

*The POWER of GOSPEL MINISTERS, and the Efficacy of
their Ministrations,*

R E P R E S E N T E D

I N A

S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D A T

N E W - A R K,

B E F O R E T H E

Reverend SYNOD of NEW-YORK.

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*But I will send for my Counsel, and had caused my People to hear my Words,
when they would not have returned them from their evil Way. Jer. xxiii. 22.*

But if our Gospel be hid to them that are lost. 2 Cor. iv. 3.

N E W - Y O R K :

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A SERMON, &c.

2 COR. X. 4.

For the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty, thro' God, to the pulling down of strong Holds.

THEY who are engaged in the Gospel Ministry, being publick Persons, will always be one common Topic of Conversation. Their Words and Actions, their very Dress, Mien and Air, will be critically discussed and censured. Some observe them with an envious, others with an ignorant Eye; and hence both senseless and ill-natured Remarks, will be made on them. The Carnal and Selfish, the Injudicious and Prejudiced, are prone to judge others, by themselves. They account for the Actions of others, from those Motives, which they know would have influenced themselves, had they performed them. The covetous Worldling, whose fordid Soul *supposes Gain to be Godliness*, imagines that all are secretly pursuing the same End, however they may pretend other Things. The Artful and Politick, who walk all their Days in Disguise, are perplexed in Search of Mysteries in the most open Conduct; and tho' they fancy they have discovered the hidden Motive, yet none are more apt to be *cut in their Thoughts* than they. Such Kind of Persons, are not able to conceive, what they never felt, that any can be influenced by a simple Regard to God and Goodness. Hence it came, that even *the Lord of Glory*, endured the Reproaches and *Contradictions of Sinners*, against himself: And our Context informs us, that some thought the Apostles *walked according to the Flesh*; that is, sought themselves as their highest End; indulged carnal Passions, courted the Favour of Men, and declined Duty, thro' Fear of their Resentments; and finally depended on

1 Tim. vi. 5.
Heb. xii. 3.
Ver. 2.

A 2

human

human Influence and carnal Policy. They deserve a *formal Censure*, who thus at Random censure the Ambassadors of Christ: Accordingly the Apostle purposed *to be bold against such*. But think what they will, it is certain, that faithful Ministers, tho' they are in the Body, and in the common Affairs of Life, act as other Men; yet in their Office, they act not from fleshly Principles, nor for fleshly Ends, nor use carnal Methods: *For tho' we WALK in the Flesh, we do not WAR after the Flesh.*

Vers. 3.

THIS our Text proves, by plain Argument; which, in Form, may run thus:

MEN who war after the Flesh, use carnal Weapons, as best suited to their Purpose: But the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal.----

AGAIN. Did we war after the Flesh, our Weapons would be without Efficacy; because God, who *bears not Sinners*, nor those who *regard Iniquity in their Hearts*, would not co-operate with them, and without him we could do nothing.

Psal.lxvi.18.

BUT the Weapons of our Warfare are mighty, *thro' God*, and prevail to the overthrow of strong Holds: Therefore, it cannot be that we war after the Flesh.

THE Christian Life, is often called a Warfare; so is the Gospel Ministry, both in our Text, and in 1 *Tim. i. 18*. Performing the ministerial Charge, is *waring a good Warfare*. The same is deducible, from 2 *Tim. ii. 3, 4*. *Endure Hardness, as a good Soldier;----and no Man that wareth, entangleth himself.*

THE Expression intimates, that Ministers may expect a formidable Opposition, in the Discharge of their Office; and such Difficulties as require great Resolution to counter, and great Power to surmount. He that rushes among hostile Swords, needs not more Courage, than he who opposes himself to the Corruption of Mankind, and endeavours to reform them.

NOTHING perhaps can set this in a stronger Point of Light, than the Faintings and Discouragement of those who were some of God's most eminent Servants. *Moses* was called to carry the Lord's Message, to King *Pharaoh*. What an awful and oppressive Sense had he of its Importance and Weight!

Weight! What insuperable Mountains appeared to obstruct his Way! He raised Objection upon Objection; and tho' they were all unanswerably solved, yet the Impression of his Insufficiency, remained so deep, that he persisted in his Request, to be excused from the Employ. *He said, send, I pray thee, by the Hand of him whom thou wilt SEND, q. d. Send any other Person thou wilt; for, as to me, I am altogether unfit for the Office, and absolutely averse to it. In like Manner, Jeremiab, when he was appointed a Prophet to the Nations, urges his Inability. Ab! Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a Child.* And afterwards, when he perceived his Untuccessfullness, and found himself violently opposed, and his Character traduced, he was so entirely discouraged, that he resolved to quit his Ministry: *Then, I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his Name.* Ezekiel too, when sent a Prophet to the Houle of Israel, went in Bitterness, in the Heat of his Spirit. These are Words expressive of strong Reluctance. Finally, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, tells the Corinthians, that he was with them in Weakness, and in Fear, and in much Trembling.

Exod. iii. 11.
13, and 4, 1,
10.

Exod. iv. 13.

Jer. i. 5, 6.

Jer. xx. 9.

Ezek. iii. 14.

