

S E R M O N

DELIVERED

AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. JACOB WEED EASTMAN,

TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE

FIRST CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

IN METHUEN,

DEC. 13, 1815.

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BY DANIEL DANA, D. D.

Pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Newburyport.

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NEWBURYPORT:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM B. ALLEN & CO.

NO. 13, CORNHILL.

1815.

SERMON.

PHILIPPIANS 1. 17.

————— *Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.*

ST. PAUL wrote this letter to the Philippian converts, from the walls of a prison. But no prison could confine the energies of his mind, or repress his zeal in his Master's cause. Nor did he regret the severest personal sufferings, by which Christ was honored, and the progress of his gospel promoted. Such, he assures his Philippian brethren, was the effect of his imprisonment. It had spread the knowledge of the gospel through the city of Rome, and even into the palace of the Emperor. In addition, the Apostle's constancy and courage, amidst his afflictions, had animated many others to come forth, and boldly declare the word of God. Some, indeed, preached Christ from a spirit of envy and opposition. But others engaged in the good work, from a sincere love to the Redeemer, and his suffering Apostle—"knowing," says he, "that I am set for the defence of the gospel."

In these comprehensive expressions, St. Paul announces the important and honorable character with which he had himself been invested by the great Head of the church. At the same time, he places before us the precise office and duty of every minister of Christ, in every age.

The subject, considered in this light, bears an obvious affinity to the great occasion on which we have assembled this day. In discussing it, I shall attempt a brief statement,

- I. Of what is implied in defending the gospel.
- II. Of some leading qualifications necessary for him who is set for the defence of the gospel.

The gospel is a revelation of divine mercy to man, considered as fallen from God, depraved, guilty and wretched. It announces a scheme of recovery from this deplorable state, through the incarnation, obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God ; and by the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. It freely offers this great salvation to all to whom it comes ; and it infallibly secures its everlasting blessings to all who repent, and believe in the Savior. This is the gospel which the scriptures reveal, which every Christian believes, and which every minister is called to defend.

This gospel militates with none of the great principles of natural religion. It neither subverts nor impairs its obligations. On the contrary, it uniformly recognises and confirms them. But it presents a system of doctrines and duties, perfectly distinct from every thing which the light of nature discovers, or which our feeble faculties could have explored. These are the topics which demand the principal attention of the Christian preacher. Occasionally, he may discuss and vindicate the truths of natural religion. He may display the being and perfections of God, the obligations of man, the dignity and advantages of virtue. These instructions have their use ; and did he address an assembly of *innocent* beings, here he might stop. But he speaks to sinners. He addresses those who have lost their virtue, and the favor of their God ; and who need correspondent instruction.

Let it then be distinctly remarked, that it is the *gospel*, as distinguished from the religion of nature ; the *gospel*, in its peculiar and characteristic doctrines, duties and motives ; the *gospel*, as a *religion for sinners*, which it is the great duty of the Christian minister to defend. In no other way, can he be faithful to his Master, or fulfil his high commission. In no other way, can he hope to impart essential and saving benefit to the souls of men.

Nor is he less obligated to defend and inculcate the

whole gospel. Difficult and selfdenying as is the task, it must be performed. Plausible and various as are the temptations to an opposite course, they must be resisted. It is the grand design of the gospel at large, to humble human pride, and counteract the strong corruptions of our fallen nature. Some of its doctrines are more directly and visibly levelled at the depraved inclinations of men. These doctrines, we may be tempted by a love of popularity and ease, and sometimes, possibly, by a better feeling, to pass in silence; at least, to soften and qualify in the representation.—But this would be treachery to Christ, and cruelty to the souls of men. We must declare these offensive, but necessary and wholesome truths—plainly and faithfully declare them—whatever it may cost our own feelings, or those of others.

