant ; and are unreasonably severe on the preacher, if, for the sake of accommodating himself to the capacities of all, he neglect the studied ornaments of speech, or depart, in any instance, from the dialect of the learned. Some are continually wishing for *novelty* in the manner and sentiments of the preacher : while others think that every deviation from the divines of former days, whether in sentiment or expression, is, of course, a deviation from the standard of right, and an instance of degeneracy. Some are immoderately attached to particular sets of phrases, which, though of mere human invention, they consider as the only dress in which truth can possibly make its appearance : while others are no less disgusted at the bare mention of them. Some think that no doctrine can be properly and thoroughly discussed and

established, unless the preacher introduce into his discourse the most severe reflections upon all who do not view it precisely in the same light with himself. While others, indifferent whether truths of the greatest importance be maintained or given up, be believed or denied, would dignify this guilty indifference with the names of candour and liberality.— Some think it enough that the preacher recommend piety and virtue in general terms; and in general terms, represent the guilt and danger of unbelief and impenitence; without any close application to particular classes of hearers: while others profess to consider it as a great point that the preacher be faithful in pointing out and reproofing particular characters and vices. And yet, these same persons are often found, as soon as they perceive *themselves* involved in such description and reproof, to be the first to complain. Some are very apt to hear continually for others; and to others to make the application: while many are but too much inclined, from an immoderate suspiciousness of temper, to apply what is said to themselves, when themselves were not intended. And how truly delicate and arduous the task, to administer both reproof and consolation in such a way, as that they shall neither be appropriated

ted by those to whom they are not due ; nor evaded by those to whom they really belong !

You perceive, my Brethren and Fathers, that I speak my thoughts on this subject with perfect plainness and freedom. And may I not be indulged, speaking (as in this sacred desk, I would ever wish to do) without any personal applications, to use such a plainness and freedom? Nay, does not *faithfulness* to you, and to myself, *require* it of me?—— I must be singularly insensible indeed, could I, on this solemn and affecting occasion, persuade myself to say any thing which should give *unnecessary* pain to any one in this assembly. No, my Brethren and Fathers:——far different is my object. It is to impress your hearts and my own, with some lively sense of the labours and difficulties which are before me; and to engage your kind and consoling sympathy with me, in the almost desponding emotions which they occasion. To this end, I have brought into view a set of mistakes, prejudices and unreasonable expectations, such as are by no means exclusively appropriate to any particular persons or societies; but such as are, in some measure, the common lot of humanity; such as result from the common weakness and depravity of our nature. Happy indeed,

deed, is that man, who is entirely free from any thing of this kind. Singularly favored is that society, in which many are not to be found, who are thus chargeable.

BUT even though the peculiar difficulties mentioned, did not exist, it must still be acknowledged no easy task to give an impartial and faithful declaration of the whole system of gospel truth. And by way of counterpart to the observations just made, it might properly be remarked, that the preacher himself is continually liable to be misled by some wrong bias, derived either from his natural constitution, the habits he may have acquired, the connexions he may have formed, or the books he may have read. All these may, in their turn, impart an influence not a little unfavorable to that simple, thorough, undisguised, undistorted representation of the truth, which ought ever to be aimed at: an influence which, with all the aid afforded by sacred scripture, it requires no inconsiderable efforts, to combat with success: an influence from which some of the greatest and best of men have not entirely extricated themselves.

SHALL I go on to say, how arduous is the task devolved on the minister of the gospel, of leading

in the exercises of public, solemn prayer and praise! To approach the throne of **T H E H I G H A N D L O F T Y O N E**, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is **H O L Y**, who will be sanctified in all who approach Him: to lift up to **G O D** the hearts of his people: to spread before his throne, their sins and sorrows, their humiliations and desires, their intercessions and thanksgivings: to do this with suitable solemnity and fervor of spirit; how difficult, how mighty the task! Alas! *Who is sufficient for these things?*