1 Cor. 2, 3.

THESE were great Men of God, and Men of a very excellent Spirit, of solid Judgment, and firm Purpose: But they had clear Views of the Greatness of their Office, the important Consequences of it, and the Difficulties that attend it, and a just Sense of their own Weakness. Hence we cannot but conclude, that they who desire the Ministry, only as an easy and honourable Way of Life, are ignorant of its Nature, and consequently not likely to be serviceable in it. It is enough to prove a Man disqualified for it, if he thinks lightly of it, doubts but he has in himself sufficient Ability to fulfill it.

As by *Weapons* the Gospel Ministry is intended; so the *Weapons* of it can design nothing else, but the Means used to obtain its End. Those, in general, are Doctrine and Discipline; the clear, wise, and zealous preaching of the Word, and Administration of the Sacraments; and the due Infliction of Censures on Offenders. That both preaching and ecclesiastical Censures, are intended, seems plain, from the following Context; for the 5th Verse informs us, that these

Weapons

Weapons are the Means of *casting down Imaginations, or Reasonings, and the fancied Sublime*; or whatever proud Conceits *exalt themselves* against the true Knowledge of God, and are opposite to the Gospel: And the 6th Verse teaches us, that they are the Instruments of *revenging all Disobedience*. The Particle, *and*, in the Beginning of v. 6, both conjoins and distinguishes these Parts; and the whole Contexture shews, that the Apostle does not intend the same Thing, by *casting down Imaginations, and revenging Disobedience*. It is therefore the easiest Construction, to understand by *that*, Doctrine, by *this*, Discipline.

Now it is evident, that these Weapons are not of a carnal Nature. They respect not temporal, but spiritual Concerns. Their Object is not the Body, but the Mind. They aim to subdue the Heart to the Obedience of the Gospel; to form the Spirit for the Service of God, and the Enjoyment of his Glory; not to torture the Body, or spoil the Estate. No Confiscations, Imprisonments, Racks or Stakes; no *confused Noise, nor Garments rolled in Blood*, are the Concomitants, or Effects, of this Warfare.

YET, with these Weapons we assault, and sack *strong Holds*. By these, in Congruity with the foregoing Explifications, we are to understand, all Things by which Sinners resist the Gospel, maintain their Ground, and defend themselves against all its Charms: Such are *Ignorance, carnal Reasonings, Unbelief, Hardness of Heart, depraved Affections, Pride and Presumption*; and in general, the *moral Corruption* of human Nature. Against *these*, Ministers are to fight, and *these* they overcome, by the Concurrence of divine Power and Grace.

ON the Whole, we learn,

THAT it is the special Province of the Ministers of Christ, to preach the Gospel, and govern the Church. And, that the ministerial Office, duly managed, by the Co-operation of divine Power, is efficacious, to subdue and purify the Hearts of Sinners.

My Design on this Subject, is,

- I. To prove the former of these doctrinal Observations.
- II. To discourse of the due Management of Doctrine and Discipline;

Discipline; or the Pre-requisites necessary to render them effectual.

III. To shew what are their genuine Effects, when so circumstantiated.

I. I am to prove, that it is the special Province of the Ministers of Christ, to preach the Gospel, and govern the Church. And,

I. THAT *it belongs to a particular Set of Men, qualified and solemnly set apart for that very Purpose, to preach the Gospel, is so plainly declared in the sacred Scriptures, that none but Deists and Enthusiasts dispute it. We have their Qualifications described, their Ordination appointed, the solemn Rites of it stated, their Province limited and circumscribed, and the special Duties of it declared, and urged upon them. It is required, that they be eminently wise and faithful; and that therefore they devote themselves to the Study of Truth, and furnish a Treasury of various, but useful Knowledge, out of which, as Occasion requires, they may bring forth Things, new and old. Hence Novices, and the unlearned, are expressly debarred from this holy Function.*

Mt. xxiv. 45.

Mat. xiii. 52.
1 Tim. iii. 6.

It is required, that after due Trial and Approbation, they be separated to this Office, by Prayer and Imposition of Hands, and those the Hands of the Presbytery, who are themselves ordained: For none can regularly invest others with an Authority, of which themselves are destitute.

Act. xiii. 2, 3.

1 Tim. iv. 14.

It is required, that they declare the whole Council of God; and that they be instant in Season, and out of Season, in preaching and exhorting. As Stewards, they are to dispense to each their proper Portion; and as able Ministers of the New Testament, to divide the Words of Truth rightly. To them, the great Treasure of the Gospel is committed; and they are stiled Christ's Ambassadors, because it is their Business to deliver his Message to Mankind.

Act. xx. 27.

2 Tim. iv. 2.

2 Tim. ii. 15.

Now it is plain, that all are not Ambassadors; all are not ordered to teach, and to reprove, with all Authority; all are not promiscuously Stewards of the Mysteries of God; nor ordained to be such, by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery. Are all Apostles? Are all Prophets? Are all Pastors and Teachers? No. The Things themselves manifest, that they

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they are *peculiar*, and pertain only to *some*. If all had equal Authority, to exercise the ministerial Office at Pleasure, the Church of Christ would no longer be a *Kingdom*, but a *Croud*; not an *Army*, but a *Tumult*; not a *System*, but an *Heap*. It would be a *Chaos, without Form*, and *void*, where Confusion, instead of Order, would reign. Therefore, 'tis not only *Impiety*, but *Sacrilege*, for any Man to *take this Honour to himself*, but *he that is called of God*, and set apart thereto, as was AARON.

