

**S E R M O N**

**DELIVERED**

**AT THE ORDINATION**

**OF THE**

***REV. HERVEY WILBUR,***

**TO THE PASTORAL CARE**

**OF THE**

**CHURCH IN WENDELL,**

**JAN. 1, 1817.**

**BY DANIEL DANA, D. D.**

**Pastor of a Church in Newburyport.**

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# SERMON.

1 CORINTHIANS ii. 13.

*Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

OF all human employments, that of the christian minister is the most important and arduous. To manage the concerns of states and empires, is confessedly no small undertaking; and requires its peculiar powers and talents. But to assume the charge of souls; to impart to men those instructions on which depends their everlasting state, is in reality an object of far superior moment. *Who is sufficient for these things? What reflecting and pious mind can approach the sacred office, but with feelings of self-diffidence and awe?*

The very thought, indeed, would be overwhelming, but for the aids and encouragements so amply held forth to every faithful, trembling minister, in the word of God. Among these precious sources of animation, may be reckoned the *examples* of those great and good men, who, having acted under an immediate divine guidance, may be safely regarded as models for imitation, to the end of time. And here, in the very first rank, we find the distinguished Apostle who speaks in the text.

Adverting, in the present and preceding chapters, to the objections advanced by some, against his preaching, as destitute of the embellishments of human literature, reasoning and eloquence, he admits the charge in all its force. He explicitly states it to have been his grand object, to exhibit the truth in its naked simplici-

ity ; to preach the *gospel*, pure as it descended from heaven. “I came to you, brethren, not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.....My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom ; but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”.....He adds: “ We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God : which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom, teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

In these concluding expressions, the Apostle obviously lays claim to a supernatural inspiration ; an inspiration which, though it did not preclude the rational employment of the faculties in comparing former with recent revelations, yet brought to the mind both the *substance* of divine truths, and the *language* in which they were to be clothed. This inspiration has long since ceased. The most favored ministers cannot claim it now. None but the grossest of impostors, or enthusiasts, will pretend to it.—Nor can the text intend that ordinary ministers are to confine themselves either in their public or private instructions, to the very expressions of the bible. Their duty is, not merely to *repeat* Scripture, but to interpret and elucidate it.

Still, in all substantial points, the Apostle may be considered as a pattern to ministers of the gospel in every age. The text, in declaring to us what he was, lets us know what every preacher ought to be. In a word, it intimates that *the instructions of the Christian teacher should be SCRIPTURAL*. This, my respected hearers, is the comprehensive and interesting sentiment which I shall now attempt to unfold and establish.

*The instructions of the Christian teacher should be scriptural.*—This implies,

In the first place, that he is to preach nothing which is not either explicitly declared in the word of God, or by necessary inference deducible from it. Unquestionably, most of the great truths of religion are distinctly and unequivocally expressed in the sacred oracles. These truths, with such others as by unforced and obvious deduction result from them, constitute the whole matter of gospel preaching. In this extensive field we may range with safety. But we may not transcend its limits.

Secondly. To preach scripturally, implies that we declare, as we have opportunity, *all* the important doctrines of revelation. Such, indeed, is the rich and endless variety of divine truths, that this is no easy task. Happy is the preacher who, at the close of a long, instructive, and indefatigable ministry, can say that he has *declared all the counsel of God*. But every faithful minister can say, that he has not *shunned* to declare it, either through indolence, or love of popularity, or fear of reproach. He does not designedly *keep back* any thing which is profitable to his hearers; but faithfully aims to deliver the whole truth of God. Doctrines the most mortifying to human pride; truths the most offensive and alarming, he will not, he cannot, from false tenderness, suppress. Nor will he fail to *search the scriptures* daily, that he may draw forth and display their abundant and diversified instructions.

