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PREACHED MAY 11, 1808,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. EBENEZER HUBBARD,

OVER THE SECOND CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN

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A SERMON, &c.

JAMES v. 19 and 20.

BRETHREN, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he, which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

THROUGH the kingdoms of nature, providence and grace, God generally carries into effect his purposes by the instrumentality of means. By angels, the ministers of his mercies and his wrath, *who do his will and are swift to obey his word*, he effectuates the designs of his eternal providence. Men are at one time the depositories of his bounties for the use of others. At other times, bringing good out of evil, he causeth *the wrath of man to praise him*, and on his schemes, however hostile to *God and his Christ*, he engrafts his own merciful results. Mediation and instrumentality pervade all his visible works. Even the inanimate agents of nature subserve his plans. *Wind and storm fulfil his word*. There is no being in the universe, but what he may use to advance his work, and increase his glory. Thus the *Great Worker*, behind the curtain of invisibility, shews himself chiefly in second causes; perhaps as one mode of trial, to ascertain whether we will blend the *worker* with his work, or with the grateful discernment of piety, trace the impress of his

hand upon all his works, and refer all second causes up to him.

This view of the divine action will furnish us with an easy explication of that part of the text, which seems to ascribe conversion to the underived power of man. When *one* is there said to *convert* another, it will lead us not to infer, that he is the final cause of that conversion, but only the happy and honored instrument in the hand of heaven, by which the change is effected. It scarcely need be subjoined, that in this sense only, and with this limitation, so explained, and so understood, can any one be said to convert another. Impious were the idea, that man can be the final cause in operating a miracle so astonishing. *All our sufficiency is of Christ.* Unless that sufficiency be imparted, unless the energizing influences of the Holy Spirit foster the attempt of man to reclaim him, *who errs from the truth*, the attempt will be ineffectual and vain. This interpretation of this part of the text, we would be understood to carry through our future remarks upon the subject.

We shall consider the scope of the text, as having two parts.

1. The motives which call for exertion in the attempt to convert sinners.

2. The manner in which the exertion should be attempted.

The motives, which should lead a minister of the *Everlasting Gospel* to his field of duty, the manner in which he should labor in that field, inferred from the nature of his motives—this arrangement will guide our reflections.

PART 1. The benevolence of the attempt to convert sinners. A traveller, who had been left by thieves, *robbed, wounded, half dead*, a spectacle of horror, and an object of aversion to the selfish and cruel, who passed by *on the other side*, inspired the good Samaritan with a pity, a generous concern, which evinced itself in deeds. *Go ye*, said the benevolent Savior, *and do likewise*. With what pity, what tenderness, and benevolent zeal, should the disciple of that Savior contemplate the case of an inveterate sinner. It is, of all that can be imagined, the most deplorable. And he, who has a heart open to the genuine sympathies of nature, a soul susceptible of the impulses of benevolence, will not *pass by on the other side*. The love, the example, the command of Christ, will constrain him. Every sublime motive, which can excite the glow of benevolence, the ardor of exertion in the great cause of God and man, the deepest pity for wretchedness indescribable, will impel him to the sinner, and the celestial attempt to heal his wounds, to reclaim his wanderings, to put him in the right way, and set him on his road towards heaven rejoicing. Let others aspire to build foundations in the dust, to gain earthly applause and distinction. He, who would evince himself a disciple of our divine master, must chiefly covet the sweet applauses of his own heart, *and the blessing of him who was ready to perish*. Nor let any man, be his pursuit or condition what it may, hold himself excused, under the mistaken impression that all the obligation is upon one class of men, and that all others are exempted. It is the most important of all social duties; the most benevolent of all labors. A consequent responsibility rests upon all.

But there is a class of men, upon whom this great work more peculiarly devolves; the ministers of the everlasting gospel. They are bound by the very tenor of their divine instructions, by the particular duties of their holy calling, by all the responsibility of their sacred office, to give all their hearts to the exertion, to devote themselves *wholly to the work*, to the exclusion of all minor considerations, religiously to cultivate all their talents, sedulously to improve *the gift, that is in them*, to summon all their energies into action, to *become all things to all men*, as far as may be without duplicity, in order *by all means to win souls unto Christ*.

Broad is their field of duty. Immense the weight of their responsibility. But the melancholy task of enumerating the discouragements, the obstacles, the determents, the formidable difficulties, incidental to the very nature of the holy calling, is not mine. It is not mine to describe the mountains, over which they must climb in pursuit of the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, nor the *cruel mockings*, they must often expect, even from the deluded wanderers themselves, even for the very attempt to reclaim them, and bring them home to God. A theme, far more pleasant, perhaps on this solemnity more useful, presents itself. The benevolence of his duties, the soothing and refreshing recompences attending success, the sublime spectacle, presented to view in the conversion of an inveterate sinner, the many *great and precious promises* of divine aid and protection to those, who give their hearts to the work.

