

SERMON AND CHARGES

DELIVERED AT THE INSTALLATION

OF THE

REV. GEORGE L. PRENTISS,

AS ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY.

NOVEMBER 6th, 1850.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE TRUSTEES AND SESSION
OF THE CHURCH.

NEW-YORK:

M. W. DODD, PUBLISHER.

Brick Church Chapel.

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*Rev. J. Leavitt
with the love of J. F. S.*

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SERMON.

BY JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWARK,

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

“This is a true saying, ‘If a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work.’”—1 TIMOTHY iii. 1.

It is impossible to work with advantage, unless we love and honor our profession. Many of the occupations in which men engage are not worthy to be honored ; for they are vastly disproportionate to the capacities and obligations of immortal beings ; and even among those who are engaged in pursuits of the highest excellence, not a few seem either unconscious of their privilege, or to have a disrelish for the duties it involves. In such circumstances, no man can throw his whole soul into his work, nor feel toward it that generous enthusiasm through which alone true success can be grasped.

The Apostle, in our text, brings to view a department of service, for whose worthiness he is prepared to vouch with all confidence. It is the office of a Christian Bishop. He that desires this, he declares, desires a good work.

A bishop, in the New Testament use of the term, is simply a Christian minister,—a pastor,—one who has the immediate oversight of a Christian congregation. This observation deserves notice, because the word, as now used, has come to mean a very different thing from what it meant in the earliest and most uncorrupted age of the Church. Now it is used to denote an office of dignity or rank, indicating superiority

over others in the same profession ; and instead of desiring it, every modest man who believes it authorized, would at least wait for others to say, “go up higher,” or, perhaps, with many of the noblest of the class in ancient times, with whom the phrase “Nolo episcopari,” I do not wish to be made a bishop, became familiar, hide himself from the distinction, and desire an humbler rank. However that may be, it is acknowledged, I believe, on every side, that the word, as used in the New Testament, points to no office of distinction in the Christian ministry.

The Apostle asserts in our text, that he who desires for himself this office or profession, desires a *good work* ;—good, not only in the sense of useful, virtuous, commendable, but in the higher and more comprehensive sense of noble, honorable, worthy of all admiration. Without disparaging any other lawful calling, by which a contribution is made to the order and prosperity of society, or the safety, comfort, and improvement of individuals, at least when those callings are made subservient, as all ought to be, to the highest ends of man’s existence, here is one concerning which we need have no misgivings :—the office of a Christian minister, in its legitimate sphere, and using its legitimate means, is an office of the highest excellence. If a man is but fit for it, and the providence of God opens the way for his engagement in it, he has nothing to do but to throw his whole soul into the work and go forward. However eminent his talents, however profound or extensive his attainments, here is a worthy field for the employment of them all.

To illustrate and enforce this sentiment, whose adaptation to the present occasion is too obvious to require a passing remark, I would invite your attention to the sacred office in three particulars, namely, its sphere, its means and methods, and its results.

I. The proper *sphere* of the Christian ministry needs to be carefully distinguished.

It is not secular. Men may say what they will of the in-

timacy of the relations between religion and all secular affairs ; but sure it is that ministers of the gospel cannot be much occupied in the management of those affairs, without degrading their office, and sacrificing some of the best elements of its power. In the affairs of states, it has been deemed wise to put a wide line of separation between the purse and the sword, lodging them in different hands. So in the affairs of the Church, there should be as wide a barrier between the purse and the book,—the management of pecuniary and secular interests, and the inculcating of the word and doctrine of the gospel. The apostles acted wisely, and deserved to be imitated, when they declined being made the keepers and distributors of the Church's funds, and required the people to appoint, from their own ranks, a distinct class of men for this purpose, saying, “ It is not meet that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.” I have never known the pastor of a church extensively engaged in managing its temporalities, excepting, of course, those peculiar exigencies which can be subject to no ordinary rules, without being thereby diverted from his high functions, and injured in respect to the sanctity of his character and influence.

It has been questioned how far political interests may properly engage the attention of Christian ministers. Doubtless there are certain great fundamental principles of Christian action, which, in their aspect on the policy of nations, no less than on the duty of individuals, are a legitimate theme for the pulpit ; and if the pulpit confines itself to these, showing their bearing on the duty of all parties towards their common country, it performs a good service. But coming down to the details of party politics, it ventures upon ground always perilous, and of very questionable utility and propriety. Not that the minister of the gospel is forbidden to take an interest and a part in the affairs of his country. In becoming a minister, he ceases not to be a citizen and a man ; and in his private capacity as a citizen, an educated citizen, a man, a thinking and intelligent man, it were a shame for him to have

less knowledge or feeling on these subjects than his fellow citizens, and an act of manifest unfaithfulness, to neglect to give his vote and use his influence. What I mean to say is, that in his official capacity as a gospel minister, he has nothing to do with these matters. When the pulpit condescends to become a mere stage for political harangues, I do not blame the intelligent citizen for deserting it as a prostituted pulpit. When the minister avails himself of his high station and commanding influence, to attempt to affect public opinion on questions of civil policy not determined except by some remote inference, in the charter of the Christian faith, I do not blame the people for withdrawing their confidence from him as a spiritual guide. This topic deserves special notice at the present day, because we are so often called upon in the name of Christian philanthropy to "cry aloud and spare not," on points on which we have no more right to teach than any of our fellow-worshipers. We are set for the defence of the gospel, not to determine how or when slavery may best be removed, or the conflicting interests of different sections of the country adjusted. Politicians may be glad to *use* us for their own purposes, but if we condescend to them, who can wonder if they throw us aside as a worn-out tool when they have done? In the name of all that is sacred, I call upon my brethren to beware how they suffer their holy calling to be thus desecrated.

The subject of education, social and intellectual culture, reformation of morals, and the promotion of public and individual virtue, is by no means foreign to the sacred office; yet, even these, important as they are, are not its radical and most characteristic pursuits. Education has a very obvious relation to Christian culture. It is an almost indispensable prerequisite to the introduction of Christian truth to the hearts of men. Hence the fact is obvious, that among all classes of men, none have done so much, all the world over, to promote schools, colleges, and all other institutions of learning,—all branches of literature, science, and philosophy,—as

the clergy. As to reformation of morals, they have stood foremost ; and wherever that reformation has been attempted on Christian principles, in whatever hands, it has not failed to receive their countenance and co-operation. Infidel reforms the Christian ministry repudiates ; fanatical reforms—tearing down, for the sake of mending, institutions which Christianity has had the chief agency in erecting—it dares not favor. But all truly Christian reforms rely upon its aid ; and where reforms have ventured to repudiate its co-operation, they have ever proved like the gourd of Jonah, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And yet, even these, we still insist, are only subordinate. Reformation of morals, cultivation of the social sentiments, education of the intellect, all lie, as it were, upon the surface. They do not reach to those deep springs of character, out of which all moral beauty and all spiritual excellence well forth. It is only as Christian products or as Christian instruments, that the attention of the pulpit is legitimately directed to them.

The proper sphere of the sacred office is strictly spiritual. It deals primarily, not with the outer but the inner man,—not with temporal interests, but those which reach forward to eternity, and belong to man's relations to God.

Foremost among its duties is the *care of souls*. It is its aim, according to the words of an apostle, to “present every man” within the circuit of its charge “perfect in Christ Jesus,” that is, to make them all true Christians, by implanting in them, through the power of God's Spirit, the principle of spiritual life imparted in Christ, and to make them complete and perfect Christians, by developing that inward principle in all parts and departments of the character. In this consists its elementary and perhaps most characteristic service. We do not deny the utility of a class of men, managing the more general enterprises of Christianity, and presiding over its collateral and subsidiary institutions. All honor to the faithful and laborious secretaries, the learned presidents and professors, the gifted authors, and the eagle-

eyed, ever-alert editors, who, repudiating the bitterness and misrepresentation with which the press, even the Christian press, is so sadly contaminated, present fairly and fraternally to the public view the state and progress of affairs, and the wants of the times. We could hardly dispense with any of them, especially in this age of enlarged Christian enterprise. But their office differs from that of the Christian bishop in one of its most fundamental and characteristic features. Their service to the Church is exterior; he moulds the very elements of which the body itself is constituted. Their services are general and indirect; he deals with souls in their immediate relations to God.

But the care of individual souls includes within itself another and more general care, namely, that of the Church. It is not as isolated individuals that our Lord expects his followers to serve him. He will have them gathered into companies, and each particular star shine in its place among sister stars, who shall together make up a beautiful constellation. The Christian minister is appointed to preside over the only strictly Christian organization,—that is, the only one instituted by Christ himself,—to gather into it all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; to conduct its discipline, superintend the various departments of its service, lead in the counsels of its officers, defend it, strengthen it, beautify it, and present it to his Divine Master a perfect and resplendent whole.

