

S E R M O N,

BELIVERED AT NEWBURYPORT,

JULY 29, 1868,

AT THE

INSTALLATION

OF THE

Rev. John Giles,

TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN THAT TOWN.

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Newburyport :

FROM THE PRESS OF E. W. ALLEN,

1868.



A SERMON.



EPHESIANS iii. 8.

UNTO ME, WHO AM LESS THAN THE LEAST OF ALL SAINTS, IS THIS GRACE GIVEN, THAT I SHOULD PREACH AMONG THE GENTILES THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST :

IN these words, the apostle humbly and elegantly magnifies his office, as the appointed minister of the gospel unto the Gentile world—For this purpose he introduces the chapter where our text is recorded, in the following words : For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles : If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given unto me to you ward : How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery ;—which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel ; whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of his power. Under deep impressions of the extent, and importance of the work assigned him, and of his unworthiness of it : He humbly exclaims in the words submitted to our meditation ; Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. He illustrates the greatness of his office, from the greatness of the nation he was under a special appointment from heaven to preach for ; as well as from the magnitude of the misery they were under while destitute of the gospel—Of this appointment he informs us expressly, in that memorable speech which he delivered, in his own defence, before king Agrippa, when he relates, that by a voice from heaven, he had been struck to the

earth, and Jesus said unto him—Rise and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister, and a witness, both of these things, which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. The gospel of the uncircumcision was given to Paul, as that of the circumcision to Peter. Both were ministers of Christ, who is styled a light, to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. Paul was chosen of Christ, to carry the tidings of salvation to the ends of the earth; to a people who sat in darkness and had no light. He considers it an honor and grace, to deliver, to save, and to render happy so great a nation.

In comparison to the apostle's charge as the minister of the Gentiles; the extent of the Jewish church was but small. As a nation the Jews were but few in number, and feeble in strength. At that time, they were a mere tributary province, or dependent state upon haughty Rome—The Gentile world contained mighty nations, powerful kingdoms, and extensive empires. The limits of the apostle's orders as a gospel minister included splendid and populous cities, such as Rome, Athens, and Corinth, with all their schools and seminaries of literature, which then professed the most eminent learning, and philosophy, in the world. To such important states the apostle was sent, and with such opponents, filled with all the power of pride, prejudices and prepossessions, the inspired preacher had to contend. Accordingly, we find him taking a faithful farewell of his countrymen in this view, after he had made them the first offers of salvation, Acts xiii. verse 46 and 47.—It was necessary that the word of God should first have been preached unto you; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, so we turn unto the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee, to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth.—Under deep impressions of the magnitude of this work, he takes a view of himself, and notwithstanding all his eminent abilities of nature, of grace, and of the schools, he says, to me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, &c.

Here is a double diminutive term. Less than the least—

He was so low, and so little in his own esteem, that he called himself by a hyperbole less than he could be, and be a saint at all. Dr. Colman on this place says "The apostle calls himself *longe minimus*, by far the least." O how humble, how small is the great man in his own eyes, after all that heaven had done to raise and to aggrandize him! Such humility as this goeth before honor, and is always the companion of true honor; while a haughty spirit indicates a fall. Genuine humility is increased and enlivened in exercise, in proportion to the elevation, and honors of Providence, to a man of real worth—The apostle could not forget what he had once been. In the genuine language of humility he says, I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church. I was an injurious person, a persecuting person, and an enemy to the gospel of Christ. This he confesses; and a remembrance of it throws him in the dust when he views it in connexion with the honors of a gospel ministry.

This text is an evidence also of the holiness of the heart of this good man, a great qualification of a gospel minister. Tho' less than the least of them, he claims kindred and connexion with saints. Tho' the chief of sinners, yet he says I obtained mercy; and tho' I have by far the least right of claiming the character of a saint, I still humbly think I am one. And as the inspired penman is deeply sensible of the importance of the work of the ministry, from a view of the greatness of the nation he was sent to, and of the miseries they were in without the gospel, and of his utter unworthiness of the honors of such an employment—He is no less affected with the incomparable greatness of the subject he was to preach; the unsearchable riches of Christ. Here we may contemplate this great man, as struck with admiration that he should be called to be a minister at all, to any people, or of any good subject; whether moral, philosophical, or divine; but it overwhelmed him with humility, gratitude, and self debasement; that he, who of all others had been the least active in doing good, and the most ready and active in doing evil, should nevertheless be intrusted with the benevolent, and benign, the heavenly and divine employment, of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. That he who had been an enemy to the spread, growth, and knowledge of the gospel, should be honored with making the first proclamation of it to all nations; and

should be made to plant churches in those very towns, and parish them up in those very cities, from whence he had been ready to pluck up professors of christianity, and to drag them unto strange cities ; and with wicked judges to give his voice against them.

From this imperfect paraphrase of the text, give me liberty, my dear friends and brethren, to state the two following propositions ;

I. That ministers of the gospel, should be holy and humble men ; and,

II. As such, they will be deeply and gratefully affected, with a sense of the importance of the sacred office of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ ; after which, I shall conclude with some short addresses, not unusual on such solemn occasions as the present.