The motive to exertion—if the labor be blessed, *a soul is saved from death. A multitude of sins are hidden.* What a train of infinite consequences fol-

low ! a sinner, whose soul was the sport of contending passions, and in *everlasting fluctuation, like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose heart, in the midst even of laughter was sad*, is brought back to that inexpressible tranquility, which results from the subjection and regulations of the passions by God's holy law, from the persuasion, that, as his heart is renovated, his course is changed, that he is now advancing towards the heavens. A sinner, who was lost to God, and that heaven, which he hath revealed ; lost to time and eternity ; lost to his friends, his country, those innumerable claims which society has upon every member ; to all those charities, which can only flow from a religious source ; and lost to himself ; a suicide bent upon self destruction ; shutting his eyes upon divine and human lights ; turning a deaf ear to the united testimony of reason, of conscience, of God's holy word and Spirit ; heedless of all counsel ; setting at equal defiance the promises and threatenings of the gospel ; despising the cross ; accounting the *blood of the cross an holy thing* ; a being in a situation, so deplorable, and so apparently hopeless, is reclaimed and brought home to God.

A soul is saved from death. Angels and men desponded of his return. Knowing, that the course of the sinner is downward, with a velocity even increasing, marking the unfrequency of return, from that path, *which leadeth to destruction*, all but that Being whose eye beholds in one view all the future destinies of his creatures, had relinquished hope of him, as one bound to hopeless and inevitable destruction.

A soul is saved from death, that complete and fi-

nal death, which extinguishes all the *life of God*, *obliterates all his image* forever, and consigns the soul to those regions of eternal death ; where the *blackness of the darkness* is ever receiving new shades from the increasing guilt of its tenants ; who are lost even to hope ; who increase their distance from God, adding tenfold horror to their guilt ; who yet, to close the climax of their wretchedness, *blaspheme the God of heaven, and repent not of their deeds*. Ah ! who shall lay claim to benevolence, who is not willing to labor in such a celestial attempt, as to *rescue souls from death*.

Not only these consequences, so indescribably dreadful, are avoided ; but positive results, involving more than can be conceived of happiness, are appended to the *conversion of a sinner*. Not only is he *saved from death*, but he acquires a title, *bought with a price*, and sanctioned by the name and authority of the *everlasting God* to immortal life. Another name is enrolled in the *Lamb's book of life*. One more shall ascend the height of heaven, *shall stand before God, and serve him day and night in his temple*.

His return increases the joys of the heavens. *There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner, that repenteth* ; a joy springing from that pure benevolence, which exults in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, in the communication of their own ineffable happiness ; a joy resulting from the developement of that merciful plan of salvation, *into which angels desire to look*. The exalted Redeemer himself *sees the labor of his soul, and is satisfied*.

The holy evangelist in the isle of Patmos, an ex-

ible for the *testimony of Jesus Christ*, by prostration of soul, and by solitary meditation, ascended in the visions of God, until he heard the united acclamations of thousands, and ten times thousands, who sang the high praises of Him, who redeemed *sinner*s by his own blood from all nations, languages, and people. Each converted sinner renews the song, and increases the hosannahs of the blessed. How soothing, how sublime the idea ! What joy, what rapture to a good mind, to “taste all this luxury of doing good,” to be the instrument of *saving a soul from death*, of raising that soul to heaven, and of giving new songs to the blessed above ! who, that has a heart, will not glow at the contemplation !

A soul is saved from death ; and need we add, that all the friends of Zion on earth, all who are on the side of God, respond to the joy, and the triumphs of the heavens. Little indeed has he drunk into the spirit of Christ, who feels no joy, when he beholds the sinner returning from *the error of his way*. Such an one, be he who he may, feeling no compassion for the forlorn condition of sinners, no generous purpose to reclaim them, who is not aroused from the lethargic stupidity of indifference by motives, so animating, and sacred, *has neither part, nor lot* in the work, nor while such in the kingdom of Christ.

It is a characteristic mark of a true disciple, that he is ever zealous for the advancement of his master's kingdom. Take the holy apostles for an example. What ardor ! what exertion ! what patience ! In every region of the globe, under every discouraging circumstance, in the face of bigoted Jews, of the vain-glorious Greeks, of the ferocious

barbarians, Christ is all their theme ; the cross all their glory. "The world was all before them," a world enveloped with the thickest gloom of ignorance, idolatry, and sin. The immensity of the field, instead of disheartening them with the prospect of interminable labors, became a new motive to alacrity. No dangers appalled them, or abated their intrepidity in displaying the truth. All personal concerns were consumed in their ardor to convert sinners.

This ardor in the cause of God, this concern for sinners, was not peculiar to the apostles. Good men in every age of the world have expressed grief at beholding prevailing degeneracy. In proportion to their grief is their zeal to ameliorate the condition of the world. In proportion to their grief and their zeal is their joy, when they behold their labors blessed. *They rejoice and are exceeding glad.* They adore in the return of a sinner, the wisdom of God in devising the place of redemption, the development of which appears in the conversion of sinners. They admire the power of God, which arrested him, who was receding from the heavens, which turned him directly round in his course. They admire the divine clemency, which could so harmonize with eternal justice, as to admit his return. They feel increasing gratitude to the great physician, so mighty to heal, so affectionate and skilful to apply *the balm in Gilead*, which gave perfect soundness to one, whose *whole head was sick, whose whole heart was faint.* They feel renewed desires finally to go to that Great Being, who displays his eternal mercies in such harmony and consistency, and *see him face to face.*

A soul is saved from death ; and other sinners, hardened, inveterate, keeping each other in countenance ; behold one of their number plucked, as *a brand from the burnings*. They are startled and amazed at the light, let in upon their darkness. If not wholly given over to *reprobate minds*, it brings them to a solemn pause. In vain would they open their mouth to scoffing, and represent the change, as the result of puerile superstition, or contemptible timidity. There is something so grand, affecting and solemn in the scene, that they cannot but be struck with awe. And the experience of every age has verified, that nothing is more effectual to awaken inveterate sinners, than to behold the triumphs of divine grace, as displayed in emancipating their fellows in guilt from the thralldom of sin, and the adversary, into the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*.