2. THE Exercise of *Government* and *Discipline*, belongs primarily to Gospel Ministers. To them, not to the People in common, are the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven* committed. A Key was an Emblem of Authority and Government; and *delivering* it to a Person, denoted his formal Investiture with that Authority. Thus when the *Government is committed into the Hands of ELIAKIM*, the *Key of the House of DAVID* is given to him. So Christ our Lord, in Effect, declares, that by giving to his Apostles, the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, was signified their Power to *bind and loose*; to *remit and retain Sins*; which they could only do ministerially, by Doctrine and Discipline.

Ifa. xxii. 21.
V. 22.
Mat. xvi. 19.
Joh. xx. 23.

IN the Epistles to the seven Churches of *Asia*, not the People, but the Angels, are commended, when Discipline was duly exercised; and the Angels alone are reproved when it was neglected. In either Case, it is supposed, that the Exercise of Discipline was the Angels proper Province.

THE same may be evinced from this plain Position, that JESUS CHRIST visibly executes his kingly Office, by ecclesiastical Government; but Ministers, and not the People, are his Representatives. The Care, and *Overfight* of the Church, is committed to them; and the People are commanded to *submit themselves to them*, as being OVER THEM in the Lord.

1 Pet. v. 2.
Heb. xiii. 17.
1 Thes. v. 12.

MOREOVER, all ministerial Duty is comprised, in *feeding the Flock*: But *feeding* it, contains the *Government* of it; and is sometimes in Scripture, restricted to Government alone. Hence Kings are frequently stiled *Shepherds*, and *ruling and feeding* are synonymous Terms.

1 Pet. v. 2.
Zech. xi. 8,
&c.

AGAIN.

AGAIN. It seems evidently to follow, from the divine Constitution, that the prime Authority must needs be delegated to Ministers, seeing by them Churches are first gathered. For there can be no Church, without Believers; no Believers ordinarily, without the Word; and the Word is not to be preached, but by Ministers. This is the fixed Order of Things.---*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*---For, *how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?* All these Interrogations, answer themselves in the Negative. Rom. x. 14, 17.

I PRESUME it is too plain, to need Proof, that Ministers are supposed to have Qualifications, for the Business of Government, as well as preaching, superior to common Christians; and can it be conceived, that the weakest Church Member is invested with equal Power and Authority? Is it credible, that God himself, would *set those to judge, who are least esteemed in the Church,* and to judge in Matters that are sufficient to exercise the greatest Capacities? It cannot be. 1 Cor. vi. 4.

ON the Whole, methinks it would be convictive to such as differ from us on this Head, candidly to consider, whether the same Charge, in Point of Government and Discipline, is given to common Church-Members, as to Ministers? Are the former ever ordered to *feed* Christ's Flock? to censure Offenders? to retain Sins, and remit them? to bind and loose? are the divine Directions concerning these Matters inscribed to them? Or do the Scriptures take for granted, that they all have equal Ability, and the same Spirit of Government with Ministers of the Word? Now, if all these must be answered in the Negative, I see not how Ministers can clearly satisfy themselves, that they act up to Character, or fulfil their Commission, if they allow every Christian equal Power in Government: For so doing, they virtually relinquish the Authority of *Overseers, of Shepherds, of Rulers,* and of the principal Officers belonging to Christ's *visible* Kingdom.

BUT tho' Ministers are the *primary*, it does not follow, that they *only* are the Governors of the Church. The Task would not only be too great for them, but the Execution of it, perhaps, too precarious. A Minister cannot be every

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where,

where, nor always among his People ; and so has not the Opportunity of knowing the Conduct of Particulars, which yet is quite necessary, in order to his admitting them to, or suspending them from, special Privileges. And to have none, whose particular Office it is, to inspect the Lives of their Fellow-Members, of whom he might enquire, concerning their Behaviour, is an Inconvenience so obvious, that a slight Consideration may see it.

BESIDES, censuring is an invidious Business ; and should the whole Burden of it be laid on him alone, it would not only be oppressive to his Spirits, but would tend to render him odious, and consequently less edifying to Offenders. In short, I venture to affirm universally, that every Minister, who understands Discipline, and is conscientious and faithful in the Exercise of it, will say with MOSES, *I am not able to bear all this People.* Therefore, for these, and other Reasons that might be offered, it appears altogether best, that some select, faithful, and judicious Men, should be joined with him, as Assistants, in *watching over the Flock*, and in managing the weighty Concerns of Government.

Now, as this is rational, it is not to be doubted, but that God, who is himself, *the original Reason*, and Author of it in us, approves of this Scheme ; and consequently allows us the aforesaid Helps, as in the like Case he allowed to *Moses*. So then, altho' he has appointed his Ministers to govern his Church, it does not follow, that ruling Elders are not also of divine Appointment. We find, that God has not only *set in the Church, Prophets, Apostles, Pastors and Teachers* ; but also *Helps, Governments* : He has not only given some to *labour in the Word and Doctrine* ; but also some to *Rule*.