Various doctrines of the gospel have been drawn into debate; and by many, positively denied. These points, it has been sometimes thought, the preacher should seldom or never introduce. But where is the authority for this strange opinion? And whither will it conduct the minister who embraces it? “Shew me,” says a sensible writer,* “the question in religion, or even in common morals, about which learned men have not disagreed. Nay, shew me a single text of scripture, though ever so plain and precise, which the perverseness or ingenuity of interpreters has not drawn into different, and even contrary meanings.” Worthless and insipid indeed must be that discourse which contains no truths that have not been disputed. It may escape censure. But it will interest none. It will profit none. It will neither instruct the ignorant, nor alarm the careless, nor comfort the pious.

Christianity has likewise its *mysteries*. But they are mysteries of grace, of astonishing benevolence, and unfathomable wisdom. They are mysteries into which angels desire to look, and which intimately concern

* Bishop Hurd.

all human beings. They constitute at once the distinguishing glory of the gospel, and the broad, immovable foundation of human hope. Nor are their *moral tendencies* and *effects* unimportant. While they humble us in our own eyes, they impart sublimer views of the love of God, and the Redeemer to our lost world. They enhance our sense of the importance and value of the gospel salvation. They furnish inexhaustible matter for our contemplation and wonder ; and motives the most animating, to obedience and devotion. In fine, they raise our desires and hearts to *heaven*, that world of superior light, where the Christian will comprehend, in a degree not now to be conceived, “ what is the breadth and length and depth and height ” of redeeming love, and be “ filled with all the fulness “ of God.”—Shall these mysteries be neglected in our preaching, because some rash spirits (may Heaven in its *mysterious mercy* pardon their error !) have branded them with the charge of contradiction and absurdity ? No. God forbid that in this respect, or in any other, we should *shun to declare the whole revealed counsel of God*, or show that we are *ashamed of the gospel of Christ* !

But while we are bound to preach the gospel without mutilation, we are not less bound to preach it *without mixture*. The Bible must be at once the guide and the source of all our public instructions. With the scripture let us speak ; and with the scripture let us be silent. Of the various forms of human pride, that of being *wise above what is written*, is not the least common, nor the least dangerous. A direr pestilence has never infected the church of God, than the ambition of constructing a new system of religion, or of founding a new sect. The rage for speculation and novelty, even where it has not proceeded to such extremes, has yet produced effects the most undesirable. Men who value themselves on their powers of reasoning, are prone to attach a greater importance to their own laboriously constructed theories, than to the plain

truths of scripture. Nor is it unfrequent that these peculiarities are maintained with greater earnestness, than those cardinal doctrines of the gospel, which they hold in common with others. But this is at best a misapplication of zeal and talents. Be it ever remembered, it is not a favorite theory of our own fabrication ; nor is it the system of the most celebrated of divines, ancient or modern, that we are to defend. It is the gospel of Christ.

Here the question arises : In what method, and by what means, is the gospel to be defended?—Let me answer ;

In the first place, by a luminous and forcible statement of the *evidences of its truth and inspiration*. I have said, of its *inspiration*, as well as of its truth, because, if true, it is unquestionably inspired ; and yet some who have admitted its truth, have denied its inspiration. But in doing this, they do not merely incur the charge of inconsistency. They virtually destroy the foundations of our faith and hope. If the scriptures are not properly inspired, on what basis do we build for eternity, but the testimony, the reasonings, the conjectures, of men fallible like ourselves ? Or if a *part* of the bible only is inspired, in what endless perplexities are we involved ? Here, a suspected page is expunged by the licentious hand of criticism. There, by some daring sceptic, an obnoxious doctrine is rejected.—But I will not afflict the Christian's heart, by further tracing the horrid process. The book on which we build our immortal hopes, defies these bold attempts to undermine its credit. Upon every leaf the broad seal of Heaven is instamped. Infinite majesty, infinite purity shine in every page. Without entering minutely into the distinction of *suggestion* and *superintendency*, as referring to the penmen of the sacred volume, we affirm with confidence, that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God* ; and is therefore worthy of the unlimited confidence of man. This inspiration, and consequent infallible truth of the scripture,

it is the duty of those who are *set for the defence of the gospel*, to illustrate and confirm.

