
SERMON,
CHARGE, FELLOWSHIP,
AND
EXHORTATION TO THE PEOPLE,
AT THE INSTALLATION OF THE
REVEREND MR. FOWLER.

THE DUTY OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER EXPLAINED
AND ENFORCED:

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

INSTALLATION

OF THE

REV. ORIN FOWLER,

AS PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN
PLAINFIELD;

MARCH 1, 1920.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, *R*

JUNIOR MINISTER OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN WEST SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

HARTFORD:

PRINTED BY LINCOLN & STONE.

.....
1820.



The Author of the following Discourse has consented, with much reluctance, that a few copies of it should be printed, in compliance with the urgent request of a committee of the congregation, before whom it was delivered. As it is not designed to circulate beyond the limits of the society in which it was preached, he does not feel himself bound to make any apology to the public ; but only requests that it may be read by those to whom it is now submitted, with the same candour which induced them to solicit its publication.

INSTALLATION SERMON.

1 COR. ii. 2.

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

THE apostle, in the commencement of this epistle to the Corinthians, exhibits in a striking manner the power and excellence of the gospel, by indirectly contrasting it with the boasted systems of heathen philosophy. Having introduced his letter with some appropriate salutations, and expostulated with them concerning the unhappy divisions by which their church was rent, he proceeds to illustrate the superiority of the gospel, by an allusion to the simplicity of its doctrines, and the weakness of the instruments by which its triumphs were effected. In vindication of the Christian religion, he refers immediately to the effect of his own personal ministry; and reminds them that the success, which had attended his labours, had resulted not from the fascinating power of oratory, nor from any acute philosophical reasonings, but from exhibiting the testimony of God to a plain fact, which they had seen confirmed by the most unequivocal divine operations. 'And I, brethren,' says he, 'when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.' This grand and cardinal doctrine, so emphatically the sum and substance of the gospel, and so fitted to stain the pride of human glory, the apostle was resolved to preach, even in the refined and opulent city of Corinth. To go and do likewise; to exalt the honours of the same cross, and to glory in the same risen and ascended Redeemer; is equally the duty of all who succeed him in the Christian ministry.

In endeavouring to derive from this passage, some instruction suited to the present occasion, allow me to direct your attention, in the first place, to the import of the apostle's determination expressed in the text ; and then to suggest some reasons why the same determination should be formed and adhered to, by every minister of Christ. We shall consider the text with considerable latitude, and accommodate it, so far as may be, to the occasion on which we are assembled.

I. Our first inquiry then is, what is implied in this determination of the apostle, to know nothing, or as the meaning evidently is, to *make known* nothing among the Corinthians, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

It implies, in general, an entire devotedness to the service and glory of Christ, in the ministry of reconciliation ;—an ardent and affectionate desire to advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and especially, to recommend and give a practical effect to the great doctrine of redemption by his blood. We will consider this head in reference to the public labours of the sanctuary, and the more private duties of the pastoral office.

1. Every minister of the gospel is bound to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified, *in his preaching*. Under this article, we shall not attempt even a complete outline of the Christian system, but only glance at a few of its most prominent features.

In this duty, you will instantly perceive, is implied that we exhibit Christ in the same divine and adorable character, which the bible ascribes to him. We are to present him to you as that Being who is 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person ;' concerning whom the evangelist declares that he was 'in the beginning with God, and was God ;' and of whom it is elsewhere said, 'let all the angels of God worship him ;' 'who made all things visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ;' and who is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.' Sus-

taining, as he does, this glorious character, we are to represent him as ruling in the empire of providence ; as upholding all things by the word of his power, and controlling all events for the ultimate glory of his kingdom. In this character, he is present and presides amidst the desolations of war, and the convulsions of the church ; causes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath restrains. To exhibit the divine character of the Son of God, and the exalted station which he holds in the Universe, must constitute one grand article of the faithful preaching of the gospel.

But let it be observed that we are to preach Jesus Christ *crucified*. And here, brethren, we are introduced to the glorious mystery of man's redemption. We are not only to exhibit him to you in the possession of that 'glory which he had with the Father before the world was,' but we are to shew you how that glory has been partially eclipsed in the mysterious event of his incarnation. 'Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' This simple statement, which the apostle has given of this wonderful fact, contains the substance of what God has been pleased to reveal concerning it. It is the fact, and not the manner or circumstances of it, in which we are practically interested : it is the fact therefore alone, which infinite wisdom has thought best to reveal ; for it is no part of God's plan, in giving us a revelation, to gratify an idle or inquisitive curiosity. But the scriptures not only inform us of the death of Christ, but of the subsequent events of his resurrection and ascension. They speak of him as exalted in his mediatorial character, 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,' not only in this world, but also in that which is to come ;' as having 'all things put under his feet ;' as

being 'head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.'

In connection with the character of Christ, and the wonderful work which he has accomplished, it will be necessary to exhibit the naturally depraved state of man. For what solution can be given of the mysterious plan of redemption, if you deny the melancholy truth that man is a sinner? If our nature were not in ruins, why all this infinite expense to repair the fabric? If the soul were not shut up to the bondage of sin, why must the Son of God descend from the third heavens to redeem it? If the curse of God's law had not fallen upon man, why all this wonderful interest that has been excited in heaven for its removal; and what explanation will you give of the scenes of Calvary, if they were not designed to open a fountain for sin and uncleanness? You perceive then, that in order to give meaning or consistency to the redemption of Christ, it is necessary to exhibit the humbling doctrine that man is dead in trespasses and sins, or destitute of evangelical holiness; and that his moral condition is so desperate as to justify infinite wisdom in the application of this wonderful remedy. Any other solution than this of the death of Christ, and the subsequent events connected with it, must involve a gross reflection on the wisdom of God; as it charges him with employing means more expensive than the end would warrant. Any other solution fritters away the significance of the gospel, and totally eclipses the glory of redemption.