Nor is his care limited to the church under his own special charge. Each church is but a part of a still vaster unity, and the fellowship of the churches is as truly a part of their life as their internal purity and activity. His own branch of the spreading vine must be kept in living communication with its sister branches, and the vessels through which the vital sap circulates to it from all others, and from it to all others, are to be kept open, and in a sound and operative condition. Tell me not that the pastor of a village church has nothing to do with the Church's general policy,—the management of her

benevolent associations, the heresies and disorders that may be creeping in, or the character of her theological seminaries. Tell me not that he is quitting his post, and leaving his few sheep in the wilderness, when he goes abroad to attend meetings of presbytery or synod, anniversaries or committees of religious charity, or conventions on the general interests of the Church. As a constituent part of a grand unity, each pastor's private charge, however humble, has an interest to be cared for in all the interests of the Church Universal; and as the spiritual guardian of his own flock, and for their sakes, he is bound to superintend their external relations no less than their internal condition, and with them take a part in all Christian enterprises, throughout the entire domain given to Christ for his possession.

To sum the whole, it is the province of a Christian bishop to build up Christ's kingdom in the hearts of men; first within the limits of his own special flock, and then with and through them, in co-operation with the entire Church, to the remotest bounds of the world. Christ is mustering on the earth a vast spiritual army; and he has appointed each pastor to prepare a particular company, have them well equipped and well disciplined, know their places in the general ranks, and be ready at his call to come forth and be joined to the sacramental host. If he may but present to his Divine Master such a band, comprising among its members all the souls given him in charge, all sanctified all clad in the complete panoply of grace, and co-operating zealously and harmoniously with the rest, according to the full measure of their power, to the great ends of the Master's kingdom, he has discharged his commission as a Christian pastor. All that tends to promote this result, and so far as it tends to promote it, belongs legitimately to his sphere of service. All else is foreign to it.

II. We proceed, then, to consider, in the second place, the *means* and *methods* by which the objects of this office are to be pursued.

As the work itself is spiritual, so are the methods and the

means. An apostle has said, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty *through God*." Human strength and skill are totally inadequate to accomplish a single spiritual object. The means to be used, therefore, must be such, and such only, as God's Spirit delights to render effectual.

Some have leaned upon power and patronage, and brought to their aid the resources of governments. These, however, are a very questionable favor. True it is, and we may hope eventually to see it realized, there is a way in which kings may become nursing fathers of the Church, and queens nursing mothers; but not, as we have reason to believe, in any of those ways in which courts and governments are now disposed to lend their assistance. All we ask of them now is protection, the same which is enjoyed by all honest and law-abiding citizens in their lawful enterprises, while we pursue in our own way our spiritual objects.

Some have aimed to reach moral and religious results through the medium of popular combinations. Associations, connected and affiliated, acting on each other, and pledged to the support of each other; conventions, establishing rules of life by votes, and endeavoring to overcome or influence by the force of numbers; a public sentiment, formed by playing upon the prejudices of men in large masses, and designed to compel acquiescence or co-operation on the part of those who might otherwise be disposed to think and act for themselves, have at times not only been resorted to, but systematically defended, as among the most efficient means of enforcing gospel principles.

Some have aimed at producing popular excitements, in hopes that in the general confusion sinful hearts might hear and follow the still small voice of the Spirit; and when, in the mere heat of stimulated passion, the cry has been raised for the moment, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" they have boasted of the delusive stir as a great Christian achievement, and numbered converts by the hundred, who to-morrow will be heard scoffing with as loud and impudent

a tone as to-day they are confessing sin, and boasting of its supposed forgiveness. The ministers of Christ should take warning, if not from reason, at least from the results of those experiments from which the Church is now suffering in every fibre of her body. Who are those who have given their Christian friends so much sorrow—who have gone back to the world, or gone off into those institutions of Satan which claim to be the very consummation of Christianity? Who but those who either owed their own conversion to artificial excitements, or have had their minds thoroughly steeped in them, in their efforts for the conversion of others.

The grand weapon in the Christian minister's armory is revealed truth—truth clearly explained, faithfully inculcated, and forcibly urged upon the hearts and consciences of men. The true conviction, the true turning of the will, the only safe and healthful excitement, is that which is produced by sound religious knowledge—by the truth of God fairly and intelligently contemplated.

To use this weapon, the minister of the gospel needs to be a thorough biblical scholar, well read in the original languages and historical illustrations of the sacred text, able to resolve difficult questions, and unfold recondite meanings, skilled in the ready use of scriptural argument, and able to lead others over the broad and rich fields where priceless pearls abound.

He must be acquainted with the *principles* of revealed truth in their systematic form and relations. Allow me to say a few words, in this connection, on the importance of *thorough doctrinal knowledge*. In this day of activity and enterprise, notwithstanding all that our education societies have attempted, and our colleges and seminaries performed, there exists, as we have reason to fear, a less perfect knowledge of the great fundamental principles of the faith we preach, in their systematic order, their nice distinctions from error, their historical developments, and even their biblical proofs and defences, than in many former and less favored

periods. The crude manner in which some even who stand high in the Church state and defend their professed principles, the unconscious ease with which they slide into positions long since tested and found utterly untenable, the continual reviving of old heresies on the part of those who verily believe themselves pre-eminently orthodox, is saddening to every lover of sound doctrine, and betokens sad results for the coming generation. Every day we see opinions advanced on the subject of the Holy Trinity, the incarnation, the depravity of human nature, the atonement, and the work of the Spirit, which stand exposed to the most easy assault from the well informed advocate of error ; and by attacking which with weapons forged to his hand in the armory of ancient heretics, such adversary might gain the readiest victory. To feed the flock committed to our charge with true knowledge, the principles of our faith, with their defences and limitations, must be familiar to us, and we must cease to deride as trivial, or reject as causing needless jealousies, the terms and distinctions by which truth is separated from its counterfeits.

Nor is secular learning to be neglected, since it forms an indispensable subsidiary in the inculcation and defence of Christian truth. The learned need the gospel no less than the ignorant ; but how shall ignorant teachers skillfully apply it to their wants ? Besides, religion is liable to be assailed from the strongholds of secular science ; and how shall its defence be successfully conducted, unless the structure of those strongholds, with all the subtle artifices which they contain, is understood ? If we would not allow the whole class of cultivated minds to break away from the influence of the pulpit and the sanctuary, and go over to cold infidelity or indifference, the ministry, set for the defence of the faith, must be themselves cultivated minds, and be able to appreciate truth and error, as they appear to such minds from their own point of view. Nay, if we would raise a reliable barrier between the simple hearts of the uneducated and the cunning sophistries by which learned unbelievers seek to undermine

their faith, we must be able to face the skeptic with his own weapons, science with science, learning with learning, philosophy with deeper and truer philosophy.

The end of all, however, is the successful inculcation and impression of the simple truths which lie at the foundation, and contain the true spirit of the gospel. To inculcate truth,—God's revealed truth,—to make men's minds familiar with it, understand it as far as it is a subject for the understanding,—know its proofs, intelligently accept and embrace it, and feel its force on their own consciences and hearts,—this is the grand means on which the Christian minister must rely. This is God's own appointed means,—his chosen instrument for the conversion of sinners, and the building up and perfecting the Church,—the sword of the Spirit.

Let us see now what facilities the ministry possesses, in its own legitimate methods for the successful employment of these means. They are, first, the pulpit ; second, private and personal instruction ; third, the influence of the church.

In the service of the pulpit we have a method of inculcating religious truth, peculiarly Christian and pre-eminently effective. Every Sabbath the great congregation meet together, for the express purpose of receiving instruction, and spend two, three, and perhaps four hours, with convenient intervals, subject to all the influences which the pulpit is able to exert. How many great Christian ideas and sentiments may, on such occasions, be made familiar to the minds of the people. The world, by common consent, is excluded from the sacred precincts. Conversation is hushed. The soothing influence of sacred music aids in calling home thoughts that would wander. Exercises of devotion predispose the mind for receiving just the kind of instruction which it is the object of the preacher to communicate. What would not the politician give for a few such opportunities ! In political excitements, he can muster in some hall or public house a few scores or hundreds of men ; perhaps for once or twice, if he is specially gifted, and the excitement runs high, a large concourse. But

here, the old and the young, men and women,—the entire community, I may almost say, are brought together, week after week, in their several churches, as a matter of settled custom ; pledged at least to remain through the hour, and listen to whatever teachings the preacher may see fit to present. “Is it strange,” said an avowed infidel, “that we cannot overthrow Christianity, when we let its ministers get us together every week, and lecture us upon it?” Nay, it is not strange. The wonder is, that with such powerful facilities, we ministers of Christ do not strive to do more for our blessed Master. The pulpit, in the hands of men well prepared and full of faith and zeal, is one of the most powerful engines ever devised for moulding human character and opinions. It is, as good George Herbert, says, the Christian preacher’s joy and his throne. Blind or reckless of his high trust is that minister who neglects to use it, or does not put forth all his strength in and through it for the holiest ends.

