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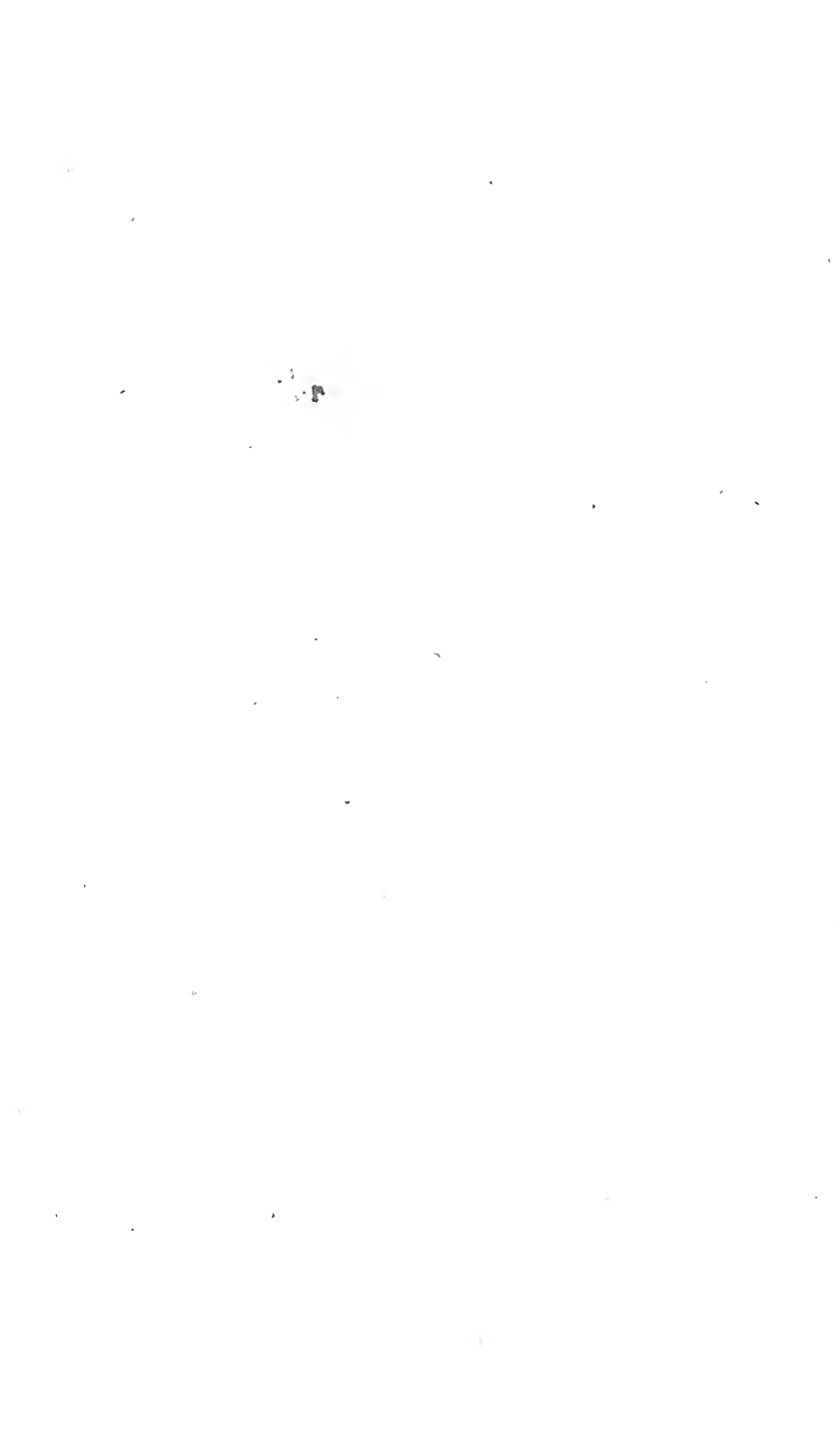






- 1 Scott's Rights of God.
- 2 Miller's Fast Sermon. yellow
- 3 Dwight on Goodrich.
- 4 Morse's Masonic Sermon.
- 5 W. Whorters' Missionary Sermon.
- 6 Dodge's on Witherpoon.
- 7 Pearce at the Ordination of Melcher ^{Kirkland on Melcher.}
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- 9 Lumbull's Ordination Sermon.
- 10 Emmons's Ordination Sermon.
- 11 Calvin on James.
- 12 Steven's Ordination Sermon.