But it is not enough that man should be informed that he is a sinner, nor even that he should be told of the infinite sacrifice that has been made for his deliverance: he must know that it is impossible that he should have a personal interest in the blessings of the gospel without complying with its requisitions; and that these requisitions are repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;—exercises peculiar to that regenerate nature, which is communicated, in the sovereignty of God's grace, through the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit. The

bible, my brethren, knows no other means of gaining a title to heaven; and it denounces an anathema upon that minister who ventures, in his preaching, to substitute any other. We are indeed to inculcate the necessity of good works, and to shew you how essential is the connection between them and evangelical faith; but if we give them a place in the work of our salvation, which the bible does not recognize, and make them the ground of acceptance with God, instead of the fruits and evidences of faith, we practically reject the atonement of Christ, and bring upon ourselves the curse of preaching to you another gospel.

The moral duties of life, also, are to hold an important, though subordinate place in the public instructions of the gospel minister; and let no one suppose that this is inconsistent with the apostle's determination to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. The various relations which exist in life were constituted by God himself; and surely it cannot be inconsistent with the office of a public Christian instructor, to explain and enforce the duties which grow out of them. It is from the sacred desk that parents are to be urged to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and children exhorted to reverence and obey their parents in all things. Here magistrates and subjects, masters and servants, are occasionally to be reminded of their reciprocal obligations and duties. Here are to be inculcated those gentle and benevolent virtues, which so pre-eminently shone in the Redeemer of the world, and which diffuse a charm through families, and neighbourhoods, and societies. If in dwelling occasionally on these topics, we are charged with departing from the duty of a gospel minister, we have only to refer to the example of that best of all preachers who came down from heaven. Certain it is that the *exclusive* preacher of morality is guilty of high treason against his master;—of intercepting the brightest beams of the Sun of Righteousness; but it is equally certain that the preacher, who entirely neglects to in-

culcate the social and moral obligations of life, is chargeable with not declaring the whole counsel of God.

The faithful minister will make it his grand object to declare all the truths of the bible, without any disguise or colouring. He will not omit any doctrine, because it may be connected with mysteries, provided it is clearly revealed; but he will endeavour to present it in its most practical aspect, without attempting to be wise above that which is written. He will not hesitate to exhibit any article of divine truth, because it may lay the pride of man in the dust; but he will urge it with tenderness and affection, and shew, by his manner, that it has had its legitimate effect upon his own heart. He will not feel at liberty wholly to dispense with any one doctrine or precept, because he may find others which appear to him more immediately practical and important; for he will recollect that it is not for him to decide what part of God's truth shall be accompanied by the sanctifying influences of his Spirit; but he will not make the less important parts of the Christian system the most prominent topics of his public instruction. He may sometimes indeed find it necessary to defend the great doctrines of the gospel against the errors of particular sects; but he will always be reluctant to introduce controversy into the desk, and unless circumstances render it absolutely essential, he will urge what he believes to be the truths of the bible, without any reference to the opinions of others. It is the duty of a minister to accommodate his discourses to the peculiar state of his audience; and doubtless cases may sometimes occur, in which he may even avail himself of the peculiar circumstances of individuals, to give effect to the truths which he delivers; but never does he appear more unworthy of his office, than when he descends in the pulpit to personal, criminating allusions. That man who ascends the sacred desk, to indulge in expressions of private resentment, or illiberal, unhallowed invective; who prepares his sermon, with a view to

lash his neighbour, or give currency to suspicion concerning him, has forgotten that he stands there as an ambassador of God, degrades the dignity of his office, and brings immeasurable guilt upon his own soul. Instead of preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified, he stands in that sacred place, to betray the honour of his Master, and provoke the pity or contempt even of worldly men.

2. The determination of the apostle, to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified, has also an important reference to *the more private duties of the ministerial office.*

It is an adage, founded on a perfectly correct estimate of the principles of human nature, that *example is of much more authority than precept.* If a preacher were to deliver the whole counsel of God from the desk, with ever so much eloquence, and yet should indulge in practices inconsistent with a Christian profession, or unbecoming the station of a gospel minister;—let his ministry be continued ever so long, he would, in all probability, leave his hearers as dead in trespasses and sins as he found them. If he urges the self-denying doctrines of the cross, and yet shews them that these doctrines have no practical influence on his own character, can he expect them to be so blind as not to discover the inconsistency? The truth is that a minister, in order to be useful *in the pulpit, must maintain an exemplary deportment out of it*; and he may usually calculate upon the importance which will be attached to his official instructions, by the dignity and correctness of his own private example. He is not only to preach Christ and him crucified in the sanctuary, but in his life. He must exhibit to the world a temper deeply imbued with the religion of Jesus. He must exemplify the loveliness and meekness of the Christian in his own character. He must not be proud, and arrogant, and assuming, and vindictive; but like his divine Master, he must be humble, and condescending, and charitable, and forgiving. It is not indeed necessary that he should always maintain a studied gravity of deportment, or

that he should decline, on all occasions, the innocent festivities of social life ; but he must never for a moment forget, at all such seasons, that he still retains his character, as an ambassador of God, as truly as when he is warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. He must bear in mind, that by giving the sanction of a smile to a vulgar and unprofitable jest, or to a single stroke of profane wit, he may do an injury to some soul greater than any finite mind can calculate ; and on the other hand, that by adhering firmly and prudently to his duty, as a minister of Christ, by maintaining Christian dignity and condescension in his intercourse with the world, and by diffusing around him the charm of a holy example, he may be instrumental in disarming the malignity of the infidel, and transforming the scoffer of the cross into a penitent, believing disciple.