Thirdly. While it is important to declare the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, it is scarcely less important to exhibit the doctrines of Scripture in their proper *connexion*. The system of Inspiration, like every other well constructed system, consists of a variety of parts, all of which have a mutual dependence, and all conspire to produce the symmetry and perfection of the whole. It is not enough, then, that none be struck out. All must be exhibited, if possible, in their proper place and bearings. A

“rude and indigested mass,” even of *scripture truths*, will be of comparatively little use. To be thoroughly understood; especially to be received with advantage, they must be seen in their connexion and dependence. This point will be best illustrated by a few examples. It is unspeakably important to display the entire natural depravity of all human beings. Yet unless it be made to appear that they are free and accountable agents still, we communicate darkness, rather than light. Their inability, and their absolute dependence on God, in respect to spiritual and holy action, must be clearly stated. But if we would not administer an opiate to their consciences, we must shew that their *obligations* are neither vacated, nor impaired. The divine decrees, respecting the everlasting states of men, must, in their place, be illustrated; but certainly not so as to diminish the encouragement of any human being to seek the salvation of the gospel. While the promises of Scripture are unfolded in their variety and riches, great care must be employed to state with fidelity and precision the characters to whom they belong. And every denunciation of divine wrath against the impenitent, should be accompanied, if possible, by such views of their guilt, as may shew that wrath to be not more tremendous, than it is just and holy.

Fourthly. To preach in a scriptural manner, is to dwell principally on those doctrines which constitute the *burden* of the inspired pages. If, amid the ample instructions spread over the sacred volume, there are certain doctrines peculiarly conspicuous and prominent; if these doctrines are the favorite theme of the inspired writers; if they distinguish the bible from every other system of religion, or morals; if they are of the nature of *first principles*; if they are fraught with a variety of momentous practical consequences; if they give a tone and complexion to all piety, and all virtue;—these doctrines unquestionably, must be “first, and last, and midst,” with the Christian preacher. To declare, to defend, to illustrate and apply

them, must be the grand object of his life and labors. This none will dispute; and it would be a waste of argument to prove it.—Nor, probably, are many of my hearers doubtful whether doctrines of this description are actually found in the bible; or what, in particular, they are. At least, the appeal may be safely made to every attentive and unbiassed reader: Do not the scriptures declare that man is fallen, utterly fallen and depraved? Do they not trace the *plan* of his salvation to the sovereign and eternal grace of JEHOVAH; its *purchase* to his ONLY BEGOTTEN AND EQUAL SON; its *application* to the HOLY AND DIVINE SPIRIT? Do they not insist on the necessity of regeneration, of faith, of practical and universal holiness, in order to our inheriting the joys of heaven? Are not these, and other kindred doctrines, the prominent, distinguishing, all-pervading characteristics of the book which we call the Bible? Granting them to be truths, are they not truths of unspeakable interest and moment—vitally essential to the hope, the holiness, the present and future felicity of immortal beings? If so, the duty of the Christian minister to insist on them, without reserve, and without ceasing, is evident and undeniable. Permit me to remark,

In the fifth place, that to preach scripturally, we must deliver the truth in *simplicity*:—“not,” says the Apostle, “in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth.” We need not attempt to clothe the sublime doctrines of the gospel in terms borrowed from human science, or reasoning, or rhetoric. The attempt would obscure rather than illustrate; would degrade, rather than dignify them. These glorious truths, like the sun, are best seen by their own unborrowed light. Resplendent with native lustre, they disdain the embellishments of human art. Not, indeed, that there is not an *eloquence* adapted to their nature. But it is an eloquence simple, inartificial and majestic; the eloquence of *feeling*, not of study and design.—As to those doctrines which are strictly *myterious*, the Apostle’s suggestion in the text applies in all its force.

They are ordinarily best delivered “in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth;” in the very terms in which Scripture has clothed them; or at least, in such as are palpably equivalent. All attempts to render them more intelligible, by the aid of human explanations, or analogies, have ever proved abortive and ever will.