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THE GOSPEL MINISTRY, *when improved*, THE
GREATEST BLESSING;
when resisted and abused, THE GREATEST CURSE.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

Sam^l. Miller

THE ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM NICOL,

TO THE CO-PASTORAL CARE OF THE SCOTS CHURCH
IN SWALLOW - STREET,

November 23, 1796.

BY THE

REV. JAMES STEVEN,

MINISTER OF THE SCOTS-CHURCH, CROWN-COURT,
COVENT-GARDEN.

To which is added

THE CHARGE

BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

OF THE SCOTS-CHURCH, LONDON-WALL.

London.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHORS,

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Strand; and BISHOP, Newport-Street.

1796.

Handwritten scribbles and marks, possibly a signature or initials, located in the upper left quadrant of the page.

TO
THE REV. DR. TROTTER,
THE REV. MR. NICOL,
MINISTERS ;

AND

*To the Elders, and other Members of the
Church in Swallow-Street.*



MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

HAD I consulted merely my *own* sentiments and feelings, the Sermon yesterday delivered would never have been submitted to public inspection. But your urgent, unanimous request, followed up by that of some respectable Clergy of the Church of England, and of many other Ministers and Gentlemen present on the occasion, hath overpow-

ered my reluctance, and given a *publicity* to the Discourse, which I little expected, and which it little merits.

I presume not to start as a candidate for theological *fame*; my ambition is bounded by the wish of being useful, and respected, in the circle of my *more immediate* Connections. The Sermon has little else to recommend it than the importance of the subject, and its tendency to arouse both the Preachers and Professors of Christianity, from that lethargic indifference, and dead formality, which so strongly mark the complexion of the *Age*. Though it may, perhaps, obtain a *wider* circulation, it is now printed, as it was first preached, with a *particular* view to the religious interests of the
Church

Church in Swallow-Street; which I hope, through the connection yesterday formed, will be greatly promoted, and long perpetuated. The Discourse issues from the *Press*, nearly in the state in which it was delivered from the *Pulpit*. Committing it, such as it is, to *your serious regard*, to the *candour of the Public*, to the *disposal and blessing of the GREAT HEAD OF THE CHURCH*, I am,

With unfeigned affection,

Your Servant in the Lord,

JAMES STEVEN.

Thornhaugh-Street, Bedford-Square,

Nov. 24, 1796.

THE SERVICE OF THE DAY

was conducted in the following Order :

The Rev. Mr. SMITH began with Prayer.

The Rev. Mr. LOVE read the Scriptures, gave the Narrative, and proposed the Questions, usual on such occasions.

The Rev. Mr. STEVEN preached the Sermon.

The Rev. Dr. TROTTER (Pastor of the Church) prayed the Consecration-Prayer, accompanied with the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery.

The Rev. Dr. HUNTER gave the Charge ; and

The Rev. Mr. RUTLEDGE concluded the whole, with Prayer and Thanksgiving.



A S E R M O N

ON

2 COR. II. 15, 16.

“ FOR WE ARE UNTO GOD A SWEET SAVOUR OF
 “ CHRIST, IN THEM THAT ARE SAVED, AND
 “ IN THEM THAT PERISH : TO THE ONE, WE
 “ ARE THE SAVOUR OF DEATH UNTO DEATH;
 “ AND TO THE OTHER, THE SAVOUR OF LIFE
 “ UNTO LIFE.”