The Christian minister, in all his intercourse with his people, is to be vigilant for opportunities of doing good. He may sometimes avail himself of circumstances comparatively unimportant, as a foundation for much serious and useful instruction. It will be his duty to enter the chamber of sickness, as a counsellor and friend ;—to urge the dying sinner to repentance, by the most solemn and fearful considerations ;—to commend the departing Christian to the compassion of Jesus, in affectionate, fervent prayer ;—to be a son of consolation to those who are passing through the valley of affliction, and to endeavour to make such an improvement of the providences of God, as shall have the happiest effect upon all who are concerned in them. He is also bound to encourage a spirit of Christian liberality and enterprise, and to recommend, from time to time, proper objects of charity to the patronage of his people. He is to devise plans for the promotion of the cause of Christ, whenever it is practicable ;—to engage, with alacrity, in the intellectual as well as religious improvement of the young ;—to encourage all associations, within his immediate sphere, for the relief of human misery ;—and in a word, to improve every opportunity for build-

ing up the kingdom, and advancing the glory of his master.

One of the most pleasant, and I may add, one of the most important duties of the ministerial office, is that of occasionally making parochial visits. It is by this means, especially, that a minister may expect to gain that knowledge of the peculiar circumstances of his flock, which shall enable him to adapt his public discourses in such a manner that every one shall have his portion in due season. At the same time, the instruction which he may communicate, while mingling in the domestic circle, with the affectionate freedom of a pastor, will often be remembered, while the same truths delivered from the desk might leave no durable impression. But notwithstanding the pleasures and advantages of this kind of intercourse, if we do not mistake, there is an impression prevalent on this subject, which needs to be corrected. Though every minister ought, as far as practicable, to be acquainted with the particular circumstances of all in his congregation, it will be utterly impossible, in most instances, to make *very frequent, stated* visits among them, without engrossing time which ought to be devoted to preparation for the sanctuary. Hence it is that a regard for the interests of his flock, must often prevail over his inclination to mingle in the domestic circle. Rely upon it, we do you no favour when, for the sake of visiting you in your houses, we neglect the duties of the study, and are compelled to send you away famishing from the house of God. In seasons of affliction, a faithful minister will, in all ordinary cases, be present with his people, and at other times too he will occasionally find opportunities for making pastoral visits; but these visits should never be expected or allowed to occupy time, which is demanded by the public duties of the sanctuary.

II. From this rapid view which we have now taken of the import of the apostle's determination, or the duties connected with the ministerial office, we proceed, secondly, to suggest a few considerations which ought to induce every minister, like the apostle Paul,

to know nothing among his people, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1. And in the first place, we allege the example of the apostle Paul, and other inspired preachers, as authoritative. When the apostle Peter stood up before that immense assembly, on the day of pentecost, and preached a sermon, in consequence of which, three thousand were added to the church, what was the substance of that sermon but Jesus Christ and him crucified? When Philip went down into the city of Samaria, and there was great joy in consequence of his preaching, we are informed that 'he preached Jesus unto them.' And you know how steadily the apostle Paul adhered to *his* determination, amidst all the circumstances of difficulty and trial in which he was placed. And where, brethren, shall we look for more illustrious models? From what mere men shall we expect to ascertain, more correctly, the duty of a Christian minister, than from a Philip, or a Peter, or a Paul? And yet these men, you perceive, preached Jesus Christ and him crucified;—a doctrine humbling enough to the pride of man, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

2. Another consideration by which we are urged to this duty is, that nothing but the doctrine of a crucified Saviour will answer the purpose for which we preach. It is not indeed for us to decide, that the way of salvation, revealed in the gospel, was the only possible one within the range of Infinite Intelligence: but whatever might have been possible to the Infinite mind, we are assured that there is no other name given under heaven, nor among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Christ. That minister therefore, who substitutes any other name in place of this, utterly defeats the grand object of the Christian ministry. We do not say that the man, who should merely inculcate the moral and social virtues from the pulpit, might not exert a generally favourable influence on society; and we have already remarked that these virtues are to have a place among the subjects of public instruction; but we *do* say that

the preacher who dwells upon these or any thing else, to the exclusion of the great doctrine of redemption by a crucified Saviour, has no right to expect that his preaching will be accompanied by the sanctifying influences of the Spirit. It is this fundamental truth, exhibited in its various bearings and connections, which is pre-eminently the power of God unto salvation. Like the sun in the firmament, it diffuses light through the whole system of divine truth. Blot it from the system, and its glory is departed, and all in a spiritual sense is winter, and desolation, and barrenness, and death.