Let me remark further: while we are careful to inculcate scriptural doctrines, we must support them by scriptural illustrations and arguments. We must “*compare spiritual things with spiritual.*” that is to say; one part of Scripture with another; the revelations of the Old Testament with those of the New; types with their antitypes; prophecies with their accomplishment; the law with the gospel. Thus it will appear that Scripture is at once the best *interpreter*, and the best *support* of Scripture. Thus, though written by a variety of characters, and in different and distant ages, it will be found to utter a consistent and uniform language. Thus too the preacher will not only speak, but *appear* to speak, in the name of God; and all his instructions will bear the obvious impress of a divine authority.

“*Comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*” That is, endeavoring to illustrate those passages which are obscure, by the aid of those which are plain; and those in which a doctrine is incidentally or slightly touched, by the aid of those in which it is directly inculcated and explained. How evident is it, that this is the only respectful method of treating the word of God! Nor is it less evident, that to a neglect of this salutary and obvious maxim, are to be traced most of those lamentable errors which have infested the church, and poisoned the minds of men. Who can doubt, for instance, that from this origin springs the fatal mistake of the Universalist? A few scattered passages, it is admitted, may appear to the superficial observer, to impart some remote countenance to the scheme. These are hastily seized, drawn away from their proper connexion, and the delicious error imbibed and cherished.

While passages innumerable, which explicitly inculcate the contrary doctrine, are treated with entire disregard and neglect.

Suffer me to add briefly, that the Christian teacher, by resigning himself implicitly to the guidance of Scripture, will obtain the best direction, not only respecting the matter, but the *manner* of preaching.

In this way, he will acquire a spirit of deep *solemnity* and *seriousness*. The truths of the gospel, by their unparalleled grandeur and interest, are calculated to penetrate every human heart with the profoundest awe. The sacred writers at large, and especially the first preachers of Christianity, appear to have felt a powerful and solemnizing impression of what they communicated to others. Nor can the minister who duly familiarizes these glorious doctrines, and these high examples, fail to imbibe a portion of the same spirit. Eternal realities will take possession of his inmost heart. And thus he will be prepared to speak of them to others, as one who not only believes their truth, but feels their infinite moment.

Is it likewise important that ministers should feel a sacred *courage* in the execution of their high and arduous office? Is it important, that, superior to reproach, to opposition, to all danger, they should dare be faithful to God, and to his truth, in the worst of times? This holy heroism is best acquired by familiar converse with the Scripture; by opening the heart to its exalted sentiments, its sublime motives, its illustrious examples. With what singular and resistless energy is this spirit inculcated by the example of that Apostle who, in the polite and learned city Rome, was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*; who carried before kings and governors its saving, and its tremendous truths; and who, unmoved by bonds, by afflictions, by death itself, determined to proclaim its doctrines with his latest breath!

Making the Scripture our model, we shall likewise inculcate the doctrines of the gospel with *firmness* and *decision*:—not indeed with a dogmatical and impos-

ing air; but in a manner expressive of a sober and settled confidence. There is a mode of instruction, so full of doubt and hesitancy, and so impartially holding the balance between truth and error, that it tends rather to perplex and mislead the mind, than inform it. It is calculated to "unsettle every thing," and "settle nothing." Such scepticism generally proves contagious; for it is rare indeed that a man succeeds in convincing another of a truth, or fact, of which he is himself in doubt. If this is candor and catholicism, it is a candor and catholicism unknown to the Scriptures. The Apostles were evidently strangers to it. They spoke like men in earnest. Convinced and impressed themselves, they were anxious to convince and impress others. Far from intimating, respecting the great doctrines they taught, that their evidence was imperfect, or their reception unimportant, they constantly urged them as truths unquestionable, and of vital importance to the present and everlasting happiness of their fellow-creatures. Let us not blush to follow these truly enlightened and benevolent men. Conscious, indeed, of our comparative ignorance, and our fallibility, let us beware of a censorious, and still more of an anathematizing spirit. Let us beware, too, of that spurious candor which makes light of truth, and of the best interests of immortal beings.

