IMPORTANCE OF THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.

A

# SERMON

PREACHED IN THE INDEPENDENT OR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, OF CHARLESTON, S. C. JANUARY 3, 1821,

AT THE

# ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. MESSRS. RAYNOLDS BASCOM, JOSEPH BROWN, CHARLES B. STORRS, EPAPHRAS GOODMAN, AND ELIPHA WHITE;

*AS EVANGELISTS.*

BY BENJAMIN M. PALMER, D. D.
PASTOR OF THE ABOVE CHURCH.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

# A CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE MINISTERS ORDAINED,

BY THE

*REV. LOAMI FLOYD,*

PASTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCHES OF BETHEL AND WILTON.

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To "The Congregational Missionary Society, of South-Carolina," and "The Young Men's Missionary Society of South-Carolina."

Brethren,

The Congregational Association, in ordaining the Missionaries whom you have employed to preach the everlasting gospel in the destitute regions of our country, have performed a duty, in the discharge of which they felt much pleasure, in the prospect of seeing the walls of Zion strengthened, and her borders enlarged. They sincerely congratulate you on your instrumentality in thus promoting the interests of evangelical religion. They hope you will be enabled to go on, devising "liberal things," and that by every effort of your liberality your hands will grow stronger and stronger, in the good work of evangelizing those who are living "without God in the world." While the glory of God is your ultimate aim, and the happiness of immortal souls the object of your unwearied pursuit, we are confident in the Lord, that success will be the reward of your benevolent exertions. "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

With the humble hope of rendering some service to the great cause, in which you are engaged, the following Sermon and Charge are submitted to publication, and offered to your patronage and disposal, by your servants, in the gospel of Christ,

The Author.

# SERMON, &c.

ROMANS 11, 13. I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE.

THE Jews were excessively jealous of every extension to the Gentiles, of privileges which had been originally peculiar to themselves, and of which they possessed the disposition to retain still the exclusive enjoyment. Seldom did Christ offend them more, than when he gave them intimations of his design to enlarge the Church, so as to admit the incorporation of considerable numbers from the Gentile world. Seldom could the Apostle touch upon this topic, without throwing the feelings of his Jewish hearers into a ferment. Even those Jews, who embraced the gospel, and "received the truth in the love of it," were with difficulty reconciled to the idea that "the Gentiles were to be fellow heirs, and of the same body" with themselves. Paul had to labor this point once and again with them, with all the strength of his eloquence, and to bring to bear upon it all that variety of prophetical evidence and scripture testimony which his acquaintance with the sacred oracles placed at his command. His department of Apostolic duty lay *among the Gentiles* principally, though not exclusively; and he at all times rejoiced in the fact of his having been appointed the honored instrument of bringing the heathen world, "those other sheep which were not of the Jewish fold," into the enclosure of the Christian church, "where there was neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ was all and in all." In the Church of Rome, as in several others, there were both Jews and Gentiles. And Paul, in his

epistle to that church, while he expresses the most ardent affection for "his kinsmen according to the flesh," is no less explicit in testifying his regard for the Gentile converts, and exults in the idea of his being appointed and employed to labor in the Gentile field, "For I speak to you Gentiles, in as much as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." "I magnify mine office" is the clause of the verse, which we propose to dwell on at present, and to render appropriate to the object and occasion, on which we have this day met.

We expect soon solemnly to set apart men to the ministerial office. It is *the ministerial office in general* of which Paul speaks, rather than the Apostolic office in any thing of a *peculiar nature* by which it was distinguished from the office of the ministry in general. That the Apostolical office as *peculiarly such*, has any succession or transmission in the church, distinct from the office of the gospel ministry in general, is an idea which has no countenance from scripture, and is without foundation there; and to testimony on this subject, other than the sacred oracles, we see no necessity of appealing, nor are disposed to perplex and embarrass our hearers with what, from any other quarter, may be adduced on one side or another. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

In what follows, we propose to show,

I. The reasons why the office of the gospel mnistry should be magnified, or what cause every minister of reconciliation has to say with Paul, "I magnify mine office." And,

II. In what manner this office should be magnified.

1st. In the first place then, the gospel ministry deserves to be magnified from the fact, that *Christ officiated in it.* This ministry comprehends the publication of evangelical truth, and the administration of religious ordinances. Both these branches of minis-

terial duty Christ "magnified" and honored by his own example. He was pre-eminently "a preacher of righteousness in the great congregation." He opened his commission, as the Prophet of the Church, with the inculcation of that great and important duty, which constitutes a leading theme in the discourses of his ministers now, "*Repent*, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." *Faith*, another essential constituent in the character of every man who is legally a candidate for glory, entered into that course of instruction which he dealt out to his attendants. Again, *all the virtues and the various acts of practical obedience*, which go to make up that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" were dwelt upon by him, both in his daily instructions, and in his Sabbath day performances, in the Synagogue and at the temple.

