

AND

EXHORTATION,

ADDRESSED

TO THE PEOPLE

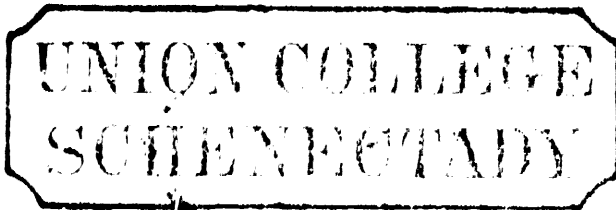
OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION.

IN PHILADELPHIA,

ON RESIGNING THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THAT
CONGREGATION,

BY ASHBEL GREEN, D. D.



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ADVICE AND EXHORTATION, &c.

My Dear People,

ON the dissolution of the pastoral relation which I have sustained to you for more than five and twenty years, I am now to offer you my parting advice and exhortation. These I choose to deliver to you from the press, rather than from the pulpit, for several reasons, but especially for this, that you may possess them permanently, and be able to consult them deliberately, and to review them often—that they may, perhaps, admonish and profit you, when the lips which have so often addressed you, shall be silent forever, and the hand which here records my last counsel shall have mouldered into dust. It does not seem unreasonable to hope, that what I may say on this occasion will claim your special attention and remembrance, since it is likely to be dictated by more than an usual solicitude to discharge my own duty, and to promote your best interests. Allow me, then, to speak to you in a style of great freedom and plainness—as a father to his children.

You have, I think, a right to be told the reasons why I have consented to leave you—They may all be resolved into

this--I have been made to believe, that I should resist the plain intimation of duty in the Providence of God, if I did not yield to the call which takes me from you. My settled expectation certainly was, to live and die in your service. But a minister of the Gospel is, in a peculiar degree, *not his own*: He is *devoted* to the service of Christ in the gospel, and is bound to forego his own inclinations and plans, whenever the Master and the cause which have a commanding claim upon him, require him to make the sacrifice. This sacrifice, therefore, it was not for me to refuse: and it seemed the less difficult to make it when I reflected, that you had already had the services (I wish they had been more valuable) of my best and most vigorous days; and that if I should remain with you, the gradually increasing depression of my voice would, probably, before long, render me incapable of satisfying you with my pulpit addresses. On the other hand, if I were at all capable of filling the sphere of usefulness to which I was called, it was, in the estimation of competent judges, of greater extent and importance than the pastoral charge of any congregation whatsoever. These are, in substance, the considerations which have induced me to accept the unexpected appointment which separates me from you; and I hope they will satisfy the candid and considerate. To satisfy such I would not be without concern: remembering, nevertheless, that the responsibility which most demands my regard is not to man, but to God—not to you, but to our common Lord.

I. I shall first call your attention to some duties specially incumbent on you in consequence of my removal; and which will be incumbent, as often as one or both of your pastors shall be removed, whether it be by death or otherwise—At such times abhor the thought of deserting the congregation to which you have belonged, if not urged to it by the most absolute necessity. At other times it may be more allowable to make a new election of the religious society with which you will be connected; mindful, however, that a per-

son who, at any time, is *given to change* in this particular, is not likely to be either a steadfast or a growing Christian. Under a conviction of this truth, I have never encouraged, in a single instance, even those advances which have sometimes been made by members of other congregations, to join that of which I was pastor. But when a congregation is what we denominate *vacant*, it is then with it a time of necessity. It needs all its strength and resources of every kind, and its members should consider it as highly dishonourable and unchristian to forsake it, unless compelled by motives of a truly conscientious kind.

Let me also remind you, that at such a season it is not only peculiarly important to hold together as a society, but also to cultivate real harmony and unanimity among yourselves. To keep together only to contend, is worse than to separate. The preservation of the peace of the church is ever, indeed, an object of such high importance, that the man who disturbs it can never be considered in any other light than as either very criminal or very unfortunate, unless the purity of the church itself, indispensably calls for the interruption of its quiet. But as the evil of controversies and contentions in a particular congregation is of the very worst consequence when it is vacant, this evil is then to be specially deprecated and avoided. Remember, as peculiarly applicable to the case before us, the admonition of Solomon*—“The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.” Divisions in all societies, but most of all in religious societies, are easily begun, but extremely difficult to end. Guard, therefore, with a truly *religious* vigilance against the *beginnings* of them. Indulge in no irritating and censorious language; have no parties or cabals; withdraw not your confidence from your elders, or from others whose fidelity you have proved; be ready to make personal concessions for the general good; let all feel the importance

* Prov. xvii. 14.

of yielding something to the convenience and opinions of others; keep in mind the great and well known principle that the majority must govern and the minority submit; learn to acquiesce in some things which you could wish were otherwise ordered. In a word, and that the authoritative word of inspiration—*“ Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus—Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”

Before dismissing this topic, there is one thing more which I must by no means omit.—It is, that nothing will more contribute to your being “ at peace among yourselves,” both when vacant and at other times, than keeping strictly to the principles and forms of the Presbyterian Church, as laid down in our public standards of doctrine and government. By these standards, try carefully all doctrines, and conduct scrupulously all your proceedings. Esteem it no hardship or oppression—esteem it as an unspeakable privilege and advantage, that these standards are given for your direction and control. In this light, I most seriously assure you, I regard them, after all I have read, heard, and seen, relative to the doctrines, discipline, and order of the Church of Christ. It is my solemn and deliberate conviction, that the system we have adopted, is not only fully warranted by scripture, but most admirably adapted to the state of society in this country, and, indeed, to the principles of human nature itself. It secures liberty.