Thus having considered the labours and difficulties which attend the minister of the gospel, in the study and in the pulpit, let us briefly consider those which surround him in some other walks of life. It is doubtless his duty to be much among his people, to endeavour, in all prudent ways, to make himself acquainted with their spiritual state, and to promote, by all means within his power, their spiritual welfare and happiness. It is his duty to administer instruction and advice, consolation and reproof, with all diligence, tenderness and fidelity, according to his own abilities, and in proportion to the capacity, the necessities and the probable advantage of others. It is particularly his duty to visit the sick and dying ;
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to pray with them; to teach, admonish, warn and comfort them, as their various cases and characters may require. And how arduous this employment! What a combination of qualities is necessary to constitute a preparation for it! What a thorough acquaintance with scripture, and with the various avenues and windings of the human heart! What mingled fortitude and sympathy, fidelity and tenderness! In fine, it is his duty to set before his people such an *example* as shall add force and weight to his instructions, exhortations and warnings; and such as they all may imitate with safety and advantage. Does there not appear in all this, new and abundant reason to exclaim, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

THE *trials* and *afflictions* which attend the ministerial office, arise from a variety of sources; and are, in themselves, numerous and complicated. In the first place, if the minister have a heart of sensibility, he cannot be an unconcerned spectator of those scenes of affliction and distress among his people, which his duty will frequently call him to witness. He cannot but *weep with those who weep*. He cannot but take a sympathetic part in the sorrows of those with whom he is connected by such strong and tender ties. And if their afflictions, dispensed by the
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hand of Divine Providence, affect him thus painfully, how much more pungent, how penetrating to the very inmost soul, must be the distress arising from the reflection—which it is scarcely possible, in the ordinary course of things, he will not have frequent occasion to make ;—that his labours have no blessing attending them ; that all his instructions, entreaties, expostulations and warnings are by multitudes despised and disregarded ! What horror is in that complaint of the Prophet : *I have laboured in vain : I have spent my strength for nought.**——

To be a *favour of death unto death*, to a single soul ; to see those who are made capable of immortal happiness ; those who are bound to our hearts by many a tender tie, refusing the great salvation, obstinately walking the broad road to destruction, and desperately plunging into the abyss of everlasting despair !—Oh, how heart-rending, how insupportable the idea !—Let us turn our eyes from the gloomy spectacle.

THE faithful minister must expect to meet with unkindness and opposition from a variety of quarters. There are many parts of his duty, some of which

* ISAII. xlix. 4.

which are likewise among the most important and indispensable, which are in direct opposition to the corruptions of human nature, and which therefore may be naturally expected to provoke the exercise of these corruptions against himself. Such, for instance, is the duty of *reproof*. The faithful and thorough performance of it, will but too often be followed by the resentment, sometimes bitter and implacable, of him who is its object. Nor can the purest motives and most inoffensive manner always shield one from these consequences. In such a case, conscious integrity it is true, affords an asylum.— Yet how cruel, how mortifying to the man of real benevolence, must be a disappointment of this kind! And can it be, to the feeling mind, an inconsiderable affliction, to be subjected to the lasting ill-will of another, merely for having wished and sought his best welfare? to be accounted his enemy, for no other reason than the having exercised toward him the most painful and self-denying office of undissembled friendship?

As the station of ministers is conspicuous, and the part which they act, important, it is not strange, that the adversary of all good is found to make them, in some peculiar degree, the objects of his malignant

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nant attempts : nor that all the enemies of truth are arranged in opposition to them. Thus multitudes will be continually found to *watch for their halting* ; to exercise themselves with unwearied assiduity in tempting and provoking them to sin ; to observe, detect, magnify and spread, with a malignant pleasure, their real faults ; and too often to misrepresent and traduce them, when they are innocent. How great and severe the trial, thus to be made continually the mark of opposition for the wicked and abandoned ! thus to be made a gazing-stock, a reproach to an unfeeling and corrupt world !

BUT even this is tolerable—it is *inconsiderable*, when compared with the opposition which the ministers of the gospel may sometimes meet with, even from christians themselves. To be regarded with coldness, reserve and suspicion, by those whose approbation one would ever wish to gain ; to be considered as an enemy, by those with whom one would ever wish to unite : to have one's well-meant efforts in the cause of truth opposed and counteracted by those from whom one naturally wishes and expects a cordial countenance and support : How truly afflictive and discouraging is this ! What a chilling damp does it give to all ardor and animation !

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Yet, so various are the prejudices, and such is the diversity of habits, tastes and conceptions, which, in the present imperfect state, may prevail, even among those who are not without a sincere love to the truth, and who would, on no account, wilfully oppose it, that this may sometimes be the case.