Jesus too *administered ordinances*—that of baptism, not indeed immediately with his own hands, but mediately by the hands of his disciples. Of the Lord's supper he was the immediate institutor, and his own hands blessed and brake the bread, poured and distributed the wine in the Eucharistic Institution. These regular and constant services, and these stated celebrations, appertaining to the functions of the ministerial office now, having been thus performed by Jesus Christ himself, every officiator at the altar, in view of this sublime and divine example, has surely ample ground for the exulting declaration uttered by Paul, "I magnify mine office."

2d. Another reason, why the ministerial office may properly be magnified, grows out of the consideration, that this office was *instituted by Jesus Christ.* It is said of those who hold certain offices in the gift of the Monarch of Great Britain, that they are *appointed by the Crown.* If this is deemed an honor by those who stand so high in royal favor, what shall be said of that office, which is in the gift of him, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords," in respect of

whom alone it is or can be said, "Let all the Angels of God worship him." Now *Jesus Christ did institute the gospel ministry.* It was he who put commissions into the hands of the twelve Apostles, and of the seventy Disciples to publish the glad tidings of salvation among the Jews alone during the period of his residence on earth. It was he too who, after his resurrection, enlarged the commission of the twelve Apostles, so as to embrace the Gentile as well as the Jewish world. "Go," says he, and "teach *all nations*, baptizing them, &c." and gave perpetuation to the gospel ministry to the end of time, by adding "And lo; I am with you always, even to the end of the world." If *the dignity of the source* then, from which the Institution of any office emanates, render it worthy to be magnified, what minister of Jesus Christ can do otherwise than say "I magnify my office."

3d. The ministerial office deserves to be magnified on account of the *amazing interests* connected with its discharge, and *the unutterably momentous results* to which it conducts. In military arrangements, there are departments of service, so widely different in importance and responsibility, as to give rise to grades of honor and of office, correspondent to the relative importance of the objects to be attained.—Thus, in God's moral administration of the affairs of our world, he assigns to his ministers a station of so much moment, and commits to their management concerns of such immeasurable importance, that whatever may have been the ignobleness of their birth, the humbleness of their circumstances, the variety of their disadvantages for claiming superiority or commanding respect; when engaged in their official duties, they are to lose sight of all these things, materially as they effect human actions and operations in all other instances: they are to feel themselves entirely on a level with the most exalted of mankind—they are to do every

thing connected with their work *without partiality*—they are not to know, who is poor or who is rich, who honorable or who ignoble—the only distinction they are to keep in view, is the eternal distinction between holiness and sin—between saints and sinners; as with God, so with his ministers, there should be "no respect of persons." A celebrated writer on the nature and duties of the clerical office has well observed, that a minister belongs to no rank—he is neither above the lowest, nor below the highest—it is not condescension to sink to the level of the former; it is not presumption to rise to an equality with the latter. In relation to the mere form and manner, and circumstances of his duty, he may; and perhaps, except in very rare cases, always ought to accommodate himself to the condition of the party with whom he is dealing in spiritual matters: but as to the substance of his duty, he is to be the same man precisely in presence of the prince, and in presence of the peasant; for prince and peasant must sink alike into "the bottomless pit," without "the repentance which is after a godly sort;" without the faith which unites to Christ; without the holiness which qualifies for Heaven. All worldly distinctions become diminutive, confounded and lost in the view of the man, whose office it is habitually to contemplate the eternal and immutable principles, by which the moral world is regulated. Moses, though at his birth resembling a foundling, saved from destruction by the hand of pity, and nurtured by the hand of charity, must go, when God orders him, to the court of Pharaoh, and state to him his duty, and denounce upon him the vengeance of heaven, if he disregard the message. Elijah must deal with Ahab with all the fidelity, that should ever characterize one who is known by the name of "the man of God." Micaiah must tell Jehoshaphat his doom, though Jehoshaphat should say "I hate this Micaiah; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil." Nathan

must say to David, "thou art the man." Peter and John must reply to the indignant Sanhedrim, having just issued their orders and uttered their threats; 'whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." John must thunder in the amorous and adulterous Herod's ears, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." Paul, before an intemperate and oppressive Felix, who sent to hear him from motives of curiosity, must preach on "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," till this profligate judge shall humble himself and discharge his prisoner, in order to administer an opiate of fatal ease to his disturbed conscience: and the servant of Jesus Christ in all ages and places, on all occasions and to all persons must not fail to "declare the whole counsel of God."