In order to this, we naturally recur to the evidence arising from *prophecy*, and its exact *accomplishment*, and from *miracles*; the former implying that the Deity has interposed by his *omniscience*, the latter, by his *omnipotence*, to confirm the truth of his word.—The *character of the penmen* of scripture must be displayed; the unequivocal evidences of candor and integrity which pervade their writings; the utter improbability that they should either be themselves deceived, or attempt to deceive the world; and the ease and certainty with which the truth would ultimately be discovered.—The faithful *preservation and conveyance* of the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, must be established; with the impossibility that the former should be corrupted by the Jews; and the still more evident impossibility that the latter should be corrupted by Christians, by reason of the variety of copies, of translations, of editions, and of sects mutually and jealously watching one another.

Most of all, must the *internal* evidence of the gospel's truth be displayed and inculcated. This is the species of evidence most adapted to every capacity. To every candid, upright mind, it is, independently of all other, convincing and conclusive. The delineation which the scripture gives of the character and perfections of God, of his law, and of the method of human recovery and salvation—the pure and sublime virtue which it inculcates, and this by the most powerful motives, and engaging examples—the enlivening promises, and glorious prospects which it presents to every true believer—the obvious tendency of the whole to exalt God, and to humble man; yet by humbling to elevate him to the nearest possible resemblance, and ultimately to the full fruition, of the immaculate and perfect Deity—in fine, the *actual effect* of this gospel, wherever it has been embraced and obeyed, to purify, reform and elevate the character of individuals, to

spread harmony and peace through communities, to strengthen the ties which bind man to man, to banish the principal evils which afflict human society, and to make nations wise, great and happy—these are so many strong and undeniable proofs that the gospel came direct from heaven, and that none but God can be its author.

Further ; the gospel is to be defended by a clear and distinct exhibition of its *doctrines*. This is an important part of the minister's duty. If, on this point, we are unfaithful, or materially defective, our labor in establishing the general truth of Christianity, is in great measure lost. Little benefit will our hearers derive from knowing that the gospel is a divine and inspired system of religion. In order to be sanctified and saved by it, they must embrace its doctrines. And these doctrines, to be embraced, must be exhibited in a distinct and lucid manner. Thus exhibited, they carry with them their own evidence. They are seen in their own unborrowed and unclouded light. Let us not then, while defending the outworks of Christianity, be chargeable with giving up the citadel. While vindicating the divinity of the gospel, let us not deny or explain away the doctrines which compose it. Let us exhibit them in their scriptural simplicity, and scriptural evidence. That minister best defends the gospel, who gives the clearest statement, and most powerful vindication, of the truths of which it consists.

In order to a complete and successful defence of the gospel, it is likewise necessary to *refute the objections* which are raised, either against the truth of the system at large, or against its particular doctrines. It has been remarked that the most effectual method to explode error, is to establish truth. The remark, though just and important, may require some limitation. There are cases in which more is necessary, than the simple exhibition of truth. When, in a religious community, the spirit of scepticism prevails ; when errors are publicly broached and maintained,

which strike at the root of scriptural truth, and of vital piety, it is time for him who is *set for the defence of the gospel*, to take the alarm. Then, faithfulness to Christ, to his sacred office, to the Church, to the souls of men, summon him to the field. Then, armed with the panoply of God, *having on the breastplate of righteousness, his loins girt about with truth, his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, taking the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*, let him go forth to the holy war. Let him faithfully, and courageously, and perseveringly oppose whatever opposes the truth of God, the purity of religion, and the salvation of men.