THE *solemn and momentous consequences* depending on the manner in which the ministerial office is discharged, now claim, for a moment, our attention. And who but must see that they are solemn and momentous indeed? To the minister of the gospel is, in some sense, entrusted the cause of God, and of the blessed Redeemer. On his fidelity depends the salvation of his own soul, and that of the souls of multitudes of rational and immortal beings beside. And can it be a small thing, can it be otherwise than infinitely momentous, to be a *steward of the mysteries, and the manifold grace of God*; to be employed in transactions in which his declarative glory, the great end of our being, the highest object which a creature can possibly aim at; nay, the object which God himself is constantly aiming at, in all his works, is so intimately concerned? Must not the consequences be infinitely solemn, of the manner in which he discharges his part, who is called to be an
ambassador

ambassador of the Prince of Peace, to deliver his messages to mankind, to preach his blessed gospel; a gospel in the success of which is involved the fruit and reward of his amazing humiliation, his unexampled sufferings, his cruel and accursed death; a gospel with whose unimpeded progress and general reception, is intimately connected the honor of the Friend, the Benefactor, the Redeemer, the Saviour of lost mankind? And who, that has any lively idea of the momentous concerns of eternity, but must shudder at the thought of rendering this eternity miserable, by the neglect of incumbent duty! What minister of the gospel, who considers, on the one hand, the singularly illustrious reward promised to the faithful discharge of the part assigned him, and, on the other, the peculiarly solemn account which he must give up to his great Judge, and the aggravated punishment which awaits him, if found unfaithful, but must feel his whole heart deeply solemnized and affected by the vast idea!—How tremendously weighty the charge of souls! To be the instrument of winning them to Christ, the great Shepherd, Bishop and Saviour of souls, how supremely desirable! To be the occasion (even the *innocent* occasion) of plunging them deep-

er into everlasting woe ; how solemn, how insupportable ! This, this it was, which made the apostle tremble at himself and his undertaking. *We are unto God, he says, a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savour of death unto death ; and to the other, the savour of life unto life.* Full well, then, might he exclaim, (and where is the person so stupid as not to feel the propriety of the exclamation !) *Who is sufficient for these things ?*

THAT we may, however, complete the evidence in favour of the reason and propriety of such an exclamation, as it respects every minister of the gospel, let us glance, a moment, as was proposed, at the weakness, the frailty and corruption of which all such are the subjects. It is quite unnecessary, I am sensible, to enter into any formal proof of this matter. It is but too obvious to the observation of men in general, that the ministers of the gospel can plead no exemption from the common frailties and corruptions of human nature. If they were only the subjects of those *innocent* infirmities which are the common lot of humanity, even *this* would much tend to illustrate the point under consideration. If they had nothing to complain of, but their poor
frail

frail bodies, incapable of any great and long-continued exertions ; continually requiring intervals of relaxation and repose ; continually claiming the attentions, enfeebling the energies, and confining the operations of their minds ; subject likewise, not only to the certain decays of time, but to innumerable accidental disorders, debilities and pains ; even hence would result ample reason to acknowledge their insufficiency for the discharge of the trust committed to them. But what additional force does the argument receive from the consideration, that they are partakers of the same moral depravity ; that they are subject to the same *sinful* infirmities as others ! It is to be hoped, indeed, that they have received some beginnings of renovation : it is to be hoped that they are not destitute of a principle of grace, and of genuine love to the Master whom they serve, as well as to the work which they have undertaken. Still they have, at best, many remainders of native depravity ; still they have much of in-dwelling sin to struggle with : and these things oppose powerful and almost insurmountable obstacles to the due performance of the part assigned them. In addition to all his external embarrassments ; in addition to the multiplied difficulties and afflictions from without, which

which attend on his office, the minister of the gospel has *within* him, many important obstructions to the faithful and successful discharge of his duty.— He has a heart naturally cold, hard and unaffected with divine things :—and if, at some times, powerfully impressed with their beauty, excellence and importance, yet too apt, alas ! soon to lose the blest impression. In common with others, he is, as it were, *constitutionally* disinclined to labour, and soon tired of that close application which his duty indispensably requires. The numerous self-denials likewise, which meet him in the discharge of almost every part of his office, are naturally very unpleasant. And in every part will he find such constant temptations to unfaithfulness, as, left to himself and to his own heart, he will be wholly unable to resist.— These things, joined with those innocent infirmities before referred to ; with the natural reluctance of the human mind, at whatever is difficult or distressful, with its natural aptitude to shrink back from whatever is peculiarly solemn and awful, afford a strong illustration of the point which we are considering. And surely, from all which has been suggested on this subject, there results the fullest proof of the reason and propriety with which every minister

ister of the gospel may adopt, in the reference to the duties of that office to which he is called, the pathetic and self-diffident exclamation which we have in the text.