As the minister of Christ must "magnify his office" by faithfully discharging it "through good and through bad report," on account of the amazing matters, about which his ministry is conversant; so must he do it, in prospect of *the judgment seat of Christ*, before which he and his hearers have to appear. It is but as it were to-morrow, when he shall be called to "give an account of his stewardship." It is but as to-morrow, when those who are his hearers now, shall stand at the bar of God too. And, when the results of his ministry are contemplated; when he realizes, that he is to be "a savour of life unto life" to some, and "of death unto death" to others, who sit under the sound of his voice; and feels the awful interests of eternity suspended on his ministrations, must he not exclaim "I magnify mine office."

4th. The ministerial office deserves to be magnified by us, because *God has magnified it* in his word *by the most striking representations and the most significant emblems.* "See, I have set thee *a watchman* to the house of Israel," said God to Ezekiel. Is not the province of a watchman momentous beyond ex-

pression? The safety of thousands is entrusted to his vigilance, fidelity and care. The dearest interests of the community are committed into his hands. If he slumbers, while all the rest are snoring, who shall guard the city from the depredations of the nocturnal robber, or shield the lives of its inhabitants from the daggers of the midnight assassin? Thus, if the spiritual watchman sleep, what is to become of those who are already "dead in trespasses and sins," to whom he is directed to "cry aloud and not spare," in language like this: "Awake, thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light." Or what is to become of those, who, being already roused are in perpetual danger of falling asleep again, unless they hear the exhortation ringing once and again in their ear, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation?" *Great* is his office then, and he ought to magnify it, and others ought not only to be willing that he should, but agree to magnify it too. The minister of Christ is again a *Shepherd*, he is to feed the sheep with knowledge and instruction—he is to guard the sheep by salutary caution—he is to defend the sheep by sound doctrine from "wolves that would come in sheep's clothing" to devour them—he is to guide the sheep into the pastures of salvation, and prevent their browzing on poisonous roots or famishing on arid and sapless weeds: he is to shelter the sheep within the enclosure of scriptural discipline. His office is great then, and he ought, to magnify it; and others, instead of blaming him for doing so, ought to magnify it with him. The minister of Christ is an *ambassador*, and as such his office is most honorable. An ambassador, who goes to a foreign court as the representative of his country, is entitled to great respect. Is he neglected or insulted in his person, or is his negociation despised? the nation which sent him, feels the indignity as peculiarly poignant, and prepares to revenge the in-

sult. An ambassador, feels for the honor of his prince and country, and in his diplomatic intercourse dares not transcend the limits of his commission. Who does not see in all these particulars a lively image of the various, vast, and weighty functions of the gospel minister? He too is an ambassador, not from one earthly court to another, from one earthly monarch to another—but from the court of Heaven to a rebel world—from him by whom "kings reign and princes decree justice," before whom "all the nations are as the drop of the bucket," to creatures of yesterday, to rebels against "the King of kings." Hear Paul's idea on the subject. "Now therefore, we are *ambassadors* for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And if this embassy is contemned—if the overtures involved in it are slighted, rejected, or opposed by those to whom they are sent, what says he, who commissioned them to treat and transact business for him and in his name? "He that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, "touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm." Paul especially was authorized to magnify his office, when he knew that of himself it was said, "He is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

Again, the ministers of Jesus Christ are denominated in the Scriptures, *Bishops*. This expression also imports the magnitude and importance of their office. How solemn in this view was the charge given by Paul to the *elders* of Ephesus, to take heed to themselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them *overseers*, the word which in the original is the same, elsewhere translated Bishops. As Bishops of the church, their office is, to *take the oversight of it*, to look well into its state,

to examine its concerns, to "feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Well therefore might the Apostle say, as he does to Timothy, "if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." And on account of the magnitude and moment of this department of ministerial duty, every Bishop in the church of Christ may properly say "I magnify mine office." The ministerial office again is an office of *stewardship*, and those who officiate in it are therefore "*stewards* of the mysteries of God." They are publicly to dispense to the church the spiritual provisions on which she must live and thrive—to feed her members with "the bread of life"—to see that they be not *starved* through the absence or want of sound doctrine; nor *poisoned* by the inculcation of false and heretical doctrines. "It is required of stewards," says Paul, "that a man be found faithful." As their hearers then are short-lived and dying creatures, and must soon migrate into the eternal world, and as they look up to them for spiritual ministrations to prepare them for that world, the tremendous danger, on the one hand, of *neglecting to feed* the flock, or of *feeding them with poison* instead of nutriment, and the immense importance on the other of dealing out to them the bread of life, "of which if a man eat he shall live forever," invest the ministerial employ with considerations that should cause all who exercise themselves in it, to say, "I magnify mine office."