Finally ; one of the most effectual methods of defending the gospel, is to *adorn* it ; that is to say, by breathing its spirit, by exhibiting its fruits, and by embodying its maxims and precepts in the life and deportment. There is something in a pious example, not only engaging but commanding. It speaks eloquently and aloud, in behalf of God, of religion, of the gospel. It is wonderfully calculated to convince gainsayers, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and secure a testimony favorable to the truth, in the conscience of every human being. In this way, not only the minister, but the private Christian, even of the humblest grade in intellect or station, may contribute substantial and important defence to the gospel. “A
 “ holy life,” says one, “is a most persuasive sermon ;
 “ expressed too in a language which men of all nations
 “ equally understand. It even explains what other
 “ sermons mean, instead of needing to be explained by
 “ them.” Happy the Christian, and the Christian
 minister, who is enabled “by manifestation of the
 “ truth,” in this form, “to commend himself to every
 “ man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

Such, my hearers, are some of the principal things implied in defending the gospel. Let us now suggest

some leading *qualifications* necessary for him who is set for its defence.

It is most obvious that a prime and essential requisite for such an one, is, a *clear understanding* of the gospel he is called to defend. An *untaught teacher* is one of the grossest of solicisms. This, in all other cases, excepting religion, is generally seen and confessed. Why it should be thought by any that the office of a Christian minister demands little or no previous preparation, is truly unaccountable. How can he teach what he has never learned? How can he explain those scriptures to others, which he has himself never studied and familiarized? How can he vindicate them by arguments which he has never revolved? How can he refute objections which never so much as met his thoughts?—The injunction of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, was, to give attention to *reading*, as well as to exhortation and doctrine. “Meditate,” says he, “upon these things; *give thyself wholly to them*; that thy profiting may appear to all.” With what weight should these counsels sink into the heart of every minister, and of every candidate for the holy office! He should seek a profound and extensive acquaintance with the evidences of the inspiration of the bible; with its doctrines, its histories, its prophecies, its precepts, its examples, its promises and threatenings. He should compare scripture with scripture. He should investigate the harmony and connexion between the law and the gospel. And if it is not absolutely essential, it is yet highly desirable, that he should repair to the fountain of divine knowledge, and read the scriptures in their original languages. It is likewise important that he possess some acquaintance with literature and general science; with natural and moral philosophy, with history, chronology and geography, with poetry and criticism. These, with other branches of science, have a more intimate connexion with a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of the scriptures, than is generally imagined. How obvious is it, even from this glance

at the subject, that a minister must be a man of application ; a sedulous improver of time ! How absurd the idea entertained by many, that his is a life of ease ! “ I do not envy,” says a distinguished layman,* “ a clergyman’s life, as an easy life ; nor do I envy that clergyman who *makes* it an easy life.”

Another qualification, not less essential, in him who is set for the defence of the gospel, is a *cordial attachment* and *love* to it. Nothing but this can secure his fidelity to Christ. Nothing but this can stamp him a genuine minister of the gospel. Without this, he may, it is admitted, appear in defence of the truth, while the truth is in fashion. But when the popular gale shifts, he will too probably betray his trust, and his Master. Indeed, a graceless, irreligious minister is one of the most guilty and wretched of human beings. He is constantly acting an assumed part. His sermons, his prayers, his exhortations, must be either perfectly cold and lifeless, or else a continual contradiction and reproach to all that passes in his own breast. Nor can it be expected, but that in some unguarded hour, the mask will drop, and his hypocrisy appear to the surrounding world. What a fatal gratification is thus given to the wicked ! What heart-felt grief to the pious ! What a deep wound is inflicted in the gospel and religion of Christ !

In him who defends the gospel, an *inflexible constancy* and *resolution* are likewise necessary. The distinguishing doctrines of revelation, though in their aspect most kind and merciful, have ever excited the enmity of the human heart, and ever will. As the preacher stands in the forefront of the battle, he must of course breast the principal shock of this enmity.— But open violence and persecution, painful as they are, do not constitute the principal, much less the only trial of his constancy. The world that lies in wickedness has its *blandishments* and *seductions*, which are still more dangerous. To resist and conquer these,

* Dr. Johnson.