But the pulpit does not stand alone among the peculiar facilities appropriate to this office. We deal, as I have said, with individual souls, and it is our privilege to deal with them separately as well as in masses. What is sometimes designated as the department of *pastoral care*—the specific watch which a pastor is expected to exercise over the individual members of his flock, affords advantages of no ordinary value. He is admitted, as no other man is, to the domestic privacy of all classes. His it is to gather the little children round him, and pre-occupy their tender minds with Christian principles and sentiments. His it is to visit the chamber of sickness and the bedside of the dying, the house of mourning and the scene of disappointment and anxiety, there to address minds rendered specially susceptible by the force of circumstances, and not willing only, but desirous—claiming the service as a special right—that he should try upon their suffering hearts the power of the blessed gospel he defends. The successful use of these facilities demands, I know, peculiar qualifications. I have said that the Christian minister should

be, if possible, a learned man—learned, especially, in the science of divinity, and in all the lore of the sacred scriptures. But a mere man of study, however profound, is not fit to discharge well these highly practical duties. The Christian minister needs a heart finely attuned to the holiest sympathies and imbued with the most delicate social sentiments. He needs a deep insight into the human character, the human intellect and heart, in all their phases and developments. If he is ignorant of the world, of human life, of the heart of man, the religious heart; if, especially, he possesses not a large share of true Christian experience, he is unfit to meet the wants of his flock, and enter into the effectual doors which this department of his official work is continually opening.

If now he requires the aid of an organization fitted to embody, perpetuate, and confirm the influences of the pulpit and the domestic scene, the Christian minister has no occasion to resort to those questionable combinations of which we have already taken notice. He has one already furnished to his hands, and just such as the case demands, in the *Church*, the very institution over which, as we have seen already, he is specially appointed to preside. A pure, upright, zealous, and well-organized church, in which the many members, though they have not all the same, have all *some* worthy office to discharge under the mild but strict rule of the gospel, is a most powerful and at the same time unexceptionable engine for affecting public opinion and the hearts and consciences of individuals. The development and application of its spiritual power in all its completeness and strength, is a work which we have too much overlooked, and a means of doing good of which few ministers of the present day seem to have any adequate conception.

It is very true, that such methods as these are not likely to startle by the apparent suddenness of their results. Neither does the influence of the sun and nightly dew. But as the one has power to renovate and sustain all nature in life

and beauty, so has the other, through the grace of God, to renew and sanctify the most perverse and unpromising hearts. A grand excitement, a violent outbreak of popular feeling, assembled masses moved as by a common impulse, may make a greater display ; but if permanently good results flow from these, it is only because the way has been prepared for it by the silent process of individual training and instruction. All great religious reformatons have their origin in just these quiet, unobtrusive processes. Luther and Melancthon could never have revolutionized Christendom, had not the people all over Europe been prepared, by a long series of private influences, to appreciate and respond to their call. Laws and proclamations of authority are of force to change permanently the affairs of the world, only when they express the views entertained, or just ready to be entertained, by the mass of individuals. And whether is greater, the voice which speaks out the people's heart, or the power by which that heart has been moulded ? It is in private, in the quiet walks of man's daily life, that the forces are elaborated and concentrated, which, when the time comes, shake the world.

We conclude, then, that the pulpit well prepared for and well used ; the private offices of pastoral care wisely, faithfully, and assiduously pursued ; the Church well disciplined, well organized, and imbued with the spirit of the gospel ; without aid from governments, without artifices, without popular combinations, are of sufficient force, under God, to make the wilderness and the solitary place glad, and the wolf and leopard lie down lovingly with the lamb and kid. These are the true, legitimate methods of wielding God's revealed truth,—the sword of the Spirit,—and are most effectual to the end designed, because they are such as he is most apt to favor with those influences without which no spiritual results are produced.

III. But this leads me to my third topic—namely, *the results* which the Christian ministry accomplishes. In the

character of these consists one of the chief proofs of its excellence.

First, it communicates to the minds of men a large share of the best knowledge. I have already spoken of the communication of truth as among its most legitimate means. But what truths? Why, they are truths which take hold upon eternity—truths which lie at the foundation of the vast universe which God has made, and over which he presides with unlimited sovereignty. When we inquire who and what God is—how came we forth from his creative hand—what duty does he require of us—what characters does he expect us to possess—on what principles does he conduct his government and discipline towards us—what is his law—what its rewards and penalties—what our character as affected by it—what our destiny, and the destiny of our race generally, beyond the grave—the way of escape from deserved ruin—the way of access to an immortality of joy and blessedness—we find all the wisdom of the wisest, and all the researches of the most diligent, insufficient to afford us an answer. Only when we come to the revelations of the Gospel, do we obtain the first hints out of which the glorious information is to be evolved. The Christian ministry, in teaching and unfolding those truths, the result of careful study of the Scriptures and profound reflection, does more to elevate the intellectual character, inform the mind, and stimulate the mental activity of the people, than the most eminent in the ranks of secular literature.

But it does not stop with the communication of knowledge. It implants, through divine grace, in the hearts of men, a new spiritual principle. Fearfully obvious is the fact to every thoughtful observer, that the human race, alienated from God, is full of vicious and ungodly propensities, and in every natural impulse of the heart tending downward to still greater corruption. No human power can restore it. An angel's arm cannot snatch one soul from the grave of sin. And yet the Gospel ministry, through the use of divinely-

prepared and appointed means, and attended by a divine power always accompanying the faithful preaching of the Word, may and does work this wonderful transformation—translating men out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son—waking the dead soul out of its deep ruin—causing it to live anew, and perform the functions and produce the results of a new spiritual life. Glorious ministry!—to make the dead live!—live to holiness and God!—live a spiritual and divine life!

Nor is this all. It aims, as we have seen, not merely to implant, but to develope in all parts and departments of the character this heaven-wrought principle. The divine life must be made to supplant the sinful life, in virtue of which the man used to live, and animate and actuate, as a kind of *soul of the soul*, the natural life which is the common possession of all men. Every Christian has the Christian *principle* in common—the root of the matter, the germ of a new being. In this he is distinguished, in respect to his personal character, by a difference, wide as between heaven and earth, from the unconverted sinner. But, as a mere principle, it lies unperceived, except to the Omniscient. If the principle of spiritual life must remain, ever dormant in the inner man, it would confer no benefits. The heart must begin to beat, and send its living currents through the veins; the channels of communication must be opened to the extremest limbs; every organ must be pervaded and actuated, and the smallest vesicles cleared from the obstructions of disease and death. Some palsied limbs, some choked-up arteries, some disordered functions, may continue to the end of this earthly existence; even till “this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality.” But the consummation at which the Christian ministry aims, is this perfect pervading and actuating of the whole man by the divine life. And though it actually accomplishes its end, at present, only, in a small degree in comparison with what might be desired, yea, rea-

sonably expected, did it but know its privilege, and put forth its power, yet even now it needs but a slight glance at the condition of the ground it occupies, compared with that where no Christian pastor utters his voice or exercises his influence, to perceive that it is one of the most benign and beneficent gifts with which God has distinguished Christian communities.

Look first at its influence on individuals in the formation of their character for the present life. The office of a teacher, in the ordinary acceptation of it, is an honorable and useful one. The education imparted in the schools, when conducted wisely, not overlooking either the moral or the spiritual nature, while it informs the intellect and shapes the manners, is worthy of all the esteem which a healthful public sentiment is more and more disposed to accord to it. But, if you ask seriously, who does the most to form the character of a child, subject, according to the customs of a truly Christian community, to the influence of both the schoolmaster and the minister, I see not how you can hesitate to answer, the latter. Look how large a portion of the ideas and sentiments which form the staple of youthful thought are derived from the pulpit. You have only to read the child's early essays at composition, and see what are the common-places which drop in most naturally in his youthful productions. Even those of the most thoughtless and irreligious will manifest how strong has been the influence of the pulpit on his habits of thinking. As to character, the example of a consistent minister, giving effect to his preaching, is a most powerful instrument of youthful culture. Pardon me for the suggestion, if you think it a mistaken one, but I cannot but believe I see, in the character of some of the best men in this community at this moment, ineffaceable impresses of the character and teachings of the distinguished men who in times past occupied some of these pulpits.