BUT it is not my Design to discuss this Point at large ; but only to say so much as may guard the preceding Doctrine.

I AM now,

II. To discourse of the due Management of Doctrine and Discipline ; or, the Pre-requisites necessary to render them effectual.

THE Mode of Expression in the Text, leads me to treat this Point, *negatively and positively ; not carnal, but mighty, thro' God.*

I. NEITHER

I. NEITHER the *End, Means* or *Manner*, should be carnal. Ministers cannot reasonably expect Success in their Labour, if they propose themselves as their End; if they seek their own Honour, and not the Honour of *him that sent them*; making it their main Business, to display their Parts and Acquirements, that they may be admired and caressed. Or if they enter into the Ministry, moved by the Love of *filthy* 1. Pet. v. 2. *Lucre*; or that they may get their Living in an easy and creditable Way. They may not use *external Force*, nor employ other Powers, to reclaim Offenders, than those they received from God. Let them not put on a *domineering* V. 3. *Sty*, nor strive to overbear, by *bantering*, or to carry a Point by the Influence of *Riches*, or outward *showy Grandeur*. Never let a Censure be inflicted to gratify a carnal Passion, or to revenge a private Injury. There must be no Shadow, either of Arbitrariness, or Partiality; no preferring of one, before another, in Judgment; nor artful Dishonesty, in perverting a Cause. Be it far from them, either cowardly to *truckle*, or proudly to *boast*, or meanly to *flatter*. They should make Sinners sensible, that nothing they can do *for*, or *against* them, is the Ground either of their *Hopes* or *Fears*. It is highly vain for any to expect, that they will gain Men to Religion, by humouring them in their Vices: Therefore, Ministers must not form their Doctrines and mode, to suit a depraved Taste. It is carnal, to speak with a *cold Indifference*, when addressing Men on Matters of eternal Moment: Nor is it less *so*, to speak only with a *meer affected Pathos*.

FINALLY, they may not depend for Success, on their own Skill or Power; their Parts or Gifts, whether natural or acquired; nor on the best calculated, and most orthodox Performances, without the Concurrence of divine Influences. All these Particulars will be found, on Examination, to be carnal, and consequently ineffectual: For, as *carnal*, and *mighty*, are opposed to each other, in our Text, it teaches us, that whatever is carnal, is therefore weak. Hence, that our Weapons may be mighty, it is necessary, not only that they be spiritual, in their Nature, but used in a spiritual Manner. This leads me,

2. To the positive Part of this Head ; that is, to shew the Pre-requisites that must concur, to render Doctrine and Discipline effectual. For some Reasons, I shall treat of Discipline in the first Place. But here let it be premised,

THAT tho' it is not human Power, or Skill, that makes these Weapons effectual, yet the greatest Prudence is necessary, in exercising them. For, tho' God may have sometimes so over-ruled Imprudencies, as to bring Good out of them, that can be no *Rule* of Procedure to us. He ordinarily works by Means that are proper, and well adapted to the End : Therefore, it is our indispensable Duty to use *only such*.

HENCE, it will easily appear, that, in order to exercise Discipline successfully, it is necessary,

1. To *understand human Nature* ; and more especially the peculiar Tempers, Modes and Circumstances, of those we have immediately to deal with. By this a Minister will be enabled to touch the secret Springs of the Soul, and so move it agreeably to the Occasion : Nor can any one, without this, advantageously accommodate himself to his People's Cases. 'Tis plain then, that the Knowledge of Books and Sciences, is not more necessary to a Minister, than the Knowledge of Men.

2. To *understand the proper Forms of judicial Procedures, and to be well skilled in the Maxims of Government in general*. For a strict Adherence to regular, established, and acknowledged Forms, will both preserve a Judicature from Confusion, in the Trial of any Cause, and remove all plausible Ground of Complaint and Clamour against them. But Deviations will expose them to be censured as partial, and at the same Time, disable them as to a clear and convictive Vindication of their Integrity. It is necessary,

3. To have a *Spirit of Government* ; to be capable, when Occasion requires, both to speak and Act with Authority. By this Authoritative Mode, I do not mean, *putting on an Air of Sternness and Severity* ; but rather acting, in a Manner grave and composed ; as one conscious of Power, and therefore undismayed and undisturbed ; but steady and resolute in doing right ; keeping the Intruder or Offender at a due Distance, yet so as not to make him desperate, until his Case is really so.

IN order to establish Authority, it is necessary to maintain an uniform Adherence to Equity,---an evident Impartiality, untullied Candour in the Examination of the Cause,----- and a Tenderneis; the Reverse of Rigour. Allow the Defendant's Cause to stand in its best Light, and put the most favourable Construction on his Conduct, that it can bear. Never bind a Person under Censure, unless his Conscience can be convinced of the criminal Fact alledged against him, by clear Evidence and Argument: And when convicted, let the Censure, as much as possible, be proportioned to the Fault; but of the two Extreams, chuse rather to be *under*, than *over*: For the Cord of Discipline, if it be over-stretched, is in Danger of breaking; the Consequences of which, always have been, and ever will be, very fatal to the Christian Interest. In a Word, we must act so, as to make the censured sensible, that we are influenced by Conscience of Duty; that we seek his Advantage, and his Reputation too, so far as it can be preserved in Consistency with the Honour of Religion; and that we have no *By-Ends* to serve, nor any *selfish Humours* to gratify.