5th. The ministerial office well deserves to be magnified *now* from the consideration, that it will be amazingly magnified *at the last day*. Its final and most important results are to be found in the eternal world, and must be looked for there. It was this view of the subject, which influenced Paul to lay before the Hebrews, this motive for submitting themselves to the discipline of the church. "For they watch for your souls as they that *must give account*

that they may do it with joy and not with grief." A similar motive was presented by Peter to the Elders of the general church. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof" (episcopountes) *acting the part of Bishops in it*, "not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." And, he adds, "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The ministerial office will be magnified at the day of judgment, by those that are saved—by them that are lost, and by the Almighty Judge. Those that had redemption revealed and applied to their souls through the preaching of "Christ crucified," will regard the ministry of reconciliation as the grand instrument, that God made use of, for bringing them to repentance, faith, holiness and heaven: and will meet with rapture those ministers who were *their spiritual fathers* in the church below. And on the other hand, the deep despair, the gathering anguish, the tremendous and afflicting outcries of those that shall be found at the left hand of the Judge, will proclaim the magnitude of the blessings they had slighted, when they rejected a *preached gospel.* They will remember, what an inestimable privilege they once enjoyed in having a gospel ministry, and their heart-rending self-accusations for despising it, will throw a glory round it. They will remember that they had "a day of merciful visitation, in which the things belonging to their peace" were set before them, things "now hid from their eyes:" and while they utter the unavailing cry, "O that I had known it," their very cry will set forth the immense importance of the institution Paul had in his eye, when *he* said "I magnify mine office."

And this office will be magnified again by the *superlative honors* which will be heaped on the heads of such as have discharged it faithfully: while on the head of every saint, a brilliant crown of glory will be

placed; that which will glitter on the brow of the faithful minister of Jesus Christ will far out shine and exceed the rest in glory. For "they that be wise shall shine as the sun, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." The influence and effects of the office which Paul magnified will run parallel with the ages of eternity.

Having ascertained a few out of many reasons, why the office of the gospel ministry should be magnified, we propose to show,

II. *How* it should be magnified. In order to induce men in general to hold the gospel ministry in becoming estimation, much will depend on the character, the qualifications and the conduct of those who are invested with it. With little propriety indeed can that man say, "I magnify mine office," whose evident incapacity for its discharge, or whose unbecoming deportment in it, effectually prevent other men from magnifying it too. Offensive as the main topic of the gospel is to the "carnal mind"—unwelcome as the preaching of "Jesus Christ and him crucified" is to the pride of fallen human nature; the ministry which embraces this topic as its leading article *may* be rendered venerable and respectable, and the tenet itself find admission into the heart, if some great mental or moral deficiency in him who preaches it, prevent it not. In order to the magnifying of the ministerial office then, it is requisite that those who are invested with it be properly qualified and furnished for it. *Divine* and *human* qualifications are requisite:

1st. *Real conversion* of heart to God is indispensable. Without this, a man may preach *morality*, but he cannot preach *the gospel*. He may inculcate the virtues which Cato, Plato and other heathen moralists taught, and he may prefix to his ethical lectures a text of scripture, and thus make his discourses, to superficial and unthinking hearers, *look like the gospel*. Or he may, from his speculative

and educational acquaintance with evangelical truth, into which however the experience of his heart enters not, *intersperse Christian phraseology* throughout his compositions. But in either of the two cases, a manifest deficiency will be visible. If he preach *mere morality*, the more discerning of his hearers will perceive, that he teaches them almost nothing beyond what ancient philosophers, with no other aid than the light of nature, communicated to their audience. And, both the discerning and the undiscerning of his hearers, who are in the habit of looking much into their Bibles, and of being conversant with the style, spirit and sentiments of its writers, cannot but be conscious of an amazing dissimilarity and disparity between what they hear from him, and what they read in the holy Oracles; and especially in the writings of the Apostles, who were the last and the most complete instructors in the Christian system. And they can never "magnify an office," which, as discharged by men, is so much at variance, by its radical defects at least, if not by its positive and manifest errors, with the word of God. Real conversion of heart to God; personal experience of the truth of his word and of the saving efficacy of its doctrines on the heart, will prove an effectual preservative from this mean and meagre substitute for the gospel. Nothing can be more ridiculous, than the idea of educating children with a view to the ministry, and of its being chosen for them by their parents and friends as a profession, just as any other profession may be. "No one taketh this office to himself but he that is called *of God* as was Aaron." Yet what is more common, especially in such Christian countries, as groan under the evils of establishments, than for hundreds to be, as it were, *born for the ministry;* and to enter the sacred desk from secular views and carnal considerations merely, to make "a gain of godliness;" embracing the gospel ministry as a profession for life, just as they would

enter upon the study of law, or of Physic. In our country, there is far less danger of such abuses. But even here, these are often temptations sufficient to allure many into the ministry who preach a Saviour, to themselves unknown. No man should think of entering the ministry, till he has some good grounds to hope, that converting and saveing grace has entered his own heart. He had better get his living by sweeping the streets of a city or the chimnies of its dwellings, than jeopardise his own soul and the souls of a multitude of others. "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch." True piety is *a radical, essential requisite* in a minister, in order to magnify his office. It is primum mobile of that sacred function God must give him a preachers heart; otherwise his tongue had better cleave to the roof of his mouth."