Passing on from individuals to the community, we shall only find new proofs of the benign influence of the sacred office. What distinguishes a Christian from a Heathen com-

munity? Chiefly the Christian ideas which make up its public opinion, mould its manners, regulate its social intercourse, and lie at the heart of all its civilization. The influence of religion as an instrument of social order has been so universally perceived, that scarce a nation can be named which has not cherished some form of it as among its safeguards. The Christian religion brings the great and pure principles which characterize it to bear on all the relations which man sustains to his fellow-man:—those of parent and child, husband and wife, employer and employed, ruler and ruled; and the sanctions by which its commands on all these subjects are enforced, are weighty as eternity, solemn as the judgment of God. We are little aware, generally, how much the morality of the community, and, through morality, social and civil order, and the healthful activity of the popular mind, is the result of the influence of Christianity, and of course is to be traced, in no small degree, to those agencies by which Christian principles are inculcated. Sure it is that if Christianity should cease among us, Christian morality, Christian civilization, and Christian government would cease with it. And if the ministry of the Gospel should cease to exert its power, hardly less sure is it, humanly speaking, that Christianity would cease in a short time.

Now look forward for a moment to the results pictured in prophecy. What shall realize those bright dreams, brighter than ever fell upon a poet's raptured imagination? If ever the time comes when sin and sorrow shall cease, when man shall become one holy, happy, loving, beautiful brotherhood, what shall bring it about? In the schemes of socialism and infidel philanthropy we can see no tendency to it. The light they cast upon the future is but the phosphorescence of decay, and destined, ere long, to be quenched in utter corruption. Nothing but Christianity tends thitherward; and in administering by its appropriate means the principles of Christianity, the Christian ministry must be regarded as the chief agency to bring about the result. Christ is establishing on earth by

his ministers—a true kingdom of God. Oh, how excellent must that office be, through which earth is yet to be transformed into a paradise !

But I shall do gross injustice to my subject, if I do not turn your attention, at least for one moment, to its eternal relations. Come with me, and take your stand beside the bed of a dying Christian. His work, his trial, his discipline, are all finished. He sees the “last of earth.” Now look over the barriers of time, into the awful depth of unfathomable eternity. See the wretchedness and degradation to which that soul, without the gospel, had been liable. Outcast from God, from holiness, from bliss, consigned to the abode of lost spirits, partaker of their misery, and member of their horrid society, what floods of wo must have rolled forever over it ! Oh, who can dwell with the devouring fire ? who can inhabit the everlasting burnings ? And yet, he is calm, he is peaceful, he is happy, yea exultant, it may be, as he looks forward. We see his eye glancing upward ; we hear his voice whispering of glory. There is a rest waiting for him ; there is a crown prepared to mark him as a conqueror ; there is an innumerable company of angels and spirits of the just made perfect, standing just over there, eager to welcome him. Why looks he thus confidently across the boundaries of time ? Why fears he not, as he looks down into the depths of eternal misery ? Why, he is a Christian. His ear has heard the joyful sound of salvation ; his heart has received the good offer in the love of it. He has entered into a covenant by faith with the Lord Jesus, and God, on his part, has given him a pledge, that there shall be found no power in earth or hell strong enough to wrest him out of his hands. Now draw the curtain for a moment, and look in upon the scene on which he is entering. What see you there ? A blessed *company* of redeemed spirits ; a glorious constellation, nay, a firmament of constellations of resplendent stars. It is the General Assembly and Church of the first-born,—the kingdom of God made complete,—the Church filled, perfected and tri-

umphant. Beautiful company ! Glorious retinue of the once slain Lamb ! Oh, what music do they make as they sing the praise of their Master ! Not the sweetest of earth's harmonies bears comparison with their anthems.

To redeem souls from sin and misery, and fit them for heaven ; to assist in making up and adorning that heavenly company, that bride of Christ, is the specific and most characteristic object of the Christian minister's studies and cares. Other offices may contribute more or less—all pursuits ought to aim at least indirectly at the same result. But it is his directly, his specifically, to promote, as his daily work, the great object of Christ's mission to the world ; or, more generically, to promote, in the only way in which this fallen earth can contribute to the result, and that, through the riches of God's grace, the most glorious one, in which any creature of God can contribute to it, the last end for which the universe was framed. Such is the office, and such the results reached by it.

Now, my friends, I am prepared to leave this subject, with entire confidence, to your most spontaneous judgment. Imperfectly as the several parts of it have been exhibited, I have no fears as to what will be the reply of the most skeptical and indifferent of all reasonable and sober-judging inquirers. If the office of a Christian bishop lies in such a sphere, pursues its work by such means and methods, and reaches, so far as it attains its ends, which certainly it does in part wherever it is faithfully exercised, such results, it must be granted to be a good, honorable, noble work.

It is good for a man's own intellect and heart ;—for his intellect, for it brings him into closest contact with the sublimest truths, and gives scope and exercise to his largest powers ;—for his heart, for it serves to awaken the holiest sympathies, exercise and strengthen the best moral and social principles, keep in his view the sublimest and most perfect pattern of human excellence, and fix his thoughts and his endeavors on the true and last end of man's being, the glory of the infinite Creator.

It is good for its beneficence to mankind ;—to society, for it reforms without demolishing, it transforms, working silently like the little leaven, all its institutions,—to the Church, for it promotes, in the most effectual way, its highest influence and excellence,—to the individual, for it soothes his sorrows, animates his exertions, and takes away the sting of death. You may enrich a man with the wealth of the world, and yet leave him poor. You may give him the best secular education, and yet leave him ignorant of the highest knowledge, and uncultivated in the best part of his nature. You may give him all the honors of earth, and yet leave him to sink into eternal degradation. But he who inculcates and gives effect to Christ's Gospel, promotes the truest knowledge, the truest moral and social culture, the best interests of society and the world, the highest welfare of man for eternity.

Such a work ought to satisfy a Christian's largest ambition. I am surprised to see how eager some ministers seem, to have a prominent part in secular affairs, and be esteemed men of the world. It is a poor business ! Why should a Christian minister wish to shine out of his profession ? If he may but shine in it, and that in the esteem of God, he need ask for himself no higher honor. There is to me something exceedingly repulsive, I had almost said despicable, in the aspect of a Christian minister attaining to high secular eminence, and competing successfully in the race of secular ambition,—those statesman-priests,—those law-learned doctors of divinity,—those classic rectors,—those fine belle lettre parsons,—it is a sight enough to make an earnest man sick. I honor as much as any many can all professions by which society is benefited. The honest and enterprising merchant, the dextrous mechanic, the skillful physician, the astute and learned lawyer, the wise and far-seeing statesman, the poet, the historian, the philosopher, the eloquent orator,—they have my gratitude ; their eminence claims my freest admiration. But when I see a Christian minister leaving his high functions to compete with any of these, and gaining success and su-

periority over them, I cannot but pity him. Congressional habits do not harmonize well with clerical manners. The language of the stump or the tribune form at best but an odd combination with the tones of the pulpit. There are, of course, great exigencies occasionally occurring, such, for example, as was our own national revolution, when all ordinary rules must be dispensed with, and all professions necessarily become merged in the common obligations of the man and the citizen. But I speak of those ministers who, under the pressure of no obvious necessity, leave the high station of influence which their sacred calling gives them, to enter the lists of secular ambition. Methinks the enemies or disappointed rivals of such a man could not ask for a keener sarcasm, with which to assail him in the hour of his triumph, than the mention of his reverend title.

It is an office which may well engage all our powers and attainments. If we are fond of study, our work calls upon us to bring forth out of the treasures of all literature, secular and religious, things new and old for its advancement. If we have a turn for the investigation of deep questions, divinity offers to our endeavors those which may well task the abilities of the most penetrating. If we have eloquence, let it be but sanctified, and the pulpit affords the largest scope for its exercise. If we have a desire to do good, and be true philanthropists, the objects and the means lie directly in the beaten path of our calling. He must have a poor conception of the demands of the ministry, who believes there are any talents worthy of a true man, which do not find ample opportunities in the sacred office,—nay, who does not find occasion every day to mourn in secret that his abilities are so inadequate to the opportunities and demands of his holy calling.