4. It is necessary to *have still in View*, the *Ends which Censures are designed to Answer*. These are, the Vindication of the Glory of God, our Saviour; and, in Subordination thereto, the Recovery and Edification of the censured, the deterring of others from the like Evils, and the Removal of Scandals from the Church. It is unreasonable, yet it is the Way of the World, to ascribe the Male-Conduct of one, to all: But when the Church exercises due Censures, she clears herself, and *puts to Silence, the Ignorance of foolish and invidious Observers*. By this Means also, the Offence taken by Fellow-Members, is removed: For when the offending Brother is censured, and submits, he is then visibly reclaimed, and so is to be received, and treated as tho' he had not been guilty. 1. Pet. ii. 15.

It requires great *Prudence*, deep *Penetration*, and clear *Circumspection*, of all around us, to know what *Mode*, and what Degree of Censure, will be necessary, at once to secure the Honour of Religion, and the Offender's Edification; and to form every Judgment so exactly, as it may be a safe Precedent in all future Cases of like Nature. THERE

THERE is also a *certain Dexterity* necessary in the Management of this Business, which cannot be explained by Words, nor otherwise obtained, than by exercising ourselves in it; nor by *that*, without an Heart anxious to do *only what is right*; ---to glorify God, save Men, and secure the Reputation of the Church. 'Tis such a Disposition of Heart, and such alone, that will set us earnestly on devising the properest Methods to *win Souls*; that will dictate the most pertinent Matter, and spirit our Address; and engage us to take Care, that every Judgment we form, be such as we can expect will be ratified in Heaven.

FINALLY, after we have done our utmost, we must depend on God for Success. If he second our just Actings, with his Authority, they will have their Effect; otherwise not. It gives us great Power over the Person censured, if we have his Conscience on our Side; but it is God alone who can give his Conscience Commission, to arrest him; which, if it does, tho' his Corruptions may reluctate for the present, yet he cannot find Peace; ---he will be obliged to yield. This is the great Advantage of acting with Integrity, and censuring agreeably to the approving Will of God. Here pause, and think,

How much should Discipline be the Study of Candidates for the Ministry of the Gospel! Such a difficult Part of their Office should not be so slightly attended to, as I'm afraid it often is. Thro' Inexperience, and the Want of a comprehensive View of the sacred Function, they are apt to think themselves duly qualified for it, when to their classical and philosophical Learning, is added, the Knowledge of systematic Divinity. But this is comparatively a small Attainment. When they are called to take the Charge of a Congregation, and are unacquainted with Government, they either neglect the Exercise of it, or attempting, mismeane it, and do Hurt instead of Good. This tends to discourage them; and, perhaps, tempts them to think Discipline in itself is hurtful, when they should rather blame themselves. For the same Case might have been so managed, that no Detriment, but much Advantage, would have been the Consequence.

THE Exercise of Discipline will give an excellent Proof of a Minister's Patience and Self-government;--of his Fortitude and Resolution;--of his Wisdom and Prudence;---of his Tenderness and Care;---and of his Humility. For why? In *that* he has to deal, with the peevish Humours, the Caprice,--the Selfishness,--the Subtilty,--the Obstinacy,--the Ferocity and Ignorance of fallen Mortals. He therefore, widely mistakes, who thinks it enough, that he is able to deal with their Reason and Judgment. Were no more necessary, our Work would be exceeding easy. But to treat successfully with Sinners, requires a *Power to charm as wisely*, as he who would tame wild Beasts, Tygers and Serpents.

If Discipline is neglected, the Consequences, however disregarded, are truly lamentable. The Church is reproached; God's Name and Honour exposed and betrayed; pious and tender Christians, are made uneasy and grieved; their Comfort and Edification obstructed; Sinners are hardened, and become more bold; the Clean and Unclean, the Holy and Profane, are undistinguished; stumbling Blocks and Offences abound; and the Removal of them becomes more and more difficult, the longer they are neglected. That all these are the Consequences of this Neglect, might be demonstrated from Scripture, and the Reason of Things, did Time permit, or were it necessary, in such an Assembly. On the Whole, I presume it is evident, that the Church can as little subsist in *well-being*, without Government and Discipline, as any earthly Kingdom. Let us next consider,

2. THE Pre-requisites necessary to render Doctrine effectual. When I say *necessary*, I would not be understood to mean any Thing inconsistent with the Sovereignty of God, who, if he please, can work *without*, or even by *contrary* Means: But I speak according to the stated, and ordinary Course of Things. Now that Gospel Doctrine may be *mighty*, it is requisite,