EVER since the Church of God was established upon earth, a distinct order of men has subsisted in it, entrusted with the care of souls, and with the ministry of the Gospel, as the means of fulfilling it. The sacred nature of the office itself, the awful responsibility attached unto it, the qualifications requisite to the right discharge of it, and the vast momentous consequences which must for ever result from it;—these are considerations all suited, on this occasion,

sion,

sion, to strike our minds with an impressive energy. Than this, what station is more dignified, more arduous, or, on which more awful events intimately depend? If the dignity of any function is to be estimated, by the *magnitude* of the end at which it aims, or of the consequences to which it leads; none is equal to that of the "Ambassadors of Christ, who are allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel," and sent "in Christ's stead, to beseech men to be reconciled unto God." What is the employment of a Physician, of a Lawyer, of any Magistrate or Minister of State, (respectable as they are) compared to that of a faithful Minister of "the Prince of Peace, of the Lord of Glory?" *Theirs* relates only to the bodily health, to the worldly property, to the civil and political rights of mankind; *his* embraces the vast interests of their immortal spirits, and its consequences, surviving time, shall extend even to Eternity itself.

Nothing can equal the dignity, except the *comfort* arising from the successful discharge

charge of ministerial duty. To this, no true servant of Christ can be at all indifferent. He who feels no interest, nor solicitude, respecting the success of his ministry, has reason to conclude, that he is neither qualified, nor called to undertake it. Not that I would be understood, as representing great usefulness, to be the only test of a *valid* ministry; I mean merely to assert, that this is what every true Minister will eagerly desire and labour to attain,—that when attained he will rejoice, and that when wanting, he will be filled with the bitterest grief.

The context brings into view an illustrious instance of this kind, in the temper and conduct of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Reviewing his toils and travels in spreading the Gospel, he particularly records, to the honour of God, the signal success wherewith he was favoured, at Troas, Macedonia, and other places where “a door was opened unto him, of the Lord.” The very retrospect of such a scene of usefulness, gladdened his heart, and made his joy swell
into

into all the transports of exultation and triumph. "Now thanks be unto God," says he, "who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge, by us, in every place."

Notwithstanding, however, the miraculous powers by which his commission was attested, and notwithstanding the learning, piety, eloquence, and zeal with which he was so signally endowed; even Paul himself could not command *universal* success. It was in the Apostolic age, as in our own;—"Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."* Though many believed and turned unto the Lord, multitudes resisted the word, and, through unbelief and impenitence, perished in their sins. A consideration this, which could hardly fail to oppress the benevolent breast of our Apostle, and to damp the ardor of that joy and gratulation, to which he had just been giving vent.

* Acts xxviii. 24.

Yet afflicted as he was with it, there were two thoughts, which banished or relieved the anguish of his mind. The one—that a Minister's final account will turn, not upon his *success*, but upon his *sincerity*; not upon the *good* which he hath done, but upon the *fidelity and diligence* displayed in the attempt. The other—that he may faithfully fulfil the *end* of his Ministry, even when those who sat under it, instead of being saved, *perish* for ever. What was primarily spoken of the great Head and Prophet of the Church, in his official character, may apply to the abortive labours of every faithful servant.—“ I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. Though Israel be *not* gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.”* Long ago it was foretold of the foundation-stone, which God himself hath laid in Zion —“ this stone is set for the *fall*, as well as

* Isaiah xlix. 5, 6.

for the rising again of many in Israel." This was the prediction of Him "who knew the *end* from the beginning;" and did not *fact* exactly correspond to it, Christianity would be robbed of one of the main pillars, by which its truth and credibility are supported. As the same fire that softens wax, hardens clay, as the same light refreshes the sound, that hurts the weak dis-tempered eye; so the preaching of the Gospel must operate differently, on different persons, according to the reception given unto it: It must either prove "a favour of death unto death, or a favour of life unto life," unto all who hear it.

Employed, as we are this day, in the solemn designation of our young Brother, to the full exercise of his Christian Ministry, no subject occurred to my mind, as more adapted to the occasion, than that contained in the words before us. They suggest the two following points of discussion, to each of which I would humbly claim your candid attention.