That I speak your sentiments, my beloved brother, your deliberate action has given the best proof. In the freshness of your youth, while the world was all before you, bright with as fair a promise of success as ever offered itself to

youthful ambition ; when the brilliant career of one scarcely less honored by admiring countrymen than dear and familiar to yourself,—that bright particular star, whose mild twilight yet lingers, sadly but gloriously round the place of its setting, beckoned you onward, and might well have fired your emulation ; when the patronage of the most illustrious was freely offered to you, and would doubtless have been given without stint, had you been disposed to enter the profession to which, as if by birthright, you seemed destined ; you deliberately, firmly, and perseveringly determined to forego all secular prospects, and give your strength and life to this humble office. And now, after six years spent in the exercise of it,—with the experience of its cares, its toils, its privations, its mortifications, and its discouragements,—you stand here to accept a new charge, and enter a new field in the same service. Say, my beloved brother, have you ever had any misgivings as to the worthiness of your choice ? Have you ever felt the throbbings of a heart overleaping its too narrow boundaries ? Have you ever doubted,—do you doubt at this moment,—that, could you but realize the true ideal of a Christian minister, it would be a loftier attainment than was ever reached by statesman or conqueror ? If you have such misgivings, I beg of you to pause here, and make haste to retrieve past mistakes. But I know well what your inmost heart answers to-day. I bid you God speed, therefore, in your glorious work. It is a noble field, in which God's providence, strangely overruling all man's plans, has bid us labor together. O, if we may but be among the instruments of casting into this large, active, growing community an ample infusion of gospel principles, and gospel sentiments, of perpetuating and advancing in all Christian attainments these honored churches, and of gathering into the fold of Christ the souls of our flocks, and preparing them, a happy throng, to sit and sing with us in heavenly places, we will desire no greater honor, and no richer privilege. You will be surrounded with an affectionate and faithful

people. You will be associated with a brother, in whose heart you can repose the utmost confidence, and into whose labors, sadly interrupted in their most prosperous stage, it will be a privilege to enter ; one, whose praise is in all the churches, not only here, but in our own native New England. You will be in the succession of a ministry containing honored names. Go on, and prosper. Gird yourself with the whole armor of God ; summon all your powers and faculties to the work before you ; labor and watch in season, and out of season ; and when Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd, shall appear, then shall you also receive a crown of glory.

A word to this church and congregation, and I will detain the assembly no longer. You, my friends, are about to receive to-day a new token of your Master's favor. Need I remind you that you must, *very soon*, give your account for this privilege ? If the work of the Christian ministry be such as we have just considered it, surely you, who are to enjoy the united counsels of two of our most beloved and honored brethren, will be expected to let your profiting appear unto all. It is an office of great labors and great responsibilities. Give your new pastor every reasonable facility and encouragement ; allow him to lay out his own work, and be ready to co-operate with him in his own way ; shield him from every needless interruption, and every dispensable labor ; and unite your fervent prayers always with his, that the grace of God, without which neither Paul nor Apollos can effect anything, may enable him to make full proof of his ministry, and gather you and your dear children into the home of the ransomed.

Fellow-mortals, brethren and sisters in Christ, and brethren in the ministry, the judgment comes, when pastors and their flocks must appear before God together. Let us give all diligence, that we may be found faithful. Amen.

CHARGE TO THE MINISTER.

BY

J. B. CONDIT, D. D.,

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

MY DEAR BROTHER :

A few years ago we parted in that beautiful city of the East, which was then our home, to occupy fields of labor quite remote from each other. It was with no expectation on the part of either of us that we should be brought together under circumstances like the present, and enter into relations like those which have now been formed. If we knew not the way in which we have been led, we cannot doubt the presence and guidance of our Heavenly Leader in all the way. I feel it to be a peculiar privilege to recognize the interposition of Providence in the successive events that have contributed to the establishment of an associate ministry in this church, with so much harmony. It is not proper on the present occasion to recount these events : yet I cannot fail to allude to the many months of trial, when, stricken under the hand of God, pastor and people have wept together, unable to trace God in his mysterious ways, only able to trust him in his faithfulness and love. But God has turned our darkness into light ; and now, rejoicing together, we would gratefully mark the favor of the Great Head of the church in your auspicious introduction to this post of labor.

The office assigned me is to give you a solemn charge in respect to the trust now committed to you. Before I proceed to the discharge of this office, let me for a moment speak in language prompted by the circumstances in which we are placed. It is not with ordinary feelings that I come to this service ; and I should do injustice to these feelings, in view of the peculiar relation in which we stand, if I did not first utter the hearty welcome to you, instead of the injunctions of duty—tendering you the right hand of fellowship, the token and the pledge of sympathy and confidence. In the name of this Christian community, I bid you welcome to our city, opening a wide and inviting field for ministerial effort. In the name of my brethren, I welcome you to our ministerial fellowship, as a member of this Presbytery. I welcome you to this sanctuary, to this communion table, and to this pulpit. I bid you welcome to the hearts and homes of this people. I know the anxiety with which they have sought a man of God, to fulfill among them the duties of the ministry ; and now through me they give you a cordial welcome, as the servant of the Lord, sent to them in answer to their prayers. May the seal of heaven be granted to the transactions of this occasion, and may the Gracious Master meet you at the threshold of your work with his abundant blessing !

The inquiry is a momentous one—How should your ministry be prosecuted, that it may, with the Divine blessing, be permanently successful ? Is not this question already present to your own mind, as one of first importance at the beginning of your ministry in this new field of labor ? Let me adopt it as the question that will fitly guide me in making some suggestions appropriate to this occasion. In answering it, I shall briefly state some general principles or rules of ministerial action, rather than enter into a detail of the duties of your office.

1. Give to your office that elevation and power derived from the influence of high and holy principles of action. It

can never take a proper position when its duties are actuated only by principles that belong to the secular vocations of men. Its purity and moral power require the presence of motives inspired by a high estimate of the glory of Christ and the worth of souls. The wisdom of the minister is not mere earthly wisdom, nor professional adroitness, by which some subordinate ends may be accomplished, but which will speedily diminish the power of ministerial character. This is opposed to that simple, chaste dignity, that uprightness of purpose, that expansive love, which the will and example of Christ require.

The highest and grandest relations of your office are those which connect it with the throne of grace, whence the offer of pardon comes to the guilty ; with the throne of judgment, before which you and your people must be gathered for the trial of the last day ; and with the throne of glory, around which redeemed sinners will meet to praise the God of their salvation. These are the relations which suggest those lofty motives and aims of the Christian minister, which are infinitely exalted above a selfish, fickle, earth-born policy—relations which, if fully appreciated, will inspire the self-forgetting, self-denying spirit, and the impulses of Christ-like love and devotion. Acting under their influence, you will show unto all that any secondary aim which you pursue is made subservient to the primary object of your calling. You will seek to disarm prejudice and opposition by faithfulness to your trust. To please others, you will not resign what you receive by divine authority : while, in sustaining it, you will eschew the cunning of the artful, and the zeal of the contentious ; remembering that the spirit of Christ will lead you to blend kindness and charity with your decision. In one word, cherishing a profound reverence for your sacred trust and for the Master who confers it upon you, you will pursue your work with simplicity, integrity, and self-devotion—thus magnifying your office in the view of all, above every other trust committed to man. A ministerial life thus regulated will be

full of moral beauty, dignity, and power, as well as be eminently fruitful. This is the way to give to the ministry its appropriate distinction, and plant it effectually in the respect, confidence, and love of the people. In what a pathway of light and power does he move, whose ministry is distinguished by those principles of action which Christ enjoined and exemplified ! What peculiar power goes out from his pulpit ! What a hallowed influence his life diffuses all around him !

2. Give to your work as a minister the first place in the appropriation of your time and energies. It is impossible to occupy the Pastorate in this city without a constant and heavy tax upon your energies. The various public interests that have this as their centre impose much labor on the ministry, in addition to those duties which belong to the office as originally appointed by Christ. You will do well to consider how much of this additional labor you can safely assume. But, aside from this, it is no small task to meet the spiritual wants of a congregation like this.