God also must furnish a man with a good measure of *native talents*, in order to his being an acceptable and useful minister. It is desirable, and perhaps ought to be considered almost essential, that he should possess at least so much aptness, both to learn himself, and to teach others, as would evince him to be not below mediocrity. We said, that in order to the office of the ministry being magnified, he who is invested with it should be furnished with *human* as well as divine qualifications. By which we mean,he should have an understanding cultivated by study and in good degree matured by literature and science. He is by office "a teacher"—he is "set for the defence of the gospel"—he is required to explain its doctrines, to solve objections, to silence cavillers, to "convince gainsayers." He should possess "a mouth and wisdom which all his adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." The great body of the people of his charge ought to feel that he is their equal in literary attainments; nay the advantage would be greater, if his attainments went beyond theirs. The word of God has indeed nowhere

prescribed what literary course a candidate for the ministry shall pass through. Its directions are of a general nature, "Lay hands *suddenly* on no man." A bishop should be "*apt to teach.*" "A good steward of the mysteries of God should bring forth out of his treasure things new and old." What we are to understand *precisely* by these phrases, and how much intellectual furniture they should be considered as implying, is a question which will probably be differently decided by different minds: and those minds too, possessed of capacity and honesty qualifying them for deciding well. On the subject of the proper degree of literary qualification for the ministerial office, perhaps the parties that have chosen the opposite sides of the question, have dealt out their censures with too much asperity on each other. And if they had each conceded something to the other, and met on middle ground, the church of Christ had been much less a sufferer than she has been. Against the idea, tenaciously adhered to by one party, that ministers of the present day need no other literary qualifications than the fishermen of Judea, whom the Lord chose for his Apostles, we feel authorized to enter a decided and unqualified protest. We insist, that the reasoning is unconclusive, from the fact, that the cases are dissimilar. Though the Apostles were "unlettered men," when first called to forsake their fishing-nets and follow Christ; yet, for three whole years enjoying the unexampled instructions of one who "spake as never man spake," they were in the best seminary the universe could afford, for rendering them "able ministers of the New-Testament," in addition to which, they were afterwards furnished with the gift of tongues, and other miraculous endowments. Before therefore, the pretensions of persons in our day, professing to preach by the spirit, unaided by human learning, are entitled to regard, it should be demanded of them to perform the works which the Apostles wrought.—

"To heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cast out devils." On the other hand, when we consider the deplorably deep and extensive wants of the Christian, still more of the heathen world; when we contemplate farther the vast disproportion that exists between different communities, as to their knowledge and degree of improvement; it seems impossible to admit, that the same measure of ministerial qualification should be required of all indiscriminately who minister in holy things. He, who would appear, in one community or state of society, but scantily furnished for his work, would in another, be regarded as an oracle. How many "burning and shining lights" have appeared in the Christian church, who were not indebted for their usefulness and success, to any early advantages of academical or collegiate instruction. The name of Carey, who made the first serious impression on the fortresses of the Prince of Darkness, in the East; the name of Fuller, his worthy fellow-worker in Britain, whose praise for logical reasoning and lucid exhibition of evangelic truth is in all the churches; the name of Buchanan, whose labors and researches in Asia have occasioned some to style him the Apostle of the East, with a host of others, who were in a great measure self-taught men, will descend to Christian posterity with honor and affection. The present loud and affecting call for ministers from a variety of quarters, all alike spiritually needy, yet widely diverse from each other in civilization, literature and general improvement, should incline us to welcome to the harvest, men qualified in *the main respects* to gather it in, though the qualification in respect to *mental culture* may be very different in different individuals. The least however, it would seem, that can reasonably be required of any man whatever for the ministerial office, is an accurate, connected and extensive acquaintance with the word of God, and the doctrines it contains. And to close the lips of those, who have

been accustomed to inveigh with severity against human learning as a ministerial qualification, and who ground this invective on the illiterate condition of the first Apostles; nothing is better adapted, than the reflection, that Paul, the only man of human learning among them, was by far the most honored, the most useful and successful of all the Apostolic brethren, and was the author of a larger portion of the inspired pages, than almost all the rest of them together. A good degree of knowledge and improvement then, in human literature, is always an important, and in many instances, a very necessary qualification in the Christian minister, though we apprehend, the precise degree to which he should possess it, may be in some measure regulated by the situation of the people among whom he is to labor, and the existing exigencies of the church. It is a circumstance not a little gratifying to find, that many Christians, once the sworn enemies of ministerial learning, have abandoned their former position on this subject, and are zealously laboring to have an educated ministry. And the recent establishment of Theological seminaries in almost every denomination of Christians, without exception, is proof of the fact; proof too, that while evangelical religion is on the rise, a louder call is made than ever before for a learned ministry.

