

A²N ADDRESS

F R O M T H E

PRESBYTERY of New-Castle

T O T H E

CONGREGATIONS under their Care:

Setting forth the Declining State of Religion
in their Bounds; and exciting them to the
Duties necessary for a revival of decayed Pi-
ety amongst them.

Published by Order of the PRESBYTERY, con-
vened at Upper October, August 11, 1784.

WILLIAM SMITH, Moderator.

*Rev. 2. 4, 5. Nevertheless, I have somewhat
against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen,
and repent, and do the first works; or else I will
come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candle-
stick out of his place, except thou repent.*

W I L M I N G T O N, [D.]

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A N
A D D R E S S
F R O M T H E
P R E S B Y T E R Y
O F
N E W - C A S T L E, &c.

Beloved Brethren and Hearers,

THIS Presbytery have often observed, with deep concern, the declining state of religion among us, and the numerous characters of apostacy which are marked upon the Congregations committed to our care: And we still observe, with continual heaviness of heart, a strong propensity in many to continue and increase in their apostacies notwithstanding all the Means used for their reformation. Impressed with these things, and knowing the danger to which our Churches are exposed
from

from this Source, we as Watchmen upon Zion's Walls, who are under the oath of heaven to be faithful to our trust, cannot acquit ourselves to God or our conscience, unless we give you faithful warning, and attempt every mean in our power for your salvation. The Searcher of all hearts knoweth, that we have not the least inclination to expose individuals, or any distinct branch of this part of the vineyard entrusted with us. The ends we have only in view are, to give instruction and warning to persons in general, and in particular to convince and reclaim those who may be guilty of any or of all the evils mentioned in this Address, that our Churches may be saved from ruin, and God may be glorified in their reformation. For these ends we have, as individuals, done what we could do : But suffer us, brethren, to express our tears with a godly jealousy over you, that generally it has, of late years, been in a great measure in vain. We therefore, as a Presbytery, call upon you, hoping our united Address will have its due weight upon your minds, and we beseech the God of all Grace, that you may receive it with the same sincerity and cordial affection with which it is given. To obtain our design the more easily and effectually, we beg leave to set distinctly before you your Guilt with the evidences of it,—some of the leading causes of your apostacy,—the means of your recovery,—with some motives to excite you to the duties necessary for a revival of piety amongst you.

I. We shall set before you your Guilt with the Evidences of it.

1. The leading and most aggravated of all your crimes are a rejection of Christ, and quenching the motions of his Holy Spirit. These are inseparably connected in the Gospel sinners Guilt, therefore, we unite them in our Address to you. They give life to all your other sins, and bind them fast upon you, tho' least of all observed in common. Christ hath, for many years, been evidently set forth crucified among you, as the power of God and the Wisdom of God for your salvation. The necessity and value of his Blood for pardon, and all the blessings of salvation freely flowing from it, have been clearly illustrated, and offered to your acceptance. And the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as the effects of our Lord's purchase, have been often exhibited by the Gospel to you for the purification of your defiled natures. But, alas! In many instances the word preached did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. The Lord of Glory has been crucified in our streets, and put to open shame, by a wilful rejection of him, and by the ungodly lives of professors, who have, as it were, opened his closed wounds, and made them to bleed afresh. Your hearts, uniting with infidel Jews, have said, crucify him, crucify him! This is the heir, come, let us kill him! or still more conformed to

to the grand deceiver, you hail him with a kiss, Judas like, with the betraying design in your hearts, and appearing in your lives. What may such foes to Christ expect, but the execution of that dreadful sentence, if they continue in their enmity against him, “ Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.” *a* And as the enemies of Christ have always resisted the Holy Ghost, so have you. He has persuaded many to open the door to Christ, and often knocked at the door of your hearts for entrance; but ye would not consent. He has convinced some of you of sin, and would also have convinced you of righteousness and Judgment, had ye not, instead of cherishing, quenched his motions. We beseech you to remember, that “ He who, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. *b* “ For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” *c* Hardened despisers of the Gospel, who refuse to be reclaimed, are daily in the utmost danger of hearing that dreadful sentence pronounced upon them, “ My Spirit shall not always strive with

a Luke 19. 27. *b* Prov. 29. 1. *c* Heb. 6. 7, 8.

with man." *d* But "Wo unto them when I depart from them," *e* saith the Lord. As an alarming symptom of God's controversy with us for these capital crimes, we have to observe,

2. An awful restraint of the Spirit of God from our religious assemblies. The people too generally assemble for worship with their hearts hardened and full of the lusts of the flesh, and they return home as they came, or worse. The seed of the word lieth on the surface of their hardened affections, ready to be devoured by every bird of prey; or it drops upon their hearts like water upon a rock, which maketh no impression. Very few, thoroughly convinced of their deplorable state by nature, earnestly enquire, what they shall do to be saved? Few, favourably enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, turn to the Lord with all their heart. Few enquire the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, weeping as they go. And what is an unfailing evidence of a backsliden Church, there are, in some places, ten quarrels, or angry debates, brought to the watchmen for one case of conscience. Alas! the ministers of Christ seem to come to you charged with that awful commission, "Go and tell this people, "hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye "indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of "this people fat, and make their ears heavy, "and shut their eyes; lest they see with their
" eyes

“ eyes, and hear with their ears, and under-
 “ stand with their hearts, and convert, and be
 “ healed.” *a* And, alas ! The wise sleep with
 the foolish virgins. As the heath in the parched
 wilderness, they see not when Good cometh.
 Like the sleepy spouse recorded in the Song of
 Solomon, when Christ knocketh for entrance,
 they plead the drowsiness which is their crime ;
 “ I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them ?
 “ I have put off my coat, how shall I put it
 “ on ? ” *b* There is little of the Spirit of Grace
 and Supplication in their hearts.—Little concern
 for the Glory of Christ, and their exertions to
 promote his interests in the world are but faint.
 —Like Ephraim, of old, they are silly doves
 without heart ; without resolution or activity
 to do what they would or know they should do.
 They seem scarcely to have an heart or tongue
 to speak for their Lord to their own families,
 or to any others. Their love languisheth, their
 zeal decayeth, and their faith staggers. They
 are generally in the lower Stages of Grace, and
 their piety is almost reduced to the lowest degree
 of visibility. It is doubtless, then, high time
 to “ Seek the Lord, till he come, and rain
 “ righteousness upon you.” *c* “ O Lord, is
 “ there none that calleth upon thy name, that
 “ stirreth up himself to take hold of thee ? ” *d*

3. The marks of apostacy are visibly stamped
 on

a *Isa.* 6. 9, 10. *b* *Can.* 5. 3. *c* *Hos.* 10. 12.
d *Isa.* 64. 7.

on the foreheadsof many. Their scandalous lives prove that they have never received the Gospel in the love of it, nor felt its power. And in proportion to the decay of piety in the Churches their iniquity abounds. Christ came to save his people from their sins, not in their sins. Nothing that defileth, or maketh a lie, shall enter the streets of the new Jerusalem. Therefore, “ Let every one that nameth the name “ of Christ depart from iniquity.”^c and “ He “ that faith, he abideth in him, ought himself “ even so to walk as he walked.”^d If we be christians indeed, we will learn of him who is meek and lowly in spirit, and who with his dying breath prayed for his enemies. But look into the conversation and practice of many professed disciples of Christ, and you would suppose they had received their instructions in the temples of Baccus, Venus, or discord, rather than in the school of Christ. Abominable uncleanness, drunkenness, prophanation of the name and sabbaths of God, lying and neglect of relative duties, frolicking, vanity and unlawful gaming, fraud and injustice, varience, hatred, malice, envy, and unbrotherly conduct towards fellow professors, with every evil work, stain their character, and give their profession the lie. And what is of all others the most dreadful case, some, who once made a promising appearance in the Church, have fallen off like untimely figs, and become more base and hopeless

B than

than they were before ; “ For if after they have
 “ escaped the pollutions of the world through the
 “ knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus
 “ Christ, they are again entangled therein, and
 “ overcome ; the latter end is worse with them
 “ than the beginning : For it had been better
 “ for them not to have known the way of righ-
 “ teousness, than after they have known it, to
 “ turn from the holy commandment delivered
 “ unto them. But it has happened unto them
 “ according to the true proverb, the dog is
 “ turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow
 “ that was washed, to her wallowing in the
 “ mire.”^a Tell not these things in Gath,
 publish them not in Ashkelon, lest the daugh-
 ters of the uncircumcised triumph ! But, O !
 they cannot be hid.