THE subject, my honored hearers, which we have now been considering, is evidently a subject pregnant with instruction and excitement to us all. I desire to preach it not to you only, but to myself; and would endeavour to get my own heart deeply affected with the solemn things which it brings to view. If the great apostle of the Gentiles, so far superior, not only to the generality of the ordinary ministers of the gospel, but to the generality of the apostles themselves, felt himself so deeply solemnized, as by the text he appears, with a sense of the awful charge which lay upon him, as a preacher of the gospel; much more ought one, who can lay claim to none of his peculiar endowments; who has reason to rank himself in a lower class of the *ordinary* preachers of the gospel, to be thus solemnized. Much greater reason has he, when entering on an employment the most serious and momentous on this side eternity; an employment, the duties of which he is totally incompetent, in himself, to discharge, to enter upon it with the utmost self-diffidence; and to breathe

breathe out the humble exclamation: *Who is sufficient for these things !*

THE work is indeed arduous beyond comparison, beyond expression. And if it were to be performed in one's own strength, Who, alas ! would ever undertake it ? What man, nay, what angel would feel himself competent to so mighty a work ? But blessed be God ! we are none of us called to this. The Master whom we serve, will, if we engage in the service from sincere love to him, and firm attachment to his cause, himself furnish us with every thing which we need for the faithful and successful discharge of it. He will impart to us strength and ability for every duty : he will ever attend us with his gracious guidance and blessing. His promise is firm and unalterable, that he will be ever with his faithful servants, *even to the end of the world.* To every one of such a character, this is ^{his} affectionate and animating language : *My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*† And how graciously multiplied and varied are the promises of Divine Support and assistance, to every trembling soul which feels it can have no sufficient ground of reliance, but the Divine mercy ! How cheering
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† 2 COR. xii. 9.

are those expressions recorded in Isaiah ! and with what new vigour and courage do they tend to animate the soul ! *Fear not thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel : I will help thee saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness. †* How inspiring that encouragement, and that undaunted, invincible resolution, expressed in another passage of the same evangelical Prophet ! *For the Lord God will help me : Therefore shall I not be confounded : therefore have I set my face like a flint : and I know that I shall not be ashamed. ||* Here then, may it be my object, and my happy attainment, to place a simple and unfeigned reliance.

At the same time, the subject instructs me with what scrupulous caution, with what sacred fear and trembling, it is my duty to commence, and with what care and diligence to prosecute, the all-important duties which have lately been devolved upon me. To this fear and trembling, to this care and

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† ISA. xli. 14. 10.

|| ISA. l, 7.

diligence, the laborious and difficult nature of the work, the trials and afflictions which attend it, the solemn and eternal consequences depending on the manner in which it is performed, the inestimable worth of immortal souls, the possibility and the danger of their being lost by my neglect, and finally, my own numerous infirmities and corruptions, bind me by the strongest obligations. May such salutary and important lessons as these, never be erased from my mind.

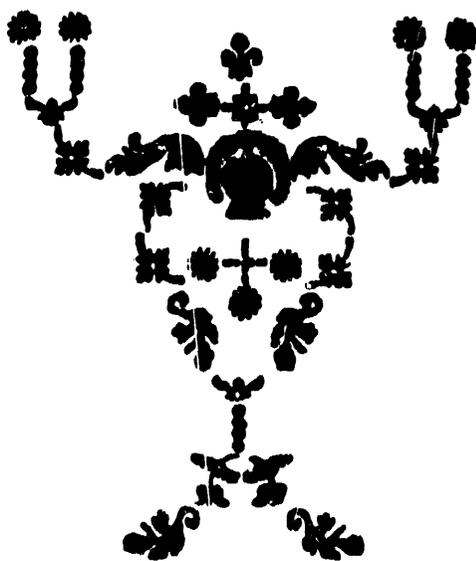
And since so arduous are the duties, and so peculiar the trials which fall to my lot, in consequence of the late connexion instituted between us ; since the final issue of this connexion will be so supremely important, both to you and myself ; and since, at the same time, such is my insufficiency for the due discharge of its duties, may I not hope, my honored Fathers and Brethren, for the extension of your candor and forbearance, your compassion and sympathy toward me ? May I not hope, that you will be ready to cast the mantle of your charity over my infirmities and failings, and to lend me, in the prosecution of the duties of my place, your cordial countenance and assistance. While, with a trem-
bling