requires the spirit of a martyr. Some, possibly, who could have gone to the stake, for Christ and his truth, have been seduced from their fidelity by the syren charms of fashion and false philosophy. Highly favored is that minister who, in the view of every species of temptation, can honestly say, “None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

With this fortitude, should be combined a spirit of *meekness* and *humility*. The true Christian minister is as distant from bigotry and ferocity, as from tameness and cowardice. To be bigotted in defence of heavenly truth and love; to be contentious, in support of the peaceful religion of Jesus, is most incongruous and absurd. Christianity needs no such aid as this. By such defenders, her cause is but weakened. Such weapons will ultimately recoil upon her own vitals. “The wisdom which is from above, is” not only “pure,” but “peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.” While we are careful that the *system* we defend, is our *Master's* and not our own; we should be not less careful to defend it in *his spirit*, and not in our own. All our zeal for truth should be prompted by love, and regulated by knowledge, and chastened by prudence, and restrained by Christian decorum. All our opposition to error should be mingled with sincere benevolence and compassion to the erroneous. Instead of calling for fire from heaven, to consume the enemies of God, or our own enemies, we should, if possible, extinguish the angry flame, where it may be already kindled, and threatening to spread desolation through the Church, and the community.

How highly responsible then is the office of the Christian minister ! How various, how interesting, how arduous his duties ! Of these duties, we have viewed a *part* only. Yet who but must see that even here, there is ample scope for all the energies of his mind, and all the best affections of his heart ? When to this we add the everlasting consequences, not only to himself, but to hundreds, perhaps thousands of immortal beings around him—consequences indescribably happy or miserable, the contemplation is almost overwhelming. Still, my reverend Fathers and Brethren, let us not despond. We serve a kind and glorious Master. He knows our labors, our trials, our discouragements, our insufficiency. And, animating thought ! if he sees us sincere and faithful, he pardons all our numberless defects, and will transcendently reward our feeble efforts. He has promised too, that *his grace shall be sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness.* Let us then gird up our loins, and apply with new ardor to our work. Let us *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.* In a day when scepticism and infidelity stalk abroad ; when error attempts to propagate itself by new arts and efforts, let us be neither dismayed, nor inactive. Let us *contend earnestly and courageously, though meekly, for the faith once delivered to the saints.* Let us have no concern, but to be true to our Master, and stand approved by his all-seeing eye. *Behold, he comes quickly, and his reward is with him.* Let us *be faithful unto death, and we shall receive from his beloved hand the crown of immortal life.*

I now address myself to the Pastor elect.

MY DEAR SIR,

You have already been indulged the honor of going forth in the name of Jesus Christ, to declare his truth, and proclaim the invitations of his mercy. Doubt-

less you have deeply felt the magnitude of the work, and the vast importance of being found faithful. But this day, a new scene opens before you. You are to be solemnly and publicly *set for the defence of the gospel*. You are to be intrusted with all the powers and duties of a Christian minister. You are to receive the charge of this people, already dear to your heart ; and to consecrate your life and labors to the service of their souls. No transaction could be more momentous.— Never, until you stand before the Judge of all, will you know a more interesting moment than the present. Now then raise your heart to the God of heaven ; and feeling that his omniscient eye beholds you, make a solemn and everlasting surrender of yourself to his holy service. Know likewise, that if you are sincere in this act of self-dedication, you are *accepted*, and may hope to become a humble and honored instrument of promoting your divine Master's cause. See then, my brother, that your aims be simple and pure, and all your motives heavenly. Lose every other object in the sublime object of glorifying God, and doing good to man. And as you would wish your life to be eminently useful, let it be eminently a life of faith, of prayer, of watchfulness, and of exertion.

The circumstances in which you commence your ministry, render it specially important that you be wholly devoted to the studies and duties of your office. Let personal improvement be your constant aim. Nor let a day pass without adding something to your stock of divine knowledge.

In regard to your *preaching*, let your first concern be, that it be *scriptural*. Let it exhibit gospel truths, supported by gospel arguments, and inculcated in a gospel spirit. Such are the instructions, and such alone, on which you may warrantably implore and expect the divine blessing.