I have presumed to state this proposition,

First, That ministers of the gospel are to be holy and humble men. It will readily be granted, that ministers of the gospel need many very important qualifications, for the proper and faithful discharge of their duty. Natural parts are necessary, such as penetration, prudence, and a power of recollection to a good degree, with a good acquaintance with the arts & sciences, with human nature, with men as well as books. And no respectable and durable usefulness can be expected in the ministry, by men totally devoid of them, in an age like this, of increasing knowledge in these things. Perhaps there is nothing in which we see the ignorance and weakness of some men more, than in affecting to be teachers of others, in the great and important truths of the Bible ; when probably they are incapable of reading it with propriety, and far less, of understanding it themselves—And the state of the church is much to be lamented in this respect in many places in our land—Yet on the other hand, these external endowments, without grace, but very poorly qualify a minister for the daily and practical part of the duties of a spiritual instructor—Of all these Paul abounded before he was properly qualified to be a minister of Christ. He had the law in his head, but not in his heart. He was a pharisaical teacher of it to others, but a stranger in his heart to its spiritual meaning. I was alive, i. e. a very good man, once, without the law ; he saw no need of any greater, than an outward conformity to

its letter ; but when it reached his heart, how holy, how just, and how good does he view its precepts.

It may be observed, all men need to be holy ; this is a great truth. But of all men, ministers need to be the most holy, from the nature of their office. It is said without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; and as no unholy ministers shall ever see the Lord ; what prospect is there, that they will be instrumental in leading others to the enjoyment of that blessed object they never saw, nor are like to enjoy themselves. The office of a minister is an holy office. When Aaron was chosen to officiate in the priestly character, on the front of the mitre which he wore was written, Holiness to the Lord ; as expressive of the holy nature of his office. The God ministers are to serve is a holy God, and is to be worshipped in the beauty of holiness, in spirit and in truth. The word that is to be preached is the holy word, that was given by inspiration of God, spoken by holy men, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The law they are to unfold, the gospel they are to preach, the ordinances, in which they are to lead, and the unfathomable riches they are to open, are all holy.

The purity of the divine law, the inflexible nature of divine justice, they are often called to declare, in order to alarm thoughtless sinners, as well as the consolations of the gospel, to establish the saints. And whether we consider them as addressing the former, or latter, holiness of heart is a precious qualification. It enables them by the experience of having seen the dangers of a sinful state, to alarm the fears of secure sinners ; and by the experience of tasting the consolations of the gospel, they are strengthened to build up the saints, in holiness and comfort ; and in both respects, to recommend themselves to every man's conscience, as in the sight of a holy and heart searching, and rein trying God.

The all important doctrine of regeneration is a holy doctrine, and is never to be neglected by ministers of the gospel, if they would be instrumental in fitting men for heaven. With what kind of sincerity can they speak about these things of the spirit ; which are only spiritually discerned ; if not sanctified and enlightened, by the spirit of God in their own hearts ? To say the least about this precious truth, a minister must appear to himself, as acting a mere farce, who preaches this doctrine and is a stranger to

its influences himself. He will be disposed, in part, to say, how can a man be born when he is old? Ministers are ambassadors of Christ, for peace with God; and as such, to them is committed the word of reconciliation. With what propriety can we expect they will negotiate in this business, or increase the number of his friends, who are enemies to God in their own hearts, are not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.

We would not be here understood, as limiting God; or as saying, that in no case can an unholy minister be useful. God can bless the word to his people's good, independent of the disposition of the administrator. We do not find, that the doctrine of Judas the traitor, Jesus found fault with, nor can we say, that he did no good in his office. But we can still say, that he was but a traitor to his official character; and that he did much evil in the church and to his master: And we may add, that if they that be wise to win souls, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever, the lustre of their brightness will be holy, and that, as stars, they will be sanctified stars for ever and ever.

Scripture joins with reason and the experience of all ages, in evincing that spiritual instructors should be men of piety and holiness of heart and life. Our Saviour represents them as a city set upon an hill, which cannot be hid; as lights of the world, for the direction of others; as the salt of the earth, to preserve men from immorality and corruption of manners. As lights of the world, they are to let their light so shine before men, that others seeing it, may glorify God. As a city, they are to be exemplary, orderly men, and ornaments to the church; and as the salt of the earth, they are to have a favour of religion and piety about them; they are to season the conversation of men in general, as far as they prudently can, and to assist christians in particular, in heavenly conversation. On the other hand, if they are irregular in their lives, and carnal and unfavoury in their conversation; they sully the beauty of the city, obstruct the progress of their buildings, ruin her order, strike out her lights, and are like the salt that hath lost its favour, and is good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under the feet of men. Agreeable to this scriptural view of our subject, we find irregular ministers fall into the greatest contempt, among all classes of