A minister of Jesus, besides magnifying his office by being truly qualified for the discharge of its duties, and appearing in the view of men thus competent, should magnify his office, by the blameless, exemplary and holy life he leads. Happy must that minister be deemed, to whom such testimony can be borne, as was afforded by Jesus in favor of his forerunner John. "He was a burning and a shining light." In this way he ought to preach every day, and preach to hundreds, whose habitual neglect of public worship deprives him of opportunity to proclaim the gospel to them in any other way, who dread

or dislike the sanctuary, or are indifferent to its employments. In this way too, he may preach loudly and forcibly to many, whose barren intellects or slender information may, in a good measure, disqualify them for understanding or appreciating his pulpit ministrations. The light of a candle, or of the sun, is just as plain and just as pleasing to the most illiterate, as to the most refined and cultivated mind. So it is with the moral light of a good example; when the life of a minister of Jesus becomes "an epistle known and read of all men," he may have cause to say, in view of that conversion of sinners or that edification of saints, to which his luminous life has materially contributed, "I am debtor to the wise and to the unwise." Thus will he magnify his office in the eyes of men, and constrain them to respect both himself and Christ. Thus will he lodge conviction in some hearts, which his discourses could not reach. In this way, many a servant of Jesus Christ, not distinguished for brilliancy of imagination, strength of argument, copiousness of thought, or any other quality, that fastens the eyes or commands the attention of an audience, has communicated such a savour of his Master to those around him, that they have honored him and his vocation while he lived; and after his death have testified that "the memory of the just is blessed."

Still farther and still more to magnify the ministerial office, he who is invested with it, must discharge its public and private services with intensity of zeal, and with a constancy that never tires. The praise of some good ministers and some good men seems to lie more in their freedom from doing harm, than in their activity in doing good. It is a kind of negative approbation which men pass on such a one, when they say of him, "he is a good man." Nothing more is meant than that he is harmless and inoffensive—he stands in no one's way—he meddles with no one's business—he passes through life peaceably and

tranquilly. A minister of this description is in some danger of falling under the woe of "all men speaking well of him." His character becomes so neutralized, that while there is no dark spot so definite and visible, as that the eye of censure may fix upon it; there are no *peculiarly luminous traces* which should distinguish a man "zealous of good works." The minister of real zeal will hardly pass through life so peaceably. If he lays or pursues plans of peculiar efficiency for demolishing Satan's strong holds—if when his Master says, "who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity," he steps forward into the front ranks, willing to encounter the obloquy of a world that hates to be disturbed in its sinful slumbers, all men will not speak well of him. He throws too many daggers into their hearts; he plants too many thorns in their pillows. Yet even they will *magnify his office*, will secretly applaud the very conduct, which tears away the covering from their hearts, and makes a disclosure of themselves which they cannot bear. A minister, who would truly and fully magnify his office, must so manage it, as to be able to say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

We have given some reasons *why* the ministerial office should be magnified. We have shewn in several particulars *how* it should be magnified. More, much more might easily have been adduced under each division of the subject. But we must not entirely exhaust a patience on which we have already made sufficiently large demands. It is time to draw toward a conclusion. Such then is the nature and the magnitude of the preacher's work, and such the qualifications requisite for its due discharge. We have only to observe, in reference to the subsequent transactions of the occasion, to which we are shortly to proceed, that Jesus Christ himself, the great King and Head of the Church instituted this office, and has left some general, though only general rules for

the induction of men into it. Imposition of hands and prayer appear to be the only things entering into the essence of the ordaining act. This act is to be performed by those who are already invested with the office. And the general principles on which they are to proceed in this duty are laid down in the sacred oracles. We are to "lay hands suddenly on no man." We are not to be concerned in the act of setting apart, in a solemn manner, to a solemn ordinance, one who is "a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the Devil." These rules we have endeavoured faithfully to observe in the present instance, and on the present occasion, and, well satisfied with the Divine and human qualifications of the candidates before us—believing them both furnished by Divine grace in their own hearts, and by a faithful and diligent course of literary and theological study, rendered "apt to teach" others, we shall now proceed to "lay upon them the hands of the Presbytery," after which their peculiar duties as Evangelists will be enjoined upon them in a specific and appropriate charge.