A soul is saved from death ; and, as one of the last blessed results of his conversion, let us behold the renovated sinner, returning to the bosom of his own family. How touching, and solemn the scene ! He had been a prodigal in a strange land, herding with the vilest of the vile. He had grieved all that concerned themselves to think of him. He had wounded his connexions in the tenderest part. Perhaps worse ; depending on him, and connected with him, the innocent suffered not only poverty, but shame and reproach with the guilty. Behold him regardless of their wants, ferocious and cruel ; his sensibilities benumbed ; his heart hardened, and incapable of the domestic sympathies, which cannot, at least, in any considerable degree, inhere in a heart, which has not been softened by religion. Behold him not only denying the sustaining hand,

to lead them over the rough and rugged ways of life, but doubling their burdens with ferocity, and enervating their courage by superadding to their load, a *wounded spirit*, incapable of bearing up against the ills of life.

Consider this man, at length reclaimed from the *the error of his way*. The adamant of his heart, as the rock smitten by Moses, flows with penitential sorrow. He raises his eyes once more to the heavens. "I have sinned, father, against heaven, and in thy sight." Behold him returning to that mansion, so dreary and joyless. His ferocity has become mildness. The tiger is changed to a lamb. The barbarian has felt the spirit of Christ, and, struck with horror at what he lately was, becomes doubly assiduous to discharge all the affectionate offices of domestic life. Who cannot fancy the scene? what kind greetings! what congratulations! How pleasant to behold *kindred and friends dwelling together in unity*. It is as the *dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of the Lord*. He is now affectionate and kind in all the domestic relations; a good parent, a good citizen, a man contented and happy, rejoicing in the *peace passing all understanding, the joy unspeakable and full of glory*, resulting from the consciousness that he is in the same road with all, who are travelling up to the holy hill, and that he shall increase the number of the blessed. Gratitude to the instrument of his conversion, and through him to the Great Final Cause, kindles its pure and gentle flames in his bosom, and they shall burn with the interminable ages of eternity.

Behold, how many blessed results are included

in *saving a soul from death*. It is not for man to imagine, much less to describe them in all their extent. These are but part, and how small a part of the whole ! All the revolutions of the earth, at its last hour, will not have involved so much of happiness, as is included in the conversion of a sinner. Ah ! my hearer, is not this a field in which benevolence will delight to labor ? Is not this a field, in which pity will choose to walk ? Is not this a field in which the noblest ambition may have scope ? What walk in life can present such inducements to generous minds as, *to labor in the faith and patience of the gospel* ? who entertaining the most distant hope that heaven would enable him to be the instrument of doing so much good, as the conversion of one sinner includes, but would enter upon his labors with animation, and energy ; alive to all the tenderness, which the condition of sinners must inspire in every benevolent mind, delighted with the sublime prospect, and eager for the indescribable result ?

PART 2. Who then are the men, *sufficient for these things*, whom God will own, approve and bless in this great work ? In what manner, with what prayers and entreaties ought they to attempt their benevolent labors in order *to work together with God* ?

He, who is to teach others the *error of their ways*, must be first taught himself. They who so zealously advert to the evangelists and apostles, in proof that the lights of human science are not needed in the prosecution of this work, forget, that some of the apostles were learned and eloquent, that all were supplied with miraculous illumination,

with such visible credentials from the *Most High*, as none could question. Instead of exulting in their former ignorance, they refer to their miraculous qualifications in proof of the divinity of their mission. While *they spake with tongues and wrought miracles*, and lightened with an insupportable radiance upon the darkness of sinners, and overwhelmed them with an irresistible eloquence, they little needed the glimmering lights of human reason and science. None, but impostors the most infamous, now lay claim to qualifications, thus visibly supernatural. In place of these, natural talent, and an aptitude to teach ; cultivated and improved love for the truth ; an honest and unprejudiced mind to search for it ; a capacity to investigate it ; profound acquaintance with all the avenues to the heart, with all its natural propensities and obliquities ; sanctified by devotion of all the faculties and powers to him, who is equally the *Father of Lights*, natural and supernatural, and an earnest, humble and persevering purpose to exert them all for his glory, and the conversion of sinners, are, in the present arrangement of Divine Providence, essential requisites.

Even the heathen sage considered it an indispensable qualification to complete the character of an orator, that he be a good man. Assuredly, they, who learn in the school of Christ, may assert this truth with more emphatic propriety. Truth, it is conceded, is truth, and as such obligatory, whether from the mouth of the holy, or the vile. But there is an earnestness, a solemnity, an impressiveness, an indescribable something in the manner of him, who feels himself the truth, the weight, and ever-

lasting importance of what he utters, which the uninterested and unbelieving cannot dissemble, nor counterfeit. The plant is always vigorous, when nature works at the root. The manner of instruction and persuasion which results from deep and settled conviction, will be most likely to come home to the sinner's heart. How humbly then ought he, who would consecrate his talents to the work of the ministry, to implore the *Father of lights*, for the sanctification of his researches, and for that increasing persuasion of the truth and importance of what he teaches, which shall give energy and divine impression to his instructions. How earnestly ought he to labor to sanctify the truth in his own heart, in order to display it with sufficient brightness to others ?