You have not come to a people who will make unreasonable exactions. They do not wish you to exceed the limits of your strength. They know there is an amount of labor and toil which no human strength can long endure. It would pain them to see you assume it and so incur the hazard of cutting short your usefulness in the midst of your days. But, it still remains true, this work demands a whole heart and a whole mind if it is well done. How great a work it is, if you look only at that part of it which belongs to the study and the pulpit ; and you are already alive to the importance of giving freshness, completeness, and variety to your sermons, if you would satisfy a sound and healthy appetite. But this is only a part of it. Wide is the range of duties out of the pulpit, taking much time and strength, and often moving the deepest sympathies of a pastor's heart. Count up the several parts of his work, in the pulpit, in the lecture room, in the prayer meeting, in the Sabbath school, in the sick chamber, in the funeral service, in the instruction

of the youth, in the administration of the ordinances and discipline of the church—in one word, in personally watching over the spiritual interests of every family of his congregation. With the experience you already have, I need not more particularly describe the labors of the minister, to evince that they demand the application of all your powers. You know that division of mental energy impairs intenseness of action. You understand the principles of ministerial economy so as to appreciate the importance of a well-devised scheme of labor, in which thought, and strength, and time are employed systematically and not at haphazard. The law for the minister is, to be ever in his work, with his best energies systematically applied. Then he will exalt his office, strongly impress men with the claims of the Gospel, and soon find that his labor is not in vain in the Lord. With a studious, vigilant mind, an active enterprise, and a warm heart, he will keep the mind of his people wakeful, earnest, and progressive. Light will glow around every theme of discussion in his pulpit. He will be present in all departments of his work, with a holy unction, facility, and attraction. This is the result of the consecration of the entire man to his high calling. But I add,

3. Observe the proportionate claims of different departments of duty. Your success will very much depend on a regard to this rule. Without that acquaintance with your people which pastoral visitation alone will give, you cannot adapt your public ministrations to them, nor secure their permanent interest in hearing the truth. You will find your duty and your pleasure in visiting the houses of sorrow ; in imparting Christian counsel and comfort at the bed-side of the sick and dying ; in guiding the anxious inquirer into the way of life ; and in leading the perplexed and trembling believer out of the maze of doubt and gloom. As you pass around from house to house, with the salutation, Peace be to this house ; asking with affectionate interest in each family circle, Is it well with thee ? Is it well with thy husband ?

Is it well with the child? many a heart, cheered and comforted by your words, will lift a prayer for you as you depart; and you shall in nowise lose your reward in such a service. Yet this is not your first and great work. That of the pulpit is superior. The people who, by their pressing demands, compel a minister to spend a large portion of his time on the circuit of pastoral visitation, and also to obey frequent invitations to social gatherings, may look for one of two results—either that he must take the hours of night for study, a course which is commonly suicidal; or his ministry must become powerless and unattractive.

The doctrine which I give you on this subject is,—Take at all events so much of every day for the study as is necessary to impart to your sermons all the richness and variety of which you are capable. The pulpit is your throne. Here gather your strength. Be sure you are felt here. Let the people understand that what is worth their hearing costs you something; and that usually according to what it costs you will be its value to them. Hold your time and talents sacred first to this your great official duty—to preach the word; that it may be preached with system, with deep and patient investigation, as well as with simplicity, pungency, and earnestness. That this principle of ministerial action may be carried out, let me say to you, be fixed and unyielding in your purpose. Do it kindly and discreetly, but still be firm, knowing that it is not only important for yourself, but for the highest welfare of your people.

4. Pursue your work with reference to growing and permanent results. That mode of action is generally most popular which promises the most speedy results. Far too low an estimate is put on that influence which is noiseless, but steady and far-reaching, touching the very foundations of individual and social welfare, and aiding to mould the character of successive generations of mind. Hence the false judgment which is sometimes formed of a minister's success; counting it small when his preaching is not adapted to produce a great

and general excitement. This has been a source of temptation to some ministers to shape their labors with a view to such an effect ; making such an application of their resources as insures a speedy exhaustion.

It is the dictate of wisdom, if you would make full proof of your ministry, that you should not aim at a quick and striking impression for a few months or a year. But gather your resources and form your plans for the permanent interest and profit of your people. I do not intimate that you are not to expect immediate and constant fruit ; but that you are to sow the seed and cultivate the field in the expectation of a long continued harvest. A regard to this principle will impart to your ministry a genuine power, and ultimately secure genuine and abundant fruit. It will lead you to plant foundations deep, to open fully all the doctrines of the Gospel, embracing the whole range of Gospel truth, and not confining yourself to the more popular departments of it. You will so conduct your ministry as to make the piety of the church strong and stable, rather than flashy and superficial. You will seek to strengthen the stakes of Israel's tent, while you are striving to lengthen its cords. You will think more of qualifications for membership of the church than of the number of members you can count. You will begin with the young in that system of instruction which will be likely to retain them around the altars of their fathers, and prepare them, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, to become efficient Christians. The principle I here present, the observance of which is so important to the right direction of your ministry, does not conflict with the utmost intenseness of effort. It will give greater breadth and compass to a minister's labors, than when his system of effort is narrowed down and condensed for a short continuance ; but it does not provide for the least abatement in the vigor and devotion, with which they are prosecuted. A ministry, regulated by the law of growing and permanent results, must be earnestly and steadfastly pur-

sued, if it is efficient and successful. Then that ministry will last, with increasing energy and usefulness.

5. Ever have a regard to the intimate connection between the spiritual welfare of your people and the fidelity with which you watch your own. They need those views of truth of which they can avail themselves in keeping the heart, in removing doubts, in resisting temptation, in overcoming the world, in enduring affliction, in learning what is duty and discharging it. Such views of truth you can only attain by a searching, experimental application of it to your own heart. An essential part of that mental discipline which is necessary to the preacher consists in the cultivation of his spiritual life. He must be ever intent on the advancement of his own piety, if he would nourish the spiritual life of his people. If he would preach so that truth shall *be truth* to those who hear him, he must see it clearly, grasp it strongly, and hold it up with light shining all around it. But in order to this, he must have the deep and tender realization of its power in his own breast. Only when thoroughly conscious of its richness and adaptation to our various spiritual necessities; only when his affections are developed and moulded by it, will his own heart be in a state to give the proper tone to his preaching. Let him cast everything he exhibits in the glowing fire of holy affections. This is the true source of ministerial power. This is a rule, in regarding which you may look for the greatest degree of success. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for, in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

The observance of this principle will subject you to many hours of solitude, for prayer and direct dealing with the heart. There is no substitute for this. Luther used to say, that he sometimes got more knowledge in a short time by prayer, than by the study and labor of many hours. You may read with profit some books on the work of a minister :

as, Herbert in his analysis of pastoral character and living ; Burnet in his details of pastoral care ; Baxter's Reformed Pastor, in his thrilling exhibition of the ministerial trust in view of eternity ; or Doddridge's faithful appeal to ministers "on the evil and danger of neglecting souls." You may derive much advantage from the biographies of men of eminent piety. But all these things will not avail without often sitting down with nothing but the Bible before you, your heart laid open to inspection, your motives canvassed, what is wrong confessed and rectified, and those waters of healing tried again and again to which you seek to conduct your people. Habitual communion with the cross will alone give you that experience of the unsearchable riches of Christ which is requisite, if you would so exhibit the Saviour as to draw sinners to him. And it is of vast importance in all your preaching, that it should appear to all that you speak that which you do know.

These are some of the rules, dear brother, for the conduct of a useful ministry, which I leave with you. And well may you ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" In view of this great work, I commend you to the promised aid of the Master whom you serve. When "pressed out of measure, above strength," flee to it with confidence. Dwell near the throne. Jehovah alone can keep you from fainting. You are permitted also to derive encouragement from a contemplation of the glorious future. Soon this endeared relation, like all others of earth, will be broken up. The crown of the faithful minister is not far distant. Right from this ground I love to transfer a thought to that fellowship which will be eternal. If we are permitted to bid each other welcome to that fellowship of reward in the skies, how glorious the scene that will then awaken our emotions, elevate and inspire all our powers ! The toil will then be over, the conflict ended, and the victory won. Now standing together on the same watch-tower, as I shall often ask, Watchman, what of the

night? it will be good to hear you answer, The morning cometh. But then the night will be forever past. Then will have come the morning of an everlasting day of rest and triumph.

CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE.

BY

REV. D. W. POOR,

PASTOR OF HIGH STREET CHURCH, NEWARK.

It gives me no ordinary pleasure, Christian brethren, to have the opportunity of commending to your cordial welcome the servant of Christ, whom you have just received as your minister. To me, no less than to yourselves, is this an occasion of gladness. Your call has drawn into my immediate neighborhood a beloved associate and friend; and were I to obey the impulses which this event starts within me, it would be to convert the charge I am appointed to deliver into words of congratulation. But this may not be. As a representative of the Presbytery, it is my duty here to remind you of the obligations you have this day formally assumed, and to suggest a few of the considerations which render them sacred and binding. And though, in many respects, it may be no more than a repetition of what has been often inculcated in your hearing, yet, with the Apostle, I may venture to say, that "to write the same things, unto me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

What I have to offer grows naturally out of the several aspects and relations in which a pastor is to be received by his people. It is from these that your various duties take their form and derive their sanctions; and only so far as these are distinctly seen and felt, will you be guided to the proper regulation of your conduct as members of a religious congregation.