But it is not only by the preaching of the cross that men are to be delivered from the bondage of sin, and saved from the miseries of the second death; but it is by the same means that we may expect to renovate the face of human society. If you will make mankind peaceable, and charitable, and forgiving, in their intercourse with one another, you must endeavour to lay the axe at the root of the tree; to dry up that fountain of bitterness, which sends its polluted streams through the whole character. The heart, upon which the process of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, has once passed, will no longer be a soil suited to the cultivation of unhallowed and malignant passions. The best way to make good husbands and wives, good parents and children, good masters and servants, good neighbours and friends, is to make good Christians. Recollect too that it is by the same means the world is to be regenerated; and one would think that evidence of it had already been exhibited, sufficient to put to flight the last^d doubt of the sceptic; for it has been gradually accumulating ever since the time when the murderers of Jesus were pricked in the heart, under Peter's preaching, and led to cry out 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' We repeat it then, that the preacher, who does not exhibit the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, leaves out of view the most glorious peculiarity of our religion, and has no right to expect

that the gospel which *he* preaches, will be accompanied by the power of God.

3. And finally, Christ and him crucified must be the burden of our preaching, because we dare preach nothing else, in view of our responsibility. A minister of the gospel is, in a most important sense, a steward of God, and you know it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. He is God's 'messenger of grace to guilty men.' He is entrusted with a message, which he is commanded to deliver. The language of Jehovah in giving him his commission is, 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked of his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.' It is not, therefore, at the pleasure of the minister, whether to preach the gospel, or substitute something else in place of it. His message is given to him, and if he fail to deliver it, in the strong language of scripture, the blood of souls will be found in his skirts. That man who goes to the house of God, from sabbath to sabbath, to amuse his congregation with theatrical airs, or unprofitable speculations, is truly in solemn circumstances; for his congregation are perishing around him, and he is himself hastening to the judgment, covered with the blood of his own people.

1. In view of the subject which we have been contemplating, our first remark is, that the gospel minister ought to be deeply affected by the solemnity of his situation. No other office, that has ever been committed to mortals, is so responsible as this;—no other so pregnant with eternal life or eternal death to the souls of men. Consequences of infinite importance, and extending through eternity, are connected with it. With what deep and solemn interest then, should the preacher address himself to his work! When he sits down to make his preparation for the

pulpit, he should remember that the eternal destiny of some soul may hang upon that sermon. When he ascends the sacred desk, he should bear in mind that if he preaches any thing else than the gospel of Christ, he is a traitor to the Son of God. When he looks over his congregation, and thinks of the judgment day, must not his bosom heave with exquisite emotions, in view of the prospect which opens before him and the people of his charge? Must he not tremble when he remembers, that the relation which exists between him and his flock, will be revealed in all its tremendous importance, and all its everlasting connections, at the bar of God? O, brethren, in view of these solemn considerations, how justly may we exclaim, in the language of an apostle, 'who is sufficient for these things?' Jesus, Master, we will confide in thy blessed promises, and repose in the merciful assurance, that thy 'grace shall be sufficient for' us!

The subject, to which our attention has now been called, has a powerful claim upon the consideration of those of us, who have devoted ourselves to Christ, in the ministry of reconciliation; and especially of our brother, who is now to be solemnly inducted into the pastoral office. In selecting for the subject of this discourse, the duties of a gospel minister, I have felt, my dear Sir, that I was occupying ground, with which you are, in many respects, more familiar than myself: and though nothing has been suggested but what may have frequently occurred to you, I have thought that it might not be unseasonable to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. This day, my brother, throws upon you a weight of responsibility which an angel might tremble to assume. If you could glance an eye onward upon the scenes of the judgment, I doubt not that you might see some of these souls who are before you, looking back upon this day which constitutes you their spiritual guardian, with an unutterable interest. Enter upon your work then, with a solemn impression, that it will be most intimately connected with the retributions of

eternity. Remember that every sermon which you preach will, in all probability, exert an influence on some soul, millions of ages after you are lodged in the grave. Let it be your settled determination that you will know nothing among this people save Jesus Christ and him crucified; and even, if by delivering the great truths of the gospel, with fidelity and pungency, you bring upon you the reproaches of ungodly men, we exhort you still to persevere;—for the master whom you serve will admit no such excuse for a neglect of your duty. He bids you be faithful, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

Receive through me, my brother, the cordial congratulations of many hearts, on your introduction to the pastoral office, under circumstances so peculiarly auspicious. If it were proper for me to mingle the private sensibilities of a friend and classmate, in the discharge of a public duty, I should tell you of my own personal joy that this Christian society has spread out her arms to receive you; and that the providence of God has so kindly conducted you into this extensive, and, in some respects, peculiarly interesting field of ministerial labour. We rejoice, especially, that the goodness of the Lord has been so distinctly visible, in the success which has already attended your labours among this people; and we hope there are many among them with whom the interest of this occasion is greatly heightened, by the reflection that, through your instrumentality, they have been begotten to a lively hope in Christ Jesus. May this token of divine love be the harbinger of a most useful and delightful ministry! And as the great Head of the Church has stationed you and me in different parts of his vineyard, it is my fervent prayer that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear that your conversation with this people is according to the gospel of Christ; and that many sons and daughters are training up under your faithful labours, who shall be your joy and crown in the day of the Lord.