He must also be an ensample to the sinner. Vain were the attempt to reclaim others from the *error of their ways* to him whose doctrine, and life were at perpetual variance. Be his talents, his powers and eloquence what they might, the shameful contradiction, between the doctrine and the comment would be remarked, and the impious hypocrisy, obviously infered, would effectually counteract all his exertions ; so far from *saving a soul from death, the enemy would find new occasion to blaspheme*. " If such, they would ask, be the leaders," by that cruel induction so common with the impious, " what must be the followers ?" If such be the ensamples, what may they be, who make no pretensions to uncommon piety ?" No ! Would he describe to them the barren deserts of self denial, through which is the road to the holy land, he must not be the first to lust after the flesh, the leeks

and onions of Egypt. Would he point them to the mountains between them and heaven, would he instruct them to ascend ; he must throw *aside every weight*, and prepare to scale them himself. Would he allure them into the road, that leadeth unto Zion, he must walk before them, and take them by the hand, *and lead them in the way everlasting*. He must describe to them no cross, to which, when occasion occurs, he is not willing to bow his own neck. He must call them to mount no heights, which he does not shew himself ready to ascend. In vain would he inculcate the temperance and purity of the gospel, while he is himself the slave of his passions. In vain would he recommend the *straight and narrow path* to others, while he himself marched down with the multitude in the broad and beaten track, *which leadeth to destruction*.

With regard to the truth, the motive, argument and doctrine, with which he, who labors to *save souls from death*, must address sinners, there is, happily, no necessity for painful invention to devise new systems, or labor to build new foundations. *The corner stone is laid in Zion*. The great and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel include the motives and the arguments, which alone have been found sufficient in every age for the *pulling down of strong holds*, and to bring the sinner upon his knees. The preaching of these has alone been attended with *divine power*. The belief of these has alone laid the foundation for settled tranquility in life, and hope in death. Shall superstructures, reared with the fragile and perishable materials of *art and man's device* upon foundations of sand, be supposed capable of enduring the floods and wind

and storm ? they will be swept away, " and like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind."

If the preaching of Christ, *and him crucified*, if the eternal clemency of God in him, if the life, doctrine, atonement and death of our divine Redeemer, if the representation of a beneficent and Holy Spirit, knocking incessantly at the sinner's heart, entreating to be admitted, and with merciful sufferance and patience ; when repulsed, returning again, if the united tenderness, patience and purity of this Holy Spirit, if the full view of all the motives, which are naturally included in these doctrines, in connection with death, judgment and eternity, fail to make their way to the sinner's heart, assuredly motives of minor validity and importance will not. Why then should he, who has pity upon the sinner, and a purpose to reclaim him, address him with the frigid motives of morality ? Why should he *spend his strength for nought*, in combatting the hardness of the heart with weapons, in the use of which the heathen sages excelled us ? *What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.* The duties of the gospel grow out of its doctrines. Humble the aspirings of the heart ; level the obstructions and prepare the way for the Savior. He being embraced, the convert will live his life, and grow to *his image and likeness*. But reversing the case, to reclaim a profligate by shewing him the beauty of virtue, the rule of right, and the fitness of things, were an attempt as absurd, as for the husbandman to throw his seed into the bosom of the snows of winter.

It is melancholy to consider how many, rejecting the simplicity and energy of gospel motives, have

exhausted their strength in dispensing, not the substantial food, which can alone rear the sinner up to the maturity and stature of a man in *Christ Jesus our Lord*, but in dispensing the *east wind*, the idle efforts of their own talents and invention. Planting a strange seed, no Apollos waters; the dews of heaven descend not; *God giveth not the increase.*

Assuredly we must search elsewhere in vain for themes so solemn and interesting, as are found in the gospel. What idea can fill the mind and affect the heart, if it be not the scripture view of God? It is God who fills immensity with his presence, every where energizing with his omnipotence, supporting all worlds by his providence, just in all his ways, *holy and righteous in all his judgments.* Behold this God casting a look of pity into the future fates of man, devising the plan of his redemption. Behold all the glories of the Godhead, which in their celestial radiance, man in the dimness and feebleness of the flesh could *not see and live*, shining with mild and sufferable lustre in *the form of a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.* Behold the life and doctrine, the death and resurrection of our ascended Redeemer! What purity and innocence! What sensibility and virtuous friendship! What active benevolence in this life! What unparalleled love in his death! What motives to reconcile mortals to thier own last hour! He hath consecrated the bed of clay. He hath dispelled the darkness of death. He hath supplied all that nature needed. He hath marked out a path, as clear as light, to the holy hill. He hath showed the practicability of every christian virtue. He hath gone up in the fulness

of love to man, above all heavens, to *his father and our father*, and thence reacheth forth his arms to sinners, the price of his blood, appealing to every thing in the heart, which can be moved, entreating them to become wise in his wisdom, strong in his strength, and white in his purities ; entreating them not to grasp the vain delusions and shadows of earth, but to aspire to the heavens and *come up thither*. Behold him representing the last solemn and eventful scene, which shall determine forever the destinies of all the sons of Adam. Behold him instructing that evangelist, whom, when on earth, he peculiarly loved, to draw aside the veil, and shew us the things, *which must shortly come to pass*, presenting all the glories of heaven to our view, by every tender, sublime and sacred image, exciting the desire finally to be received to the immoveable kingdom of Christ. These are themes, which include those arguments and motives, which present that view of sin in its deepest and most detestable shades, against so much light, against the bleeding love of such a Savior, that, failing to move the sinner, must preclude the hope of success from any other consideration.