I. That

- I. That Ministers, who faithfully diffuse “the sweet favour of the Knowledge of Christ,” are accepted of God, *whatever* be the effect produced by their Ministry.

- II. That since the preaching of the Gospel must produce its effect, of one kind or other, its hearers shall either *perish* or *profit*, by their attendance upon it.

After a brief discussion of these two important points, I shall *review and apply* the whole, in a more direct reference to the business of the day.

The *First* truth taught us in the text, is—that Ministers who faithfully diffuse the “sweet favour of Christ,” are accepted of God, *whatever* be the effect produced by their Ministry.

By an approved apostolical pattern, we are here instructed in the great duty of a Christian Minister, which is—to make the
doctrine

doctrine of Christ, the grand pervading theme of all his ministrations, and to represent all the other lines of religious truth, as running and referring to this as the *centre*.

Though this sentiment needs not the aid of metaphor to render it intelligible, our Apostle employs a striking, agreeable, and apt similitude, to give it lustre and advantage. He compares the preaching of the Gospel, to a *rich perfume*, diffusing its sweet reviving fragrance all around.

Without straining, or doing violence to this beautiful image, I shall use it no farther, than as it may illustrate the sentiment, and serve the purpose in view.

Such as are conversant with Scripture phraseology need not to be told, that, amongst many figurative allusions, that of a *precious, odoriferous ointment* is also used, to denote the Saviour's transcendent dignity, and the exquisite delight which his people feel, when hearing of his name. "Thy name,"

name," (says the Church, speaking of Christ in his person, character, offices, and grace) "thy name is as ointment poured forth." As though she had said, "Not more grateful to the external senses, not more adapted is the most delicious *perfume* to re-animate a person fainting in a swoon, than are thy gracious excellencies to restore and delight my soul, when pining away under a sense of guilt, and under the pressure of it's many sins, sorrows, trials, and infirmities." From these, and other causes, every Christian, while he continues in the body, is more or less subject to many spiritual maladies; to much languor, debility, and depression. In such circumstances, what is the grand *Catholicon*, and where is it to be found? In vain do we seek for it in the bleak, barren fields of human science; in the classical lore and cold speculations of Orators, Philosophers, Poets, and Politicians, either of ancient or modern date.—No, "miserable comforters are they all!" Nothing *they* can suggest can ease an awakened conscience of it's cumbrous load, pacify a troubled spirit, revive and raise the

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soul

soul when drooping and disconsolate, or satisfy it when panting for a happiness suited to it's nature.

The *Gospel*, and the *Gospel alone*, that precious system of grace and consolation, directs us to a suitable and effectual *Restorative*; one sweeter far than all the odours of Egypt and Arabia.—I need not say, I mean the doctrine of *Christ*, and of *salvation through his blood*. To hearers of a sound spiritual taste, “who have their senses exercised, that they can discern between good and evil,” every other system must be insipid, unfavoury, and useless; adapted rather to *corrupt* than to *cure* a disordered, imperfect, sinful nature. And yet, strange to tell! are there not some Preachers, if such they may be called, whose discourses smell more of *Socrates* and *Seneca*, of *Xenophon* and *Plato*, than of that worthy name by which alone sinners can be saved. Instead of being “a sweet favour of Christ,” neither the sentiment nor style of such Preachers has any *relish* of salvation in it. By fine-spun theories and maxims of morality,
by

by philosophical disquisitions on the beauty of virtue, and by the arts of science, *falsely so called*, they think to reason, or to charm the World into outward reformation. Instead of pointing, like John, to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” his name is but seldom and sparingly introduced, or if mentioned at all, it is with obvious reluctance and with cold reserve.