In fine, our instructions, if modeled on the plan of Scripture, will breathe an air of *tenderness* and *benignity*. The spirit which pervades the gospel, is a spirit of the purest, kindest love. By this heaven-tempered weapon, it assails and subdues the hard heart of man. Its first preachers, distinguished as they were by their courage and energy, were not less distinguished by their benevolence and mildness. What a pattern, in this regard, was the eminent Apostle to whom we have just alluded! The motto which he prescribed to himself and his brethren, was, "*Speaking the truth in love.*" And his whole practice was signally correspondent. Never did a warmer, tenderer heart animate a human bosom. "We

“were gentle among you,” (he says to his Thessalonian converts; we were gentle among you) “as a nurse cherisheth her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear to us.”—Happy the minister who has such a spirit! Happy the people who have such a minister!

I have thus, my respected hearers, attempted some illustration of that style and manner of preaching which may be called *scriptural*. I now proceed to suggest a few considerations which evince its excellence and importance.

I might remark, in the first place, that we have no warrant for any other mode of preaching. The direction of the Most High to the prophet Jonah, was, “Go—preach the preaching that I bid thee.” The address of the risen Savior to his first disciples, was, “Go—teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Substantially the same is the duty of every minister of the gospel. From the bible he derives his commission. In the same heaven-descended volume are contained his *instructions* too. Here he is taught, explicitly and definitely taught, *what* to preach, and *how* to preach. So far, then, as the doctrines and spirit of his ministry are conformed to this divine model, does he substantiate his claim to the character of a Christian preacher; and no further. So far, and no further, is he faithful to him who sent him.

Secondly. The preaching which has been described, and that alone, meets the exigencies of fallen creatures, and answers the inquiries of awakened sinners. Solemn beyond expression, my hearers, is the situation of the minister of the gospel; and awful his responsibility before the bar of heaven. To him it belongs to train immortals for eternity. It is his to furnish a reply to the most interesting question which was ever breathed from human lips: “*What shall I do to be saved?*” What is the religion which will pre-

“pare a sinner for heaven?”—With the bible in his hand, he can answer this question. He can point the inquiring sinner to an infinite atonement, an Almighty Savior, a renewing and sanctifying Spirit. And may I not appeal to the experience of my Fathers and Brethren in the ministry, in proof that these are the only doctrines which furnish hope to the awakened mind, and consolation to the broken heart? Have they not found the religion which derives its origin, and its aliment from these precious doctrines, and others allied to them, to be the religion which stands the test in the hour of temptation, and the hour of death?

Thirdly. It is scriptural preaching alone which satisfies the demands of truly Christian hearers. Saint Paul, as we have seen, speaking of his having preached to the Corinthians, the simple doctrines of the gospel, assigns this as the reason; *that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*. If we deliver gospel doctrines, supported by gospel arguments, intelligent and serious hearers will perceive that they have ground of confidence; for they will perceive that God speaks, and not man. If in place of the truths of revelation, we substitute our own reasonings, or rather *conjectures*, (for in religion, what are all human reasonings, but conjectures?) they will perceive that man speaks, and not God; and they will justly withhold their faith. Or should we undertake to support even gospel doctrines, not by scripture testimony, but by a train of metaphysical argument, Christian hearers would have reason to complain. Should they, in this case, even give their assent, the thing believed would be true; but the faith would be faith in man, and not in God. And why should we wish thus to rob God of his glory, and Christians of their comfort and edification?

Further: preaching the truth in its scripture simplicity, is the method best adapted to convince or confute gainsayers. Human pride and corruption have ever arrayed themselves in opposition to the holy and benign doctrines of revelation; and ever will. Of

course, human ingenuity will ever be employed in framing plausible objections against them. To meet these objections by particular refutations, is sometimes expedient and necessary. But this method has its difficulties. In a contest of human ingenuity and argument, it will not be strange, if error shall sometimes gain at least an *apparent* victory over truth. Often, therefore, opposition may be most effectually silenced by simply stating an obnoxious doctrine in its scriptural light and evidence. In this case, the objector's heart may not be gained; but his conscience may be aroused. At least, he may be constrained to see that he is engaged in a contest against the truth and authority of God.