Upon the manner, in which these truths should be enforced, we intend not to dwell. Conviction of their infinite importance in the heart of the preacher, will dictate that earnestness, simplicity, energy and affection, with which it becomes the messenger of God to address himself "to guilty men."

Although set *for the defence of the gospel*, and although in the proper time and with due frequency the preacher ought to overwhelm the vain objections of the unbelieving, with the consistency, va-

lidity, and unquestionable evidence of the holy gospel, yet care must be used, that this strain do not predominate. The greater part of fancied unbelievers are of that guilty kind, who do actually *believe and tremble*. The delusions of sophistry, and the seduction of the passions, may have drawn them away, and thrown a veil over their faith. But the original impressions are still, in characters indelible, engraven upon their hearts. Upon these, argument is lost. And there are others, who will reject the confutation, and catch at the falsehood. The careless and unthinking are often brought acquainted with infidel arguments, adduced to be confuted, which they would else have never heard; and they eagerly imbibe that which is most congenial to their taste. The poison remains, while the antidote has no effect. Beside, it is questionable, whether it be christian policy to be perpetually engaged in combating infidelity, among professed believers, and to occupy more time in detailing the defence of an undescribed religion, than in teaching what religion is, and the indispensable necessity of that religion to sinners.

The most extensive scene of the preacher's labors, it is true, is in the house of God, and the public services of the sanctuary. Yet in private he may often find occasions, where to apply instruction, counsel, warning and reproof. With the prudence, meekness and gentleness of Christ, he must search for the moment of easy access to the sinner, and faithfully probe his wounds, until he is brought to see, what he is, and how he needs the sovereign *balm in Gilead*. He must take him by a friendly violence, as the angels did Lot, when he would

have lingered still longer in Sodom, and lead him away from death.

We will consider one more walk of duty, and close the detail. Behold the sinner on his death-bed, trembling at that unknown and terrible futurity, which was ever a reality in the recesses of his heart, but which was obscured by the delusions of flesh and sense. He now sees in a clear light. The glooms of night gather, thick and dreary, over his head. Anxious, trembling, confused, hurried in a thousand different directions by the conflict of opposing passions, he is now raised upon the heights of confidence and presumption, and directly after plunged into the deepest abysses of despondency. He *who watches for souls*, approaches his bed. How, in this crisis of trial, shall he conduct? Shall the infinite clemency of heaven be so displayed to his view, as that new hope shall be added to his presumption? Or, on the other hand, shall God be displayed to him, *terrible in his judgments*, and in his nature a *consuming fire*, so as that all hope of his eternal mercies be relinquished? It is a trying emergency, a case of difficult solution, where often eternity depends upon an hour. What refreshment to a benevolent mind to be the instrument of rescuing souls of this description, in those moments of horror and despair from the verge of eternal destruction! O, my brethren, let us *watch unto prayer*, that we may on these interesting occasions *magnify our office*, and conduct with fidelity and tenderness.

Such is a hurried and rapid detail, of some of the more commanding motives, that lead a minister of the everlasting gospel to his field of duty, the diversified walks in that field, and the manner in which

he should acquit himself in the discharge of those duties.

To him is entrusted the most awful charge, that God has committed to mortals. Souls are his charge; to save them his object. He is responsible if they perish through his neglect. What eternal consequences depend! who will not tremble, while he takes this weight of responsibility upon him? Who, engaged in the work, will not *look up to the hills, whence our help cometh*, for strength and support.

You see, my brother, the outstretched field of duty before you. By the special providence, as we hope, of the great *Shepherd*, you are now to be commissioned to feed his flock in this place, to guard it from wolves, and with studious assiduity and tenderness, to search after wanderers, ceasing not to prosecute the search, until they are found, and returned safe to the fold. You are to *feed them with knowledge*. You are to lead them in safe places, *to green pastures, beside cool and still waters, that their souls may be refreshed*. And while speaking to them in the doctrine, authority and example of him who commissioned you, we trust, *they will know your voice*, and while going before, and by the united influence of precept and example, pointing them to the spires of *that city, which hath foundations*, they will follow you in *the way everlasting*.

Let a deep regard to the command of our common master, let pity and benevolence inspire you with a particular affection for your flock. *Be not unto them as an hireling*. Let them perceive that you have drunk from the fountain, that you have imbibed the affectionate concern and care of your

great model. If you behold any of your flock straying away, receding from the heavens, let not the frigid motives of worldly wisdom, and false decorum, restrain you from going after them, and by reproof, instruction, entreaty, by every pressing argument, urging them to return.