# CHARGE

BY THE

## *REV. LOAMI FLOYD.*

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

You have been set apart "by prayer, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery," to the sacred work of the Gospel ministry. We have given you the right hand of fellowship, and received you as helpers with us in this great work. The things which we have received, by the commission which we bear, as ambassadors of Christ, we have committed to you, according to the apostolical instruction; because we have judged you to be faithful men, who are able to teach others also. Therefore, we proceed to "Charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. Watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of Evangelists, make full proof of your ministry."

You are ordained to the gospel ministry, as Evangelists. You are therefore charged with the important work of contributing your aid to evangelize the world, which lieth in wickedness. You are commissioned to go to the ignorant, and those who are destitute of the means of religious instruction, in order to teach them the way of salvation, and to lead them to Jesus, the Light of the world, and the Saviour of sinners. To find such, we need not cross the wide ocean which rolls between us and the shores of India; we need not traverse the inhospitable deserts

of Africa; we need not cross our western mountains, nor penetrate the forests inhabited by savage tribes: In our own favored land, around us, and among us, are multitudes who have not the knowledge of God; who sit in darkness in a land of light; who are ready to perish in a region of plenty. Go, search them out in the hedges and highways; tell them the good news of salvation through a Redeemer; break to them the bread of everlasting life; and direct their wandering feet in the way of righteousness and peace.

The leading part of the Charge which you now receive, is, to "preach the word." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is the word of God, and that only, which you are commissioned to preach. It is then of the utmost importance that you should be well acquainted with this divine word; and that you should be faithful in endeavouring to ascertain its true doctrines, and in imparting the instructions which it was designed to give, to the ignorant and the sinful. Search the Scriptures with diligence, and pray fervently and constantly for wisdom from above, that you may be workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and faithfully dispensing to every one his portion in due season.

As watchmen, set upon the walls of Zion, endeavour to guard her gates against the intrusion of error, in whatever specious shape it may appear. It is by *knowing the truth* that Christians are made free; it is *through the truth*, that they are sanctified. Though all errors are not equally dangerous, yet St. John assures us, that "no lie is of the truth;" and we must of course consider every deviation from the truth as having a tendency to derange the pure system of practical religion, and to derogate, more or less, from the excellency of the Christian character. But those errors which affect the fundamental articles of our faith, are of most serious consequence, as they spread their deadly influence through every part of the

Christian system. If we have erroneous views of our moral state and character, of the character of God, of the person and work of the Redeemer, and of the way in which sinners are reconciled to God, the whole system of our religion will be marred at its very foundation. Against such errors, therefore, we should be guarded in the strongest manner, by a deep and intimate acquaintance with the important truths which the gospel has brought to light. And by teaching these important truths in our respective ministerial spheres, we should guard the church of the living God against the introduction, and the prevalence, of destructive errors.

An intimate and comprehensive acquaintance with the doctrines of Divine revelation is necessary, to qualify a minister of the gospel for his important work. He will indeed find it advantageous to cultivate an acquaintance with literature and science, and to enlarge his circle of knowledge by extensive reading and studious research. But he must never substitute the glimmering taper of human wisdom for the Divine light communicated from heaven by the sacred oracles. From this Divine source he must draw his treasures of knowledge. There he will learn the "great mystery of godliness," and see the most harmonious display of the Divine attributes, in the redemption of lost mankind; and here he will find every trait of the Christian character laid down in the clearest manner, and every duty of the Christian life enforced by the most powerful motives. By "holding fast the faithful word," therefore, he will be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers."

The minister of Christ must be faithful in "declaring all the counsel of God," and "keeping back nothing that is profitable" to his hearers. "Therefore," said the Apostle Paul, "seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty,

not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Nothing is more incompatible with faithfulness in the ministry than "handling the word of God deceitfully." We must faithfully exhibit the truths contained in this word; and we must address the consciences of men, as well as their understandings; in order to convince them of sin, and lead them to embrace the truth with simplicity, as it is taught in the gospel.

In the work with which you are now charged, you must "be instant in season, out of season," in administering instruction, reproof, and consolation.—You will, we trust, find many favorable seasons for bearing your testimony to the truth, and promoting the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. These opportunities of usefulness, we are persuaded, you will feel it your duty to embrace, with readiness and zeal. And even at times when attempts to impress on the minds of men the truths of religion may seem to be "out of season," neglect not such opportunities as circumstances afford of showing the necessity and the means of salvation. Be ready to teach "publicly, and from house to house, testifying" to sinners of every description, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."—Imitate him who "went about doing good;" and, like him, regard with special tenderness and compassion the poor, the tempted and the afflicted. Remember at all times the nature of our Saviour's mission. Of him it was written, and fulfilled, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Keep his example in view, and endeavor to promote the

benevolent design for which he came into the world, and labored, and suffered, and died.