You will likewise be solicitous that your *visits*, and all your intercourse with your beloved flock, may be instructive and edifying. Let your habitual temper

and deportment, wherever you are, witness to all around, that you are sincere and ardent in the sacred cause of religion. And let your Master's motto be your own : " I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, in which no man can work."

Hitherto, your heart must have been much comforted by the affection and unanimity of this people ; and still more, by the precious tokens of a divine blessing on your early labors among them. May these drops of mercy prove a prelude to a copious and widely extended shower of divine influences !—May you, my dear Sir, *be wise to win souls !* May you happily attain the best and noblest of human characters—that of an able and faithful minister of Jesus Christ ! And, having successfully promoted his glorious cause on earth, may you receive a late and large reward in his everlasting kingdom !

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS OF THIS CHRISTIAN SOCIETY,

WE adore the Author of all good, in your behalf, that he has kindly remembered your destitute state. We rejoice that, instead of being scattered on the mountains, as sheep without a shepherd, you have been led thus early, and with such unusual harmony, to seek a renewed enjoyment of the gospel, in its stated ministrations. In the strong expressions of your regard and affection to this favored young man, we hope we perceive a *token for good*. Nor can we be sufficiently thankful for the evidence already afforded, that his efforts to promote your salvation have been crowned with some success.

The moment is now arrived when you are to see him solemnly constituted a minister of Jesus Christ, and your Pastor. Receive him, beloved brethren, in these interesting characters, with new solemnity, and with new affection. We trust he will approve himself an instructive preacher, and a faithful defender of the gos-

pel. What then must be your obligations? What your high responsibility? What the momentous consequences of this day's transactions? Eternity, and eternity alone can declare. Guard, I adjure you, against the common, but fatal inconsistency of loving the *messenger*, and rejecting the *message*—of commending gospel Sermons, and trampling on gospel truths, invitations and warnings. Often reflect on that tremendous, glorious day when ministers and people will stand together, before the tribunal of God. And by all that is sacred, and interesting, and dear, be entreated to prepare to meet the Judge of quick and dead.

BEHOLD, HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS! *and* EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM!—Yes, my fellow-mortals of this great assembly; he whom we now preach as your SAVIOR, will shortly be revealed as your JUDGE. O then, seize the moments of mercy. Bow to the sceptre of eternal grace. Be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Then, when the wicked shall cry to the rocks and mountains to conceal them from the wrath of the LAMB, you shall lift up your heads with joy, knowing that your redemption is nigh.

AMEN.

C

MR. EASTMAN'S

REPLY TO THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH'S CALL.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

WHILE I rise to answer the invitation which you have renewedly made, emotions of a solemn nature impress me.

Unable of myself to do any good thing; too prone to indifference in the things of religion; frequently cold in the cause of Jehovah, I tremble at the thought of taking the priest's office upon me. But I look to you, my brethren, for your counsel, and your prayers! I look to you with earnest desires that you would entreat the "Father of mercies," that I may be faithful. O pray the "God of armies," that I may, "like a polished shaft in his quiver," be successfully used in putting to flight the enemies of truth, and in baffling the assaults of error.

And while conscious that I have reason to view myself as "the least of all saints," and as greatly deficient in those qualifications which are necessary to constitute a minister useful, I look to the *glorious Redeemer*, and there I behold a *sufficiency*. On him I desire to lean for support and assistance. For of this I feel confident, that he at whose command the waves were still, diseases departed, and the dead arose, can warm the heart, enlighten the understanding, and bless the labours of the most feeble. He whom the Apostle describes as "saving those who believe by the foolishness of preaching," can arm a single remark in the most deficient sermon, with the omnipotence of grace, and make it instrumental of "saving a soul from death."

And I should be guilty of injustice, were I not to remark, at this time, that the spirit of benevolence which appears predominant in this place, and the harmony which prevails in this society, and which has been repeatedly expressed in both church and parish,

have had their influence in the decision which I have made. Desiring that this unanimity may continue, and that my usefulness may equal your wishes, I accept your invitation.