4. The abounding neglect of the worship and ordinances of God amongst us is a strong and an awful evidence of our backsliding. Those despisers of divine ordinances neither love nor practise the duties of the closet. They entail upon their unhappy families the fearful curse of God who is jealous for his worship, and will “ Pour
 “ out his fury upon the Heathen who know
 “ him not, and the families who call not upon
 “ his name.”^b “ God loveth the Gates of
 “ Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.”^c
 And his children esteem “ A day in his courts
 “ better

^a 2 Pet. 2, 20, 21, 22. ^b Jer. 10. 25.

^c Psa. 87. 2. & 84. 1. 10.

“ better than a thousand ; and had rather be a
 “ door-keeper in the house of God, than to
 “ dwell in tents of wickedness.”^d Do you not
 therefore bear upon you the visible marks of
 apostacy, whose seldom attendance upon the
 ordinances of God, especially ye whose entire
 desertion of them, manifest a weariness with
 his service, and the enmity of your hearts a-
 gainst the God of ordinances ? Ye hate com-
 munion with him, and forsaking the God and
 worship of your fathers, have associated with
 the enemies of the kingdom of Christ ! The
 pious example a number of you have seen, and
 the pious instructions you have received in your fa-
 ther’s houses, will rile up in Judgment against
 you, O ye who sell your interest with God’s peo-
 ple, for the debauching pleasures of the flesh, as
 prophane Esau, who for one morsel of meat
 sold his birthright ! Where will you appear, or
 what account can you render to your incensed
 Judge, in the great day of his appearance ? In-
 to his hand we must commit you, who saith of
 the obstinate and self-willed, “ I will answer
 “ that man by myself.”^a But, consider, we
 pray you, consider, before it be too late, that
 “ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of
 “ the living God.”^b Your crimes are aggra-
 vated ye neglecters of God’s service, by repeated
 counsels, admonitions, rebukes and warnings
 given to you in public and private. Aggrava-
 ted by the most solemn Vows some of you have
 made

made in the presence of God, angels and men. When you recognized your baptismal obligations, the heavens and the earth were called to witness for the truth of your performance! Where can such perjury be found, where such guilt, under the whole heavens? Papists and Mahometans are more zealous about their false worship; Heathens are more careful to serve the gods made with hands, than many who have received the badge of Christianity are to serve the only living and true God. Nor is this the crime of the more ignorant only, or those whom the world esteem as more insignificant: It is also the crime of many who wish to be thought, and who do call themselves, the better sort of people. The richer sort, they should say, the prouder, the viler sort of people! Like brutes they live! Like brutes they are like to die!

Never was a land so polluted as ours with people called Christians, who have less apparent religion than many Heathens.

Heathens have often manifested much zeal for the worship of their country, and by their sacrifices implicitly owned the necessity of an Atonement. But our new race of infidels, who deny the propitiation of Christ, and withdraw from his ordinances, acknowledge neither. With these our youth are in danger of being corrupted; especially with those of them who are, or may be, advanced to posts of profit and honour.

honour. With these a number of the children of professing parents have already joined in heart and practice. And what is indeed remarkable, and a tarnish to a christian country, many who profess the name and religion of Christ, will vote into places of public trust some of those infidels rather than intelligent and sober professors; as Paul said to the Corinthians, we “ Speak this to your Shame.”^a Is it indeed so, can it be so that in a country so populous as ours, there is not a sufficient number of judicious sober professors, in good standing in their respective societies, or the respective denominations of Christians to which they belong, into whose hands we may put the reins of Government? Are we reduced to the hard necessity of choosing debauchees and infidels, to make and execute laws for us? Men, who by their pernicious example and opinions will corrupt the morals of the people, especially the young and rising generation! We repeat it again, we “ Speak this to your Shame!”

5. Of those who seem to make some conscience of performing duty, many are criminally partial in their obedience. Separating what God has inseparably united, they practise some of the duties and accept some of the privileges of christianity, without a due regard to all of them. Some seem to show a respect to the law of God, who pay little or no respect to the Gospel.

Gospel. Others profess a regard to the Gospel and Grace of Christ, who pay little attention to the duties of the law, which all who are justified through faith in Christ are bound and inclined to observe as the rule of their lives. Some profess a regard to the duties of the first table of the law, but do not duly attend to the duties of the second table; they own the name, worship, ordinances and sabbaths of God; but neglect the duties of justice and charity to men. Others again neglecting the duties they owe to God, attend only to those due to fellow creatures. In these also many are partial. They make a boast of paying their just debts, and on this slender foundation build their hopes of eternal happiness, notwithstanding they make no conscience of slander, or slyly taking an advantage in a bargain. Some will attend public worship on the Sabbath, who neglect the devotions of the family and closet. Again some are advocates for outward duties, such as prayer, and hearing the word preached, who have no just perceptions of the nature and necessity of repentance, faith, self-denial, and making us new hearts. These, as the gifts of God, are graces; as commanded, are the creatures duty. All, except an abandoned few, seek, nay, urge to obtain baptism for their children. But many wholly neglect the other seal of the covenant; altho' "Do this in remembrance of me," be as expressly an injunction of Christ, as teach and baptize, repent, believe on the Lord Jesus

Jesus Christ, and love God with all the heart. This neglect commonly ariseth from an aversion to holy living, to which they suppose the Sacrament of the Supper bindeth. But, Brethren, what dispensation have you in baptism, which is forbidden by the Lord's Supper? are not the obligations of the one ordinance the same as the obligations of the other? and the qualifications necessary for the one the same, in general, as the qualifications for the other? The liberty many take in this instance is, we doubt not, a great source of backsliding and abounding impieties in our Churches. We beseech the guilty to reflect seriously upon their conduct. How can ye expect to sit down with the friends of the Bridegroom at his marriage supper in heaven, who refuse to sit down with them at his supper upon earth? and all of you who only pay a partial attention to the commands of God, remember, that they only shall have reason to be unashamed, who have a respect to all his commandments.

6. Many of those who are more strict and constant in the performance of duty, turn their duties and frames into a new modelled covenant of works, or a new law of Grace, repugnant to the pure Grace of the Gospel. Of this rank of Sinners there are two classes.

1. Those who trust that their outward obedience to the law will save them; or that this,
if

if sincerely performed, will recommend them to the divine acceptance through the righteousness of Christ. Their sentiment is this—Christ procured pardon by his blood for those who make, or try to make themselves righteous by sincere obedience, and thus recommend themselves to the favour of God. If they try sincerely to do their part, they say, Christ will not fail to do his, and wherein they come short, he will make it up for them. Professors of this stamp have no just notion of the total depravity of the heart, and the absolute necessity of a saving change wrought upon it, before we can do any thing sincerely, and truly pleasing to God. Nor have they any proper apprehensions of salvation by Grace, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by Faith, without respect to any good done by us, or wrought in us. Notwithstanding all the pure instructions of the Gospel they have been favoured with, as the carnal Jews of old, “ Being ignorant of God’s Righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God.” *a*

2. Some self-righteous sinners are convinced of the necessity of an inward work of Grace upon the heart, and experience many of the common operations of the Spirit, who notwithstanding rest short of Christ. Of those, some
rest

rest on their convictions, repentance, and good frames, as their righteousness. Others trusting that these will recommend them to Christ, and give them a title to his righteousness, they rest here without an actual application of Christ and his salvation to their own souls. They do not come to him as poor, and wretched, and miserable, blind and naked, because he freely inviteth them; but they snatch at the promises as theirs, because they have the price of convictions and good desires in their hands to buy an interest in them. As a full proof that they rest short of Christ, did they admit the conviction, the old blind, dead, stony heart remaineth in them, unbroken, and unrenewed. This is a fine-spun thread of self-righteousness, not common but in times of a common revival of religion, or where the Gospel is preached with great clearness and pungency. But in proportion as true piety decays in the Church, it will decay, as will also the other branch of legal righteousness mentioned above, until at length prophanity and deism take the place, not only of true piety itself, but even of every resemblance of it. This is already in part, and like soon to be fully our unhappy situation, unless God shall revive his work, and remember Mercy for us, in the midst of those years of backsliding and deserved wrath.