But "who is sufficient for these things?" "We are not sufficient of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." In order then that you may be "able ministers of the New-Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit," be sensible of your entire dependence upon God, and ever seek his aid by humble and fervent prayer. Look up to the Father of lights for Divine illumination, that you may be enabled rightly to understand the doctrines which he has revealed, and so to explain them, as to make your hearers "wise unto salvation." Let it be deeply impressed on your minds, that success in your labors in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, "is not of him that planteth, nor of him that watereth; but of God that giveth the increase." Pray therefore that the influences of the Holy Spirit may accompany your ministrations; that you may be instrumental in turning sinners "from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God."

The present state of the world, and the signs of the passing times, call loudly for your ministerial efforts, and greatly encourage your zealous exertions. Look around on the world, and see how many dark places are in need of Divine illumination! how many of the human race are sunk low in error and wickedness, and ready to perish without hope!—"The harvest is great, but the laborers are few." There is much to be done, and few prepared to go forward as instruments properly qualified to effect the great work. To evangelize the world, requires a mighty effort. Be ever ready to contribute the several parts assigned you in this labor of love.

The signs of the times are encouraging. A missionary spirit prevails to an extent unknown in former ages. Many dark regions have already been penetrated by the heralds of the cross; and many living trophies of their success evince that "the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, to

every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." At the joyful sound, the temples of idolatry have fallen, and many—in some instances, whole nations have "cast their idols which they had made to worship, to the moles and to the bats."

What can be more interesting and encouraging to missionaries than the facts which recently occurred in the Sandwich Islands? Scarcely had our missionaries left their native shores, when Providence opened for them a wide door, in those Islands of the ocean to which they were destined, by destroying the very foundations of idolatry. This great effect was produced without missionary aid, several months before the missionaries had time to arrive. It was effected, we are told, by order of the reigning prince, who also bore the office of the high priesthood. By thus preparing the way, by the destruction of the whole system of idolatry, the great Head of the Church has shown, we cheerfully hope, that he is ready to give success to the mission; and that no difficulties need discourage those who are zealously exerting themselves to promote the interests of his kingdom. A system of idolatry which in Otaheite had for twenty years resisted all the efforts of missionaries, in the Sandwich Islands, fell suddenly by the weight of its own corruption, before the missionaries sent out, had time to arrive. Who can refuse to acknowledge the hand of God in so great, and unexpected, and unprecedented a revolution, which opened at once so wide a door, for the introduction of the gospel of peace and good will to men?*

The great things which God has done among the

* See the Christian Spectator for July 1820, p. 370, 372. "Early in the month of November, the young king, (who had himself been inducted into the office of high priest before his Father's death, with a view to preserve his political influence,) came to the resolution to destroy the whole system of idolatry. It is supposed that this was done with full deliberation, with the consent of all who had any voice in the government, and without any opposition from the people. With respect to these transactions, we have the most explicit statement of two eye witnesses, masters of vessels, who have long been conversant with those Islands;

heathen in remote parts of the earth should excite us to increase our exertions to evangelize the heathen who dwell in the midst of us. While the wide and perilous ocean, and deserts abounding with dangers and deaths, in a thousand forms, are traversed by missionaries from our own,and other Christian lands, to carry the sound of salvation to the distant heathen, shall we neglect the thousands among us, who are equally destitute of the true knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation? Go, my brethren, go in the strength of Jesus, and in the spirit of the gospel of peace and good will to men; go, and proclaim to those who are ready to perish for lack of knowledge, proclaim in language which cannot be misunderstood, in accents which shall reach the heart—proclaim the glad tidings, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Our prayers shall accompany you; and we trust that he who has all power in heaven and in earth will be with you in your ministrations.

And now, brethren, we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace. May he build you up, and crown your labors with abundant success, through Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory and dominion, world without end. *Amen.*

Captain Blair and Captain Clark, both of Boston. When the resolution was taken, orders were issued to set the buildings and enclosures consecrated to idolatry on fire; and while the flames were raging, the idols were thrown down, stripped of the cloth hung over them, and cast into the fire; and what is still more marvellous, the whole *taboo* system was destroyed the same day.

Captains Blair and Clark left Owhyee about the 25th of November, and carried down to Woahoo and Atooi the king's orders to burn the monuments of idolatry there also. The order was promptly obeyed in both Islands. The chiefs and people in all the Islands expressed a desire that missionaries might arrive, and teach them to read and write, as the people of the Society Islands had been taught. Tamoree, king of Atooi, and father of George, who went with the missionaries, was particularly desirous that teachers should arrive. He was very anxious to see his son, and has sent one of his subjects, by a vessel now on her way from Canton to Boston, with an express order for George to return. He has also manifested a great wish to visit Pomarre, at Otaheite, and see for himself the change that has taken place there."

It is hoped we shall shortly hear from the missionaries; and have our hearts cheered with an account of their arrival and success.