First, then, and above all things, remember, dear friends, that your minister bears the character of *an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He comes to you clothed with a divine commission. The anointing of the Holy One is upon him. The seal of his authority is the gift given him in the "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery" in the name of Christ. His heart is burdened with the messages of God to the souls of men. And the purport of his future labors is, to aid in preparing lost sinners for eternity. These things we affirm in no figurative or accommodated language. The ministerial office literally implies all this; or it implies nothing, and there is no propriety in the solemn services of this evening. Difficult as it may be to invest anything with which we are in daily converse with such transcendent interest; and prone, as most people are, to sink the ministry to a level with the ordinary professions of life, it is peculiarly necessary for us, particularly on occasions like the present, to recur to fundamental facts, and in our own minds, at least, redeem, as far as possible, the sacred office from the desecrations of a thoughtless familiarity. Even the commonest objects of sight reveal, on closer acquaintance, a deeper significance than they seem to have. To the reflecting poet, the meanest flower that blows is enough to suggest "thoughts that lie too deep for tears." And were we all habituated to ponder, as we ought, the mysteries of our spiritual existence, it would be no hard thing for any of us to realize that, "in the earthen vessel" of a frail and mortal body, there may be conveyed to us a treasure of untold value; or to believe that the *agency of the Holy Ghost* may be employed in qualifying and making an ordinary believer an overseer to feed his brethren in the church of God. Whatever, then, may be the outward aspect of things, let your faith in the sufficiency of Christ's appointment lead you, dear friends, always to regard your minister *as the servant of God for your sakes*. Study to receive him in this, his chief capacity. While he is endeavoring, in weakness and fear, and much trembling, to dis-

charge his solemn functions, let it be your aim to manifest, in return, such a disposition as is due to the dignity and glory of Him in whose name he officiates. A faithful minister is one of heaven's choicest gifts, and, like all other divine gifts, can prove a *blessing* only when accepted in a believing and appreciating spirit. The *degree* of your minister's usefulness will, therefore, depend to no small extent *on the estimate in which you hold him*. There must be in you some adequate response to the claims he presents on your attention and obedience, if you would be duly benefited by his labors. Do not, therefore, I beseech you, by any means suffer the *minister* to be lost sight of in the *man*. He has no proper place over you, except as he is delegated from above. His talents do not give it to him. His qualifications as a theologian do not entitle him to it. The authority of his brethren cannot confer it upon him. If he be what he professes, his call is a voice from heaven, his qualification is the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and he stands before you as nothing less than the herald of the blessed Jesus. This is the capacity in which you are chiefly to hold him in estimation; and, doing this, you will at once put yourselves relatively in such a position as shall prepare you to receive his services in a becoming spirit. When he comes up here, Sabbath after Sabbath, to disclose to you the hid treasures of our Lord's testament, to set forth the doctrines of our salvation, to announce the terms of the everlasting covenant, and to extend the invitations of mercy, you will not then be disposed to treat his message lightly, as the unauthoritative declaration of a fellow-creature; but you will be constrained to listen as to the demonstration of God's Spirit and truth, which it were a sin to disregard. When fidelity to his Master requires him to wake up your slumbering consciences with the tones of reproof and rebuke—to show you, without disguise, the evil of sin, the danger of sinners, the wrath of God against all unrighteousness; when he is endeavoring to hedge up your devious path by the restrictions of the law, and is

pressing on you those claims which fetter your evil inclinations, and rouse the enmity of your carnal heart, you will learn to bear with and respect that plain dealing. What you would not endure as coming from merely human authority, you will reverently give heed to as the revelation of God, uttered by a reluctant, heart-aching, affectionate messenger, who, out of devotion to his Master, and regard for your souls, is holding in abeyance the feelings of the man, that he may be truthful to his office. Yea, instead of visiting upon him the odium which these unpleasant truths so often stir up, you will be disposed to thank God, that amid the flatteries of the world and the deceits of your own heart, there is one, who, emboldened by a divine zeal, dares "to reason with you of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," even though it make you tremble. And so also when he visits you at your homes, in the way of pastoral intercourse, or for the purposes of kindly admonition, comfort, or sympathy, you will, for his Master's sake, as well as for his own, give him an open door not only to your houses, but also to your hearts, "as the helper of your joy." Trusting his benevolent intentions, you will throw off that reserve in which so many entrench themselves in the presence of their minister, to their own detriment, and be ready to confer with him on all topics of religious doctrine and duty and personal experience, with such freedom as shall enable him to see your wants, and direct to some purpose both his public and private ministrations. Still further, out of regard to the sacredness of his office, you will be careful also not to secularize his character, by drawing him into frequent contact with worldly associations, or by pressing his learning and abilities into the service of any and every enterprise that may be on foot. This is a tendency of our times, which is more fruitful in bad results than is often supposed, and from which you will be duly guarded, by bearing ever in mind the objects for which you have called your minister. Finally, in view of these objects, you will be disposed also to make it a theme of frequent prayer, that God

would, by the rich communications of his wisdom and grace, qualify your pastor to be a blessing to yourselves and to this whole community. The more vividly you realize the truth and the divine nature of his commission, the more earnest will be your desire, that he should come to you in the character of a *witness*, testifying of the things he has felt and seen through the intuitions of a clear faith. To this end, therefore, will whatever degree of prevalence you may enjoy at the throne of grace be constantly employed, and in his unlooked for strength and success, will your minister be made to feel that he is encompassed on every side by hidden aids, in the assurance of which he will thank God, and take courage. Such will be the effects of a due appreciation of the nature of the ministerial office. Impress, then, upon your minds, as a matter of pre-eminent importance, that in this office you have a gift from the Great Head of the Church, which you are to prize, and improve to the praise of Him who has instituted it. The more highly you value it, the more diligent and careful will you be to secure the blessings for which it was designed. Treat it with disrespect or neglect, and you receive the grace of God in vain—that grace whose honor is ever vindicated in its ultimate and entire withdrawal from those who abuse it.

Yet, secondly, in the regard you pay your minister in his official character, forget not that he is, at the same time, *a man*. And this I mean not by way of disparagement, as is the case with many, but by way of allowance and sympathy. There is, it must be acknowledged, a great contrast between the dignity of our calling, and the unworthiness of those who enter it. In view of the greatness of the former, well might we all put the Apostle's question, and with far greater emphasis, too, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We are frank to confess it, dear brethren, none of us are sufficient for the work in which we engage. It is not on this supposition that we venture into the ministerial consecration, and undertake to handle the word of God. Nothing but the infinite condescension of divine grace could ever have permitted us to

stand as ambassadors for Christ, and become co-workers with him. While, therefore, we are bold to magnify the office, we are not ashamed to ask the indulgence and aid due to our nature and susceptibilities as men. Remember, then, I beseech you, that in all his official labors, your minister carries with him a heart quickened, by the very nature of his duties, to a more than ordinary degree of *sensitiveness* to whatever affects his work and character. He is identified with his calling, and will be alive to feel, in his own person, all the indifference, the neglect, the opposition, which may be manifested towards the cause he advocates. He carries his message in his heart. It is a part of his most sacred convictions. And when delivered, it is so wrought out of the texture of his own being, that he cannot avoid feeling a personal interest in it as a production of his own mental labor. Let me, therefore, challenge for him in his private, but *particularly in his pulpit ministrations*, all that delicacy and courteousness of behavior which the laws of civil society exact of all those who would be deemed gentlemen. Do not imagine that he is any less susceptible to a disrespectful demeanor, while addressing you from the pulpit, than when speaking to you in the parlor. The vacant seat, the roving look, the slumbrous eye, the restlessness of aversion or weariness, the trifling behavior, be assured, will all make on his mind, while preaching, a keenly painful impression ; and they will often serve to account for that confined or hurried delivery, which betrays a heart ill at ease. Be careful, therefore, to avoid, as far as in you lies, being betrayed into such improprieties of deportment. Let the same consideration towards the feelings of another, which govern you in the ordinary walks of life, be manifest also in the house of God ; and borrow no license from the supposition that you may not be observed, or that the disrespect of your conduct will not be felt. There is no observatory like the pulpit, and nothing so disheartening, so destructive to all true eloquence, as the evidence that one is speaking to an inattentive audience. If, then, you wish to make your minis-

ter diligent in his labors, and eloquent in his sermons, inspire him with the constant tender of your kindly regards. Give him a full house, and countenances radiant with attentive looks, and there will be such excitement in the scene, as will kindle all his energies, and make his most arduous labors at once delightful and easy. There is a pleasure, awakened by the response of the eye and the tokens of interest, which makes every faculty of the soul work nimbly, and under its stimulus even ordinary intellects have been stirred up to unwonted vigor and exertion. Let this pleasure be ministered here, and you will have a two-fold reward, namely, the direct and full benefit of what you are listening to, and the increase of power, and life, and unction you call forth in your minister.