It is an important advantage attendant on a scriptural mode of preaching, that, in proportion as it prevails, ministers will of course be *united*. The debates and divisions among this class of men have long been the opprobrium of religion, the grief of its friends, and the triumph of its enemies. Is there no remedy for so deplorable an evil?—Permit me with suitable deference to suggest, that the remedy, if found, will probably be found in a general determination among ministers to rally round the standard of the Bible, and to follow where it leads; to draw their private sentiments and public instructions, more entirely and exclusively from the Scripture; to treat its grand, characteristic doctrines according to their real importance; and to treat the little peculiarities of party and system according to their real insignificance. Thus they will stand up, a firm, unbroken phalanx, against the assaults of error and infidelity. They will speak with united voice; and they will speak to be heard. They will acquire and exert an influence over the minds of the community, equally powerful and salutary.

Again: this kind of preaching will ever be found the most rich, diversified and instructive. Our own resources are soon exhausted. The peculiarities of a human system are soon learned, and soon become stale

and disgusting. The sermons, even of ingenious and strong-minded men, who suffer themselves to be thus trammelled, are apt to tire by their uniformity. But in the Scripture, there is a variety, an endlessness, which meets the cravings of the ever-inquiring mind of man. The preacher who constantly draws from this source, needs not, and ordinarily will not be uninteresting. In his sermons, the same great truths will, indeed, often recur; but in such a variety of attitude and illustration, as will at once fasten attention, and reward it.

In a word: this is the preaching on which we may rationally expect the divine blessing. Men are sanctified and saved, not by error, but by the truth; not by metaphysical subtilities, but by the simple doctrines of revelation. The gospel is, of all systems of religion and morals, incomparably the purest, and the best. But this is not all. It is *the power of God to salvation*. It is the grand ordinance which Heaven has appointed, which it has engaged to bless, and has actually blessed, to reform and save degenerate men. In vain do we look for the same effects from any other system or mode of instruction. The Apostle Paul, to expose the poverty of that *legal* kind of instruction to which many in the Galatian church had swerved, expostulates in this style: *This only would I learn of you: received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* With propriety we may *generalize* the question. What is that preaching which, in all ages, has been crowned with the divine influence and blessing? What is the preaching by which sinners have been awakened, convinced, converted and sanctified; the church of God enlarged; and the general interests of piety and virtue promoted? Is it the preaching which has clearly and faithfully exhibited the doctrines of the cross? Or is it that by which these doctrines have been overlooked, or softened, or distorted, or denied, or reproached? To this question, all ancient and modern history, all experience and observation, furnish but one reply. The

*doctrines of the cross*, especially when delivered with simplicity and energy, with tenderness and love—these are the doctrines which the Spirit of God has sealed to the souls of men. And the Spirit of God has abandoned that preaching which has abandoned these holy and divine doctrines.

The subject, imperfectly as it has been illustrated, affords ample matter for solemn and interesting reflections. These, however, will be waved, to afford time for the addresses appropriate to the occasion.

My first attention is due to my Fathers and Brethren in the ministry. But having already made such large draughts on their candor and patience, I will only, in addition, beg them to accept the hints which have been suggested, not with a design to instruct, and still less to dictate; but to *stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance*. If, by any thing which has been offered, my *younger* brethren should find themselves confirmed and animated in that method of preaching which is most congenial with the ministerial office, my principal object will be accomplished.