And it surely becomes us, my brethren, to plead with the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, that he would enable us to live a life of piety and devotion. It becomes us to pray for assistance and direction in every duty—in every undertaking.—And let us continually reflect that the eyes of the omniscient God are upon us. Let us consider that he who died to save us, is soon to be our Judge—our every sin is open before him, and is recorded against us as soon as committed.—Let this thought induce us to live as we should wish, if the glorious Redeemer himself were now present in the body, beholding all we do.—Thus, and only thus, shall we have reason to hope for a foretaste of happiness here, and for the full fruition of heaven itself hereafter.

THE CHARGE,

BY JAMES MILTIMORE,

PASTOR OF THE FOURTH CHURCH OF CHRIST IN NEWBURY.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND FRIENDS,

THE transaction you have now witnessed is very solemn, interesting and important. In the presence of God, Angels and men, our beloved brother has been publicly inducted into the pastoral office, according to the usage of Christendom, and in conformity to the genius of the Christian dispensation.

In ordaining pastors in the Churches, intelligent Christians have preserved a sacred respect to Apostolic practice, in transactions most nearly resembling it. Thus, the investiture of men in the office of the Christian ministry, is performed by prayer, and laying on the hands of the Presbytery. Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, faithful teachers in the Church of Antioch, laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and separated them, to the sacred office.

It was at the command of the Tri-une God that the primitive ministers of the gospel were separated to the work, whereunto the Lord had called them. And, In the name of God the Father, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift—In the name of God the Son, the adorable King of Zion, and head over all things for his Church; and in the name of the Holy Ghost, the author of all good in the heart of every minister—We, the ambassadors, the servants, the ministers of Jesus Christ, by prayer, and the imposition of our hands, have separated you, **JACOB WEED EASTMAN,** to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, ordaining you a Minister of the New-Testament, and Pastor of the Church and religious Society in this place.

The office, my brother, into which you are now inducted, is noble and momentous; and your character is sacred and interesting.—You are by profession a Minister of Jesus—an Ambassador for Christ—a Leader of the people—a Shepherd in Israel. Sacred character indeed! high and honorable office! The task devolved on you to-day, is great and arduous; your work is vast and interesting, and your demeanor therein of universal and everlasting concernment. You are now, under God, the steward of the mysteries of Christ, and, in some sense, the guardian of the best, the everlasting interests of this dear people. If, then, you should ignorantly mismanage, or indolently neglect the trust reposed in you,

the souls now committed to your charge, may not only be injured, but everlastingly ruined. But if you are discreet and active—if you are wise and faithful, you may turn many to God, and shine as a star in the firmament of righteousness forever. If these remarks are just, you will, we doubt not, admit that it is proper you be now admonished, and exhorted to the faithful discharge of ministerial duty. And the Ecclesiastical Council convened in this house, has required, *not that I command you as a master*, but, that as a brother I address to you the exhortations of this solemn occasion.

In the presence of the great, the all-pervading, the all-seeing God, who is assuredly in this house to-day—in the presence of the holy Angels, who doubtless witness the transactions of this interesting scene, and before this assembly, we affectionately exhort and adjure you, “O man of God,” Take heed to yourself, and to the ministry which you have received of the Lord, that you fulfil it.

It is in a confident persuasion, my brother, that your heart is right with our heart, that we have now taken you up with us, into the chariot of the everlasting gospel. O Sir, defraud us not of our hope. Disappoint not our confidence. But watch wisely in all things. “Do the work of an evangelist. Shew yourself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Make full proof of your ministry.”