Far otherwise acted Paul, and the other Apostles, in fulfilling the Ministry, which they had received of the Lord. They were “not ashamed of the Gospel of *Christ*,” even of that part of it, which to others was the most shameful and offensive. In the divine, though despised, doctrine of the Cross, they were determined for ever to glory, because well they knew, that though it might be sneered at, as foolishness, by the self-righteous of the age, “it was by this same foolishness of preaching that God was to save them that believe.” Wherever they went, this was their darling, delightful theme; and almost every where it was

crowned with remarkable success. Travelling the land of Judea and of Palestine, as well as the more remote, idolatrous nations, how freely did they impart to them the Gospel of God? preaching to all “who were called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God.” This they did, “not with the wisdom of words, but with great plainness of speech, lest the Cross of Christ should become of none effect.” Instead of proselyting the Nations to the belief of the Truth by the glitter of language, by the fallies of wit, or by the charms of eloquence, they left it to it’s own innate evidence, to it’s own intrinsic energy, that so “the excellency of the Power might appear to be *of God.*”—Nor did they mutilate and obscure it, by mingling fancies of their own, to make it palatable to their hearers. This they left to the Judaizing zealots, while they, with undeviating integrity, “shunned not to declare *all* the counsel of God,” without daring to conceal or to curtail the most trivial part of it. On this Paul speaks, with an air of triumph, in the verse following the
text.

text.—“For we are not as many, who corrupt the word of God : but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the fight of God speak we in Christ.”

The same firmness and fidelity are expected, and will be studied of all, who would imitate this approved, apostolical pattern. Would *we*, my reverend Fathers and Brethren, wish to share in the triumphs of this Apostle, we must seek it, by establishing the same principles, by being actuated with the same motives, by aiming at the same end. To shape and accommodate our Sermons to the humours of our People, betrays a low, temporising, dastardly spirit, unworthy of the truths we preach, of the character we sustain, and of the exalted Master whom we serve. Were their silly prejudices and prepossessions to guide us in the Pulpit, we behoved to walk in a very partial and contracted range : too much stress would be laid upon some doctrines and duties of Religion, while others would be but slightly touched, or totally concealed.

Instead of this meagre, defective plan, we are to lead our People through the land of Revelation, “in the length and in the breadth of it,” explaining the historical, prophetic, typical, doctrinal, and practical parts of it, in close connection with that “Great Mystery of Godliness,” which reflects lustre, meaning, and consistence on the whole. Treat we, for instance, of the *Attributes* of God, we must not fail to show, that it is *in the face of Christ* that these shine with their most reviving splendor. Treat we of the *Promises*, we must not forget to mention, that these are “all yea and amen *in Christ*, to the glory of God.” Speak we of the *Law* of God, in its moral obligation, demands, threatenings, and terrors, it would be highly culpable, did we omit to add, “Christ is the end of the Law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth.” Do we insist on the *divine Commandments*, we must inculcate and recommend obedience to these, only from arguments connected with Christ, “without whom we can do nothing.”—Thus, while we maintain “that faithful saying, and affirm constantly,

constantly, that they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain *good works*," it will be in perfect harmony with another "faithful saying, also worthy of all acceptation—that *Christ Jesus* came into the world to *save sinners*, even the chief."

In this way will all our Ministrations literally prove "a sweet favour of *Christ*;"—his name will drop from our lips like the *sweet smelling myrrh*, shedding forth the most rich, reviving fragrance. When the Gospel is thus preached, in it's native purity, and when it's great Author is thus faithfully exhibited, in his infinite, unborrowed, transcendant dignity, it might be expected that men, in general, would be so convinced by it's evidence, and so captivated by it's charms, that, like Paul, they would "count all things loss, for the *excellency* of the knowledge of *Christ Jesus*." But so it is, that from prejudice, from pride of understanding, from the want of a sound spiritual taste, to relish and receive it, *the doctrine of Christ* is an *offence* to many, who "reject the counsel of God