TO YOU, MY DEAR SIR, who are now to be solemnly inducted to this holy and honorable office, these remarks have a special application. And I indulge the pleasing confidence that they meet your cordial assent. Of your high sense of the importance of drawing religious instruction directly from the Scriptures, you have given ample pledges, not only to your friends, but to the Christian world. Doubtless, amid your researches into those divine Oracles, you must have deeply felt how precious, how “profitable” they are “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God,” the christian minister, “may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Often repair, my brother, to this fountain of light and life. Peruse, and reperuse the Scriptures, until your mind and heart, your sermons, exhortations and prayers, be thoroughly imbued with their heavenly spirit. It

is recorded of one of the most eloquent men of modern times, that when about to compose an oration, he first spent some time in perusing *Homer*; and being asked the reason, "I choose," said he, "to light my lamp at the sun." With what superior propriety may the Christian preacher come to the composition of every sermon, warm from the perusal of the sacred pages; and thus, lighting his lamp at the *sun of righteousness*, transfuse celestial fire into the bosoms of his hearers.

While you sincerely aim to declare the whole truth of **God**, you will dwell with peculiar emphasis and urgency upon the doctrines which principally occupy the sacred volume? for on these doctrines, the life and power of religion, the salvation and comfort of human souls, eminently depend. And while you keep back nothing that is humbling or alarming in the gospel, you will endeavor to give an impressive display of its unutterable *grace* and *compassion*. Real faithfulness is as much concerned in the one, as the other. In all your reproofs and warnings addressed to the impenitent, think of **HIM** who poured tears of celestial pity over the blood-stained sinners of Jerusalem—of **HIM** who shed his *own* blood, that the chief of sinners might find mercy.

Let the same spirit of heavenly benevolence be transfused through your whole life and ministry. Let it go with you to the parlors of the rich, and the cottages of the poor. Let it attend you to the house of mourning, to the bed of sickness, and the bed of death. Let it dictate every sermon, and breathe in every prayer. Let it pervade all your conversation, and all your deportment. This will give you the readiest access to the minds and hearts of your beloved people. It will afford you incalculable advantages to profit and save their immortal souls.

And now, my beloved brother, remember with animation *whose you are*, and *whom you serve*. Go forth to your great and momentous duties, in the name, in the strength, and in the spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Lose all other cares in a sublime solicitude to approve yourself to your glorious Master's eye. Come often to his feet, that you may *learn of him* how to preach, and how to live. We do not expect that you will *degrade* your Savior, or *deny the Lord that bought you*. We do not expect that you will consent to be the slave of avarice, or ambition. What have we to do with the sordid gains of earth, who hope to inherit the riches of the universe? What have we to do with the empty applause of mortals, who hope to hear from the eternal Judge: "Well done good and faithful servant."——O my brother! be faithful—faithful unto death—and these exalted honors, these immortal felicities shall be yours.

This Christian Church and Society will indulge me in a short address.

Beloved brethren and friends,

The great Shepherd who with unslumbering care and tenderness watches over his blood-purchased Church, has heard your prayers—He has seen your tears. This day he bids you take your harps from the willows, and employ them anew in the songs of Zion. This day your eyes behold your teacher; the friend of your souls; the spiritual friend and father of your dear children. He gives himself to you. The God of heaven, through the medium of his authorized ministers, consecrates him to you. Henceforth *he is yours*. And we humbly trust that he will prove a precious ascension gift—a *new year's gift*—for which many of you will adore the Giver, in time, and for ever.

O my brethren! How unutterably solemn is the relation which commences, with this commencing year! Its consequences will remain when the heavens shall be no more; when millions of years, and of ages shall have rolled away. Never, never forget it—a preached gospel, wherever it comes, is either a *savor of life unto life*, or a *savor of death unto death*. Open your hearts to all the dread solemnity of the scene. And now, while the angels of light, while the great Redeemer, while the eternal God, are present to witness

the awful transaction, will you not ratify a sacred *covenant*, that you will prepare to meet your minister at the right hand of the glorious Judge? And will you not religiously resolve that from this hour, and for ever, you will put away from among you whatever would prevent so auspicious and happy a meeting?