7. It deserveth a place amongst our complaints,

plaints, that some spurn at the due exercise of discipline, and others entirely pervert the design of it. Church censure was ordained of God for the edification of the Church; those therefore who resist it, resist not man but God. We exhort such to consider seriously how fearful it must be to live, or die, under a righteous sentence pronounced by the Ministers of Christ; for our Lord assureth us that what they thus bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven. Others again, making the judicatures of Christ a stage upon which they pour out their malice on fellow professors, pervert the design of discipline. If they suppose their character or property to be touched, and sometimes in order to make their own dirty character appear fairer than their neighbours, they fly directly to the Church for revenge, without taking the steps Christ has ordered in case of personal offences and private faults, or enquiring whether the matter be properly cognizable by the Church, or not. That they do not act from a principle of conscience, or to promote the purity of the Church, appears, first, from their bitter and irreconcilable temper. Secondly, they make a sport of, or suffer to pass unnoticed, crimes of a much higher degree, which do not affect themselves.

8. We would omit a duty we owe to the Churches, did we not tell you, that the neglect of many to support the ministers and worship
of

of Christ, proves the coldness of their hearts towards himself; and indeed is a strong proof to too many, did they admit the evidence, of their being destitute of a principle of common honesty and true honour. It is not only a neglect of the express command of God, but a breach of their own most solemn engagement to give their minister as much of their worldly substance as will enable him to attend to his duties, without distraction arising from the cares of this life. Christ esteems what is done to or against his ministers and interests, as done to or against himself. God arraigned, and threatened the Jews, for suffering the house of the Lord to lie waste while they attended carefully to the ceiling of their own houses. *b* Their withholding the tythes and offerings, by which the priests were obliged, as it were, to offer the blind and the lame in sacrifice, is charged as a robbery committed against the Lord himself. *c* And Nehemiah contended with their rulers, because they obliged the Levites to desert their ministry, and repair to the fields for their sustenance, by not giving the portion due to them. *d* When were these charges exhibited? in their flourishing state? No! but immediately after they had been wasted by war, and seventy years captivity. Undoubtedly then, such Churches, in a gospel day, as by their parsimony and neglect, oblige ministers to offer the blind and the

b Hag. first & second chapters. *c* Mal. 3. 8, 9.
 & 1. 8. *d* Neh. 13. 10, 11.

the lame in their ministrations, are as really chargeable with robbery as the Jews were in the days of the prophet Malachi, and more so, because their circumstances are easier. Discouraged and distracted with worldly cares, ministers cannot duly give themselves to reading, meditation, and other duties necessary for the comfortable and profitable discharge of their trust. Hereby God is robbed of his glory, ministers of their duty, and souls of their proper food.

God has ordained that they who serve at the altar should live of the altar. They may claim, according to divine appointment, an easy and honourable competency, not as a charity, but in strict justice. To this end the tythes of all the twelve tribes and forty-eight cities with their suburbs were appointed to the single tribe of Levi. Thirteen of those cities and the tythes of the tribe of Levi were appointed to the house of Aaron, together with part of the sacrifices, free-will offerings and other perquisites, for the maintainance of the priests and their families.^a It will appear upon an average, that the portion of the common Levites was one fourth and of the priests at least one third more than the claim of the people in common. Yet this might not advance them above the rest of their brethren in their worldly circumstances, because the common people

^a Lev. 2d, 6th, 7th chapters, and Num. 5th, 18th chapters. Jos. chap. 20. 21.

people could attend to many things for their support, which the priests then could not, and ministers now cannot, attend to.

God, who is justice and equity itself, made the appointment in justice to this order of men ; and the moral reasons of the institution continue the same to this day, and will through all ages.

Ministers are public persons ; therefore are obliged to be at many more expences than those in private life—they are commanded to give themselves wholly to the duties of their office, and of consequence are prohibited many gainful businesses others may be employed in—or if there are any trifling worldly affairs in their hands which they may pay a moderate attention to, they must necessarily suffer loss for want of their own eye steadily over them, and sometimes for want of skill—they ought to be examples to the flock in hospitality and deeds of charity—and as teachers of their duty to others, they are under special obligations not to incur the odious charge of being worse than infidels, in not making due provision for those of their own house.

It will appear from all these things duly weighed, to be necessary, in order that ministers may perform their several duties to advantage and with propriety, that their support should
exceed

exceed the incomes of common good livers, whose circumstances are a medium between abounding fulness and pinching poverty. This medium marks the bounds of duty to ministers, and to all others in their several stations, with respect to their desires and endeavours for the good things of this life, as being the freest from temptation, and the most conducive to their own and the public good. It is however, much to be regretted, that several worthy Clergymen, who are frugal in their expences, and moderate in their wishes for this world, are not possessed of this happy medium. It is also to be lamented, that young preachers and other itinerants are too frequently discouraged and greatly straitened by the illiberality of contributions for their support, and sometimes by their not being given in due season. Many individuals we know sympathize with ministers under these grievances; they are liberal, and sorry that more is not done. But a great part of the blame lies at the door of those who will not duly assist nor draw in an equal yoke with their brethren. Societies are likewise to blame, as well for want of wisdom in laying their plans, as for want of spirit and resolution in the execution of them. Did they bring their affairs into a due train, and take proper care to keep them so, their political interests might be managed to the reputation and advancement of religion, without the least oppression to individuals. It is incomparably more easy for a whole society to put and keep their minister in

in easy circumstances, did they take proper methods for it, than it can be for the oppressed minister to want what their inattention or parsimony withholds from him. And how readily might vacant Congregations give a suitable recompence to those who are sent to supply them, if they did but take a little proper care! at least it might easily be the case, we are convinced, in most of the vacancies in our bounds, perhaps as easy as in any part of North-America. But, O! shall we be obliged to give it as a mark of our degeneracy, that none, perhaps, are more culpable? †

St.

† *Besides what has been hinted of the unfaithfulness of some with respect to the support of the cause of Christ, who neither love himself nor his Gospel, it might be observed, that it is indeed astonishing, that others, who seem to be sober professors of Christianity, manifest a criminal indifference with regard to the ease and comfort of their minister, and an extraordinary want of thought about what may be necessary for his support. It is certainly extraordinary, that even a moderate exercise of common sense does not teach them to speak and act very differently from what they do. They measure the quotas necessary for the support of ministers nearly by the salaries promised at the first settling of the country, when all things were to be procured at an easy rate, when people were kind to assist in labour*

St. Paul moved the emulation of wealthy Corinth by examples of the liberality and forwardness

*labour or otherwise, as is usual at the first planting of a country, and when land could be purchased to settle a family upon twenty, thirty, or forty, and in some places fifty or sixty times cheaper than it can at this day. Any gentleman could more easily have provided for a family then with fifty or sixty pounds, than he can now with two hundred pounds, or even more money. The people were not wise enough to procure parsonages, when it could have been easily done, tho' urged to it both by Presbytery and Synod. Therefore now ministers are obliged to procure settlements for themselves, or want. If they venture to make a purchase, they may lie under the burden without assistance, and never be able to rise, or hold their head above water, unless they obtain it some other way than by the care of the people. Tho' the people are commanded to know them who labour among them,—to know them in their wants as well as otherwise, and provide for their relief, yet they pass them by unnoticed in this respect; and if they visit them by chance, they visit them as mere strangers. This cannot but be felt as a piece of cruel neglect. The whole care is to persuade a minister to accept their call; but when he has accepted it, he may take care for himself. He must provide for himself, he must bear the loss of all deficiencies by death, removals, carelessness, or ill nature :
And*

wardness of afflicted and poorer Churches? Can it then be a crime in us to imitate the example? many Churches in Europe are obliged to give the tythes of all they raise to the established clergy of their country, are obliged to discharge the expences of Government; to pay their rents and many perquisites exacted by Church and State, who, notwithstanding, provide