* Philip 2, 3, 4, 5—14, 15, 16.

and it ensures order—abide by it closely, and it will be your guide and your shield.*

II. The choice of a minister of the gospel, is the next point, in order, which demands your attention. The members of a church and congregation, while they are vacant, should be much and earnestly engaged in prayer to God, that he would send them a pastor, “after his own heart.” Pastors were among the ascension gifts of Christ;† and to him should every eye and heart be directed, when one is to be chosen to a particular charge. Infinitely more may depend on this, than on all other means and efforts which can be employed without it. That people who do not receive a pastor in answer to prayer, have, indeed, much reason to fear, that they will not receive a blessing with any one whom they may elect.

In this, as in every other instance, prayer is not only the instituted means of obtaining from God what we desire; but it has also a natural and direct influence on the minds of those who use it, to prepare them for the blessing sought, and to lead them to all the measures calculated to secure it. Whatever we pray for earnestly, we are disposed to seek diligently, and to exert all our vigilance and care to obtain.

It is, therefore, perfectly consistent for me to recommend, that while fervent and continued prayer is used, you should, in selecting the man by whose ministry, you and your children are to receive “the dispensation of the gospel”—infinitely momentous in its consequences—make the following inquires, in regard to every candidate for your choice.—What is his estimation for piety? Is he not only a man of real religion, but is he eminent and exemplary in religion? What is his character as to orthodoxy? Is he not only considered as generally sound in the faith, but is

* I would recommend that every family in the congregation make it a point of Christian duty to keep a copy of our Confession of Faith, &c.

† Ephs. iv. 8, 11, 12.

he free from all suspicious peculiarities, which often increase with time, and at length, in some cases, prove infinitely mischievous? What is the complexion of his public discourses? Does he preach in such a general and equivocal manner, that you cannot clearly discover his sentiments and system? Or does he bring forward plainly, fully, and frequently, the great and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, illustrate them perspicuously and distinctly, and apply them powerfully and pungently, and yet discreetly and judiciously, to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. Is he in the habit of digesting well what he delivers from the pulpit? Or are his addresses extemporaneous, loose, rambling, incorrect, and incoherent? Does he instruct and reason in his sermons? Or is he only, or chiefly, a declaimer? Has he a suitable variety in the topics which he discusses? Or are his discourses all of one kind, and in the same strain? Will he be likely to declare to you, "the whole counsel of God" without reserve, or timidity? Is his manner of address in the pulpit agreeable and interesting, and sufficiently popular? Is he a man of a fertile mind? Or is he only a plodder and imitator of others? What is the measure of his general talents and furniture? Has he a considerable fund of knowledge—especially of theological knowledge? Does he make theological attainments the chief object of his pursuit; or is the study of divinity only a by-business with him, while his time and attention are principally given to general science, or to some object not immediately connected with his professional calling? Is he a diligent and laborious man, who may be expected to make improvements, or at least to continue to do as well, throughout his ministry, as he does at first? Is he likely to adorn and recommend religion, by showing that his practice, out of the pulpit, is governed and directed by the doctrines which he delivers in it? What is his natural temper, and what are his social habits? Is he affable and courteous, conciliating and accommodating, and yet firm and unwavering? Is he a pro-

dent and discreet man; or is he heedless, harsh, rash, hasty, irritable, resentful, offensive, or intrusive? Will he be able and disposed to take his part in endeavouring to promote the general interests of religion, and of our church, for which he will have so fair an opportunity in this city? and let it not be thought indecorous (for much will depend upon it) when I add, that if he be a man with a family, you will do well to inquire into the character of those who compose it.

It is by no means to be understood, that I advise you to choose no man for your minister, in regard to whom all these inquiries cannot be answered in the most favourable manner. Far from it—such a man, perhaps, does not exist. And I think it proper to warn you distinctly against criticising the character and performances of ministers with a captious spirit, or a fastidious taste, which is always extremely injurious to those who indulge it; and which may sometimes be hostile to the edification of the whole congregation, by keeping it vacant much longer than is necessary or useful. Still the inquiries I have stated, if discreetly used, may be very advantageous. They may serve to direct your attention to those qualities in a pastor, which are the most estimable; and a reasonable proportion and combination of which you ought to require. Piety, prudence, knowledge, diligence, and aptness to teach, you should consider as indispensable. Solid and durable qualities are much to be preferred before any which are not likely to be lasting, however they may dazzle and charm for a season.

If a candidate for your choice as a pastor, has been educated among yourselves, or has lived for a considerable time within the sphere of your own observation, there will, of course, be less difficulty in ascertaining his real character and talents. But if he be a foreigner, or have come to you from a distance, remember that much more reliance should be placed on the information and opinions which you may obtain from others, who shall have known him fami-

liarily and fully, than on any impression which he may have made on your own minds, by a few public discourses and a few personal interviews. The latter are often fallacious, and ought, if possible, never to be trusted, if they do not harmonize with the former. So many instances have occurred of unworthy and insufficient men in the sacred office, gaining the hearts of the people and obtaining speedy settlements in important stations, to the unspeakable injury of the church afterwards, that I should feel inexcusable, if I did not put you upon your guard against this danger. In all cases, beware of too much haste, in choosing the man to whom is to be committed a trust so important and sacred, as that of your spiritual instruction and improvement.

If you remain a collegiate charge* (and whether you ought so to remain or not, is a point on which, at present, I am not prepared to advise you) one of your ministers, and perhaps sometimes both, may, without inconvenience, be young men. But if you are to have but one pastor, he must be a man of very uncommon powers and activity, if he be able to serve you suitably, till he shall have had the experience and preparation of a number of years in the ministerial life, to qualify him for the weighty charge which so numerous a congregation as you compose will lay upon him. As a general rule, consider it indispensable, in case you have but one minister, that he shall have been a preacher for seven years, before he become an object of your choice.