men; for while such are of all descriptions of characters, the most disgusting to men of real religion and order, we often find them contemned by that remaining sense of consistency, found in the very worst of sinners. To these observations I would beg leave to add, that a minister of Christ is also to be a humble man. This disposition is inseparably connected with holiness. Whatever indirect claims, men of other professions may impose upon themselves from a false sense of honor, to harbour the contrary habit; ministers of religion can have none, directly or indirectly. They are instructors of humility by office. Can there be a more inconsistent character than a proud instructor of humility? The most lively sense of the dignity and greatness of the apostle's office, clothed him with humility, and while he professes a name among the saints, he does it humbly. He seems to himself as small, less than the least of them all. Thus, he, who is counted by others the greatest, is himself disposed to be a servant of all. The language of pride is greater than the greatest, but the language of humility is less than the least. By the humility that a gospel minister is to cultivate, we are not to understand, that low, mean or cringing flattery for applause among men, which we see in some characters. This is generally found in very weak, and frequently in very wicked men. The disposition of which we speak, is an ornament to the greatest characters, and to men of the most penetrating understanding. It is compatible with a just sense of the dignity of our office and of our usefulness and worth in the world. It is a grace of the holy spirit. Its exercise ariseth from a view of the infinite superiority of God, the purity and excellency of his character. It is accompanied with a just view of our own unworthiness. our odiousness to his holiness and obnoxious state to his displeasure; with a continual sense of dependence on him, for life and every other blessing. It disposes to consider the duties of condescending to, and preferring one another in love. It feels the obligation of confessing our faults one to another, as a privilege of which a good man would not be denied.

The example of Christ, the prime minister of the New Testament, loudly calls for humility in all spiritual instructors. "Come learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." Such as have been eminent in doing good in their day were of the same humble disposition. When Moses was

called to office, under impressions of humility he exclaims, "O Lord I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant ; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." That excellent prophet Isaiah, when called upon to carry God's message to the Jews, says, 6th chap. 5th verse, Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips—for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Agreeable to this humble state of mind, do we also find Jeremiah thus saying ; chap. i. ver. 5, 6. When God says "I have sanctified thee and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations ;" Then said I, ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child—Humility disposes an instructor of christianity to take a kind notice of the lowest, the weakest, and least favored, with advantages, of his flock ; to administer milk to babes in Christ, while it preserves him always from preaching himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. It will dispose him to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice ; while he will sincerely pity and pray for those who go astray, and in meekness instruct them, who oppose themselves, if peradventure, God may give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth ; that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. It will dispose a minister, not to sit down as if already perfect, or as if he had already attained : but conscious of many imperfections about him in grace and knowledge, he will press forward to higher degrees, in all christian habits and exercises, and in an increase of the knowledge of God, of Christ, of himself and of the important truths and mysteries of religion. Whatever degrees of proficiency he may have made in these things, his humility enables him to realize that in a comparative view, his knowledge is but ignorance, his wisdom but folly, his holiness but impurity, and all his righteousnesses as filthy rags before God. Should a humble minister be successful in doing good, knowing that God giveth the increase, he returns him all the praise.

Humility is a characteristic of a real christian ; and when we find it a prominent feature in a minister's disposition, it opens the avenues of the heart in favor of receiving his instructions. Far from this are the effects of a contrary disposition. An heart destitute of humility is a proper soil for every poisonous root of bitterness to spring up in, and trouble the church of God. If an error in principle or

practice should overtake a man of this temper, he scorns the humble exercise of confession. As the want of holiness strips a minister of the innocency of the dove; the want of humility bereaves him of that wisdom and prudence that makes wise to win the souls of others, or his own; and leads him into a labyrinth of confusion, distress, and folly, in which all his haughty attempts to extricate himself, from the just censures, and contempt of good order, are utterly unavailable: For the Lord lifts up the meek, while he casts the wicked, the proud, and the presumptuous sinner to the ground. To this man, saith God, will I look, who is of a meek and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.—Whereas “Those who walk in pride, he is able to abase.” The disposition of the apostle in our text, and the grace we have been recommending, soften the heart of man, and make it susceptible of all those amiable impressions which distinguish, and adorn the man, the minister, and the christian; and have a tendency to engage the mind in all the noble purposes and exercises of piety towards God, and benevolence to man. Which plainly shows, that ministers of the gospel, ought to be holy, and humble men.

This leads to observe,

Secondly—That, as such, they will be deeply and gratefully affected, with a sense of the importance of the sacred employment, of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In proportion to the importance of the trust committed to a man of holiness and humility, he will feel the weight of it deeply affecting his mind. Hence says Paul, to Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust. The declarative honor and glory of God, the salvation of immortal souls, in the ministry of reconciliation, are committed to gospel ministers. In proportion to the many blessings, which the charge gives to a good man, may contain, he will study to mingle gratitude, with the humble emotions of his own insufficiency for such high duties, and unspeakably unmerited favors. Thus, says this great man in our text, to me—is this grace given. His heart overflows with gratitude, for the high, the distinguished, and unexpected favor of preaching Christ, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, not only to his own countrymen, which he had so earnestly and faithfully done, but to nations, who had long sat in darkness and had no light. How well do the feelings of his own heart correspond with the glad tidings he had to car-

ry to others. The importance of the ministerial work is evident, in that it is to preach Christ; not a mere man, not a created angel, but Christ the uncreated angel of the covenant.