A stranger should speak with caution: yet permit me to say, WENDELL is a favored spot—far above others—if it contains no neglecters of God's house and ordinances; no prayerless families; no individuals who openly oppose, or secretly despise strict religion; no self-deceiving formalists; no cold-hearted professors. If there be such present, what a *precious crisis* does the opening of a new year, and the reception of a new minister present, to commence an *entire revolution*. No greater blessing can we implore, or even conceive, than such a revolution as this; and in wishing it, we emphatically wish you a happy new year.

Could you, my friends, open and read the volume of the divine decrees, many an individual of you would probably read: “*Thus saith the Lord—this year thou shalt die. This year, the last warning shall sound; the last sermon be heard; the last season of mercy be indulged.*” Nor, whenever you enter this house of God to worship, can you be assured that another sabbath will dawn for you, or that you will meet your beloved minister again, until you meet him before the bar of judgment. Cherish the solemn and salutary thought. Be solicitous to spend every sabbath, to hear every sermon, as if you knew it would be the last. Let your inmost hearts bow to the King of glory, to his saving truths, and his holy commands. Then, when the Lord Jesus shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all who believe, you shall appear before him with joy, and shine, as jewels, in his everlasting crown.

Beloved hearers of this great Assembly,

You have had some view of the duty of ministers. In their duty, behold your own. If they are bound to

preach the truth—the pure truth—the whole truth; you, certainly, must be no less bound to receive it. And their instructions, so far as they accord with the Scriptures, are to be received, not as the word of man, but as the word of the living God. We claim, indeed, no dominion over your faith. We ask no blind and implicit confidence in our instructions. Their agreement or disagreement with the sacred Oracles, we invite you to try and determine for yourselves. It is your right. It is your *duty*. But we entreat you to remember, that no doctrine, however hostile to human corruption, however wounding to human pride, or baffling to human reason, yet legibly instamped with a *Thus saith the Lord*, can be rejected without guilt—without unutterable danger. To all his faithful ministers, Jesus has said: *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* Little, therefore, as is the deference which we would claim for ourselves, yet for our Master and for his truth, we claim much. O let not all our imperfections, our ten thousand faults, disgust you with the message we bear. Be content to receive from *earthen vessels*—mean, frail and perishable—that *heavenly treasure* which can make you rich for eternity.

**THE CHARGE,**  
**BY THE REV. MR. ESTABROOK,**  
**OF ATHOL.**

IN the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by power derived from Him—We his Ministers, at the desire and request of this Christian Church, have convened here for the important purpose of separating you, Mr. Hervey Wilbur, from worldly employments to the sacred work of the Gospel Ministry; and according to the wish and desire of the Church and society in this place, have separated you, to this great work, by Prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery: and I have been appointed by this venerable Council to give the solemn Charge to you, on this interesting occasion.

And according to Apostolic custom, I now charge you, in the name of the great Head of the church, to consider the nature, the importance and the greatness of the office into which you have been inducted. You are now, a gospel Bishop, an Ambassador of Christ. Therefore take heed to thy Ministry; be an example to the Flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseer. Feed Christ's sheep, feed his lambs, with the sincere milk of the word: feed them with knowledge and understanding: Avoid mysterious and perplexing questions, which serve to bewilder the minds of your hearers, rather than to edify and enlighten them.—Theological disputes have done much mischief in the Christian world. The sacred desk was never designed for a place of angry disputation; but to harmonize the minds of the people of God. Never be the occasion of perplexing the minds of the dear people of your charge.

Let your discourses be plain and practical, solemn and engaging.—This people have been accustomed to such discourses. Your worthy Predecessor, wherever he was known, was highly respected and esteemed for his prudence, piety and wisdom. Be thou therefore, like him, the faithful shepherd, the discreet guide. Let your sermons be animating and plain; your doctrines useful and instructing. Christ's sermon on the mount is a good model for you; there *usefulness and plainness* are happily united—But you will make the whole of the sacred scriptures, the rule of your faith and practice. Endeavor to impress upon your own mind, and

the minds of your people. the importance of reading and studying the holy scriptures. The Bible is of all books the most valuable ; and calculated, under God, to do infinite good. Often direct the attention of your dear people to the study of this sacred volume ; it is able through faith, to make *you* and *them wise to salvation*.