As a man, also, you will find your minister encompassed with *infirmities* of various sorts—infirmities of body, of mind, of heart. It may not be always with him as either you or he himself could wish ; not always the same physical vigor ; not always the same display of intellectual ability ; not always the same elevated fervor of devotion. There may be also mistakes in the judgment, and in the conduct, and in conversation. Should you see such things, let the thought teach you forbearance, that in this way he is only the better prepared to come into a closer sympathy with yourselves, and through his own errors is learning how to be lenient and considerate and kind in his application of the law to others. Remember also that the treasure of the Gospel is given unto you in earthen vessels, *that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us*. Were the minister a perfect man, it would seem from this assertion of the apostle, that there would be danger of his becoming a rival of his Master in his people's esteem. Regard, then, the imperfections of your minister as incidental to his calling, so long as they argue no serious defect ; and suffer them only to remind you where your proper dependence ought to be placed.

As a man, your minister is also subject to *limitations* and will need your aid for the proper discharge of much of his

duty. He is not omniscient, and will require to be informed, like other people, when any are sick, or in trouble, and in any way need his aid. Many persons forget this, and seem to think that a minister ought somehow or other to be acquainted with their affairs ; and without taking pains to send him word, they feel disposed to blame him for neglect. This is unjust. It is better, seeing that the minister is but a man, to obey the apostle's rule, and in such cases be sure to *send* for the elders of the church. Where this is not done, let no blame be ascribed. Nor, again, is the minister endowed with ubiquity. In a large parish there are multiplied demands, often occurring simultaneously ; and the minister can only be in one place, or do one thing, at a time. Let him have the prerogative of deciding which are the most urgent ; and if he is engaged in one direction, consent to have him so occupied, even though it be to your momentary inconvenience. Remember the precept, " In honor preferring one another." So, too, is your minister limited in strength and resources. There may be such a thing as pressing him beyond measure. There may be such a thing as his breaking down under the burden of the many labors that seem forced upon him by the exigencies of his position. There may be such a thing as his exhausting his entire system by an overstrained yet voluntary endeavor to carry out all the plans which a fervent love for his people may suggest. Of such possibilities you, dear friends, can ask of me no evidence. Let it be your study, then, to devise how you may best disencumber the sacred office of many of those exactions, which needlessly tax the time and strength of a minister, and which are more of a compliment than a utility to those who make them. Such is the state of society in these days, that there is danger lest the peculiar work of the ministry be pushed too much aside by a multiplicity of incidental demands, which, in a city like this, find the most convenient disposal at the parsonage door. Against such distractions I must beg leave in behalf of my brethren to enter a decided protest. It is enough for us to prepare our dis-

courses, to visit our people, to attend funerals, to meet Presbyterian calls, and to assist in the various benevolent enterprises of the day. Work of this sort has increased in amount far beyond what it once was, as must be evident to those who observe the signs of the times; and it requires no ordinary amount of diligence and vigor to accomplish it all in a manner satisfactory to the critical taste of the age, growing ever more fastidious. In view of this circumstance, I have but to ask the remembrance of the fact, that the minister is but a man of frail and circumscribed powers, who, if of the right spirit, will find ample room for the full exercise of all his capacities in the legitimate sphere of his profession, and must be borne with if he cannot always expand himself so as to fill the yet wider circle, which many are disposed to mark out for him.

It was my intention to touch upon the obligations due to the minister, as a *citizen* of the commonwealth, and possessed of the civil rights which duty to his country, and fealty to the cause of morality and religion may require him to exercise. But want of time forbids; and I must pass from this to speak of him, as my last topic, in his character as a *Christian scholar*. To this point I would gladly give more prominence than I am here able to do. You well know, however, that no minister, at the present day, can long maintain his position over an enlightened and cultivated audience, without being a careful and laborious student. Now, when so much information is cheaply diffused abroad, it is more than ever necessary for the preacher, if he would sustain himself in that relative moral and intellectual elevation which the pulpit indicates, "to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, to meditate upon these things, to give himself wholly to them, that his profiting may appear unto all." What is requisite in this matter, I conceive, is but feebly comprehended by the majority of hearers. They may know what is instructive, and may appreciate a good sermon; but they little imagine how much mental toil and

search it often costs the preacher. I was once told by a distinguished clergyman, whose unchecked ardor, alas! brought him to his grave in the flower of his manhood, that the amount of information packed away in a single sentence of one of his most effective discourses cost him a whole month's investigation. This is indeed a peculiar case; still, it is no uncommon thing for a preacher to spend weeks and months on the great themes of the gospel, in order to elucidate them in a manner so clear, as that they may be understood in their varied bearings and connections, while yet it shall seem to others to have been the easy exposition most naturally thought of. To be capable, therefore, of acting his part as your sacred teacher, you perceive that your minister must have two things: first, resources to apply to; and second, leisure to study. It is your *duty* as well as your *interest* to see that, so far as is in your power, he has these. Gladly would I here urge upon you the priceless value of a parish library, judiciously selected, well taken care of, and constantly augmented out of the parish funds. Such a furniture for your parsonage is as necessary as tools for your workshops. It is exceedingly costly furniture, I must add, often exceeding the power of the minister to supply as he needs; but the money spent upon it will redound to your advantage, in the enlargement of the means of knowledge thus supplied to him who is to search out for you the deep things of God. Having furnished this in a manner that shall be a model to the churches, let me urge you to see to it that your minister has leisure to study. Do not compel him to make up for the distractions of the day by the toil of the night. Let a judicious foresight of what will be needed for the Sabbath regulate and restrain your desire to have him with you at your social entertainments, *particularly if these are to be so late in the evening as to detract from the vigor of the morning hours*. Remember, that it is not easy to pass at once from the crowded drawing-room into the study with a mind sufficiently devout and collected to ponder upon and

unfold eternal truths. Let me entreat you, therefore, to be moderate in the demands you make upon his society, and to preserve him, as far as may be, consecrated to his work. Be assured, you will be more than rewarded for this self-denial, by the higher tone of spirituality, and the greater reach of thought which will be brought to bear upon you in the house of God.

But I fear I have transcended my limits and your patience, and must hasten to my conclusion. You need hardly be reminded that the union effected this evening has its issues in eternity. We hope it has been brought about under the clear approbation of the Great Head of the Church, and has his sanction. Had this not appeared to be so, never would he, whom you now receive, have sundered the ties of strong affection which bound him to his recent charge, in order to enter on this new field of labor. He has done this, because it seemed plain, that, through you, his Master called him to a larger usefulness, and had given him "much people in this city." Let him see that in this respect neither he nor you have been mistaken. Let him feel the warmth of such a Christian greeting here as shall cause him—I will not say forget—but, not to regret the long-cherished friendships he has left behind. It is true, you have a much loved and honored pastor still with you, from whom you may not withdraw aught of the affection you have thus far bestowed; but are your hearts so circumscribed that you must detract from the one what you confer on the other? Each new comer into the family circle opens new spaces in the parent's bosom that seemed all full before. So let it appear in this instance with you, that the addition of a new pastor has only the effect to increase the capacities of your regards. "In recompense of the same, be ye also enlarged." As the two pastors are one in their love and care for you, so let them be one in your esteem. Like the double stars in our firmament, which only the curious telescope separates, let them shine upon you with mingled rays, each serving to enhance the brightness of the other, and both known by the same gene-

ral term ; and let your eye be single in the perception of them, so that your whole body shall be full of their blended light. Thus will your profit be commensurate with your advantages ; and we shall expect to hear that in this church thus doubly blessed, there is spiritual life and strength, and in this congregation many converts added unto the Lord. Look upon both your pastors as the servants of Christ, into whose names none of you are baptized. One may have planted, the other may be called to water ; but they are only laborers together with God. Ye are God's husbandry ; ye are God's building. It is from Him your increase cometh. So look to him, then, for his blessing, that the service of his laborers may redound to his glory. Before him must pastors and people one day stand, to give an account of how they have improved their trust and discharged their duties. May it then be found, that you have listened to instruction and been wise hearers ; and that they who have watched for your souls as those who are to give account, have many seals of their ministry and crowns of rejoicing ; that so you and they may ever unite in glad praises to Him, who, through the feebleness of human agency, has been able to bring many sons unto glory.