2. If the office of a gospel minister involves such tremendous responsibility to those with whom it is

more immediately entrusted, it is obvious that every person, to whom the gospel is preached, is responsible for the proper improvement of it; and hence, that the re-settlement of the ministry, in any congregation, is a solemn and interesting event. If ministers are faithful, they are not answerable for the success of their preaching. If they declare the whole counsel of God plainly, affectionately, earnestly, let who will perish under their ministry, they shall be acquitted and rewarded at the judgment. While we, at the peril of our souls, must take heed how we preach, you, at the peril of yours, must take heed how you hear. They to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness will perish; and they only to whom it is the power of God will be saved. Take care then, my hearers, how you trifle with the gospel of Christ. The ministry of reconciliation was instituted for high purposes; and while it is an unspeakable privilege to enjoy it, it is more than madness to treat it with neglect. If there be a soul in this assembly that shall perish, at last, from this region of Christian privileges, then indeed thou hast a prospect before thee which may well make thee tremble. No tongue can tell what accumulated woes will burst upon thee, in thy descent through the immeasurable tract of eternity. Thou shalt not merely have thy place in the world of despair, but shalt have it amidst the fiercest flames that the breath of God's vengeance has kindled. While you are sinking in that gulf over which hangs the blackness of darkness forever, you will pass, in your downward course, the pagan sinner, the Jewish sinner, the Mahommedan sinner; and will be reminded through eternity, by the pangs of remorse, and the throbbings of despair, how much more tolerable it is for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you.

This religious society who are, in the course of providence, this day restored to the stated enjoyment of gospel privileges and ordinances, will, it is hoped, make a faithful application of this subject to their own peculiarly solemn circumstances. We rejoice with you, brethren, that the great Head of the church

has appeared for you, to repair your desolations, and give you a pastor who, we believe, will not disappoint your hopes. For several years, the billows of affliction have been beating upon you, in an almost uninterrupted succession.* You have had to struggle with the multiplied evils attendant on bereavement and vacancy. You have seen the darkness of death resting over the candlestick where a light of no common lustre had long shone. And even the elements have been commissioned to widen your desolations, by destroying the sanctuary in which you and your fathers had worshipped. We rejoice that the day *has* at length arrived, in which Israel is redeemed out of all his trouble; and that you are permitted to meet this morning, in this new and noble building, to witness the solemn consecration of a pastor to your immediate service. But while we commend the liberality and zeal which you have recently manifested, we feel constrained to admonish you, that in the settlement of a minister, you have only entered upon your duty. We trust that your zeal for the promotion of religion will not be exhausted in the auspicious events of this day; and that while this interesting era will be recorded in your most grateful recollections, it will be associated with innumerable blessings to yourselves, and your children, and your

* In September, 1815, the meeting house, belonging to the congregational society in Plainfield, was blown over and destroyed in a violent storm. In February following, the Rev. Doctor Benedict, their greatly respected and venerated pastor, was removed from his labours by death. From this period, religion began rapidly to decline among them, unhappy divisions existed in the society, and there were few who seemed disposed to mourn over the desolations of Zion. Even after they had succeeded in rebuilding their church, the interest of religion continued to be greatly depressed, until their present pastor went among them to preach as a candidate. The blessing of God seemed to attend his first labours, and the happy result was, that within a few weeks, he received an unanimous invitation to become their minister, and a general attention was excited, throughout the congregation, to the things of religion. The recollection of these peculiar dispensations of providence towards the society, rendered the solemnities of the installation unusually joyful and interesting.

children's children, to the latest posterity. When your minister reads, in the record of eternal truth, that to some he is 'a savour of death unto death,' you cannot be surprised to find him inquiring, with inexpressible solicitude, in what manner his preaching is to be received by you. Come not to the sanctuary, I entreat you, from sabbath to sabbath, to indulge a vain and wandering curiosity. Come not to bury your faculties in sluggish repose; or to spend an idle hour in mocking God with a hypocritical service. Come not to profane this sacred place with unhallowed or indecent levity; to criticise and cavil instead of receiving the truth in the love of it, or to put on the externals of a worshipper, with the heart of a formalist. Come not with all the avenues of your soul closed against the influence of the Spirit of grace. Come rather prepared to welcome and cherish his divine agency; to admit him into your bosoms as a constant resident; and to invite him to establish in each of your hearts, his divine kingdom. If you are bending under a burden of guilt, and trembling under the impressions of divine wrath, this is the place where you may hope that God will reveal himself to you in the condescending majesty of a Redeemer. If the light of his countenance is withdrawn, and days of spiritual darkness come upon you, here you may hope for a return of your Father's smiles. If death should enter your dwellings, and sunder some cord which is entwined with the fibres of your heart, here you may hope that the Being, who fills the place with his presence, will reveal himself to you, as the God of all consolation. I beseech you therefore, brethren, to take heed with what spirit ye attend upon the preaching of the word; and how delightful is the thought that the angels, who may be occasionally commissioned to visit your assembly on errands of mercy, when they return to their seats of bliss, may carry up with them the blessed intelligence, that the word here dispensed has been to many among you, a savour of life unto life!