bling heart, I look forward to the labours, difficulties and trials which are before me; while a sense of my own weakness and insufficiency, is ready to distract and overwhelm my mind; where shall I find relief and repose, if not in the confidence of being indulged with your candour and friendship, your compassionate and tender sympathy: and that you will kindly assist me, so far as in your power, in bearing a burden almost insupportable? And may I not be permitted particularly and earnestly to request of you, my honored Christian Friends, that in those consecrated moments, in which you are privileged to approach the throne of grace, and pour out before God, the aspirations of your hearts, your feeble, trembling servant in the gospel may not be forgotten: that he may be remembered by you with an ardor proportionate to the importance of the duties devolved on him, and his own insufficiency for their discharge? Will you not, with all the sacred importunity of prayer, intreat that the blessing of heaven may descend and rest on him: and that his feeble efforts may, by a divine energy, be rendered effectual to the everlasting benefit of yourselves, your dear children and families?—

milies?—At the same time, it will naturally occur to every reflecting mind, that if to *preach* the gospel be a momentous and solemn thing, it is, from the very nature of the case, a thing hardly less solemn and momentous to *hear* it. It proves *a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death*. Awful alternative! May the tremendous idea make a deep impression upon all our hearts! May our whole souls be alive and engaged in the interesting things which are before us! May we not cease unitedly to besiege the throne of grace with ardent and importunate supplication for the bestowment of that best of blessings, the Holy Spirit, in his convincing, converting, sanctifying and comforting influences! And may God be pleased, in infinite mercy, to grant that the genuine spirit and temper of his blessed gospel, so *pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits*, may pervade and harmonize all our breasts! And may he be graciously pleased to say of his Church here, what he said of his Church of old: *This is my rest forever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.*

FINALLY,

FINALLY, may we all be so favored as to walk together the toilsome journey of this transitory life, *in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost.* May we all, through Divine Mercy aiding our progress and smoothing our way, arrive at last, at that holy, blissful state, where *the Lord shall be our everlasting light and strength, and our God our glory:—*where, free from the distracting sense of frailty and of sin, we may employ every active energy of our souls in celebrating the praises of sovereign, all-conquering, triumphant grace ; and where from countless myriads of glowing hearts, and enraptured, harmonious voices, shall arise the ceaseless tribute of *blessing and honor and glory and power, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. AMEN.*





MR. DANA'S REPLY

TO THE

RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH'S CALL :

Omitted, through mistake, in the publication of the ORDINATION SERMON, and inserted here, by particular request.

MY FATHERS AND BRETHREN OF THIS CHURCH,

AS you have now publicly and solemnly renewed your request for my settlement among you, in the important work of the Gospel-ministry, I do now, in the same public and solemn manner, renewedly signify my compliance with your Invitation, and my readiness to consecrate myself to your service in the gospel of Christ : conscious of the arduous nature of the work which is before me, and my own insufficiency for it : at the same time, humbly apprehending myself called in duty to undertake it ; and hoping that, by the all-sufficient grace of Christ, I may be enabled faithfully to testify his blessed gospel, to fulfil the ministry to be committed to me, and finish my course with joy.

MY

MY FATHERS AND BRETHREN
OF THIS CHURCH AND SOCIETY,

THE transaction on which we are entering, is deeply solemn and important. It is pregnant with consequences of everlasting magnitude and moment to us all. May we all be impressed with a realizing sense of its awful importance and solemnity! May our hearts be united, and that more and more, in seeking the promotion of Christian truth, holiness and love! May our prayers ascend in union to the throne of grace, for the Divine presence, guidance, and benediction! And may the God of all mercy grant that the connection which we now contemplate, may be the happy source and occasion of our mutual benefit and comfort here, and mutual, everlasting felicitation and rejoicing, in the world of immortal glory!