1. That the *Gospel Minister be holy*, and so have Experience in himself of those Truths he is to deliver. He who *feels* what he says, will naturally speak with *Ardour*. The divine Sentiments come *glowing* from his Heart, and tend to *kindle* the Hearts of his Hearers. It is natural for Men easily to catch

catch each others Passions. We see how quickly Anger will fly from Breast to Breast; and how intensibly a chearful Countenance diffuses Pleasure all around. We are touched with Compassion; that is, we feel the Miseries of others, and symphathetick Tears are extorted from us by theirs. So People are engaged to hear *in earnest*, when they perceive, that a Minister is *in earnest* with them. Hence it plainly appears, that pointed and warm Address is a proper, and well adapted Mean, to influence the Hearts of Men; and consequently is the Mean which God *ordinarily* uses for that End. But this genuine *spiritual Ardour*, is peculiar to an holy Man. He who is conscious *in himself* of the certain *Reality* of divine Things; who feels their Power, tastes their Sweetness, and labours under the Sense of their Weight and Importance; whose Heart *the Love of Christ constrains*, and Zeal for the Salvation of Souls fires; whom the Presence of God and his gracious Communications *now*, and the sure Prospect of his Glory *hereafter*, animate and encourage; He, I say, will speak like a Man of God indeed: He will open his Mouth *boldly*, and ~~make~~ manifest the Gospel, as it ought to be spoken; will speak as the Oracles of God;---will speak like one who believes what he speaks, and believes it to be inexpressibly great and concerning: Will speak like one having Authority, and not as the Scribes. It is requisite,

2. To propose the Doctrines of the Gospel, distinctly and clearly. Let Mixture and Confusion, Disguise and Colouring, be far removed. Let the Things themselves be seen, and made as naked as possible. This Paul opposes to *Wisdom of Words*, and that *Excellency of Speech*, which a Minister of Christ should avoid. An excessive Nicety in Composition, and curious polishing, take away the Energy and Spirit, cloud the Things of God, and prevent their appearing in true Colours; for they will ever appear most grand in their native Simplicity. The LORD of Glory uses great Plainness of Speech: But Men, affecting to be more subline, often *darken Counsel*,---divine Counsel,---by Words without Knowledge. It is the truest Learning, that enables a Minister, to speak a Word in Season to the Weary. This leads me to say,

Eph. vi. 19,
25.

Mat. vii. 29.

1 Cor. i. 17,
and 2, 4,
13.

Job xxxviii.
2.
Hai. i. 4.

3. THAT

3. THAT it is necessary to calculate *evangelical Discourses*, so as to make them *distinguishing*; and to speak *convincingly and demonstratively to the Conscience*. We must beware of strengthening the Wicked, or discouraging the Righteous. It is highly criminal, either to make those Hearts sad, whom the Lord would not have made sad; or to encourage those, who despise the Lord, to fancy, that no evil shall come upon them. This is done, by giving false, or insufficient Marks of saying Grace; or condemning the Christian's State, when only the present *Frame* of his Heart is to be censured; nor does he any better, who gives no distinguishing Marks of a gracious or carnal State, at all; but addressing his Hearers *in the Lump*, leaves them to divide each to himself at Pleasure. It is undoubtedly his Duty, as a *Steward of the Mysteries of God*, to give every one his Portion, and separate between the *Precious and the Vile*, by drawing their respective Characters to the Life. So, and *only* so, can he be said, *rightly to divide the Words of Truth*. This is the only proper Method of attempting to fasten Conviction on the Guilty, to alarm the Careless and Indolent, and *comfort them that mourn*. Now, as a *pointed Form of Address*, is quite necessary in this Case, however unfashionable it be among the Votaries of modern Politeness, it is really *most elegant*, for this plain Reason, because it is *most proper*. But after all,

Exek. xiii. 22

Jer. xxiii. 17.

Jer. xv. 19.

2 Tim. ii. 15.

4. *THE Power of God* is absolutely necessary, to render the Word effectual. Paul may plant, Apollos water; but 'tis God alone who can give the Increase. The Apostles had never succeeded in reforming the World, had their *Speech* and their *Predaching* been only with the *enticing Words of Man's Wisdom*, and not in *Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power*. Some others, might, perhaps, have been admired themselves, as much as *Demosthenes, or Cicero*; but Christ and his Gospel, would have been neglected; and no mighty Effects produced. An elegant Discourse may please, when it does not edify: It may command the Ear, when it does not strike the Heart. But he who preaches with Power, speaks in the *true Sublime*: For he obliges his Audience to attend to the *Things* that are spoken: Their Minds are so engaged, by the *Matter*, as often to neglect the *Cir-*

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cumstances

circumstances and Manner :---So rapt up,---that, for the present they think little about the Preacher ; but hear the *Word*, not as the fine Sentiments of a Man, but, *as it is indeed, the Word of God*. The Preacher may, upon after Reflection, be very highly esteemed ; but at the Time, the Truths, not the Person, are admired, and fill all the Thoughts. *Then* Threatnings appear terrible : Pronounced with *solemn Gravity*, they strike,---they *slay*,---like Thunder-bolts launched from the right Hand of Omnipotence. *Then* the Offers and Invitations of the Gospel, delivered with Simplicity, become *alluring*,---Exhortations *persuasive*, and the Promises *exceeding precious* and sweet. Then divine Things appear great, *very great*. Their *exceeding Weight* overpowers the Soul, and makes it bow down before the God of Glory, and Majesty. I am insensibly led,

III. To mention the Effects of Doctrine and Discipline, when circumstantiated in the aforesaid Manner:

SPIRITUAL Doctrines at least over-awe Sinners, astonish them, and, *for a while*, put them to a Stand. They put them on serious Resolutions, of living new Lives, engage them actually to a partial Reformation, and *almost persuade* them to be Christians. Nay, they sometimes seem like new
 Aēt.xxvi.28. Creatures ; they are humbled, and *walk softly* ;---rejoice in
 1. King. xxi. 27. the Light of the Gospel, and the glorious Prospects it opens to them. They forsake their former wicked Courses, and vain Companions, *who live in Error* ; and seem to have
 2. Pet. ii. 18. V. 20. *escaped the Pollutions of the World, thro' the Knowledge of the Lord Jesus*.