And what adds to the affliction is, if he makes the least complaint, he is covetous; if he tries any other scheme for relief, he is worldly. In short, unless he can make brick without straw, he is a bad man, or there is something wrong about him. —Much to his praise, it was once said by a worthy Elder of this Presbytery, pleading the cause of his minister, that people are not clear of their oath to support their minister competently, tho' his whole salary be paid, which is commonly far from being the case, if it be found upon trial, (and the trial ought to be made) that what was promised is insufficient for his support; because they not only subscribed as individuals, but the whole engaged, as a collective body, to give him such an honourable and sufficient maintainance, as would enable him to attend to the duties of his office, without distraction arising from the cares of this life. These are serious matters, and we fear will have serious and fatal consequences to our Churches, if not attended to in time.

provide convenient houses of worship, and afford their ministers a decent and honourable support. In our own country, several congregations in much worse circumstances than the most of ours, having had their trade much more obstructed, and been much more exposed to the ravages of war, have repaired and some of them built convenient houses of worship, and, at the same time, paid a due attention to divine ordinances, and to those who labour in word and doctrine amongst them. In other places they have formed congregations, called ministers, subscribed liberally for their support, erected houses of worship, attended duly to ordinances in season and out of season, and made provision for their families: All this they have done with the working-tool in the one hand, and the weapon of defence in the other!

“ Prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts,
 “ if I will not open the windows of heaven,
 “ and pour you out a blessing, that there shall
 “ not be room enough to receive it.”^a They have proved the Lord with their duties of love, and he has performed his word of truth to them, by the effusion of manifold blessings upon them, especially the rich and remarkable influences of his Grace. But, O! what is to become of our withering Churches, who live like the secure Zidonians and will not duly exert themselves for God in one respect nor in another. Is he
 about

about to spue such out of his mouth?—To remove their candlestick out of its place?

To those who try to evade conviction upon this point with an empty jest, and cloak their own guilt with the common cant phrase of covetousness in the clergy; we answer, It is your cause we plead, had you eyes to see it—It is a part of God's counsel we deliver to you, which at this time it would be a crime in us to conceal. And we ask you, how will you, or how can you free yourselves from the charge of sacrilegious robbery? a robbery of the worst kind: "Ye have robbed me," saith the Lord! Read the charge, and tremble, ye who can, but will not assist your brethren to support the Church of Christ. Read with application the judgment of God upon Ananias and Sapphira, for holding back part of the price, ye who promise something for the support of Christ's cause, but will not comply with your engagement. The flimsy excuses some of you offer for your conduct, are a reproach to christianity, a tarnish to human nature itself!

We have from principle been opposite to establishments as nurseries of Tyranny. Yet we cannot but bear our testimony against the licentiousness of those who use their liberty as a cloak of covetousness. This, as well as tyranny, sinks the interests of the Church. Upon this point, therefore, we must address every principle

principle of reason, and conscience, and honour in you. It is in your power to assist the Church in outward respects, if ye will. And will ye not lend an assisting hand to save the cause from sinking which you have professed? Prove the Lord by your care for his cause, and see if he will not pour out a blessing upon your basket and your store, upon your persons and your families, and upon the labouring cause of our Lord Jesus Christ amongst us. Assist the struggles of your brethren, who labour and long for the prosperity of Zion. Let pity to them, let your own interest, let the command of God, let the obligations of your duty, and let the honour of christianity in the world, rouse your attention, and excite you to your duty.

We cannot, however, expect an effectual remedy for this, or any other of our complaints, until the Holy Spirit be poured from on high to revive his Church. Without this her outward glory as well as her inward beauty will decay, and we shall become a reproach, and a taunt, and a bye-word upon the earth. The only principles of liberality to the Church, where there is no establishment to oblige it, are honour, conscience, and piety. True honour is a jewel too rarely to be found among the treasures of fallen men—Many professors have made shipwreck of conscience—Piety is a seed thinly sown, and the few remains of it are sadly

ly withered. We add this as another motive to excite every one to be earnest with God to revive his Church.

Thus, brethren, we have pointed out to you some of the leading marks of our backsliding. All our Churches may not be equally guilty. And some of them, we doubt not, are more guilty in one respect, some in another. But all are so guilty, and our crimes are so prevalent, as to expose us to imminent danger, unless it shall be prevented by timely repentance.

II. We proceed now to point out some of the leading causes of our backsliding. This is necessary as well to excite us to repentance, as for our future warning and admonition.

1st. Our defections, as well as the defections of the Church in almost every age, have originated from the declensions of the saints themselves. A source this that few, perhaps, have attended to ! Who could believe that the lights of the world would spread a cloud upon the Church ?—That the salt of the earth would be the means of putrefaction in her ? Yet it is a mournful truth, that so indeed the case is. From their spiritual decays arose those evils in the Church of Ephesus, for which God threatened to unchurch them. That Church was not accused of prophanity, or false doctrine ; nor for want of discipline, or patience, or labour for Christ's name sake. In all these respects they stood fair, and were highly com-
mended.

mended. But the charge was leaving their first love ; a decay in their spiritual affections, which gradually operated to the destruction of the very things for which they were commended.

The lively exercise of love in the hearts of believers gives such tenderness to all their affections, sheds such a favour on all their devotions, and stamps such heavenliness on all their conduct and conversation, as fixes an impression upon others, that there is an excellency and power in religion which they have not known, and which they ought to be acquainted with. This excites their desire to know what it is, and rouses their resolution to seek and be acquainted with Christ themselves. The daughters of Jerusalem, or common professors, struck with the spiritual glory of the spouse of Christ, when she enjoyed near communion with her Lord, cry out in astonishment, “ Who is this
 “ that cometh out of the wilderness, like pillars
 “ of smok, perfumed with myrrh and frank-
 “ incense, with all powders of the merchant ?”^a Amazed at her solicitude to obtain his smiles, they enquire, “ What is thy beloved more than
 “ another beloved, O thou fairest among wo-
 “ men ? what is thy beloved more than another
 “ beloved, that thou dost so charge us ?”^b In answer to this enquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem, the bride of Christ gave such a description of the glory of her Saviour as fired their

their minds with a resolution to seek and enjoy him with her; "Whether is thy beloved gone, "O thou fairest among women? whether is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." *c* Many and great have been the effects of a lively frame in religion to convince others, and allure them to Christ.

But when believers lose their first love, they become like the salt which has lost its savour, useful for nothing, but rather hurtful to every thing. Their deadness, their stumbles, and their conformity to the world, throw stumbling blocks in the way of others, and leave an impression upon the minds of those around them, that there is little in religion but a mere form. The common convictions, therefore, which others might have received from their example, gradually die away. And their common affections for religion ceasing, nothing pleases them, but what tickles their fancy, or soothes them into a pleasing slumber: Then they presently drop the form; dropping the form, and conscience being laid asleep, they run into every scene of sin and vanity, which corrupt nature prompts them to. This is not all; but as conscience must have its plaister to give it ease, some of them to this end drink in error, first in drops, then in large draughts. These communicate the poison to others, and they to others again, until the infection becomes contagious. This is the very way in which deism has commonly
crept

crept into the Church, and all the abominations that have ever tarnished her glory. Thus you see the gradual progress of apostacy. Formality springs from the loss of a spiritual frame—Neglect of duty takes the place of formality—prophanity succeeds the neglect of duty—and the most corrupting errors close the dark scene.

It is but too evident that, in general, we have trod in all those steps, except the last, and are just preparing to take our next step upon that unhallowed ground. It is our comfort, amidst all our causes of mourning, that this Presbytery are as yet free from gross errors, and our people will as yet suffer the wholesome doctrines of Grace to be preached to them. Yet we cannot but tremble at our situation. We are in a condition the most unhappy in case of an attack from error which we fear will make its approach unto us, perhaps gradually at first, but afterwards, unless prevented by divine Grace, will pour in like a mighty flood, and with its impetuous torrent sweep down before it whole shoals, especially of our unprincipled and wanton youth, into the dismal gulph of perdition. The subtle enemy of mankind, who is ever watchful to sow his tares while men sleep, will take the advantage of our drowsiness to sow his corrupt seed, unless undeserved mercy prevent him.