*That a collegiate charge is often difficult to be sustained, is not to be denied. But that colleagues may live together in perfect harmony and confidence (I desire to mention it with humble thankfulness to God) I know by happy experience. With no one of the three colleagues, with whom I have been associated, had I ever a word of difference, or the least difficulty in the discharge of any duty. To him whom I leave with you I take this occasion to express my sincere and warm attachment, as to a man of tried worth, to whom I owe many obligations, and whose friendship I hope ever to possess. While he shall remain with you, you will have a counsellor and guide in whom you may place the greatest confidence. But in part 6th this address, I look forward to the time when you may be entirely destitute of the advice and assistance of a living pastor.

In electing a pastor, endeavour by all means to be unanimous. On this both his comfort and your's, and even the success of the gospel with you, will, it is probable, greatly depend. It is not to be expected that the great variety of tastes and opinions, which will always exist among you, can be exactly suited in any one man. Of course there must be a degree of compromise, and it ought to be regarded as a very important branch of Christian charity, for individuals, or a minority of the congregation, to sacrifice their inclinations to the general good. Satisfied that the man to be elected is one who will be faithful to his trust, they ought to receive him without complaint, as the choice of their brethren: and where this has been done, it has sometimes been seen that the dissatisfied individuals have, at length, become strongly attached to the very man whom they would have rejected, and have been convinced that a better choice was made for them, than they were disposed to make for themselves. If, after all, there be any who cannot be reconciled to the choice of the majority--if their consciences forbid them to acquiesce--this will constitute one of the cases, in which it may be proper for the dissatisfied members to withdraw from the congregation, and to seek another, in which they may believe that their edification will be more promoted. But this is always to be done in the most quiet and peaceable manner possible, that while it relieves the grievances of those who withdraw, it may not cause a greater grievance to those from whom they separate.

III. When a minister is settled, the next inquiry is, in what manner you ought to treat him; and how you may improve by his ministry in general, so as to derive the greatest advantage from it.

In the treatment of a minister be careful, on the one hand, not to idolize him; and on the other, not to despise and injure him. There is real danger of both these extremes; and, as is often the case with extremes, the one has

a strong tendency to produce the other. What, in the first instance, we over value, we are, in the second, prone to condemn and abuse. It has often happened since the time of the apostle Paul, that a people who once, *if it had been possible, would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to their minister, have eventually slandered him, persecuted him; and sought to be separated from him.*

I am perfectly aware that such is the strong propensity of the mass of mankind to express admiration or censure, just as their feelings prompt them, that there is little hope of engaging a large congregation to act with full discretion in the particular now considered. But the malady which cannot be cured, may still be mitigated. The discreet and conscientious part of a religious society, by watching against error themselves, and by using their influence steadily with others to oppose or correct what is wrong, will always produce, in the end, a very considerable and salutary effect.

The clergy are often reminded by the laity *that ministers are but men*--Let them, then, remember their own suggestion, and not load us either with praise or with blame, which it belongs not to man to receive, without danger or injury. If your minister be popular, he will know it sufficiently by indications which cannot be concealed. Never, therefore, offer him fulsome praises to his face, nor utter them to others. If they come to his ears, and he be as modest and self denied as he ought to be, they will only disgust him, and if not, they may greatly injure him. Give him solid proofs of your friendship and affection—show him that you “esteem him very highly in love, for his works’ sake”*—by attending diligently on his ministry, and endeavouring to profit by it; by regarding his admonitions and advice; by a ready gratification of his reasonable wishes; by relieving his wants and anticipating his necessities; by

* 1. Thess. v. 13.

constant kindness and attention to him and his family; by assisting him to bear his burthens; by sympathising with him in his afflictions; by habitually and earnestly praying for him; by letting him see that he has been the happy instrument of leading you to the Saviour.—These are the means by which he is to be encouraged, and your attachment to him demonstrated. But all extolling of his powers and services forbear, out of tenderness to him and to yourselves, lest you render him less estimable, acceptable and useful, by undue praise; and above all, lest you offend God, by giving to a creature what belongs to himself alone. If you idolize your minister, your sin may be punished by your being permitted to admire him, without receiving any real profit to your souls. Among the causes of spiritual barrenness we may probably number the improper estimation of means and instruments, to the forgetfulness that it is only “God who giveth the increase.” When the Corinthians said*—“I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ,” they needed and received the severe rebuke of an apostle.

Recollect, also, on the other hand, that unjust censure of the ministers of the gospel, as well as an excessive estimation of them, is offensive to their master, and may draw upon you the manifestation of his displeasure. If a minister of the gospel be vitious, or act in any way altogether inconsistently with his sacred office, seek to have him deposed or disciplined at once; and I rejoice to say that, in the present state of our church, I think you will not seek it in vain. If he has been, in your opinion, indiscreet, or negligent, or unfaithful, or in any respect blamable, in a particular instance, let some individual go to him privately, and tell him frankly what is thought to be wrong in his conduct.—Tell him with respect, tenderness, and affection, mingled with fidelity and plainness. In many cases, probably, he will be able to

* I Cor: i. 12.