against themselves, and make light of the great Salvation!"—Precious as Christ is unto them that believe, unto the unbelieving and impenitent, he hath always been as "a root out of a dry ground;" as "having no form nor comeliness in him, wherefore he should be desired." Little do persons of this description reflect on the truth and meaning of that awful doom, which our Lord, originally, denounced against the *Jews*; but which shall also fall in just severity upon all who are of the *same* infidel-brood. "If ye believe not that I am *He*, ye shall *die* in your sins." What else can be the portion of those, that *will not* come unto him, "who alone hath the words of eternal life? Dreadful doom! who, that has any love to the souls of men, would not deprecate and deplore it; and deploring, endeavour, to the utmost, to prevent it? Though his grief may be unavailing, and his best-intended, best-directed efforts utterly abortive; he will be ready to exclaim, in similar strains, with the plaintive Prophet—"But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places
for

for your pride ; mine eye shall weep fore, and run down with tears *.”

Under every discouragement of this nature, the grand relief, to a faithful Minister, is—that, however offensive may be his Ministry *unto Men*, it is accepted of *God*, as a service *well-pleasing* in his sight. “ We are *unto God* (says the Apostle) a sweet favour of Christ, both in them that are favoured, and in them that perish.” Desirable in itself, as it surely is, *success* in his work is what no Minister can command, or secure to himself ; it depends upon causes, over which he has no controul. Nevertheless, if he has endeavoured, by proper means, to do good to the utmost of his power ; whether he fails or succeeds in his design, “ verily, he shall in no wise lose his reward !” Indeed, in the tranquility and approbation of conscience, and in the refined, exalted pleasures connected with it, the Redeemer’s service may be said to be, its *own* reward. But, besides this recompence given *in hand*, every faithful

* Jer. xiii. 17.

Minister shall graciously receive an ample retribution, “at the resurrection of the Just.” With whatever silence and obscurity he may have passed through life, he shall then be acknowledged and commended, before an assembled world; and, from his Master’s lips, shall openly receive that grand *eulogium*, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

It were well if his labours led to the same glorious issue, in the case of *all*, who attended on his Ministry. But the issues and aspects of the Judgment-day will *vary*, according as men have *rejected*, or *improved* the means of salvation. This naturally leads to the next topic of discourse.

II. That since the preaching of the Gospel must produce it’s effect, of one kind or other, it’s hearers shall either *perish* or *profit* by their attendance upon it.

First, The text declares, that “to them that perish, it is *the savour of death unto death.*”

death.” How awful and alarming the thought! that any who have heard the word of *life*, should *perish* for ever—that, to any who have sat under the preaching of the Gospel, it should serve only as a *torch*, to light them down to the dreary abodes of *darkness and despair*. Not that this arises from any fault or deficiency in the Gospel itself, or that this is its direct and proper tendency. Entirely the reverse—the effect is to be attributed, not to the Gospel; but to the unbelief, insensibility, and obstinacy of sinners themselves, who “*will not* come unto Christ, that they may have life, nor receive, with meekness, that ingrafted word, which is *able* to save their souls.” In this view, we cannot impeach the wisdom and equity of the divine character, or subject it to any imputation of harshness and severity. It is wholly matter of *self-crimination*. Despisers of “the Gospel of the grace of God,” may be said to *perish by choice*; and, to *prefer* the miseries of spiritual *death* to all the blessedness of endless *life*!

Permit

Permit me briefly to illustrate the truth of this sentiment in two particulars.

1. When a preached Gospel is resisted and abused, it is "the favour of death," as it contributes to the badness of their *state*; as it seals and aggravates their deserved *condemnation*. Man's first act of disobedience brought death into the world, and all our woe; and on this account, as well as for our actual and acquired depravity, a sentence of condemnation hath gone forth against us all. "Curfed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the Law to do them." From this state of guilt and condemnation, how shall sinners obtain deliverance? or to what shall they look for final release?—Not to virtues of which they may suppose themselves possessed; even these, if they had them, are but requisitions of present duty, and cannot make the smallest reparation for one past transgression.—Not to vows of future amendment; for these, at best, are not only destitute of every degree of *merit*, but too often prove precarious, feeble, and transitory.

transitory.—Not to the justice of God; for, instead of peace, that speaks nothing but vengeance to the guilty.—Not even to the general, uncovenanted mercy of God; for the utmost that it can dictate, is, “Who can tell, if the Lord will turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” Nowhere can souls, burdened with guilt, find deliverance and rest, but in the method of salvation revealed in the Gospel. It is only “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that can free them from the law of sin and death.” But if, by unbelief and impenitence, they reject this great salvation, then “the commandment, which was ordained to life, will be found to be *unto death*.”