That he may be prevented, and that we may be thoroughly healed, let us remember from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do the first

first works. It should shame you who have known the comforts of God's love, it should fill you with remorse and contrition, it should draw from you the most hearty confessions of your guilt, and it should engage you to the most earnest and unceasing endeavours for a restoration of the divine presence to the Churches, that you have been the first criminal causes of judgment coming upon them!—You who have been made partakers of the Grace of God, heirs of his kingdom, and joint heirs with Christ! You who have felt the bitterness of sin, and the pains of a wounded conscience for it! You who have known the comforts of redeeming love, and the powerful obligations of it to live to Christ: He that resteth in his love, speaks it to you once more, to recover you from your backslidings, as he did at first to recover you from the ruins of your fallen state; “The master is come, and he calleth for you.” Rouse then from your slumbers, and attend to his voice, lest you should hear it speaking to you in alarming accents, and perhaps when you may be near the end of your race.

2. The neglect of the heads of families to train up their children and those under their care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is a prevailing cause of our defection. It was one principal source of the apostacy of the ten Tribes of Israel from the true worship of God, for which they are arraigned and severely threatened;

threatened ; “ They have dealt treacherously against the Lord : They have begotten strange children : Now shall a month devour them with their portions.”^a And it is no less a source of our apostacy from the true principles and practice of christianity. Your neglect of duty and ill example have alienated your families from God, from his people, and from his service ; and thus have you procured the charge of treachery in God’s holy Covenant, and his curse upon your blessings. All the instructions of the pulpit, and the scraps of time ministers can redeem to speak to every one in private, will be of little avail, where there is no proper care in families to prepare youth for the reception and due improvement of them. Where wholesome instruction, due discipline, and holy example, the leading duties of your vow when ye offered your children to the Lord in baptism, are lacking, what can be expected but a race of infidels nursed up in the bosom of the Church ? Hereby God, who calleth you to holiness, is dishonoured ; the Church, which Christ hath purchased with his own blood, is injured, and your hands are deep dyed in the blood of the deathless souls of your own offspring. O ye careless and vicious heads of families ! perfidy is marked on your conduct ! treachery against the Lord, and cruelty to your own flesh and blood !—Ye who suffer your children to run like the untutored savages—ye whose example

ample teacheth them to prophane rather than praise the blessed name by which they are called!—Teacheth them, instead of truth and holiness, the arts of dissimulation, fraud, detraction, and to defile themselves with the lusts of the flesh!—Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, teacheth them to lay up treasure upon earth, as the chief good!—Ye who by refusing the incense of the evening and the morning sacrifice to God, teach your children to refrain prayer before him! And all ye, who instead of instructing them to keep God's sabbaths and reverence his sanctuary, instruct them to violate both, by your loitering at home for the ease of the flesh, like brutes of the stall, or gadding abroad, like the wild asses colt! We beseech you, brethren, who are guilty of these, or similar crimes; we pray you, by every thing sacred, to consider your ways, and repent.

3. Our apostacies took their rise from a relaxation of the reins of discipline, in too many instances, either through inattention, or carelessness in the officers of the Church, or an overstrained prudence, lest the delinquents should go over to other societies, and thereby weaken their own. It is indeed to be lamented that the schisms in the Church have opened a wide door to this pernicious practice, by which the strict exercise of discipline has been obstructed in several instances, to the injury of the Church.

But

But it is a great mistake to suppose that her interests will be promoted by a relaxation of government, except in some cases peculiarly circumstanced ; for observation and experience teach us that the strength of a society as well as its honour and influence in the world dependeth much upon a wise and steady exercise of discipline.

Here we beg leave to mention and attempt to remove a too prevalent mistake, a mistake which has been a source of much impiety amongst the youth of our day, viz. That they are not the objects of Church censure, until they recognise their baptismal vows by an approach to God at his own table, or by offering their seed to him in baptism. A mistake this must be ; for in baptism children are taken into the Church, to be trained up for God. But as they cannot, at non-age, be immediately under the cognizance of church-officers, they are committed to the tutorage of parents, or other sponsors, to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And, indeed, it is a considerable ground of their admission, that persons supposed to be faithful, and sufficiently qualified for the trust, engage for their religious education. If therefore minors, arrived to a competent understanding to receive counsels and admonitions from the Church, shall continue in the commission of sin, or the usual neglect of the duties which they were bound by their baptism to perform, they ought to be called to an

an account by the officers of the Church, and censured for their conduct. Sponsors also, parents or others, are liable to censure, if it shall be found that the crimes of their pupils have originated from, or been persisted in, through their neglect or ill conduct.

4. It is to be feared, that too often the success of the Gospel has been hindered, by ministers dependance upon their own gifts rather than upon the Grace which is in Christ, by their not trying to have their own hearts duly impressed with the importance of the messages they bring to the people, and by seeking rather to gain their applause than to gain their hearts for God. Self is a deadly fly, which spoils the ointment, and lurks under many disguises. It provoketh God to blast our labours, and unfitteth us for the profitable discharge of our duty.

III. We shall now lay before you some of the leading duties necessary to revive the decaying interests of our Church. We wish, brethren, to recover the health of the daughter of our people, by striking at the root of our disease, lest our wound become incurable. In order to this we beseech you,

1st. To weigh seriously the causes and guilt of our apostacy, the dishonour it does to God, and the mournful effects of it upon ourselves, our posterity, and the world around us. Without a sense of these things upon your hearts,
every

every attempt we can make to direct you to the means necessary for your salvation will be in vain. O consider, that tho' you should sleep, God's eye will be awake; and the lukewarmness of the Church is so nauseous to him, that he will spue her out of his mouth except she become zealous and repent.

2. Try faithfully to have the spirit of ancient christianity revived in your own souls, and the souls of others. If you would recover your first love, "Remember from whence you are fallen, repent, and do the first works."^a Be serious and careful in your attendance on every mean of Grace, public and private. Beware of resting in a lifeless form, without the power of godliness—be importunate and constant at the throne of Grace for the Holy Spirit to convince you and others of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And by wise counsels and reproofs, united to a holy walk with God, discountenance all vice in others, and excite them to all holiness and virtue.

3. Let parents and all heads of families be very careful to train up their families for God. Take all due pains to instruct them in the glory and importance of Gospel doctrines—to impress upon their hearts a sense of their sin, their guilt and their danger. Open to them the deplorable condition of fallen nature, and their absolute

^a Rev. 2. 5.

lute need of Christ to save them—show them the excellency and fullness of redemption by the Blood and Spirit of Christ—the amiableness, the nature and necessity of piety and virtue in their various lovely branches—be watchful to restrain them from vice and folly, and to encourage them to righteous and virtuous actions—set before them a pure and convincing example, not only by a careful attendance on every ordinance, but by the spirituality of your own frame in religious duties, and a life of close communion with God. And, O see that your families also pay a proper respect to these duties !

4. We do earnestly enjoin it upon parents and all Church officers, to be careful in training up and exciting young people, to recognise their baptismal vows, as early in life as may be, by a public acknowledgment of them, and a dedication of themselves unto the Lord. This is necessary to Sow a Seed in the Church, that will grow up to the glory of God. And we might have observed, that a deficiency in this respect is one reason why She is so overgrown with briers and thorns.

5. We do entreat and enjoin upon all Church officers to revive the spirit of discipline, and strictly put into practice, without fear or favour, our just and wholesome laws against offenders of every description, high and low, rich and

and poor, old and young, who may be capable subjects of censure. Admonish and rebuke the guilty, in public, or in private, according to the nature and aggravation of their crimes—suspend from special privileges those who do not reform—and execute the necessary but too much neglected censure of excommunication from the communion of the Church, those who, after repeated reproofs and warnings, obstinately persist in atrocious crimes, or heretical opinions. Paying always, nevertheless, a suitable respect unto the condition and circumstances of persons and places, lest by putting old wine into new bottles, or new wine into old bottles, the bottles perish, and the wine be spilt.

6. As much dependeth upon suitable care and proper regulations in societies, in order to promote the interest of religion amongst them, we must beseech your careful observation of the wholesome advices given by our Synod, and the regulations they planned, years ago, for the health of the societies under their care—such as the erection of societies of manners, the appointment of committees to manage the political affairs of congregations, the keeping exact registers of baptisms, marriages, deaths, &c. The choosing of deacons, and providing convenient glebes as soon as may be. Especially let there be a due observation of that very necessary and repeated injunction of Synod, that the people be steadily represented in our judicatures by
their

their ruling elders. This is necessary, as well for other good purposes, as to preserve the privileges of the people and our valuable constitution.