On the eminence upon which this day's solemn-

ties have placed you, it is not strange that your minds should impatiently hurry along through an uncertain futurity, to explore the progress of this ministry. In the midst of all the joyful expectations which this occasion excites, remember that you know not what may be written, concerning you, in the book of the divine counsels, or how soon you may find a mournful counterpart to the solemnities of this day. While we fervently pray that your brightest prospects may be realized, we must not forget to remind you of the instability of human hopes ; and that, possibly before the revolution of a single year, the sable covering, that may hang around this desk, may announce to the stranger, who comes into your sanctuary, that your minister was arrested at the threshold of his career, and has gone to render in his final account. But should the event be otherwise, as we earnestly hope, and should his ministry be continued for a long course of years, in how many interesting scenes will you and your pastor mutually share ! Some of you he will visit in chambers of sickness, and perhaps commend your departing spirits into the arms of your Redeemer. Others he will accompany into the field of graves, and endeavour to lead your minds to the consolations of the gospel. Some of you, we would fondly hope, he may direct into the path of life, and hear you begin to celebrate the immortal song. But in a little while, at longest, this connection will be dissolved. Every individual, in this society, will lie beneath the clods of the valley. The green grass will wave around your graves ; the winds of winter will sweep through your fields ; the sun will continue, by his cheering influence, to warm and animate unnumbered millions ; but these bodies will inhabit a world of desolation, and will be known only among the slumbering nations of the dead. This sanctuary, we trust, will be filled with worshippers ; but instead of the fathers will be the children. Still the consequences of this ministry are not fully developed ; for these inhabitants of the grave shall come forth, and the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be

opened, and some of you will be found on the right hand, and some of you will be found on the left hand, as you shall have improved or neglected this ministry. Yes, hearers, when the world is on fire, and the judge is descending, and death and hell are giving up their dead, ye shall think of the solemnities of this occasion, with an overwhelming interest. O God, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, save this people and their minister from being witnesses to each other's unfaithfulness, in the final day. May they, through his instrumentality, be guided to eternal life; and may he, as a reward for his having turned many to righteousness, shine as a star in the firmament of God, forever and ever!

THE CHARGE,

BY

REV. MOSES C. WELCH, D. D.

AS God hath established a church in the world, so he hath, also, established the order, ministration, instruction, and discipline of his house. The mode of induction to office, and the authority committed to his ministering servants, are from the LORD.

That church, which was established in the family of Abraham, and confirmed under a new dispensation, was taught by Christ in his own person. What animated scenes opened to view, when this divine Teacher from heaven, for three years and a half, instructed the ignorant, comforted the distressed, renewed and sanctified the wicked, and did many wonderful works in Judea? The work was prosecuted by the apostles, who were commissioned to carry on what Jesus had so happily begun. How astonishing the effect, and how greatly was the church enlarged by the preaching of these men, on the day of pentecost? The cause of God continued to progress, through the instrumentality of the once persecuting Saul of Tarsus, miraculously converted, and sent forth to testify the gospel of the grace of God, not only in Judea, but throughout Asia, Africa, and some of the most noted places in Europe. By the divine blessing on his labours, God caused his church to spread over all the provinces of the widely extended Roman empire. Through the fidelity and grace of God, the church has continued to the present era. A branch of it here, from many trials, is now emerging from the cloud, and witnessing the power and grace of God.

You, my dear brother, are this day constituted a Bishop in this part of the kingdom of God. To you

is committed the pastoral care of this church and people—a treasure more valuable than rubies—more precious than all the goods of this world. For these souls you are to watch, as one that must give an account to the Lord of the vineyard. What better counsel, then, exhortation, and charge can we give than that you imitate Christ, and his holy apostles? Imitate them in their preaching—in their conversation—in their fidelity—in their spirit of prayer. We counsel—we exhort—we charge you, *O man of God!* that you know nothing among this people save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Set examples of meekness, piety, love to Christ, and the souls of men. Be sound in the faith. Preach the word—the word of God, and not of man.

The Book I hold in my hand was given by inspiration of God. It contains a revelation, from the fountain of all truth, of those things which sinners must know that they may be saved. This Book, dear sir, I commit to you, with a charge, in the name of its divine Author, that you make it the man of your counsel—the subject of your prayerful meditation, and your guide in preaching. Unfold its sublime doctrines—enforce its holy precepts—lay open its awful and tremendous threatenings, and tenderly apply its consoling and blessed promises. Preach the whole gospel. Proclaim Jesus Christ in the wonders of his person, the glory of his perfections, and the infinite excellency of his character. Preach those doctrines which place God on the throne, and all creatures in his hand, as the clay in the hands of the potter—which stain the pride of human glory, and lay man at the foot of the cross. Keep back nothing that may honour God, and promote the good of souls.

You will find it necessary to be diligent—to be laborious—to be instant in season, and out of season. You are to instruct the ignorant, alarm the stupid, and guide the trembling inquirer to Christ. Baptize the believer and *all his* into the kingdom of Christ.

Like Peter and your predecessors in the ministry, feed the sheep, and feed the lambs of the flock.

Attend carefully to the discipline of the church. See that the laws of Christ's house are honoured and executed. While the humble and repenting offender is forgiven, and restored to the bosom of the church ; let the hardened and obstinate transgressor be cast out, and treated as *an heathen man, and a publican*.

Your work is arduous—it is infinitely momentous. Your dependence for success in your labours must be on the power of God the Father—on the infinitely meritorious blood of God the Son ; and on the influences of God the Holy Ghost. Yes—on the special grace of the sacred **THREE IN ONE**, must be all your dependence for success. Be, therefore, a man of prayer. Engage the presence, and the divine assistance of Him who has called you to office, and who sends you into the vineyard. If He go with you, the work will be pleasant ; success will attend your labours, and you will be a rich blessing to souls.