satisfy you that you had less cause of offence, than you had supposed; and in some, that you had judged him altogether erroneously, through ignorance or mistake. If he shall have been really to blame, you will have taken the most proper method to reform him; and if of a right temper, he will certainly not only correct his error, but thank and love you for your faithfulness and friendship. But beware of scattering indiscriminate reflections on your minister, to the diminution or destruction of his influence with his people. Remember that the credit of religion itself, and the success of the gospel, are connected with respect for the ministerial character. Will your children, or others who may respect your opinions, be likely, do you think, to derive benefit from the instructions of a man, whom they shall hear you frequently condemning and reproaching? Or is it probable that you will yourselves,* “receive with meekness, the ingrafted word which is able to save your souls” from one, over whom you are in the habit of erecting yourselves into haughty censors; or toward whom you are continually indulging in fault-finding, and in severe remarks on his performances, actions and character? Avoid, then, as injurious to yourselves, your family and friends,—as cruel and unjust to your minister, and as highly offensive to the Saviour himself, all groundless and unnecessary censures of him who is placed over you in the Lord. Make a reasonable allowance even for real blemishes, imperfections, deficiencies and mistakes. Consider that your pastor’s office is extremely arduous and difficult, as well as that it unavoidably exposes him to such a general and rigorous scrutiny, that all the real friends of religion should rather be his advocates than his accusers. Recollect too, that we are all far more disposed to lay blame on another than on ourselves, and that it is by no means improbable, that the fault which you will sometimes be

ready to find with your pastor, you ought rather to have found with yourselves—with your own temper, wrong feelings, or improper expectations.

There are two or three sources from which misunderstandings and dissatisfactions, relative to the clergy, are so apt to arise in a congregation in this city, that it may be proper to notice them distinctly.

1. The frequency of public preaching. That ministers of the gospel may be slothful and negligent in this particular, and that they who are laborious on the whole, may sometimes be blamably deficient in industry and exertion, I am not disposed to deny; nor would I be the apologist either of the one class or the other. But the truth is, the mass of the people do not know, and it is not easy to make them understand, how much time is necessary to a suitable preparation for the pulpit; nor how many calls of duty and interruptions of study in a populous city, reduce the time which their minister can devote to such preparation, within a small compass indeed. They usually, therefore, expect more preaching from a clergyman than it is practicable for him to perform. The case is particularly hard and embarrassing to a young minister. The late venerable Dr. Witherspoon, whose opinions on ministerial duty certainly deserved the highest regard, said to me when I was coming into your service—"In ordinary circumstances, never neglect, while you are young, to write one sermon in a week—and never attempt to write more than one, for if you do, you will spoil them all. If you must preach twice, let once be without writing, and with little study; otherwise, instead of doing all well, you will do nothing well."

To a young clergyman then you ought to show much indulgence in the article of preaching, for if he neglect diligent study and laborious preparation for the pulpit in youth, both he and you will probably regret it sorely to the end of his life. For two or three years after entering on his ministry do not expect from him stated-

ly, unless he voluntarily offer it, more than two public performances in a week. As he advances in age and experience your expectations may reasonably increase: and after a number of years he may, if his health permit, preach as frequently as you may desire to hear him. But the health of your pastor ought always to be an object of your regard, as well as of his own—If it be feeble, make candid allowances for it; if it be vigorous, or comfortable, you have a right to expect that his services will be more numerous and with fewer interruptions.

2. Pastoral visitation is another portion of ministerial duty, in regard to which the complaint in congregations is so general, that I never knew but a single minister—an aged man, who in the last years of his life devoted nearly his whole time to visiting—who did as much of it as his people desired. There certainly has been no part of my duty as a pastor, in which I have so little satisfied myself as in this; and in which, also, I believe that I have so little satisfied you, Yet I can truly say, that I have always appreciated it highly, and that the anxieties I have felt, the resolutions I have formed, the plans I have devised, and the exertions I have made, to perform it more effectually, have neither been slight nor few.* There are several obstacles to the full discharge of this duty, in this place, not to be easily surmounted or removed. Many earnestly desire to have their clergymen call on them often, as a friend or companion, who would never wish to see him enter their doors on a visit strictly pastoral; that is, to catechise the family, to inquire into their religious knowledge and the state of their souls,

* A consideration which had much influence in determining me to enter on that course of public catechetical lectures, which I have continued through two seasons, was, that this would be a substitute for family visitation and catechising—that in this way I could do what was equivalent to catechising all the youth of my charge, with many of their parents, once a week, for half the year. There is nothing I more regret in leaving you, than that I leave this course of lectures incomplete—Possibly it may yet be finished, and the whole be published

and to address them seriously on their eternal concerns. Yet such, or similar visits, a clergyman is chiefly bound to pay. His time is too precious to devote much of it to ceremony and sociality. A few hours, occasionally, he may properly employ in calls or visits of mere civility and friendship; for these may have their use, not only in relaxing his own mind, but also in gaining the affections of his parishioners. But those who have no disposition to see their pastor on the errands that are the most proper to his office, have the least reason of all to complain of him for the want of attentions of another kind; and yet these commonly are the very persons who are most disposed to clamor against him for not visiting his people.

But the occupations mostly pursued by those who live in this city, and the manner in which the several members of a family are obliged to spend their time, are, in fact, almost incompatible with regular pastoral visitation. Many families can neither intermit their business, nor be seen together, except in the evening—when visits are generally inconvenient to a minister. The most which seems to be practicable, is, that your pastor should see you in seasons of affliction, sickness, and confinement; at times when some of the family are known to be under serious impressions of religion; and when providential occurrences, of whatever kind, may give you a special claim on his attention. If on such occasions you shall perform your own duty, by letting him know what is the state of your household, he will ordinarily be able and desirous to visit you. And if my successor, or late colleague, shall be able to organize a system of regular family visitation and catechetical instruction, I shall, should I live to know it, rejoice in it with all my heart. But you must not forget that this cannot be effected without your consent and co-operation, and that till it be done, your expectations of visits from your pastors ought to be limited by the bounds which I have indicated. In the mean time you will recollect, that the constant opportunities which you

have for the general catechising of your children, the favourable circumstances in which you are placed for deriving religious knowledge from books and conversation, the privileges you enjoy in religious societies and conferences, and from the numerous public services on which you may conveniently attend, both on sacred and secular days, are, to say the least, a full equivalent for the want of that family catechising, which congregations otherwise circumstanced more need, and sometimes receive.