7. As much dependeth upon the temper and conduct of ministers as means to promote reformation, let every member of this Presbytery, and every preacher in our bounds, “ Take heed to himself and to his doctrine,”^a “ That he adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,”^b knowing that the follies and stumbles of ministers tarnish the sacred character, and cause the offerings of the Lord to be abhorred : Let him watch for souls as one who must give an account to God, and remember this direction of the Apostle, “ Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine.”^c—“ Having received this ministry, let every one Renounce 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.”^d—In doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech which cannot be condemned.”^e

For instruction and warning to this Presbytery, especially to young preachers, and all who

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a 1 Tim. 4. 16. *b* Tit. 2. 10. *c* 2 Tim. 4. 2.

d 2 Cor. 4. 2. *e* Tit. 2. 7. 8.

may incline to join with us, we are here constrained to mention a few things, which are opposite to those apostolic injunctions, and have a strong influence upon hindering the success of the Gospel. The minister who holdeth back what may be profitable to the hearers, especially what may be most profitable to them, for fear of giving offence or condemning himself, undoubtedly walketh in craftiness, and handleth the word of God deceitfully. A minister may preach nothing but truth, and yet not preach faithfully, because he does not declare the whole counsel of God. He may be chargeable with no error, and yet be very guilty, as well for not saying what ought to be said upon his subject, as for not applying it close home to the consciences of his hearers—Nor can he be said to show uncorruptness in doctrine, sound speech which cannot be condemned, who intersperseth his sermons with doubtful phrases, which may have a very dangerous meaning couched in them. It is not an unprecedented thing to conceal error under a false disguise, or shew of Gospel truth. This may be done either as the effect of a false education, or of design, that the people may indiscernably drink in poisonous drops.—Another fault in preaching of much more hurtful tendency than people are aware, is an affectation of novel phrases and sentiments. This is commonly the effect of a strong desire in the preacher to appear as an original, tho' he may not have the smallest pretensions

tensions to such a character. The unfailing effect of such teaching is to swell the preachers mind with a conceit of his own abilities, and form giddy opinionative hearers ; while, before they are aware, it may whirl both himself and them round into the gulph of error and inconsistencies. Here it ought to be observed, that a minister's principal business lies in conviction and persuasion, not in dry speculation, or in teaching truths not known in the Churches ; therefore it ought to be his chief aim to lead his hearers to the faith and practice of already received doctrines.

Affectation of the sublime is another error in preaching, which only puffeth up the mind of the preacher with imaginary glory, and for a time deceiveth his injudicious hearers. This only entertains the audience with tinsel ornaments instead of the solid instructions of the pulpit, or with swelling bombast instead of true sublimity. The light of such instructions dies like the shooting meteor, in an instant, and passeth away with an empty sound, as the cloud without rain, leaving no lasting impressions upon the heart. Nothing (error excepted) is more cold and disgusting to the pious or intelligent mind, than swelling tragical pomp without affections ; the voice and mere production's of the head without the heart ! Such preachers should know, that the leading principles of true sublimity are dignity of genius and pathos, which in the christian orator should be kindled
by

by fire from God's altar.—A. That its justest standard is the word of God, in which we find no gingling sounds, no swollen empty descriptions, no paint put upon the pearl; but a native simplicity, perspicuity, dignity and strength;—the language not contrived to embellish the ideas, but natively flowing from them, and therefore the most happily adapted to impress a sense of them upon the heart.—A dronish and unmeaning cant, substituted in the room of seriousness and ministerial gravity, will only lay the hearers upon their pillow, and lull them into spiritual slumber.—To collect the bare bones of orthodoxy from old systems of divinity, and throw them among the people, will have little tendency to convince them, or give fire to their affections.—The mere agitation and fury of nature, which is sometimes mistaken for pure zeal, is only a fire without the small still voice of the Gospel and Spirit of Christ.—And an unbounded wandering from our subject, or a multiplicity of ideas crowded into the discourse, which have little connexion with or tendency to illustrate our main theme, will lead the hearers minds away from it, and veil the principal object from their sight.

To avoid those and similar errors, and to obtain the great ends of our ministry, let none of us content himself with merely doing his duty, or even doing it with reputation, without gaining souls for the Lord. Let every one fix, as the great objects of all his administrations, the
increase

increase of Christ, tho' he himself should decrease, and to convert sinners to him, and build up believers in their holy faith. Let every one take pains to have his own heart impressed with a sense of the importance of the messages he bears to the people, and the worth of their immortal souls, as well as with a sense of his own insufficiency to think even a good thought as of himself, and that all his sufficiency is of God. Especially let him take the greatest care that his own heart be right with God ; that he live near to him and under the lively impressions of his Grace and love. Let him live, as well as preach the Gospel, daily acquiring more acquaintance with and making greater progress in the spiritual life. And it would, no doubt, be of the highest advantage to have, in all our ministerial exercises, a reigning belief in our hearts, that however pertinent our studies, and however sound and well spoken our discourses may be, in public or in private ; yet if the seed sown be not watered with our tears, warmed with the love of Christ in our hearts, and cast by a hand well instructed with his Grace, we have little reason to expect much saving Fruit.

8. In the last place, we enjoin it upon all to be earnest in wrestling for themselves and the necessitous Church of Christ. And we do earnestly recommend to every congregation in our bounds, to erect praying societies ; lesser ones in particular districts, or consisting of select persons ;

persons ; and larger ones of the whole congregation, or as many as may be disposed to associate for prayer. We are the rather encouraged to hope for success in this part of our address, as it has been repeatedly and warmly recommended by our worthy Synod to all the congregations in their bounds, both before and since the commencement of our late troubles, to spend part of the last Thursday of every month in social prayer to God for a revival of his own work in our Churches, and the unmerited favours of his Providence to our guilty land. We might also observe that this has been practised with great success in several congregations both in Europe and America.—Verily, effectual fervent prayer availeth much, especially social prayer. It hath availed to arrest the sun and moon in their course, to shut and open Heaven, to quench the Flame of Wrath kindled against a Nation, to obtain Deliverance for the Church at many perilous Seasons, and the Holy Spirit to revive her declining Interests. Need we mention to you who have read your Bibles, the precious effects of the faithful and earnest wrestlings of Jacob, Moses, Hannah, David, Daniel, Esther, and the Jews in her time, with many others of the Old Testament saints ? Our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Salvation to the ends of the earth, made his appearance in our world, in answer to the entreaties of good old Simeon and Anna the prophets, with their companions, who waited continually in
faith

faith and prayer for this consolation of Israel when the saviour was born. *a* The Holy Ghost was sent down in a remarkable manner, on the day of Pentecost, in answer to the prayers of a large society of the apostles and disciples of Christ, who, according to his direction when he ascended on high, tarried at Jerusalem, waiting continually in prayer for this promise of the Father. *b* Thro' means of the continual intercession of the Church, on Peter's account, an angel of the Lord was sent to knock off his chains, and conduct him in safety to the house of Mary, where a pious society earnestly solicited Heaven for the mercy, the very moment of his deliverance. *c* It would, indeed, be endless to enumerate all the precious effects of prayer recorded in Scripture and Church history. God never designed or promised a special favour to his Church or to individuals, but he gave them an heart to pray for it, and honoured them with giving it as an answer to their prayers. But the necessity and usefulness of this duty to obtain blessings for the Church, you may clearly stated and fully proven in the famous Mr. Edwards's humble attempt to promote piety, especially social prayer, in Europe and America. We do most earnestly beseech you, brethren, to make conscience of attending faithfully to this duty. We have tried every means with you in our power, we fear, in a general mea-

a Luke 2d Chap. *b* Luke 24. Acts 1st & 2d Chap. *c* Acts 12th Chap.

measure, of late, in vain. And we are apprehensive, that all our studies and all our preaching will be in vain, unless you obtain by prayer the Holy Spirit to bless the means—But this duty duly and perseveringly attempted will not fail of success.