Be much with the people of your charge. Encourage, exhort, admonish and warn them to flee from the wrath to come. Be instant in season and out of season. Preach not yourself, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Make God's word the rule of your faith and practice, and not human creeds, which have been stumbling blocks to thousands, & in many instances, set the christian world in flames. Call no man Master on earth, for one is your Master, even Christ. In doctrine, shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity and a sound speech, that cannot be condemned—Let your doctrine, from this sacred desk, drop upon your hearers as the rain, and your speech in private families and among individuals, as the dew. Wrest not the holy scriptures, as too many have done, to support some favorite party or doctrine ; teach not for doctrines the commandments of men, but deliver the whole counsel of God.

Give yourself much to prayer. A christian bishop will be much engaged in this duty, both in public and in private. Inculcate, likewise, this important duty upon the minds of your people — Urge them to attend public and family worship. If these duties are neglected by them, it is an evidence, that they are *grossly* remiss in all the duties of religion. Therefore be faithful as an ambassador of Christ ; tell them of their faults and their danger, if they neglect these necessary and important duties.—Their souls are committed to your care, and you must answer another day, a neglect on your part.

Enforce your precepts by your examples. Precepts are cold, without examples. If while you exhort your hearers to attend the duties of religion, you neglect them yourself ; you will do an infinite injury to the cause you are placed here to support and defend. Therefore we charge you, in the name of God, to add to your precepts your examples. Consider how much depends on you ; generations yet unborn may, long after you are dead, be benefited, or injured by your good or bad examples. Think what an amazing responsibility devolves on you. You being placed as a watchman in Christ's church ; this people will look to you for good examples as well as for precepts and doctrines. Therefore, let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Administer the ordinances of the gospel to the proper subjects of them. Admit not to these ordinances the profane and vicious, nor shut out those who are entitled to them. Be wise, be meek, be sober ; let prudence be your pole star. Look to God for direction, and to Christ for help ; and the Spirit of him who was in the bush, will give you light and comfort. And this charge which you receive from us, give thou to others, who are able, faithful, and discreet men, apt to teach, lovers of God and the Redeemer.

Watch for souls as one that must give an account before God—Remember that there is a day coming when you must give an account how you have kept this charge that now has been given to you—Solemn consideration! I tremble for you and myself, and am ready to exclaim—who is sufficient for these things: But look, my dear friend, to Jesus, the mighty Savior, who has said, My grace is sufficient for thee. This has been a comfort to me, and must be so to you. Trust in the Lord, and stay thyself upon thy God: then you may hope for the promised assistance which you need, and must have, to be a faithful Minister of Jesus Christ. If you are an unfaithful servant in the vineyard of Christ, you will be beaten with many stripes.

This flock, this church and society, who are now earnestly looking upon you, who are now set apart as their spiritual guide, expect you will be faithful to warn them of their danger, and direct them to walk in the path, that leads to God; and Christ, your Master the Son of God, requires it of you; their souls will be required at your hands. If this is the case, as it certainly is, how much it concerns you to be diligent in your calling. Be wise for thyself, wise for time, and wise for eternity. If you have grace given you to do this, you will be blessed indeed; and that this may be the case with you, is the prayer of each one of us, who are Ministers of Christ, and every child of God here present. We wish you, Dear Sir, not only a happy new year, but a long, useful, and prosperous Ministry of many years to come; and when years shall be no more with you and your flock, may you be admitted to glory, and say Lord, here am I, with the dear people of my charge.

AMEN.

*Note.* The Right Hand of Fellowship was given by the Rev. Mr. Gates of Montague. A copy was requested for publication: but was not received.