3. The last cause of complaint, which I propose to notice, is, the occasional absences of your minister for the recruiting of his health and spirits. That under colour of such absences, abuses may be practised, is not to be questioned. At the same time, you ought to be sensible, for it is certainly a truth, that there is not one man in a hundred who has a constitution to bear the life of a student and pastor in your city, without intervals of relaxation, and occasional excursions in travelling, to restore his wasted strength. The duties of a faithful minister here, bear harder on the animal functions, than the occupations of the day labourer, the mechanic or the merchant. The absences contemplated will, moreover, be useful to your minister, and eventually to yourselves, by the opportunities which they will afford him of enlarging his acquaintance with men of piety and science, of seeing the habits and customs of different places, and of extending generally his knowledge of mankind—a knowledge as important to a minister of the gospel as that of almost any other description. A moderate allowance for such absences, therefore, you ought to make, without complaint or reluctance.

On reviewing the three last particulars, I am very sensible that, while they are important to direct you in the treatment of your pastor, they are capable of perversion by him—But there is nothing which may not be perverted; and I hope you will never have a pastor capable of using what was intended for his benefit, to screen him from deserved

censure, or to assist him in the practice of imposition. A man disposed to do this, would be likely to be soon banished from the ministry altogether. Every worthy minister of the gospel will incline to the extreme of over exertion, rather than to that of indulgence. He will often be disposed to regret that he cannot do much more than he finds to be practicable, in a cause so good as that in which he is engaged, and for a Master who has such high and tender claims, as the one whom he serves.

In order to your improvement under the ministrations of your pastor, I recommend a careful attention to the following things.

1. Expect and desire him to declare to you “all the counsel of God.” Do not indulge a wish that he should keep back, conceal or disguise, any part of the revealed system. Be willing that he should bring it all forward, and in all its strength—provided that he does it with suitable explanations and in just proportion, dwelling most on those topics which are most important and most practical. Never quarrel with your minister for dealing plainly with you from the pulpit, and endeavouring to come as closely as he can to your consciences and hearts. Remember that he is bound to do this, both that he may deliver his own soul and be instrumental to your salvation. If he shall avoid coarseness and vulgarity, (which he ought to do as a matter of duty as well as taste,) he cannot be too plain, practical and pungent, in his addresses. Let it be deeply imprinted on your minds, that it is not to be amused or entertained, it is not merely to be instructed, that you hear the gospel—it is *that your souls may be saved.*—Alas! what would it avail you, though your pastor were as wise and as eloquent as Paul, if he were not honoured to win your souls to Christ. Oh that my successor may be far happier in this respect than I have ever been! Oh that he may see many seals of his ministry, beyond what I have witnessed! And that this may be realized, be not wanting to yourselves—honestly, hear-

tily and wholly, seek to be made wiser and better, whenever you hear him preach.

2. Do not treat both your pastor and yourselves so unjustly, as not to attend constantly and regularly on his preaching. It is not in human nature to speak with earnestness to deserted seats. You, therefore, not only sustain a loss yourselves, but you sink the heart of your minister, and disserve those who are present, when you are unnecessarily absent from church. Against that most unchristain custom, which has begun to shew itself among you, of neglecting public worship in the afternoon of the Lord's day, I desire here to enter my pointed testimony. It has its foundation unquestionably in the love of sensual indulgence and conformity to the world; and so long as any individual allows himself in it, I seriously affirm that I have very little expectation, that he will profit by the morning service, on which he attends.—A conscientious, careful, prayerful, and constant attendance on public worship, I do most earnestly recommend to you all, as you value your eternal well-being. And though I must not dwell upon it, yet I cannot be content without urging, in a word, upon those who have not yet approached to the table of the Lord, not to withdraw from the church during the administration of the holy sacrament of the supper, but to remain till the conclusion of the solemnity; and reverently to meditate on what they witness. Thousands have dated their first deep and effectual impressions of religion, from what they saw and heard at the Lord's table, before they had ever been admitted to it as communicants.

3. Receive the private admonitions, and even rebukes of your pastor, suitably administered in the discharge of his official duty, with temper, candour, submission and thankfulness. To admonish, reprove and rebuke individuals, is an undertaking to which a gospel minister is commonly disposed to be sufficiently reluctant, without any special discouragement. Yet it is one which he is not permitted wholly to refuse; and when seasonably, discreetly, tenderly

and faithfully performed, it may be of the greatest use.—It may, under the divine blessing, save a soul which might otherwise be lost. View it, therefore, not as an insult, but as it is in reality, an instance and proof of the truest and highest friendship; and be persuaded that you will act, not meanly and pusillanimously, but nobly and wisely, as well as dutifully, in meekly receiving and profiting by “the wounds of a friend.”—“Open rebuke is better than secret love.”*

4. Fail not to send your children statedly to receive the catechetical instructions of your pastor. Prepare them for these instructions at home, by carefully governing, teaching and praying with them, according to your solemn baptismal vows; and as recollecting what I have often inculcated, that family government, family instruction, and family religion, are the only sure and solid foundations of all that is excellent either in church or state. With much regret I have observed that there has been, for a year or two past, a lamentable and increasing remissness in the duty of sending your children to be taught their catechism, and those little forms of devotion which have been prepared for their use. The cause of this, as I am satisfied that I do not mistake it, I must not forbear to expose.—It is the criminal neglect of parents to teach their children in their own families. Giving them little instruction there, they are at first ashamed to expose their own unfaithfulness and their children's ignorance, by sending them into public; and afterwards they lose, by degrees, all sense of obligation and regard to the duty, till at last they omit it wholly, without compunction or concern. Believe me, the guilt and the danger of this is truly alarming, with respect both to yourselves and your offspring. Perform to them, therefore, your own personal duty, and you will be willing and desirous to give your pastor the opportunity of performing his. Send to him, carefully and punctually, these lambs of the flock, that he may add his

* Prov. xxvii. 5.

endeavours to your own, in striving to direct and guide them to the fold of eternal safety and rest.