Be a man of study. Give thyself to reading, meditation and prayer, that thy profiting may appear to all. We expect you will unfold the mysteries of redemption, and guide souls to Christ, when some of us shall sleep with our fathers. With some, the day is far spent, and the night is at hand. The shadows of the evening are stretched out. Even the person who is the organ of communicating this solemn charge, when a few more days have rolled away, will see you no more. Pleased and rejoiced that one is settled here with so good prospects to himself, and this beloved flock, permit me to say, that although we must decrease, we hope you will increase—that you will grow in every ministerial grace, and qualification—that you will, like the rising sun in a fair morning, shine brighter and brighter ; and, like that splendid luminary, that enlightens and then warms the earth by his life-giving rays, be an instrument of enlightening the minds of your hearers, and of communicating the beams of divine love to their souls.

Keep this charge, thou man of God, and thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. And now, *dear brother*, we commit and commend you to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. May the Lord render your way prosperous. May you gather many into the sheepfold of Christ; and when He shall gather together all his jewels, may you meet a goodly number, as your crown of rejoicing, who have been brought to his standard, through your instrumentality; and with them be introduced to the unutterable and eternal joys of the heavens, in a *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

THE RIGHT HAND
OF
FELLOWSHIP,

BY
REV. ASA MEECH,
Pastor of the First Church of Christ in Canterbury

“WHEN James, Cephas, and John perceived the grace which was given to Paul and Barnabas, they gave unto them the Right hand of Fellowship.” This Right hand, therefore, is to be given to those who are called, by the grace of God, to take part with the ambassadors of Jesus, in the ministry of reconciliation.

Resembling the sacred Trinity in Unity, they are one in character, one in principle, and one in the grand object of their pursuit. The greatest possible sum of happiness is the ultimate end of Deity in all his works. For this sublime object, “he reared the pillars of the Universe; gave birth to the material and intellectual worlds;” created angels and men, with rational and moral powers, capable of endless

progression in knowledge and happiness. For *this*, he formed the plan, and will finish the glorious work of Redemption. For *this*, Christians pray, and imitate Jesus. And *this* is the supreme end of all his faithful ministers. They rejoice in the happiness of God, and in the happiness of rational creatures, and desire its extension to the highest possible degree. Their qualifications, credentials, and happiness, they derive from the same glorious love and mercy of their Redeemer. They experience the same elevation of mind, in the reception of the same harmonious principle of benevolence. They supremely love their *divine* Lord ; they love one another. They rejoice in the prosperity of Zion, and cheerfully make every exertion, and meet every privation and hazard, which promise to promote its advancement.

Reverend and dear sir, we joyfully admit your claim to this exalted standing. We trust our hearts, and the supreme object of our pursuit, are one. In the name, and by the appointment of this ecclesiastical council, I do, therefore, most cordially give you the Right hand. By this expressive and friendly ceremony, we acknowledge your regular introduction to the sacred ministry, and your equality with us, in all the authority, rights, and privileges of this holy office. And we promise you, by this pledge, all the friendship, counsel, and aid, in our power, so long as you sustain the character, and regular standing of a Christian minister. And from you, sir, we expect the due reciprocation of love and fidelity.

My brother, you are now set for the defence of the gospel, in this important outpost of our connexion. And we rejoice in that gracious visit of the Holy Spirit, which hath drawn your heart to this people, and perfected their union ; and which clothes your settlement, this day, with such interesting prospects. We wish you a double share of the wisdom and grace of your venerable predecessor. His name is worthy to stand engraven on these sacred walls ; and will long be revered by those who enjoyed his ministrations. And may you live to see the glory of this latter

house far exceed that of the former. We wish you the continued presence of the Almighty Saviour, and *much success* in preaching the unsearchable riches of his gospel. Notwithstanding the brightness of present prospects, you doubtless expect, that, in the course of your ministry, some will oppose and reject your messages of mercy, and that others will treat them with an astonishing and criminal indifference. In a clear apprehension of the greatness of your work, and of the difficulties you may be called to encounter, is your heart, my brother, ready to utter this fearful exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Permit me, then, to whisper, to your trembling heart, these precious words of the Lord Jesus, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Let such gracious promises animate and encourage you, to the most vigorous exertions in the cause of Zion. For, surely, the grace of the *Lord Jesus* is sufficient for thee. In his mighty hand we leave you; with the earnest supplication, that his blessing may rest upon you; that your ministry may be *long, useful, and happy*; and that when the present life shall close, you may rejoice in all the fulness of Him who holds the stars in his right hand, for ever and ever.

While we mingle our congratulations with you, sir, and with this church and people, on witnessing the solemnities of your sacred connexion, under such harmonious and promising circumstances, we can but ardently desire that your happy union may long continue, and even outlive all the vicissitudes of this mutable state.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirt of his garment. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever more."

THE CHARGE,

TO THE

PEOPLE,

BY THE

REV. ERASTUS LEARNED,

Pastor of the Church in Westminster Society, Canterbury.

Beloved Brethren, and friends of this Church and Society—

WITH a deep and awful solemnity, have we witnessed the interesting transactions of this day. You have received, this day, a great ascension gift, from him, who is head over all things to the church, and on this event the most important consequences depend, which will be realized through eternity. He, who is set over you in the Lord, will prove either a savour of life, or a savour of death to your souls. Your pastor has received a solemn charge to be faithful in the duties of his office, as a minister of Christ, and as one who must give an account. He *must be* faithful, or the blood of perishing souls will be required at his hand. While he is thus situated, standing as a responsible watchman on these walls of Zion, you, my orethren and friends, have important duties to fulfil, in your relation to God, to your pastor, to each other, and to yourselves. To some of these duties, permit me to call your attention, and, as an organ of this council, to charge you to observe them in the fear of the Lord. Acknowledge, then, with humble gratitude, the goodness and mercy of God in making such a wise and benevolent provision for directing sinners to the way of life, and for the quickening and edification of his people. To effect these purposes of his love and grace, he has appointed the ministry of reconciliation. He is sending forth evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ

He has remembered you in your troubles ; has blessed your exertions in erecting a house to his name ; has visited you with the spirit of his grace ; and is this day giving you a pastor, we trust, after his own heart. Let these things excite the lively gratitude of your souls, and lead you to place your confidence and trust in him alone, who hath said to his people, " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Receive your minister as a messenger of the Lord of hosts. He comes to you as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. He comes with a message of love and mercy. He comes to feed the sheep and the lambs of Jesus, and to beseech sinners to become reconciled to God. We charge you, therefore, to receive his message, to submit to the king of Zion, by exercising repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake, for he doeth the work of the Lord.

Remember, brethren, that the Lord hath ordained that they who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel, and the labourer is worthy of his hire. Let not your minister be embarrassed with the cares of this world, by your neglect. As he has become your servant for Jesus' sake, he is entitled to a decent and honourable support. Forget not to administer to his wants in seasons of sickness, seasons in which he will most need your support and kindness. How trying, how discouraging must it be to a minister, to be treated with neglect or indifference by a people, when his health is lost or impaired in their service ! Such things ought not to be. Encourage your minister in his work. This you may do by your kindness, your co-operation, and your prayers. Reverence the holy Sabbath and its institutions ; and attend to its appropriate duties. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. Let your attendance on divine worship be seasonable and constant ; and leave not your minister, at any time, to speak to the walls of the sanctuary. Nothing can be more discouraging to a minister of the gospel, than to find, when he enters the house of worship, only

here and there one disposed to attend upon his ministrations. While he possesses the feelings of a man, it must damp his ardor, and enfeeble his exertions. When strangers intrude into your borders, with the cry, "Lo, here is Christ, or lo there," go not after them, is the direction of the SON OF GOD. The manner in which they come evinces their object. They come to divide, to scatter, and to destroy the flock. Receiving or following them is attended with many evil consequences, besides being in direct opposition to the commands of the Saviour. Remember the disappointment and trouble of Micah, who forsook the instituted worship of God, and received a straggling levite for his priest. We charge you, therefore, in the language of an inspired apostle. "Mark them, which cause divisions among you, and avoid them." Let your eyes often behold *your* teacher, and by diligently attending on his instructions, strengthen his hands and encourage his heart. We charge you also, brethren and friends, to take heed *how* you hear. Come to the house of worship with a desire to learn and to do the will of God. Listen with candour to the instructions given you, and receive the word of truth into good and honest hearts. Hear with self-application, that you may abound in fruit, and not receive the grace of God in vain. Co-operate with your pastor in maintaining the discipline of Christ's house. The most wise and benevolent rules are given, by our divine Lord, for promoting the purity, the order, and the peace of the church. However desirous your pastor may be to promote these objects, yet you must be sensible, my brethren, that he cannot succeed, without your cheerful and united co-operation.— Though, after all your exertions, tares will be growing with the wheat until the harvest; yet, a prudent and faithful attention to discipline will promote the honour of religion, and the benevolent designs of the gospel. Where Christian discipline is neglected, the cause of the Redeemer languishes, and the enemies of religion triumph; but where it is faithfully maintained, agreeably to the spirit of the gospel, Zion will

arise and shine forth in her beauty as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Be active, then, brethren, in attending to this part of your duty. Brethren, pray for us, was a direction of an inspired apostle of our Lord. If men of such endowments and privileges needed the prayers of their brethren, how much more do those who are called to the ministry since miracles and inspiration have ceased? Pray, then, for your pastor. Remember him in your supplications, in the closet, in the family, and in your social meetings for prayer. Pray that he may have utterance to dispense divine truth with boldness and fidelity; and that a blessing may attend his labours, that whether he plant or water, the Lord may give an abundant increase. Brethren, do not expect too much from your minister, nor be disposed to censure him with severity for the common imperfections of human nature. Remember that he is a man of like passions with yourselves. He has a right to rely on your candour and charity. Do not disappoint his reasonable expectations. Let him live among you without fear, having confidence in you all. Remember the duties which you owe to each other as brethren. Endeavour to promote each other's edification and salvation. Love one another as Christ has loved you. Ever act under the influence of that wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Avoid every thing that may cause strifes and divisions among you; walking together with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. For behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Forget not, brethren, the duties you owe to your children and households. Train up those committed to your care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Teach them, both by precept and example, to remember God's holy Sab-

bath. Let them not spend that sacred day in amusement or sloth. See that they accompany you to the house of God. Impress on their minds, at home, the solemn and interesting truths they have heard dispensed in public. Talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Pray for the blessing of God to rest upon them; so shall a generation rise up which shall call you blessed, even a generation to serve the Lord.

Finally, brethren, we charge you to remember, that every one of you must give an account of himself to God. Time is short, and behold, the judge standeth at the door. Be prepared then, for the coming of the day of God. For the day is hastening in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness! All these things shall be dissolved. Not only all *material* things, but all connexions and relations, subsisting in this state of trial, shall be dissolved. The very happy and interesting connexion, formed this day between you and your beloved pastor, must be dissolved. He must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of his ministry, where you must also stand to give an account how you have heard and improved. We charge you, then, to improve the day of your visitation, and prepare to meet your God. Brethren, farewell.

24 JUN 68