BUT the most powerful Preaching, has not these Effects on all who are not converted by it: Yet it will be *distinguished* by Effects of a different Nature. For the festered Sores of Sinners being probed, and their Consciences rified, it galls, and tortures, and provokes them. Hence that bitter, and seemingly unaccountable Spleen, and Contempt, which they so frequently manifest against such preaching, and such Preachers.

THE most blessed Effect of *the Word*, so circumstanced, is the Renovation, and Sanctification of carnal Hearts: These, however hard, it breaks as an Hammer, melts as
 Fire,

Fire, changes their Temperature, and forms them for God. They are made susceptible of Impressions from every divine Command. The Law engrafted, is no longer a *dead Letter*, but a *practical Principle*; being written, not only on the *Memory*, but on the *Heart*. Hence Sin, *once* loved and indulged, is *now* hated and mortified; and Holiness is relish'd and promoted. The Proud and Lofty, become *lowly in Heart*; the Turbulent, mild; and the Obdurate, pliant and tender. God is the Object of supreme Delight; his Truths are received, his Promises confided in, his Laws obeyed, and his Ordinances frequented. In a Word, *old Things are pass'd away, and all Things are become new.*

DISCIPLINE also, duly exercised, is sometimes *mighty*, to reclaim Offenders. Seconded by the Authority of God, it often deters even the Bold, and makes *others also to fear*. But if any obstinately persist, and refuse to be reformed, in that Case, we *have in Readiness to revenge all such Disobedience*; by cutting off the infected Member, that the Contagion may not spread. *A little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump.* And *one Sinner may destroy much Good.*

1 Cor. v. 6.
Eccl. ix. 18.

Now, my reverend, much honoured, and very dear Fathers and Brethren; (altho' as I presume, every one, upon Trial, will find himself covered with some Degree of Confusion, when he would offer any thing by Way of Exhortation, or Advice, to those, whom he knows to be greatly superior to him; which is at present my own Case, yet) since by your stated Appointment it becomes my Duty to preach to you to Day, I most humbly beg, and from your Condescension, I may hope to obtain, Permission to address you, especially my co-eval and younger Brethren, in a few Words.

How solemn and awful is our Office! how difficult our Work! We are nearer the Lord, than others; and *he will be sanctified in them, that come nigh him.* We speak, we act, and we judge for God. *And who is sufficient for these Things?* How solicitous should we be, that we *speak of him, the Things that are right!* And that our judicial Acts be such as we may expect he will ratify in Heaven! Then will they be *established indeed.* How necessary is our constant Dependance on him! For he is our Strength, our Life, our Light, and our

Lev. x. 3.

our Confession; and without him we can do nothing. We may readily manage with such *Plausibility*, as to obtain ourselves the Esteem of our Hearers; but we have done nothing to the Purpose, if we have not engaged them to esteem the Lord of Glory, and pay a serious Regard to his Will. This is the End of our Ministry; and what have we done, if it is not attained?—Christ has sent us, to endeavour the saving of Sinners, and for that Purpose, to shew them their Guilt, offer Pardon, Righteousness, and Life to them, and earnestly to beseech and persuade them to accept the Offer, and yield themselves to God, as those that are alive, from the Dead. Now, if they friendly receive us, as Men; but reject us as Ministers; what have we profited? When they refuse Obedience to the Message we bring from our Master, they reject us in our proper Character. And shall we be content with personal Respects, when Jesus Christ is disregarded? God forbid. Let us recommend pure Religion to them; let us do it faithfully, zealously, and prudently; and if by what we lose we lose Favour, let us not value it, but cheerfully take our Lot with our Saviour, and our Lord. Will it become us to be honourable when he is despised? Or is it meet, that the Servant be above his Master? If the World hate us, remember that it hated him first. Do we Labour much in vain? So did he, who spoke as never Man spake. Do the Voluptuous and Covetous sometimes deride us? Just so they behaved towards him. Let us, therefore, go straight on in the Way of Duty, thro' Honour and Dishonour; thro' evil Report, and good Report. May we never seek our own Glory, but only the Glory of him that sent us; nor preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. Let us ever be desirous to disappear ourselves, that he may be admired, and gloriously exalted. Do we trust him with our Souls? Trust we him, then, with our Life, our Estate, and our Character; and never omit our Duty, in order to curry Favour with the World. O! May we quit ourselves like Men, and be strong.

I would now beseech the Students of the College, here present, to shew a Word of Exhortation.