You are sent into the vineyard with every harbinger auspicious to usefulness and success. May it be the pleasant morning, preceding a long and happy day. A people, uncommonly united and affectionate, have called you to cast your lines in a *pleasant place*, in a vicinity, where you may calculate upon taking *sweet counsel together*, with your fathers and brethren in the ministry; in a section of the country, where infidelity dares not openly to raise his audacious front; and with a people, who seem willing to exempt you from those distressing anxieties and cares for subsistence, which are so directly incompatible with the discharge of your diversified duties.

With these, and many other propitious omens, you will unquestionably enter upon your labors with cheerfulness and delight. If from this point of vision, the prospect before you appear cloudless, and illuminated with the brightest rays of hope, it will not be strange. Views, less flattering, in minds more familiarized with the darker scenes of life, have inspired a false and sanguine confidence.

It would grieve me to throw a shade upon the prospect. But is it not safer to repress the illusions of hope, than to reap the bitter fruits of disappointment. From the first, who were commissioned to preach the *unsearchable riches of Christ*, through the whole cloud of evangelists, apostles,

primitive worthies, presbyters and ministers, they have borne united testimony, that they trod a hard, rugged path. Their successors must not calculate to recline in the shade, and *be at ease in Zion*. They must expect *the heat and burden of the day*, during *their strife, their labor, their warfare*. You also must calculate upon passing through *good report and evil report*; upon enemies, who will *watch for your halting*; and upon more cruel *perils from false brethren*. You must expect, as all have realized in the experiment, to find unyielding perseverance in their evil courses, in many, all your labors and exertions notwithstanding. When you have ascertained the natural coldness and adamant texture of the sinner's heart, you will respire an involuntary sigh at the depth of human depravity, and perhaps in despondency say, that you shall *spend your strength for nought*, and let the commenced task fall from your hands. But I forbear. The auspices of your induction promise better things; *things which accompany salvation*. But should you in your future career experience these *fiery trials*, count it not strange, as though some new thing had happened.

May I be permitted to express to you, my brother, my own wishes and feelings on this solemnity, to you so joyous and solemn, while the recollection of the many pleasant days we have spent together come over my mind "like a cloud." Providence and your duty have indeed called you so far from our walks, that these golden days, these interviews, so pleasant and mournful in the recollection, cannot be frequent. If friends are separated by duty and distance, it becomes in their minds, if capable

of friendly feelings, a tender and a sacred motive to keep both in those paths, which however they diverge in this world, conduct each to those happy mansions in the *father's house*, whence neither distance, time, duty, nor death can sunder them.

For you, my dear brother, *my prayer and my heart's desire to God*, is, that he may speed you *in the race set before you*, that your career may be glorious, that you may honor your holy profession, and be a rich blessing to this people, and their children after them; that *generations yet unborn may rise up, and call you blessed*. And when all the glories of this world shall fade from your view, when your extended arms shall touch the land of your recompense, that eternal futurity, towards which you point your hearers, to have been the instrument of *saving souls from death*, will give you those sublime and substantial comforts, which you would seek in vain in all the fading glories of this world. Hear the great Apostle of the Gentiles, when conscious, that he was about to retire from his labors. *I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day*. Should such be your consolation in that last solemn and joyous hour, with what transport shall you recite the promises and declarations of holy scripture. "*Fear not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God. Thou hast saved souls from death, and hidden a multitude of sins, depart in peace. Thou hast been faithful in a few things; enter into the joy of thy Lord.*" And in better worlds, *they who have turned many to righteousness shall shine,*

as the brightness of the firmament, as the stars forever and ever.

We will hope this glorious result of you. With happy dispositions for the ministry, as we are persuaded; certainly with a predilection for the holy calling from your earliest years, with the example of a father now in the mansions of glory, overbearing must be the temptation, which would swerve you from duty. God give you grace to be *faithful unto death.*

And you, fathers and brethren of this society, behold him, *whom you have chosen, to come to you in the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of peace.* He hath now blended his future fates with yours. Be candid, affectionate and kind to him. Remember, *that he watches for your souls.* If he must account for the manner in which he preaches, you must also account for the manner in which you hear. *Strengthen his hands and encourage his heart, by attending upon his ministrations. Forsake not assembling yourselves with the multitude, who keep holy time.* Leave not the temple to respond the echo of solitude. And O let me entreat you by the mercies of the *Living God*, to walk with him, hand in hand, in peace and in love, in that road *which leadeth unto Zion.*

Men and brethren of this assembly, regard not the induction of a minister of the everlasting gospel into his holy office, as an idle ceremony. The *Lord of the harvest hath called us* all, as fellow laborers, into his field. Each in his measure is bound by every urgent and pressing motive to exert himself to save others from ruin, and if others, much more himself. These solemnities ought to associate themselves in your minds with the indispensa-

ble necessity and the everlasting importance of being *reconciled to God in Christ*. And, my hearer, there is no time for delay. Be intreated not to let the present moments slip. They are precious. They are irretrievable. You are bending towards eternity, as rivers roll down to the ocean. These things which you now behold, are evanescent. These scenes are receding from your eyes. They will soon be succeeded by the permanent realities of eternity. So live, and so die, as to be found of your Judge in peace.

May God grant it for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever.

AMEN.



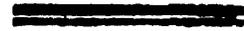
A CHARGE,

BY THE

REV. ELIAB STONE,

OF

READING.