Christ is to be preached in all his saving offices and relations to man. As our great instructing prophet he is our light, our sun who riseth with health, joy and life in his rays. He is to be preached as an interpreter among a thousand—the teacher who instructs as never man did. He is to be preached as that glorious personage of whom the patriarchs spake, and whose day they saw afar off with gladness of heart; and of whom the prophets predicted with ecstasy of joy.

Christ is to be preached as our great and atoning high priest, who, after he was sacrificed for us on earth, entered within the veil into the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man; as the propitiation, the advocate, and the intercessor; the all prevailing intercessor, in the presence of God for his chosen.

Christ is to be preached as king in Zion, and for her welfare, holding the reins of universal government; and swaying the sceptre of uncontrollable dominion over all things in heaven and earth; and exalted far above all principalities and powers, and thrones and dominions.

He is to be held up to view, in all his saving characters and relations; as the only Jesus who saves his people from their sins; the anointed of God, to be the mediator between God and man, and the only way of access unto the Father, in his birth, his life, death, and resurrection, and the end of the law for righteousness to them who believe.

The riches of Christ are to be preached, by ministers of the gospel. They have often abundant reason to preach the poverty of men, of churches, and of ministers. The Laodiceans were poor, miserable, wretched, blind and naked; as such, they were directed to the riches of Christ. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich—In the VIIIth Chap. of Proverbs, Christ is represented under the character of wisdom crying, and understanding putting forth her voice—saying, “O ye simple, understand wisdom, and ye fools be ye of an understanding heart. Riches and honor are with me, yea durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea than fine gold, and my revenue than choice sil-

ver.—I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance and I will fill their treasures.” By the riches of Christ we may understand the fruits of his death, in all the gifts of his grace here, and all the blessings of glory. Hence in scripture they are called the riches of his grace, and the exceeding riches of his grace. Eph. i. & 7. In whom we have redemption thro’ his blood the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Chap. ii. & 7. That in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.—They are also called the riches of his glory, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Hence says this apostle, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” And again he says, “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man.” The riches of Christ contain, the fulness of his Spirit, and all the merits of his blood. Pardon of sin, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, safety in life, victory in death, and an entrance into glory. A large treasure indeed, that gospel ministers have to lay open to perishing sinners. They are employed, as Christ’s servants, to go and tell the poor, the halt, and the maimed, that all things are now ready, and invite them to come and partake of the blessings of grace and glory in Christ.

Ministers are enjoined to preach all these things, as unsearchable in Christ. They come from him, belong to him, and are all treasured up, and found in him, as their source. “It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and he is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” It may be said that all the works of God are unsearchable; the sun, moon and stars declare his glory, and the firmament his handy work. His ways are in the seas—and his footsteps are not known. But of all his works, that of redemption is the most unsearchable.

Christ is unsearchably rich in the constitution of his person. The prophet Isaiah gives us an unsearchable representation of him in the following characters.—“The child born, the Son given—his name shall be called wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father and

prince of peace ;"—he is God and man, in one person—Emmanuel, possessing all possible perfections both of the divine and human natures. Hence, "who can declare his generation? What is his name if thou canst tell? He is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh." Here with propriety may be put the query, "Who can by searching find out God?" What numbers can state, what lines can fathom the depths of this treasure of divinity in Christ? After the deepest researches of the human understanding in the knowledge of his riches, in this view, we may still exclaim, how little of them do we know? How miserably poor, then, in comparison to Christ, are all the saviours proposed by those, who deny his divinity?

But again,

Christ is unsearchably rich, in his love and mercy to the children of men. Hence the Psalmist of Israel declares his tender mercy to be over all his other works. The apostle informs us, in his benediction for the Ephesian church—"Ye, being rooted, and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Christ is unsearchably rich in the depth of his councils and doctrines of his word. Agreeable to this, is that elegant exclamation—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, fully furnished for every good work.

The doctrine of his sovereignty and divine decrees are among the deep things of God, but they are unsearchably rich and comfortable to all true christians. Hence "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." And again the christian triumphs "Because God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth."

He is unsearchably rich towards his people in all the administrations of his Providence, whether of prosperity, or

adversity. O how rich he is in this respect, when he makes all things work together for their good. Is it not unsearchable, that tribulation and distress, that persecution and famine, that nakedness, the want of every thing comfortable, that peril and sword; or the having of every thing uncomfortable, and that for his own sake, they should be killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter; and yet he not only conquerors; but more than conquerors? This is an incomprehensible display of the riches of Divine Providence in their favor in the issue. Though poor they may make many rich; though having nothing yet possess all things in Christ.