In the discharge of official duty, we exhort you, give attendance to reading, to exhortation and doctrine. Preach the gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God. In so doing you will preach Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God to salvation.— You are entering, my dear Sir, on the scenes of ministerial duty, at a time peculiarly critical and trying. On the one hand, you behold men carried away with the pride of human science, refusing to sacrifice their own ignorance, to the perfect intelligence and wisdom of God. On the other hand you behold infidels, more merciless than the wretch that would rob you of your daily bread, combining their influence, to wrest from you the whole gospel of your salvation. At such a time, all who sustain the sacred character, but especially young ministers of the gospel, may be tempted to seek popular applause, and court the favor of the aspiring rationalist and the proud philosopher. But we hope better things of you, my brother. We trust, Sir, you will never blush to be an advocate with your fellow-men, in behalf of the Divine Jesus, the adorable Savior of fallen souls. But, when you descant on the beauty of virtue, you will permit no hearer to insinuate, that you had nothing to say in behalf of the excellency of Jesus Christ.— When you plead with fervent zeal, for righteousness, temperance and judgment, let no one say that the weighty matters of the law, love and hope, and faith in God the Savior, are seldom or never your subjects.

Being allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth the heart. Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God. Preach the soul humbling, soul quickening truths of the gospel, however the sinful world may despise them. Open the glories of God's everlasting covenant. Display the triumphs of bleeding, saving love. Exhibit the excellencies of our Immanuel, and propagate, what the world calls, the absurd doctrines of the cross. Thus you will break to immortal hearers the bread of life. Thus you will feed the children in your Father's family, with celestial food. Thus you will satisfy ransomed souls with hidden manna, descending from God out of Heaven.

The duties of your office, you know, are arduous and toilsome. One thing, however, is happily calculated to carry you through them with facility and pleasure. It is that personal piety which must always constitute the distinctive character of a good minister of Jesus Christ. Cultivate then, Dear Sir, a more pure, near, and spiritual acquaintance with Christ, and the power of the gospel yourself. Study to feel upon your own heart the importance, the sweetness, and the energy of the truths you deliver to others. Attend to the state of religion in your own soul. Live near to God. Be harmless as the steward of God; be sober, just, holy, temperate, a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men. In all things shew yourself a pattern of good works, that the ministry be not blamed. Thus give yourself, O man of God, to the duties of your high vocation, and you will go through them with increasing delight, and with happy effect.

Administer the ordinances of Christ, with fidelity and wisdom, to all who have a scriptural right to them. Rule in the house of God, with impartiality and discretion. Introduce others, when called, into the evangelical ministry, with caution and solemnity. Commit the sacred office only to wise and faithful men, able and willing to teach souls the way of salvation.

I said before; I repeat it now: The duties of your office are arduous, diversified and toilsome. They relate to the souls, the precious souls of men—Souls infinitely more valuable than millions of worlds. My brother, the precious souls of this dear people are now committed to your care. Some of them it is your duty to arouse and awaken; others you must encourage and comfort. They must all be admonished and instructed. How arduous and important the task! How awful your responsibility! But this is not all. You must be singularly favored indeed, if you meet with no severe trials and afflictions. You need not expect exemption from conflicts, sufferings and oppositions. In carrying the triumphs of the Redeemer's cross, into the empire of delusion and crime, you must expect to meet with fierce resistance, from every foe of God and man. The prince of the power of the air, his coadjutors in this world, and his allies in the human heart, will com-

bine to oppose your kind designs. But let your eye be immutably fixed on the standard of the cross—Follow with undiverted steps the Captain of your salvation ;—And, “ Let none of these things move you, neither account your life dear to you, so that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry which you have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

This charge, I give you, Sir, in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who in the presence of Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ; To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

AMEN.

NOTE.

The other exercises were performed by the following Ministers : Right Hand of Fellowship, by the Rev. JOSHUA DODGE, of Haverhill* ; Introductory Prayer, by the Rev. ISAAC TOMPKINS, of Haverhill ; Consecrating Prayer, by the Rev. WILLIAM MORRISON, of Londonderry, N. H. ; Concluding Prayer, by the Rev. ISAAC BRAMAN, of Rowley.

* Mr. Dodge was prevented by indisposition from giving his performance to the press.