IV. Besides the motives casually interspersed through this address, we shall conclude with a few principal ones selected out of many, in order to excite you to a ready and careful performance of the duties necessary to recover the health of our declining Churches.

1st. Let your own danger, the danger of the Churches, of your families, and of the children not yet born, have weight with you. The severest punishments, spiritual and temporal, have been inflicted upon many Churches for persisting in the crimes of which we are guilty. And can we escape, except we reform? But the sorest of all plagues, and the most to be deprecated, are spiritual Judgments. God punisheth sin with sin, the most grievous of all calamities.

He resenteth the obstinacy of a people, by removing their delusions, and suffering them to fill the lusts of the flesh. “My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts: And they walked in their own counsels.”^a If we obstinately persist in our sins, provoked Heaven will restrain from us the holy

^a *Psa.* 81. 11, 12.

holy Spirit, and give us up to blindness of mind to hardness of heart, to vile affections, and strong delusions to love and believe a lie. Then the love of many shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound. Intestine broils and divisions will deface our beauty, and consume our strength. Errors and heresies, pouring in as a flood, will stain our glory, and expose our shame. And finally a holy and jealous God will spue us out of his mouth. And in proportion to the greatness of our privileges will be the certainty and weight of our punishment. “ You only have
 “ I known of all the families of the earth ;
 “ therefore will I punish you for all your iniqui-
 “ ties.^c He that despised Moses’s law died without
 “ mercy ; of how much sorer punishment, sup-
 “ pose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who
 “ hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and
 “ counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith
 “ he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath
 “ done despite unto the Spirit of Grace. For
 “ we know him that hath said, vengeance be-
 “ longeth unto me, I will recompence, saith
 “ the Lord.” ^d

We might adduce many alarming threatnings and examples of this kind. The history of the Church and nation of Israel is pregnant with such instances. Where are the ten tribes ? What is and has for a long time been the state of the Jews ? “ In the day when I visit, (saith
 “ the Lord to Moses) I will visit their iniquity
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^c Amos. 3. 2. ^d Heb. 10. 28, 29, 30.

“ upon them. And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf.”^a Jehovah displayed his wonders before them in Egypt, and at the Red Sea; he commanded the heavens to rain down bread for their hunger, and the rock to pour out water for their thirst; he gave them his ordinances, his promises, and his laws; they felt the terrors of Sinai, and trembled in the awful presence of their Lawgiver and Judge: yet their hearts soon turning back to Egyptian idolatries, they made to themselves a golden calf. For this sin, aggravated by all the judgments and mercies they had seen, God threatens to visit them with sorer punishment when he would reckon with them for future crimes. Accordingly he consumed those rebels with various plagues, for forty years in the wilderness, till of all that came out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upwards, none remained to enter the promised rest, but Caleb and Joshua, who had faithfully kept the charge of the Lord.

Many waisting Judgments were poured upon them in future ages for their apostacies, until, finally, filling up the measure of their cup, by crucifying and rejecting the Lord of Glory, they were wholly cast off, and scattered as fugitives among the nations, for more than 1700 years. God has long since spued the once famous Churches of Asia out of his mouth for their gradual and incorrigable defections from the faith and practice of the Gospel. Now the polluting and dark delusions of Mahomet triumph, where the

^a Exod. 32, 34, 35.

the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached in purity and with power. And has not Rome, whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world, long since become a nest of the vilest abominations?

Tremble, brethren, at the rehearsal of those Judgments, which were written aforetime for our warning. Have we any reason to expect that we shall not likewise perish, except we repent? Our sins are more aggravated than theirs, because they have been committed against greater light; therefore we may expect the greater punishment, sooner or later, if we persist in them. The word and providence of God, his Judgments and Mercies, have united their voice with these and many other examples for our warning and instruction. He has planted a noble vine in our wilderness, cultivated and hedged it in, watered it with his Holy Spirit, and caused the pure doctrines of the Gospel to drop as dew upon it; yet we have backsliden from him, and refuse to return. What then can we expect, unless a speedy and thorough repentance prevent it, but that he will take the vineyard from us, and give it to those who will bring forth the fruits thereof in their season?

Of this Judgment some alarming symptoms are already upon us. This Presbytery, one of the first erected in America,—once the bright example of piety, learning, and good sense, and in whose bounds God eminently vouchsafed his gracious presence: This Presbytery, so highly favoured,

favoured, has now a visible cloud spread upon it! Several once large and flourishing congregations are greatly diminished—several able and faithful labourers have been removed from time to time, a number of them in the height of their usefulness—some by death, some to different parts of the vineyard, while others are prevented of their wonted usefulness by bodily infirmities. And of the common people, many of the precious sons of Zion, for piety and good sense comparable to fine gold, have ceased from their labours. And where do we see the sons appear with the spirit and zeal of their fathers? “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth : for the faithful fail from among the children of men.” “The righteous are taken away from the evil to come,” and few, if any of equal eminence are raised to supply their room. When God is about to spread darkness over his house, he takes down the most eminent lights in it, as well Ministers as private Christians. We have, indeed, reason to unite with the prophet, and cry, Our fathers, our fathers, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! they are gone! and, O! is the Spirit of God departed with them?

Is it time for you, brethren, or for us, to sleep? Let us awake, and try to take hold of a departing God, and a departing Glory. Let us be earnest with God to cast Elijah’s mantle upon the Elisha’s of our day, and to give a reforming spirit to our people. Let Zion’s danger,

ger, the danger of our families and our own souls, rouse our attention, and awake us to our duty. As our fathers transmitted to us a fair spiritual inheritance, let us transmit the same undiminished to our posterity. And, O! let us not entail upon them the curse of our iniquities visited upon them to the third and fourth generation.

2. Let the obligation of your solemn vows to God prevail upon you to reform. “ Know ye
 “ not (saith the apostle) that so many of us
 “ as were baptized into Christ were baptized into
 “ his death? wherefore we are buried with him by
 “ baptism into death: that like as Christ was
 “ raised up from the dead by the glory of the
 “ Father, even so we also should walk in new-
 “ nels of life.” *a* And our Lord, commanding his apostles to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, adds, “ Teaching them to observe all
 “ things whatsoever I command you.” *b* From these passages of scripture, with many others, it is easy to see, that the leading obligations of your christian oath, are a respect unto all the commandments of God, the mortification of all sin, and all the acts of a new and spiritual life. And as often as you offered a child to the Lord in baptism, you expressly recognised this vow. And, O! how solemn the transaction, when many of you renewed this oath at his own table,

a Rom. 6. 3, 4. b Mat. 28. 19.

table, swearing before God, angels and men;—
 swearing over the memorials of a crucified Jesus,
 that you would be wholly and for ever the Lord's!

Bear with us, our beloved hearers, suffer us
 to address you on this point, as those who are
 under oath to God to be faithful to your souls.
 But how shall we address you? As wilful cove-
 nant breakers, as perjured persons, we are o-
 bliged to address many of you! And, O! We
 tremble to relate it, we are obliged to address
 some of you as baptized infidels! Is your baptism
 a mere farce? Is it an empty compliment, or
 a solemn institution of heaven? Your deserted
 closets, your empty seats in the house of God,
 your prayerless families, your prophane practices,
 and your turning away from the mysteries,
 and ordinances of Christ, will be swift witnesses
 against many of you.—Own the truth now,
 confess Christ before men in practice as well as
 in words, lest he deny you before his Father.
 Consider your ways, we beseech you, hearken
 to the word of exhortation, and repent; lest
 you hear with anguish in your souls that pierc-
 ing query put by the Judge himself, “What
 “hast thou to do to declare my statutes, and
 “that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy
 “mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and
 “castest my words behind thee.” *a*

And we pray you, our young readers, to lay
 it seriously to your hearts, that ye are not your
 own, ye have been solemnly devoted to God in
 covenant;

covenant ; therefore ye must break your league with hell, and early in life make a personal surrender of yourselves to the Lord. Choose God for your God, his people for your people, his interests for your interests, and his service as your pleasure. Particularly we exhort those who may be favoured with pious parents, to beware that their instructions be not lost upon you, and their prayers be not frustrated by your obstinacy, lest they kindle for you a flame most intensely hot in a future state.