Ministers now, indeed, have no such power delegated unto them, as had the priests under the law, who could declare the incurable leper utterly *unclean*: nor can they pronounce on any of their people, as the Apostles did on Simon the forcerer, “thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” No;—such an extraordinary power hath long since ceased, with the
cause

cause that required it. But it by no means follows, from this concession, that the sacred office is now altogether stripped of its authority and efficacy. Often perhaps, though unknown to us, do our sermons, still prove “the favour of death,” to some that hear us. What Jesus said of his doctrine, as dropping from the lips of Prophets and Apostles, will apply, in a certain degree, to that of every faithful Minister, to the end of time—“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*” Nay, Scripture teaches us, that the hottest hell, shall be the portion of those who despise the Gospel; or attend upon it, without any design or desire to profit: “It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for such &c.”†

2. The Gospel, when abused, proves “the favour of death,” inasmuch as sinners, by stifling and counteracting its sa-

* John xii. 48. † Matth. xi. 22.

cred influence, only take occasion to *corrupt* themselves *the more*, by the abuse they make of it. This thought admits of illustration, in various views.—Sometimes, it, indirectly, *confirms their prejudices*. Coming to hear, with an unfavourable prepossession of mind against it, they only attend, that they may meet with something, by which their disaffection to the truth may be fostered and confirmed. To such men, the doctrine of *Christ crucified, the strictness and extent of the divine law—the mortification of the flesh, with its affections and lusts*, are subjects peculiarly offensive. This our Lord assigns as a reason, why he spake so often in parables; that persons who came to cavil at his word, might be hardened and confounded.*—Sometimes, *their passions are excited by it*. So strange a repugnance is there between the passions of men and the word of God, that they often quarrel, both with the word itself, and with those who dispense it. The stream of depravity being damm'd up, by the holy law of God, takes

* Matth. xiii. 13.

occasion, from this circumstance, to swell and flow, with a more raging fury. Instances innumerable might be produced of this; but I satisfy myself, with one example from the Old Testament, and another from the New. In 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, we see how the ancient Prophets, as well as their predictions, were sometimes treated; and how the scorning of the wicked proved unto themselves, an *evident token of perdition*.—"But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." In Acts vii. 54, we see too, how the faithful preaching of the Proto-martyr Stephen, while it convinced, it so *exasperated* the Jews against him, that when they heard what he had said, "they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth." And though the punishment which followed their murderous deed, is unnoticed in the narrative, it is probable, that (Paul excepted) few of them escaped the just judgment of God. "If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment

punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace.”*

Again, sometimes, by means of the word, sinners *lull themselves asleep in carnal security*. While Ministers prophecy to them *smooth things*, all is well; but if, by a serious and faithful address to the conscience, they disturb their peace, or detect them in the *secret* haunts of iniquity, then they are offended, and, in proud hostility, rebel against the truth. Were Ministers to overlook that part of the word, which is more searching and severe, “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,” their preaching would have the most pernicious influence; fostering a peace which should rather be disturbed.

To address the precious promises and consolations of the Gospel, unto persons of

* Heb. x. 28, 29.

this description, is like applying sweetmeats to a disordered stomach, which tend to feed rather than to cure the disease,—to injure, rather than to make the appetite sound. By such a vague indiscriminate application of the word; many, I fear, have been soothed in their sins, and lulled asleep in carnal security, from which they have never awaked, until “their feet stumbled on the dark mountains,” and till they were about to plunge into the gulph of remediless ruin!

But from this dark distressing view of things, we turn away—to contemplate a brighter scene.