Christ is unsearchably rich, in the nature of that union by which all the members of his mystical body are joined unto him, by one spirit. Hence, says the apostle, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God; which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In fine, we observe Christ is unsearchably rich in the operations of his spirit, on the hearts of men, and in all the communications of his grace. These belong to the unsearchable things of God. They are the things of the spirit, that are spiritually discerned. Who can tell how the bones do grow in the womb? Who can unfold the operations of the spirit on the human mind, in enlightening the understanding, enlivening the heart dead in trespasses and in sins, and meliorating the whole soul, by impressing it with the image of God. The communications of his holy spirit are rich beyond all possible expression. From the beginning of the world, to the present day, have these emanations been communicated from him; and like yonder sun for light, seem no nearer ending. The patriarchs richly shared of the unsearchable riches of Christ; the prophets of these divine favors; all the apostles were and all real christians are, the subjects of these precious influences. They are in number as the drops of rain from the pouring clouds, or the pendent pearls of dew on the grass, from the womb of the morning. He has therefore promised to pour out his Spirit, and to be as dew unto Israel.—They are unsearchably rich in point of duration and extent. All flesh are said to be their objects, and the ends of the earth their

boundary ; while eternity itself in the enjoyment of God gives them duration. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man adequately to unfold the riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Thus the employment of a gospel minister is to preach Christ and his unsearchable riches ; and when the feeble voice of man expires in death, and ministers shall be no more ; unto thy province, O eternity ! shall be assigned to unfold the unsearchable riches of the Redeemer, when saints are mingled with angels as cherubs and palm trees, to adorn the house not made with hands, in glory.

Let us now conclude by offering a few words, by way of address, to my Brethren in general in the ministry, to my Reverend Brother about to be installed over this people, and then to the church, congregation, and people, in this place.

To you my Rev'd Fathers and Brethren in the ministry, with all due deference, give me leave to say, That had the words of my text been spoken by a minister of but moderate abilities ; and of no special acquirements, we should view them expressive of a deep sense of the blessings of his office, the humility of a christian, the piety of a godly minister ; and as worthy our imitation.

With what increased energy then should they come upon our hearts, when we contemplate the speaker as the great apostle of the Gentiles ; possessing a high degree of strength of mind, and power of judgment ; favored with the eminent advantage of an education at the feet of Gamaliel—well acquainted with the learning most in fashion in his day ; and the whole adorned with an uncommon share of the grace of God, and a spirit of inspiration ! Viewing the subject in this light, it is truly striking.

To me, says this great and good man, who am less than the least, &c. What words shall we seek ? What expressions shall we use, to state the disproportion between us and our sacred employment, as preachers of the unsearchable riches of Christ ? Let a consideration of these words, serve to throw us prostrate in the dust, with a sense of our insufficiency for the important work. May a consideration of the great and special favor done us, in assigning us such a blessed employment, stimulate us to be faithful. Let us, my dear Brethren, seasonably consider the awful situation in which we must finally appear, if after all that God has

done for us, in putting us into the office, we should be found faithless, proud or graceless ministers ! What tongue can express, or heart conceive the accumulated misery of such a character ? Shall not his education, his opportunities for study, his sermons, his prayers, his professed principles, and the solemn vows of his office serve as chains, and as chains that can never be broken, to bind him hand and foot, as an unprofitable servant, to be cast into darkness and everlasting dishonor ? Shall not all the churches of Christ, see all faithless ministers brought forth ; and as the most consummate traitors to the Redeemer, condemned by him, by angels, and by saints, with aggravations of guilt and hypocrisy peculiar to themselves ? With what wild despair, & unparalleled amazement must they sink under the weight of trifling with the truths of the gospel, of stifling the convictions of the spirit, of neglecting the unsearchable riches of Christ, and losing precious and immortal sou's ? Let us then be holy, let us be humble, and let us be faithful unto the death ; and we shall obtain a crown of life. Let a consideration of the sublime employment, of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, excite to diligence, in bringing forth of this heavenly treasure, things new and old. Let us feed our people with knowledge and understanding ; that when we appear before God, we may be able to say, here are we, and the children whom God hath given us ; and have the well grounded hope, of meeting with a reconciled judge, to receive the final approbation, of well done, ye good and faithful servants, enter into the joys of your Lord.

MY DEAR AND REV. BROTHER,

It is with peculiar pleasure we assemble, on this joyful occasion, to install you, as a watchman, in this part of our spiritual Jerusalem. By a concurrence of various, and apparently special providences, you arrived at this place, in season, to support, strengthen, and encourage this people, when about to be left, as sheep without a shepherd ; and this day to take the oversight of them in the Lord.

Ample indeed, from every necessary quarter, are those recommendations of your qualifications, faithfulness and perseverance in the ministry, in times past. In this we rejoice, as honorable to you, satisfying to the Presbytery, and encouraging to the people of your charge in this place.

As we doubt not you will, so we shall always rejoice, that you continue to deserve them.