5. Remember your pastor in all your prayers. How often does the great apostle of the gentiles repeat the injunction—"Brethren pray for us." He felt constantly the necessity of being aided by the devout supplications of all the faithful: And if such was the fact in regard to him, with all his extraordinary furniture and endowments, what must be the feelings of every inferior and ordinary minister of the gospel, who has any right views of his work and his necessities? He will assuredly most earnestly desire, as he will most urgently need, your unceasing prayers; and you will incur the guilt of no common neglect, if you do not prefer your petitions to God constantly and ardently in his behalf. Neglect in this particular, may, also, be most injurious to yourselves; for your pastor's labours, however faithful and abundant, will do you no good, unless God confer his blessing on them; and it is only in answer to prayer that you have a right to expect the blessing. Therefore, pray for your pastor and for the success of his ministrations—I had almost said—whenever you pray for yourselves.

And here you will permit me to put in a request, that I may still be specially remembered in your addresses to God, though my pastoral relation to you be dissolved. Give me this proof of your attachment and affection, and I will esteem it as the most precious which I could receive. Pray that I may be directed, assisted and blessed, in the arduous trust which I am about to assume, and for the right execution of which I feel that I need both wisdom and strength which can come from God alone.—Pray that I may be made the humble instrument of promoting our Redeemer's cause to the end of my days; and that then, through his infinite merits and prevalent intercession, I may be permitted to enter on "the rest which remaineth for the people of God."

IV. It only remains, that I make a few remarks on the relation which we have sustained to each other; offer some special exhortations; and commit you and myself to the great "Shepherd and bishop of souls."

In the review of my ministerial life, I see innumerable short-comings, deficiencies and imperfections, which I sincerely lament, and for which I earnestly implore, through Jesus Christ, the divine forgiveness. Yet my conscience does not accuse me of the want of general fidelity. I believe that my labours, on the whole, have been equal to my strength; and that "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." My first sermon after ordination was grounded on 1 Cor. ii. 2.—"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The apostle's resolution, as expressed in this text, I then proposed to adopt as my own; and I now "take you to record" that in my humble and imperfect measure, the fulfilment of this resolution has been exemplified in my preaching, and in my other labours among you—I trust "I am pure from the blood of all men."

On your part, I certainly have not only no complaint to make against you as a congregation, but abundant cause to be satisfied and thankful, for the manner in which you have received my ministrations, and for the affection, respect, confidence and kindness, which you have manifested toward me. Often have I borne testimony in your favour in these respects, and even "boasted of you to others."—I have indeed loved you much, and I have every evidence that you have loved me in return. To many individuals I owe obligations of which I cannot think without emotion, which I can never expect to return, and in view of which I can only pray that God may be the rewarder of those who conferred them. But let all be assured that while I live, though my pastoral relation to you will have ceased in *form*, on my part it is likely, in a measure, to remain in *fact*.—I must still have *pastoral feelings* toward you; and every service which I may

be able to perform, either for the congregation at large, or for any individual of it, you may at all times command, with the certainty that it will be rendered by me with unfeigned pleasure.

It is our duty to make use of providential occurrences to promote our own improvement and that of others; and the separation of a pastor from his charge is surely an event in providence, which calls on both parties concerned in it, to turn to some good account. It was this consideration which determined me to make this address; and if the situation in which we stand at this mutually interesting period, may serve to give more impression than usual to what I may say, I would fain not loose the opportunity of doing any good, which is thus offered to me. Allow me, then, in addition to what I have already addressed to the congregation at large, to direct a few words in particular to three descriptions of persons among you.

1. To the professors of religion. Your situation, my dear brethren, in this populous and dissipated city is, at once, trying and important, in no ordinary degree. It is trying, because you are exposed to snares and temptations—to a tide of fashionable vice and folly—not known and felt, in an equal degree, in most other places. At the same time, these very circumstances render your situation the more interesting and important.—If found faithful, you will insure to yourselves a brighter crown of eternal glory; you may be instrumental not only in preserving your children from ruin, but in forming them for distinguished usefulness in this world and in preparing them for endless happiness in the world to come; you may promote, more extensively than others, the general interests of Christianity; and you may set an example, the influence of which may be widely felt. *Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, put on the whole armour of God, watch unto prayer, be sober and hope to the end.* Be not conformed to the world which lieth in wickedness, yourselves, and use your best endeavours to save your

offspring from it. Be willing to exercise self denial, and to bear the cross, in the cause and for the sake of your precious Saviour. Give no unnecessary offence—be meek and humble, and kind, and courteous, and affable, and hospitable, and charitable, and liberal. Whatsoever things are truly lovely and of good report, think on these things. As far as in you lies, live peaceably with all men, and let not your good be evil spoken of; but set your faces as flints against every vitious, every questionable practice. Be very guarded in your indulgence in fashionable amusements; they insensibly steal upon the heart—and often seduce it from God from love to his service, obedience to his laws, and affection to his people. Renounce, as utterly inconsistent with your Christian profession and integrity, all theatrical entertainments, and carefully guard your children against them. Strive to excel in practical piety, in genuine holiness of life and conversation. Love and associate with each other. Encourage Christian conferences and associations for prayer. Avoid as much as you can religious controversies—they often destroy vital Godliness. But hold fast the truth as it is in Jesus, in opposition to prevailing heresies and errors. Avow your faith unequivocally and distinctly, and never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Labour to show an example of true evangelical piety, in all its purity and in all its loveliness.