My dear young Brethren! Some of you, it may be concluded, design the holy Ministry. It is well,---he that desires it, *desires a good Work*. And at this very Time we need Assistance. There are a Multitude of vacant Congregations under our Care: A Multitude, who cry after us, desiring the *Bread of Life*, when we have none to send, in order to *break it to them*. In this Exigence, their and our Eyes are turned towards this College. Spent with Toil, we comfort ourselves with the Prospect of Help from hence. But, O!--if your Hearts are not right with God; if you are not zealous for the Honour of Jesus, and the Interests of his Kingdom; If you are not anxious for the Salvation of Souls, but seek your own Honour and Ease; if you conform yourselves to the corrupt Taste of the World, and instead of evangelical, plain, and pungent Address, you *only* study to be elegant and harmonious, while your Discourses are destitute of *Spirit* and *Life*; how lamentably disappointed shall we be! And how much ashamed of our Hopes!--If you are *in the Gall of Bitterness*, what shall we do?--*If Salt has lost it's Savour, it is good for nothing*. In Mat. v. 13. In short, if God himself be not with you, you will not answer our Purpose, nor relieve us in our present Exigence. But you cannot expect his gracious Presence, unless you have *avouched him to be your God*; unless you ultimately design his Glory; and unreservedly devote yourselves to his Service. If, then, you would comfort us; if you would refresh immortal Souls; if you desire, that the *Blessing of those who are ready to perish may come upon you*; if you would rejoice the whole Church of God; and finally obtain the Smiles of Heaven, *give yourselves to the Lord Jesus in the first Place*. Without the Pre-requisites mentioned, your Ministrations are neither likely to be profitable to others, nor pleasant to yourselves. For why? Your Heart will not be in the Work, and consequently it will appear but a dull and heavy Task. What Delight can you take in feeding the *Sheep* of Christ, and his *Lambs*, when you neither *truly* love him, nor them? How will you be able to *speak a Word in Season to the Weary*, when you cannot natively apprehend their Case, having never been *exercised unto Godliness* yourselves? Who can expect, that you

you will be tender, and cautious of hurting the Souls of others, when you daily wound your own? Nay, pious People will starve under your Ministry, finding little, or nothing, suited to their Exercises and spiritual Relish; the ungodly will be hardened, and made more secure; and to compleat your Unhappiness, God will not accept your Persons, nor your Service. Therefore, if you embrace not the Gospel with all your Heart; if you depend not on Jesus Christ for Righteousness and Strength; nor delight in Purity of Spirit, and universal Conformity to the divine Law; touch not with unhallowed Hands, these holy Things, lest ye die. *Hence, ye profane! Be far away!*

YOUR good Sense, my Brethren, will not allow you to interpret this Address as a Censure on any of you: But you will do me Justice, if you understand it to be the genuine Expression of a strong Desire, that you may be unceasable, blessed yourselves, and Blessings to all around you.

As for such of you as do not design the Ministry, permit me to remind you, that you are equally under Obligations to live to God, and *serve your Generation according to his Will*, in your respective Stations. Let it be your Study to do Good, and that the most extensive in your Power. This should be the Aim of all your Acquisitions in Learning. What avails it, that you know more than others, if you are not more serviceable to Mankind, than they? Consider, that the greatest Honour which God confers on Men below, is, not to make them rich and splendid, but *useful*. These are the *highly favoured* of God, and, which is infinitely more, they are themselves *Favours* which he bestows on the World. *The Kingdoms of the Earth* are often given *to the vilest of Men*: But those are of an *excellent Spirit*, who are formed by Heaven for the Good of Men on Earth. Therefore seek only to be *Good*, and, if God succeed your Pursuit of *that*, you will be *great* of Course: And if your Hearts are upright, and your Zeal sincere, you may expect his Concurrence.

FINALLY, I would offer a few Considerations to the Hearers of the Gospel in general, who are now present.

You hear, my Brethren, with what an important Authority we are invested; and how awful a Charge is committed
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to us. We are commanded to take Care of your Souls ; and must be accountable, if you perish thro' our Neglect. I doubt not but some of you esteem us highly, and often hear our Discourses gladly : You shew us Kindness, treat us friendly, and perhaps honour us too. But, however agreeable these Things are in their Place, they are far short of answering the End we have in View : For if you count us faithful, you must of Course conclude that our Hearts are set on your Salvation ; therefore we cannot rest satisfied with personal Regards, while you reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we preach. We demand your Hearts for our Lord and Master ; we insist upon it, that you freely yield yourselves to him ; and we urge upon you the Offers of Grace, and eternal Salvation. We speak these Things in the Name, and by the dread Authority, of the great God ; and *beseech you, in Christ's Stead, to be reconciled to God.* On this Head, we may not, we cannot, let you alone.---Discouraged and repulsed we renew our Attempts.---For how can we bear to see you perishing, and not endeavour to prevent it?---We must, we will, cry after you, while you are within hearing, and follow you with our Cries even to the Gates of Hell.---But we can no more.---You are convinced, that we urge you to what is your Duty ; we have your Consciences on our Side, and no Objection, or Scruple is pretended. Now, then, while your Ears hear the Overtures of Mercy, accept them ; receive the *Gift of Righteousness* ;---*present yourselves a living Sacrifice to God, which is your reasonable Service* ; and be not willing to go Christless and Graceless away from this Place. If you comply, you will be blessed for ever ; and be *our Joy*, and *our Crown*, in the Day of the Lord Jesus. *Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* Which may God grant, for Christ's Sake. *AMEN.*

F I N I S.