THE Creator of all things has formed the human mind capable of perpetual progression in knowledge, virtue, holiness and happiness. But, for the improvement of this noble capacity, teachers, in every age of the world, have been found necessary. Adam, even in a state of innocence, was taught of God—the Patriarchs by Angels—the Jewish Church by Prophets—the christian world by Christ and his inspired Apostles. These were *extraordinary* divine teachers, qualified for their work in a wonderful manner. But in order that uninspired men may be skilful and successful instructors of others, they must first become learners themselves, and continue learning until they are able to teach others. Agreeable to this we find, even in the days of miraculous inspiration, public institutions were provided for the education of these youths, who were designed to be public teachers of religion. In the Jewish church, there were schools (or colleges) of the prophets ; where, no doubt, it was expected, under the direction of wise and pious instructors, the students would acquire habits of virtue and piety, and such an acquaintance with the law of Moses, as would duly qualify them to read and explain it in the Jewish synagogues every sabbath day. The Apostles also, who were finally endued with miraculous

gifts, yet previous to this, and before they were sent forth to preach the gospel, continued some time in the school of Christ, that they might learn of him how to instruct others.

If in the days of inspiration, *learning* was a necessary qualification for a public teacher of religion; much more must it be necessary, since miracles have ceased. Hence we infer, that mankind, under both the Jewish and christian dispensations, greatly needed religious instruction. Hence also we infer that public teachers of religion must be men of piety, morality and learning; especially must they be well acquainted with *sacred science*. For an ignorant or vicious man to assume the character of a public teacher of religion, or for the people to encourage him by their attendance on his proffered services, is as repugnant to reason and common sense, as it is inconsistent with divine revelation. Such counteract the counsels of Christ, and rashly copy the ridiculous example of infamous Jeroboam, by admitting into the sacred office the lowest of the people, even any who offer themselves. The talents and characters of public preachers in the christian church, are of such high importance to its edification and well being, that Christ and his apostles have pointed them out with great precision. They must be found in the faith—examples to believers—and well instructed scribes.

Although the apostles ordained none to the work of the gospel ministry, but such as they judged well qualified for the business; yet the aged apostles exhorted their younger brethren to fidelity in the work assigned them. This apostolic example has given rise to the laudable practice of giving a charge to a steward in God's house, on his regular induction to office.

You will, therefore, reverend sir, receive kindly a word of exhortation from your friend, and the friend of your amiable, pious, deceased father—from one grown grey in the same work in which you are engaged, and who ardently wishes you success. By this charge we do not design to dictate your faith—for we claim the right of private judgment for ourselves, and cheerfully yield the same to you and to all others. But by this exhortation we wish to impress your mind with a lively sense of the importance of fidelity in the gospel ministry.

You, fir, have this day, voluntarily become God's ambassador to men ; a station attended with high responsibility. Soon, in the presence of assembled worlds, angels and men, you must give an account to the Searcher of hearts, how you have performed the duties of your office. You are engaged to personate the Son of God, in a work the most interesting ever attempted by man. You have engaged, in Christ's stead, to persuade men to be reconciled to God. You must then walk circumspectly, and do every thing in your station, which you can reasonably suppose Christ would do, were he in your situation. The example of Christ is perfect ; you must copy it correctly.

Your work, fir, is as difficult as it is important. Men, whose enmity against God has, in some instances, been confirmed by a long habit of vice, must be reconciled to God. This is difficult, like whitening the Ethiopian. And yet this must be done, or immortal souls are lost. Souls formed capable of endless and ineffable felicity, are plunged into misery awful and eternal. If these weighty and alarming considerations press on your mind, till the apostle's language, "who is sufficient for these things?" bursts from your lips ; the answer to this question is—no mere man. Of ourselves in this difficult work, we can do nothing. But, my friend, here is your comfort. If you are faithful, you will not be left to yourself alone. God will be with you. He says, "My grace shall be sufficient for you." Christ will be with you. He says, "Lo, I am with you always." By strength derived from him, you can do all things. Awaken sinners to repentance ; and by so doing, increase the joy of heaven. By his help you can turn many to righteousness ; and then you will shine with distinguished lustre on earth, and wear an immortal crown in heaven.

But as you wish for God's help ; you must try to help yourself ; by improving all your talents ;—by reading, meditation and prayer. Read all books, tending to increase useful knowledge and godly edification. Especially, study the *Bible* ; that book of books, containing a perfect rule of faith and practice. When you read, particularly the sacred oracles, be very careful to understand them. To this end meditate and pray. "Pause, ponder, sift," till you see their excellency, till you feel their renovating influences on your own heart, and until you

realize the necessity laid upon you, as God's messenger, to explain clearly, and enforce by conclusive arguments, all the doctrines, duties, precepts, promises and threatenings of the gospel. On such preaching you may hope for God's blessing to attend the diligent hearer. Then sinners will be converted to God, and fairs edified and built up in their christian faith.

Although your work is arduous, yet it is excellent; for if you do it well, you will be infinitely beneficial to your *fellow men* and to *yourself* too. By teaching you will learn; learn to know more, to live better, and prepare for a brighter crown. These thoughts cannot fail to excite in you love to the ministerial work. This love will increase diligence, animate fidelity and promote success.