Consider that the eyes of the congregation are turned on you, and that your conduct is often considered as a warrant for any doubtful practice. Be watchful, therefore, lest you become stumbling blocks to others—how intolerable the thought that you should be instrumental in precipitating an immortal being toward destruction! In the observance of all the laws of Christ endeavour to be unblameable: In all social and relative duties show a pattern which others may safely imitate: In the discharge of all moral obligations be scrupulously exact: In all congregational concerns let your temper and your actions teach others to be concili-

atory, and to consult the general good more than private gratification. Encourage charitable designs, and all suitable measures for the propagation of the gospel—take the lead in these, and endeavour to draw the congregation after you. Prosperity, even in this world, is likely to attend the community, as well as the individuals, who are ready to serve God with their substance. “These things, I give you in charge, that ye may be blameless.* Finally, brethren, farewell: be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

2. Some of the congregation to whom I have been preaching during the whole of my ministry, or the larger part of it, are apparently yet “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity”—To these, I am extremely anxious to say something at parting, which may possibly be useful to them if God peradventure may yet give them repentance unto life.

My dear friends—on the supposition that I have been faithful in delivering to you the messages of the gospel (and in what degree I have been so, let your own consciences testify) then is your guilt before God such as may well give you the most serious alarm. Recollect that where he “hath given much, he will require the more,” and that, consequently, to slight the full dispensation of the gospel for five and twenty years, is to incur a most tremendous responsibility to your final judge. Attempt not to excuse yourselves and to soothe your consciences, with the thought that it is only *omission* with which you are chargeable. It is against *omissions* that some of the severest denunciations of the gospel are pointed. The tree which bore *no* fruit, the lamp which had *no* oil, the unprofitable servant who made *no* use of his talent, are there exhibited as emblems of peculiar criminality, and examples of the severest condemna-

* 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

tion. The sentence which our Saviour represents himself as pronouncing at last on those who shall be found on his left hand, is grounded wholly on *neglect*. When the apostle, trembling at the thought of being “a savor of death unto death” to some who had heard the gospel from him, exclaimed,—“Who is sufficient for these things?” it still appears that the guilt he contemplated arose from *neglect*. And shall it at last appear that all the warnings and entreaties which I have delivered to you, shall be “a savor of death unto death” to your souls,—that the whole effect of my ministry on you shall be only to aggravate your final condemnation! Insupportable thought! God forbid it! is your exclamation, as it is my own. Ah, unhappy men! but this event will not be forbidden, it will assuredly take place, if you do not speedily fly by faith to the Saviour, in whose atoning blood your “crimson and scarlet” stains may be washed away.—Are you yet disposed to plead for delay? How often have I reminded you of its dangers and delusions? How often have I admonished you that any future time would, probably, find you less inclined than the present, to enter on a life of piety and holiness? I now put it to your consciences if, at this moment, you are not, yourselves, examples of this very truth. Cannot many of you look back to a period, at which you were more disposed than you now are, to attend to the concerns of your immortal souls? And what is to be the end of this delusive course? Does it not present to your view a most fearful issue? Verily, between you and the precipice of eternal ruin the steps seem to be but few. Take them not—oh infatuated mortals! take them not I beseech you. Stop, and turn, and speedily retrace your way, and you may yet be saved. Shall it not be seen that you will obey this call? May I not hope that the event of my leaving you shall do you more good than all my past admonitions have done—that though you were proof against every other warning, yet you yielded to the last? Then, if permitted to “enter into the joy of my Lord.” I shall yet, in his presence above, number

you among “the children that God hath given me.” In the name of the Saviour before whose judgment seat I am soon to meet you, by all the happiness and by all the horrors of eternity, by all the mercy of the declaration that “where sin abounded grace did much more abound,” I charge and conjure you, to turn immediately from your sins, to embrace the offered salvation, and to become the triumphant monuments of redeeming love.

3. I am shortly to address the youth of the congregation—

Precious Youth—

When I think of the numbers of you whom I have baptized and catechized, to whom I have taught forms of devotion and delivered lectures of pious instruction; when I call to mind how often I have fondly looked upon you as the best hope of my ministerial charge; my soul is ready to be melted within me, at the prospect of losing my pastoral connexion with you. But the thought which most afflicts me, and which I wish may most affect you, is—that I leave so large a proportion of you unreconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Of those to whom I have administered the sacrament of baptism, alas! how few are there that I have had the pleasure of admitting to the other sacrament—the symbol with us of a profession of being truly and unreservedly devoted to the Lord. Yet there are many of you whose years would entitle you to this privilege, if your hearts were duly prepared to receive and seek it. It is, indeed, an anticipation that consoles me, that he who shall enter into my labours may, at some future period, reap what I have sown—that my successor may see a large harvest gathered from among you, for the granary of heaven. But why should this prospect be remote? Why should any of you risk the danger of perishing forever by trusting to the future? Why may not my separation from you be the occasion, in the dispensation of God’s providence and grace, on which a multitude of you may be brought to lay seriously

and savingly to heart the things which belong to your everlasting peace? The thought is so grateful, that I know not how to abandon it. My dear children! compel me not to abandon it. Your own eternal advantage pleads, in concert with me, that you should not. If the event shall prove that my ceasing to instruct and admonish you (to take place at the end of this address) did so rouse you to an attention to your spiritual state, did so seriously remind you of your neglected duty, did so affectingly urge upon you the importance of becoming immediately what I have so long wished and prayed to see you—that with one consent you pressed into the kingdom of God, taking it by holy violence, you will eternally rejoice; and I shall hope to rejoice with you, in this happy consequence of my removal.