For this purpose, with all due respect to your experience, and past faithfulness, in the duties of your office, suffer me, Dear Sir, to observe, as a part of the duty devolved on me this day, by your polite partiality in my favor; That you will receive this important trust, in Christ's vineyard, with renewed impressions of its weight and magnitude. With deep humility, gratitude and self-denial, you will take the oversight of the flock of Christ in this place. This trust is pregnant with every important blessing. It contains the ministry of reconciliation, the declarative honor and glory of God, and the salvation of precious and immortal souls, in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. In this you will find a wide field, in which you are to dig deep; and for which you are to sell all, to obtain the pearl of great price, for yourself and people. To a real christian, the sermon that contains Christ and his riches, is indeed rich and good; while the most accomplished and learned without Christ, is poor and tasteless. In persevering to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to your people; your head will shine with light, and your own heart join with theirs in burning with love, while you like your master, thus talk with them by the way, and open unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. It is in having a constant recourse to this unfathomable fountain, that you can find light in darkness, strength in weakness, comfort and life in death, and many from among your people, as seals of your ministry, and as crowns of your rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

For you, my dear friends and fellow christians of this church and congregation, I beg leave to remark, that, unremitted has been the care of a kind Providence over you as a people, ever since you formed into a religious society. And shall we not ascribe your organization to the all directing influence of that God, whose wisdom foresaw the propriety of increasing the number of ministers and places of public instruction, in proportion to the increase of population in this place. God has crowned your endeavors with success, and settled, over you, an approved gospel minister from afar:—After rejoicing for awhile under his ministry, you were called to weep with them that wept, in consigning him unto the grave, the house appointed for all living.

And while his memory remains embalmed in your hearts, you are, this day, called to rejoice with them that rejoice, in the resettling of another, directed to, and approved of, by your deceased minister; and most cordially received now, as the man of your own choice. You believe that as the former did, so this minister will also lead you to the unsearchable riches of Christ. Receive him as one of the precious gifts of an ascended Saviour. Encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands, in the good work of the Lord. We congratulate you, my friends and brethren: It is with pleasure we reflect on your attachment to the plain, and unadulterated doctrines of grace, on your constancy in attention to public worship, and on your generous care for the support of a gospel ministry. May that love to the truths of the gospel, that union of sentiment, and that peace and harmony in the affairs of your church and society, that have hitherto, under God, been your strength and ornament, ever prevail among you. And should any unreasonable sectarians, springing up, trouble you, as very little notice is due, so very little ought to be taken of such. They frequently live, by the fire of contending with them, and often collect strength and importance, from the consequence of their opposers; and when that is denied them, they die away of their own accord.

And now my friends and brethren, for you, and for your minister, we offer to Almighty God, our sincere prayers, that with increasing fervor, he may long continue as a spiritual instructor, to preach, and you as his people to hear the unsearchable riches of Christ; and that you and your dear families may be often refreshed with the consolations of those unsearchable riches, until you are finally filled with all the fulness of God.

This great assembly will indulge me the liberty of observing, that it is matter of our unspeakable joy and gratitude to God, that solemnities of this kind are frequent in our land. Notwithstanding the united exertions of sectarian delusions, and high handed infidelity, with the powers of darkness to destroy a regular and orderly ministry, and to bring the solid and rational religion of our fore-fathers into contempt; still the great body of our citizens continue to respect them, as the institutions of inspiration. May we of this generation, with our offspring after us, to the latest posterity, continue in the uninterrupted enjoyment of our

liberty, sacred and civil, and delight in the religion of Jesus Christ, as the greatest ornament of our nature and a source of sublime enjoyment to man. May we consider it as affording the most salutary maxims and precepts for life, an unfailing consolation in death, and a pure and endless happiness in eternity.

And suffer me yet to add, that, as this town has been famed for religion ; and is still blessed with faithful, able, and orderly gospel ministers, let the inhabitants thereof bring forth corresponding fruit unto God. Who can say, but that, if the things that have been done among you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long since in dust and in ashes. The condemnation awaiting despisers of the gospel under such circumstances of advantages as yours, must be very awful indeed.

To conclude ; may that holy, that humble spirit in our text ; that spirit of charity and benevolence that thinketh no evil and is kind, adorn ministers and christian professors of every denomination in Newburyport ; and make you the comely brethren, who dwell together in unity. And may that spirit make us all, and our churches, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, beautiful as Tirzah and comely as Jerufalem. Then shall our happiness be just such as is earnestly wished for, but far greater than can be expressed even by those, who rejoice most in the prosperity of Zion : For when prophecies shall fail, when tongues and solemnities on earth shall cease, when ministers and knowledge shall vanish away, then shall we enter on that state of being, where all shall see as they are seen, and know as they are known in the full, and everlasting enjoyment of the unsearchable riches of Christ.—AMEN.

THE CHARGE.

By the Rev. SAMUEL TOMB, of Newbury.

REVEREND SIR,

CONSCIOUS of my inability to do justice to the part assigned me in the solemnities of this day, it was with diffidence that I undertook it, and with fear and trembling I attempt the execution. But when I consider, Sir, that you have been invested with the sacred office of the ministry for a course of years, and have exhibited to this Presbytery abundant testimonies, from Ministers and others, both in Europe and America, of your exemplary fidelity in the labors of the Gospel; I am comforted with the thought, that the necessity of a particular, formal Charge is hereby superseded—and that my duty at present is only, as a monitor, to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance, and to advise you to exercise the same diligence and faithfulness in relation to the dear flock which is now committed to your pastoral oversight and care, as we believe you have done in your former connexions of a similar kind.