My son, as I love you, I beseech you to study the scriptures, until you become mighty to explain them with clearness and enforce them with energy. Pray without ceasing, with faith and fervor, for *yourself*, that you may declare the whole counsel of God faithfully, and do the work of an evangelist successfully.—For your people, that they may receive with meekness the ingrafted word, and live as the grace of the gospel teacheth.—For *all men*, that they may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

You are now, put into the ministry of Christ, clothed with all the authority of a christian bishop; not indeed that you may lord it over God's heritage, or exercise dominion over the faith of men; but that you may be a helper of their joy. You are appointed the shepherd, *particularly*, of this flock of God. Diligently guard it from the wolf who may artfully appear in sheep's cloathing that he may the more successfully devour. Feed the sheep and the lambs, with food suitably adapted to their circumstances. Your labor in this vineyard of God must be incessant. In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thy hand; both may prosper, if the seed be pure and the soil well cultivated. But a rich harvest is not to be expected even with much labor, unless the seasons are favourable. If from present appearances, we can judge of future seasons; the prospects of the laborers in God's vineyard are not very flattering. For when the burden and heat of these days of infidelity and revolution come on, their labor will be hard, the season hot

and their harvest light. But let none of these things move you. Remember you are set for the defence of the gospel. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Fight the Lord's battles skilfully. The cause is good; it is the cause of God. You may therefore rest assured, the gates of hell will never prevail against it. Should hosts of christians suffer martyrdom in this cause, yet even this melancholy event, may be the means of the rise and prevalence of christianity. For the blood of the martyrs has often been the seed of the church.

Be thou therefore steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labours shall not be in vain in the Lord. Be thou faithful unto death, and your master, who cannot lie, has said, I will give you a crown of life. AMEN.

precious ointment and heavenly dew not only fill the house and family of God with sweet perfume, but render them fruitful in every good work."

But if union and fellowship are so desirable among christians in general, how peculiarly requisite are they among those who are set to be examples of the believers, not in word only, but in conversation and charity; in spirit, as well as faith and purity. Multiplied and solemn are the considerations, which enjoin it upon ministers; to encourage and strengthen one another, and as far as possible to *speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.* It tends exceedingly to promote their own improvement, comfort, and usefulness, the benefit and best interests of others, and the honor of our holy religion; while every contrary appearance mars the beauty and glory of our Zion, hinders the success of a gospel of love and peace, and affords a scoffing world occasion to blaspheme.

Giving the hand is an ancient usage among all civilized nations, having a variety of significations. In the common, civil concerns of life, it has been practised, from time immemorial, as an expression of friendship, a pledge of faith, and a sign of brotherhood on the induction of a person as member of a society, or invested with an office.

As a religious, ministerial rite, though not absolutely essential to the consecration of a pastor, it has not its rise in mere human invention, but is founded on scripture example and authority, and has been generally adopted by the christian church. It expresses much that is proper to be expressed on the occasion by a significant emblem, which retains its meaning as well as propriety through every age.

Impressed with these sentiments, *dear sir, I give you the hand,* in behalf of the Council by whom you have been solemnly ordained, for a testimony of their approbation and acknowledgment of you, as an evangelical minister, hopefully qualified for the momentous duties of the sacred office; regularly called and introduced into it; and invested with as much ministerial power and authority in the church of God, as belongs to any of your brethren. It is intended to express their sincere regard for you, their readiness at all times when able to assist, relieve, and strengthen you, and their confidence of finding in you the same affection and readiness returned.

I am not ignorant, my friend, of what must be your feelings on receiving a charge the most weighty with which man can be intrusted ; nor of the animation to be derived from such a public and solemn assurance of the brotherly love and assistance of those who have entered before you upon the same great and good, but difficult and self-denying service.

How reviving, how sublime is the reflection, that sincere and faithful ministers are fellow workers, not only with one another, but with the infinite Jehovah, his adorable Son, and divine Spirit, in the same glorious cause ; that the holy angels are also employed with them in ministering for them who shall be heirs of salvation ; that the grace and strength of an omnipotent Saviour are sufficient for them, and will be perfected in their weakness ; and that a distinguished crown of life and unfading glory is laid up for them, and will be their eternal reward. Take hold by faith, my brother, of these and other precious supports, which are so liberally provided for you, and *gird up the loins of your mind.*

It is our fervent desire and prayer that you may be happy, and instrumental of turning many to righteousness. Our ascended Redeemer vouchsafe you his promised presence, to comfort your heart, to increase you in knowledge and holiness, and furnish you unto every good word and work, that you may approve yourself a wise and faithful steward of the mysteries of the kingdom of God ! While you preach nothing but the everlasting gospel in the love and spirit of it, may you ever feel in your own soul a deep impression and powerful experience of the sacred truths you deliver to others ; and while with the armour of God you contend earnestly for the unadulterated faith which was once delivered unto the saints, may your whole life exemplify and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Thus may you shine as a star of magnitude in *this* world, that in another you may hereafter shine as the brightness of the firmament forever and ever.

We affectionately *commend you*, together with the beloved flock of which you have undertaken the oversight *to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. The Lord bless thee and keep thee ; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee ; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

And now, arise, Jehovah, into thy rest ; thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness ; and let thy saints shout for joy—O Jerusalem ! peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

AMEN.

THE END.