That I should combat, at this time, the pretences and temptations by which the young delude themselves, and are deluded by the great adversary of souls, into the neglect of religion in early life, as it is not practicable, so I think it cannot be necessary to you. Often, and at length, have you heard me detect these fallacies. You have only to exercise your memory and your candour, and you will, I flatter myself, admit that I have demonstrated to you incontestibly, that youth is infinitely the most favourable time to enter on a life of piety; that such a life, truly understood and exemplified, cannot be gloomy or cheerless; that, on the contrary, it is favorable to every pleasure worthy of a rational and immortal being; that the sacrifices which it requires are far outweighed by the enjoyments which it ensures; that the sense of unconditional safety in all events, which it produces, gives a serenity and peace which nothing else can bestow; that true spirit, genuine honour, real dignity, amiable tempers and gentle manners, are its legitimate offspring; that it enjoins industry and fidelity, and thus leads to prosperity on earth as well as to happiness in heaven; that in short, and in the language of infallible truth,* “ Godli-

liness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." In this manner I have endeavoured, you will recollect, to remove your prejudices against a devout and holy life. But to remove prejudices is not enough—the life itself must be entered on; and other, and still more interesting considerations, are usually blessed of God to incline men effectually to engage in it. These considerations, therefore, I have been accustomed to press; and would to God that I could now press them effectually on every individual of you. Would to God that you might now receive and feel as you ought the solemn and momentous truths, that you are sinners by nature and by practice, and that till renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and united to Jesus Christ by a lively faith, you are every moment in danger of perishing forever—in jeopardy of hopeless and inconceivable misery. From this danger and jeopardy I urge you to flee, as knowing that the flight is for the life of your souls: And I point you to the Saviour as the ark of safety, and tell you that if you truly and perseveringly look for his grace and aid, you shall not fail to find them, and be led by them to safety and salvation. Young as you are, you have no time to lose in attending to this great concern. Some of your companions, whose hold on life was as firm as your's, you have seen sinking suddenly to the grave. You have, therefore, proof incontestible and alarming, that your youth affords no security against the immediate arrest of the king of terrors: And if it did, the continuance of life without true religion, could never be desirable. If terminated without it, the space afforded would only be to you the opportunity of "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath" Or if saved at last, as "brands plucked out of the fire," you would have incurred much anguish in this world, and a diminution of happiness in the next; from the whole of which early piety would have been your compleat preservation. Now, therefore, I beseech you—by every tender and by every awful consideration, I beseech you—yield your-

selves “ a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” True religion, lovely in all, is most lovely in the young. So let it eminently be in you. Recommend it in your example, by all its powerful attractions, by all its native charms,—that as far as possible you may engage others to think favourably of it. Associate it with every generous and manly endowment and enterprise—with improvement in knowledge, with courtesy of demeanour, with emulation and activity in business, with inviolable integrity in every office of life. Shun, as a pestilence, the society of the wicked; be watchful against the thousand seductions to vice and misery which surround you; be moderate and guarded in your pleasures; “ flee youthful lusts;” be obedient to your parents, docile to your teachers, respectful to your superiors, kind to your inferiors, benevolent and just to all—Thus, if you shall be spared in life, you will be preparing to pass it with happiness and honour; and at whatever period you shall be called hence, you will assure to yourselves the reward “ of the good and faithful servant.”

Nothing now remains but to commit myself, and you my people, to Almighty God our common Father—

O most merciful God and Saviour, who hast condescended to make known, and to endear thyself, to thy church and people, by styling thyself “ the Shepherd of Israel;” graciously vouchsafe to receive from thy unworthy servant, whom thou hast been pleased to honour with the office of an under pastor in thy church, the resignation of the charge of that flock, of which he has been from his youth an overseer—Called, as he believes, by thy providence, to another station, he resigns into thy merciful hands, whence he received it through the ministry of his brethren, this important and precious trust, which thou hast favoured him so long to hold—And oh! through the blood of the everlasting covenants through the prevalent intercession of the great Ad-

voeate on high—through the infinite and effectual mediation of his adored Saviour—he earnestly prays that thou wouldst freely pardon all his ministerial sins; and not less that thou wouldst forgive the transgressions of this dear people, since they have been under his pastoral care. Sustain and bless thy servant still, in the arduous duties which may be before him. Make him faithful unto death, that he may receive a crown of life. And may this people be ever thy peculiar charge. May they recollect and regard the instructions and exhortations which they have received from any of their pastors, whether living or dead. May thy special blessing rest on the endeavour now made by thy servant, that they may have their duty “always in remembrance after his decease.” May he who is still their pastor, be abundantly prospered and succeeded in his public labours, and abundantly comforted in his own soul. May this people never want pastors “according to thy heart, who shall feed them with knowledge and understanding.” May they ever hold fast the truth in the love of it—the truth as it is in Jesus. Save them from all heresy and error: Save them from barrenness and unfruitfulness under the cultivation of thy hand: Save them from hardness of heart and blindness of mind: Save them from all discord and dissention. Make them an example of all christian excellence. Pour out upon them copiously the influences of thy most Holy Spirit, that many may be born and taught of God; that converts may be greatly multiplied; that thy church may be greatly enlarged; that thine own people may be greatly comforted;—yea, O Lord, if it be thy holy will, that not one of this flock may be wanting, in the day when thou shalt make up thy jewels. And when “the chief Shepherd shall appear,” may they and their pastors receive his plaudit, and be permitted to rejoice together forever, in the kingdom and glory of their Lord. Grant these things, O most merciful Father, for the sake of thy best beloved Son Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, one glorious and eternal God, be praises forever, AMEN.