Permit me then, dear Brother, in the name of our glorious Master, and by order of this reverend Presbytery, to remind you of some general outlines of the solemn trust which you received in charge at your ordination, and which is this day re-committed to you in this place. Every Minister of Jesus Christ has a trust committed to him in common with all christians; and also a trust which is peculiar to his office. That trust which we have in common with all Christians, is—*the care of our own souls*; all that concerns personal religion and godliness; according to St. Paul's charge to Timothy, *Take heed unto thyself, that thou mayest save thyself*. Those are certainly unfit to take care of the souls of others, who are careless of their own;—unfit to direct others in the way to heaven, who do not walk in that way themselves;—unfit to be made *keepers of the vineyards*, who criminally neglect their *own*. The truth is, that the possession and exercise of vital, personal religion is so essential to the well-being and comfort of the ministerial office, that the want of it not only excludes all rational hope of personal happiness, but also of public usefulness.

Wherefore be admonished, dear Sir, to take good heed to yourself—to the state and temper of your soul before God, and to the tenor of your conversation before men.

You will give diligence both to make and keep your christian calling and election sure ;—that from a heartfelt experience of the power of religion, and a comfortable assurance of your acceptance with God, you may be able in some good measure to say with the Apostle John, *That which I have seen and heard, looked upon, tasted and handled of the word of life, that declare I unto you, that you may have fellowship with us.*

You will also take good heed to the tenor of your conversation, that it may be a just and lovely transcript of that divine religion which you profess and preach. This was part of the charge which Christ gave his apostles ;—*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* A similar charge was given to Timothy, *Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* And the great Apostle of the Gentiles never appeared more in the true spirit and dignity of his character and office, than when he said to the Churches of Corinth and Philippi, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

In the next place, Reverend and dear Brother, you will take heed to the ministry, which you have received of the Lord to fulfil it. This is the all important trust which was committed to you at your Ordination—which is renewedly committed to you this day, and which you are most solemnly bound, faithfully to keep and execute among the dear people of your present charge.

This trust is very comprehensive in its nature, and interesting in its consequences. It includes all that relates to the doctrine, worship and order of Christ's kingdom—all that concerns the spiritual and eternal welfare of precious souls, and the declarative honor of God and Christ among men. The word of God uses a variety of expression to represent, and impress on our minds, the important nature—laborious service, and high responsibility of the ministerial office. Ministers are called angels and ambassadors—pastors and teachers—servants and laborers—stewards of the mysteries of God, watchmen, soldiers, guides and rulers.

Agreeably to the import of these characters, we have confidence in you, Rev. Sir, that you will approve yourself faithful to your divine Master, and to the people of your charge.

Being an Ambassador of the King of Kings, sent forth to propose and negotiate a treaty of peace between God and

sinners, you will strictly adhere to your commission—use every scriptural mean to effect its object, and be always in readiness to render an account of your embassy to God.

As a scriptural teacher and pastor, you will preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. In the choice of your themes for public instruction, and in your manner of treating them, you will be dictated rather by the known necessities, capacities and circumstances of your hearers, than by a regard to your own ease or gratification. Those great principles which confessedly lie nearest the foundation of christian faith and practice, you will most frequently and zealously teach and recommend. At the same time you will not shun to declare the whole revealed counsel of God, for the instruction, conviction, edification and comfort of your hearers. The flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you a Bishop, or overseer, you will carefully feed with the pure milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. With joy you will draw water to quench and refresh their thirsty souls, out of the wells of salvation—the inspired Oracles of God. With peculiar tenderness and affection you will feed the lambs of the flock with that milk which is designed for babes. Thus you will comply with the injunction, and imitate the example of the glorious shepherd and Bishop of souls, who feedeth his flock like a shepherd, gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom; and who says to every under shepherd—*Feed my lambs.*

In the character of a servant and laborer, you will apply yourself to the various branches of your duty with all humility, diligence, constancy and perseverance, knowing that in due season you shall reap the reward of a good and faithful servant, if you faint not.

Being a steward of the mysteries of God in this part of Christ's household, you will wisely and faithfully dispense to every one under your care, his proper provisions—his portion of divine promises or threatenings, reproof, or comfort, as the case may require. You will administer the special ordinances of the gospel only to such, as in a judgment of charity you may have reason to repute duly qualified subjects, carefully distinguishing the *precious* from the *vile*.

As a watchman, set on Zion's wall, you will watch for the spiritual and eternal welfare of your people; will carefully observe their state, temper and conversation: take no-

tice of the motions and approaches of their spiritual enemies, and give them seasonable and faithful warning both of their duty and danger.

Being a spiritual soldier and warrior, solemnly enlisted under Christ's banner of truth and love—arrayed with the whole armour of God; you will boldly and vigorously defend his cause and kingdom in the world. For this purpose you will skilfully wield the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, against every spiritual foe;—you will courageously face every difficulty and danger, and endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;—you will boldly attack the camp of Satan—pull down his strong holds of sin and error, and endeavor by all means to deliver those from his fatal snare, who are taken captive by him at his pleasure.

As a ruler in Christ's kingdom, you will faithfully interpret, apply, and execute his laws, and maintain his royal dignity and authority, by taking care that all things relative to the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of his house, be done decently and in order.—And when called to approbate, or ordain others to the work of the ministry, you will not suddenly lay hands on any man, but commit this important trust to wise and faithful men, who shall be able to discharge it with dignity and acceptance.