3. We excite you to your duty by the honour and interest of Christ, which you are under the strictest obligations to promote in the world. Ye are not your own, but his—His ; for he made you—His ; for he maintains your soul in life—His by right of redemption ; for he purchased the Church with his own blood. If therefore ye look upon yourselves as “ Bought with a price, glorify God in your body, and your spirit, that are God’s.”^a Redemption thro’ Christ is the noblest of all the works of God ; for here he is glorified in the highest ; therefore let those who profess redemption in his blood, glorify him in the highest by a pious walk and frame of heart, as becometh the ransomed of the Lord. Those who name the name of Christ, and yet do not depart from iniquity, nor duly attend to his laws, do what they can to tarnish his Glory, and prophane his name before men. “ What do ye more than others ?”^b was

^a 1 Cor. 6, 23. ^b Mat. 5. 47.

was a query put by Christ to his own disciples. The same query he putteth to each of you, intimating your peculiar obligations to let your light so shine before men, that others beholding your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

The holy lives of primitive christians drew many heathens to believe and embrace christianity ; but the unholy lives of many professors in our day, cast stumbling blocks before an ungodly world, and fix their chains fast upon them. Were an intelligent heathen to observe the animosities and divisions of many who profess to be followers of the Lamb, would he not suppose Christ to be the minister of discord rather than of reconciliation ? Were he to observe their filthy practices, would he not suppose Christ to be the minister of sin, and christians a set of the vilest hypocrites ? Did a Mahometan travel amongst us, a Mahometan instructed by the Alcorn to abstain from wine, and worship frequently in the day, what would he think of our many drunken christians ?—Of many, especially of our baptized debauchees, and many of those that effect high life, who will not deign to assemble for public worship ? And what would he think of multitudes amongst us, who refuse the incense of the morning and evening sacrifice to God ? Would he not call Christ an impostor, and bless himself in his own delusions ? Or did a zealous Papist take notice of the carelessness of many protestants about their
souls,

souls, and hear their lifeless, dry and formal devotions and Sermons, he would, and more frequently does, than you are aware of, condemn Protestantism as heresy, on this very account, and is more confirmed in the belief of his own superstitions. Alas! how is Christ wounded in the house of his professed friends! Consider, ye carnal professors, what injury is done to the cause of Christ by your evil conduct. What a shame, what a reproach for Christians! —For Protestants! —For Presbyterians, who enjoy so many precious privileges, to live such scandalous lives, and manifest so little zeal for God!

4. Reformation will be the truest mark of gratitude to God for the late favours of his providence to our young nation. The hand of God has not more visibly appeared in any revolution than in ours. This is so evident, that ~~the~~ rankest Deist can scarcely deny an eminent interposition of providence in our behalf. Weak and unworthy as we were, the Lord hath delivered us from the expectations of a powerful and insidious foe, saved us from our fears, created peace in our borders, and put us into the quiet possession of our invaluable rights;—Rights which involve in them all the precious interests of religion! All this he hath done, notwithstanding our provocations in the time of our affliction. Now we are delivered, let us not, as the carnal Israelites, eat, and drink, and rise up to play;—nor, Jeshurun like, wax fat, and
H kick

kick against the rock, of our Salvation. Neither let us, with ungrateful Jews, when delivered from their long captivity, attend only to the repairs of our own houses, and suffer the house of the Lord to lie waste—nor every one mind his own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. If we do not humbly and thankfully improve our mercies, whatsoever great things God may have had in view for the ages to come, by our glorious revolution, he may severely chastise us, as he did the rebellious Israelites, whose carcases he strewed in the wilderness, tho' their seed came to inherit the promised blessing. However visible the hand of God be in our late revolution, yet but few, even of the more serious, look to what appears from his word and the uniform operations of his providence in all ages to be his great design in the whole—very few have known, that in all this he has been laying the foundation of a glorious empire for his well beloved Son, to whom he has promised *the heathen for his inheritance, and these uttermost ends of the earth for his possession.* And few have known that all our struggles and all the chastisements we may receive for ingratitude are necessary to prepare the way for the full accomplishment of that great promise. Were these things realized, we would join trembling with our mirth, and express our gratitude by an holy life, as becometh the redeemed of the Lord.

Brethren, we must not only say with our lips,
 but

but pray from our hearts, *thy kingdom come*. Nor will it be sufficient to pray for the blessing; but we must use the means necessary to obtain it. Without this our expectations of it will be presumptuous. We must follow after all righteousness, which exalteth a nation; and abandon all iniquity, which is a reproach to any people. Take care that your reformation be complete: Begin every one by laying the foundation sure in your own hearts. Proceed to reclaim others and allure them to the Lord by a holy example, by counsels, reproofs, and every mean in your power. And, O! see that ye encourage your ministers, and strengthen their hands in the work of the Lord. Beware lest ye waste their lives and consume them with cares by your obstinacy and neglect.

5. In the last place, we shall address an argument to those who love and long for the coming of Christ's kingdom—an argument which they only can fully feel, and which it is necessary they should feel, in order to the glorious end we have in view. Should it please the gracious God to revive his own work in the midst of the years, it would afford unspeakable comfort and assistance to you, and to many of the Lord's weary heritage. In times of common decadence and corruption you have few helps, and many weights to press you down. Oppressed, however, and inactive as you may frequently feel, you cannot be contented with your present frame; but, as mourning doves of
the

the valley, you bewail your Lord's absence as well from the Church as from your own souls. You long for the candle of the Lord to shine upon your tabernacle, as in months past. You long, at times, and you pray to see his Power and Glory, as you have seen him in the sanctuary. You feel alone in the midst of company, and bereaved in the midsts of enjoyments. But did he, who has the residue of the Spirit, pour his gracious influences in common upon the Churches, you would have company : Many joining hand in hand, and inquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, weeping as they go, would be comfortable and helpful companions to you in your wilderness passage. You might expect that your own souls would then be quickened into life, joy, and enlarged desires for Christ. And some of you who are on the confines of eternity, having seen the salvation of the Lord, would depart in peace, comforted with the prospect of his special favours as well to the Church as to your dear relatives who remain behind you in the world.

These are favours the Lord grants in answer to prayer. Graceless sinners cannot pray right, and many of them will not attempt the duty. This mean of reformation, therefore, in a peculiar manner devolveth upon you. Awake, then, to your duty ;—Shake off your drowsiness ! Seek him no longer by night upon your bed ! Plead not the excuse which is your crime :
 “ I have put off my coat ; how shall I put it
 “ on ?

“on ? I have washed my feet ; how shall I defile them ?” Watch, and fast, and wrestle in prayer. Unite in praying societies—enquire for him, and speak of him one to another : then the Lord will hearken, and hear : a book of remembrance shall be written before him for them that fear him, and that think upon his name. Relax not your endeavours thro’ discouragement, nor grow weary in duty—Think not that delays are denials. God may delay till the properest time to give, when your faith and patience shall be fully tried, when it will be the more evident that the favour flows of mere Grace, and then it will be the more comfortable to your souls. Therefore, though the vision tarry, “Wait for it ; for it will surely speak at the appointed time, it will not tarry.”^a Seek him until ye be enabled to say, “I found him whom my soul loveth : I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.”^b Finally, all “Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence ; and give him no rest, until he establish, and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”^c

Thus, brethren, we have pointed out to you some symptoms of our disease, and the causes of it, with some means for recovering our health, and motives to excite to the due use of them for that end. And we entreat your careful attendance to the whole. Do not give this address
only

only a slight reading, and throw it aside, as people too commonly do, when a new book falls into their hands. Read it often, ponder it seriously, weigh every particular thoroughly, with the reasons upon which the sentiments are founded. Try to have your hearts fully impressed with a sense of our danger, and fully resolved to give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, till God vouchsafe to us the special tokens of his presence, and pour from on high a shower of his divine influences upon us. Without this our case will soon become deplorable. Alarming, however, as it is, it is not desperate. The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. The residue of the Spirit is with him, and he waiteth to be Gracious: Let us therefore make our humble suit to him, and continually wait upon him, until he be pleased to return, and leave a blessing behind him. Which may God grant for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

F I N I S.