In a word, dear Sir, you will study in all things to approve yourself to God and to the consciences of your hearers, as a workman, who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing and applying the word of truth. Deeply penetrated with a sense of the vast magnitude of the trust committed to you, and of your entire dependence on the grace and blessing of God for assistance and success, you will second all your studies and labors by fervent and incessant prayer.

These things, Reverend and dear Brother, we give you in solemn charge, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom. May the Lord God of the holy prophets be your sun and your shield! May he make you a burning and a shining light in this candlestick! And after you shall have been the honored instrument of bringing many sons and daughters to glory, may you receive the benediction of a good and faithful servant; and shine as a distinguished star in the Church triumphant forever.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY MR. *DANA*, OF NEWBURYPORT.

THE gospel we preach is a gospel of peace and love. Emanating from the pure benevolence of Deity, it aims to restore the harmonious and happy intercourse between earth and heaven, which by human apostasy was broken off. The benign office of its ministers is to persuade a rebellious, revolted world to return and be reconciled to its God. Of every true-hearted preacher, the ruling principle is love to a crucified Savior:—his dearest desire, to glorify God in the salvation of immortal souls. Just as far then as those invested with this sacred office are faithful, so far they are *united*:—united in spirit, in design and pursuit. Their governing principles and views, as they directly tend to elevate the soul, to enlarge the heart, and enrich it with every noble, every tender sentiment, lay, of course, a broad and solid foundation for mutual friendship; and that of the purest kind. To the cultivation of this friendship they are invited by a thousand additional arguments: by the variety of cares and labors, oppositions and discouragements, infirmities and wants, in which they have a common participation. These all enjoin an union of affection, of strength, and of effort, as most essential to their mutual comfort, and to the effectual promotion of the common cause of their adorable Master.

And unless we mistake, the great Head of the Church has designed that there should exist among the ordinary ministers of his gospel, an *equality* of office and authority; an equality which may constantly remind them of their mutual dependence, and forcibly invite to mutual sympathy, to a co-operation of efforts and of prayers.

In such a contemplation, the primitive apostolic practice of giving to the newly inducted minister the **RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP**, appears full of important meaning. Nor need we doubt the propriety of *retaining* a rite so expressive of the emotions inspired by an occasion like the present.

THIS SACRED PLEDGE I now, Sir, present you, by appointment and in behalf of this ordaining Presbytery.—Trusting that your heart is devoted to God and his cause, and rejoicing in the qualifications with which he has blest you, we acknowledge and embrace you as our brother in the gospel ministry. We cheerfully welcome you as our companion and fellow-laborer in this part of our Lord's vineyard. And we solemnly assure you, that by the help of God, we will treat you as such: that we will take a lively interest in your comfort, usefulness and success: that you shall have our sympathy and prayers; and may command, as occasion shall require, our best counsel and assistance.

The offices of Christian tenderness and love which we thus solemnly engage to you, we need and desire for ourselves. In the gift of your hand, we receive a pledge of your readiness to impart them.

The cause in which we are embarked is great and arduous indeed. It imperiously claims our warmest zeal, and most indefatigable diligence. While the enemies of Christianity are combining their malice, their arts and efforts, to exterminate it from this globe, shall not its friends, shall not especially its ministers, oppose and counteract the black design, by a correspondent union and energy of exertion? The conflict may be severe: but blessed be God! its issue is nowise dubious.

My Brother, let us unite our cares and efforts to heal the bleeding wounds of Zion. Let us charge ourselves and our hearers to pray and labor for her *peace*. Let us imbibe and exhibit the spirit of that good man* who said:—“I would as willingly be a martyr for love, as for any article of the creed.”

Happy the minister who in the view of every affliction and discouragement, can say, with the venerable **PAUL**: *None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which*

* **MR. BAXTER.**

I have received of the Lord Jesus. We wish you much of this Christian heroism and magnanimity, great success in the good work of the Lord, and many souls for your present comfort, and final crown.

Brethren and Fathers of this Christian Church: having tenderly felt for you in the day of your calamity, we would now participate your joy. Accept our sincere congratulations on the solemnities that are past. Your eyes have this day seen the man of your choice solemnly consecrated to the service of your souls. Awful and mighty is the charge; and to a serious mind almost overwhelming. You will not fail therefore to give him still your candor, your kindness and devout intercessions. Would you effectually strengthen his hands and heart? Receive with meekness and love the gospel he preaches; and let its pure and saving truths have an abiding, an all-controlling influence over you. This, while productive of ten thousand other blessings, will signally refine, exalt and strengthen the union now consummated between your pastor and you. Nay more, it will render it *indissoluble*. It will stamp it with *immortality*.

Brethren, let us feel with new sensibility the obligations which lie on us churches and professed friends of the meek and lowly Saviour. Let us cultivate and exemplify the benign and healing spirit of Christianity. Let us walk together under the influence of that divine *Charity* which is *kind and long suffering, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

Finally, brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

AMEN.