Secondly, The Gospel Ministry, unto others, is “the favour of life unto life.” Were our preaching, my Fathers and Brethren, *universally* followed with effects like those, we would droop in discouragement, and in despondent grief, be ready to relinquish the very attempt. But although some of our hearers prove only a source of *sorrow and shame* to us; blessed be God! there are others who prove “*our glory and joy.*”
Although

Although “to them that are lost our Gospel is hid,” or has only a deadly destructive favour,—there are others whom we may address, in the language of our Lord,—“The words that we speak unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life*.”*

Here, it is natural to enquire, *who* or *what* is it that causeth these to differ? Is the effect to be ascribed to any superior energy in the word—to any greater exertion of talents in the preacher—or to any transcendent merit in the hearers? No—they may be children of the same family, members of the same church, may sit, perhaps, in the same pew, and the preacher may address them with the same ability, earnestness and affection: and yet, after all this equality in outward circumstances, the one class may remain *cold, callous, lifeless* as a stone, while the other is *awakened, melted, moved, and animated* with the liveliest sensations of faith, love, gratitude and joy! Upon no other principle, can this happy

* John vi. 63.

difference be properly accounted for, than upon that laid down by the Apostle, when he said—"By the *grace of God*, I am what I am."*

Permit me to illustrate the phrase "the favour of life unto life," in *two* distinct ideas, which it seems to include,

1. That the word of God purely preached, is the grand *instrument* by which the divine life is usually infused and advanced in the souls of believers.

By nature they, like others, are spiritually dead; having no vital sensations, appetites, inclinations, or affections towards God or his service. Of the reality and misery of such a state, the bulk of mankind have no proper persuasion. They can conceive of death in no other light, than as it is an extinction of the feelings and functions of animal nature: But that men may be "*dead even while they live*," that even when their

* I Cor. xv, 10.

animal and intellectual powers are in full vigour, they may be destitute of *moral and spiritual life*; is a position, sanctioned as it is by Scripture and fact, which many deride, as the wild reverie of fanaticism and folly.* To the eye of *faith*, however, opened by divine revelation, this seeming paradox appears at once credible and consistent. Full well can real believers recollect the time, when the pulse of sacred af-

* Some unenlightened heathen, and infidel Jews have appeared, who may serve to affront those modern pretenders to *reason and refinement* in religion.

It is reported of *Socrates*, by his historian, that among the last discourses which he delivered, he says, when speaking of *Life*, in this moral sense. "Do you ask me what it is to *live*? I tell you that, to live *truly*, is to endeavour to excel in goodness; and to live *comfortably*, is to feel one's self growing better and better."

It is said, too, of *Philo-Judæus*, that, when describing man, such as he ought to be, he observes—"No one ought to be reckoned a partaker of the *rational* nature, that has not in him *hope towards God*." If such were the sentiments of men confessedly strangers to Christianity; the *reason* of those alluded to above must be shamefully sunk *below the standard*; and yet, forsooth, they would affect exclusively to be thought *rational* Christians!!

fections never beat in their breasts; when the breath of true prayer never ascended from their lips; when, whatever acuteness, sensibility, and vigour they discovered in prosecuting their *secular* interests, their souls were quite careless, senseless, and dead, as to matters of *spiritual* and *eternal* concern. In this dismal state would they for ever have remained, had not "God, who is rich in mercy, with his great love wherewith he loved them, even when they were dead in sins, quickened them together with Christ."* Though other means may be conducive to this end, the pure preaching of the word of Christ is the grand instrument usually employed, in the renovation of the souls of men. When reading or hearing some particular parts of it, formerly, perhaps, neglected or despised; the Spirit of Grace, who is the sole *efficient* cause of this change, thereby produces such deep convictions and impressions on the mind, as shew, that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

* Eph. ii. 4, 5.

But

But not only are believers, “of God’s own will, *begotten* by the word of truth, that they may be a kind of first fruits of his creatures;”—they are also *sanctified, quickened, comforted, and advanced* in holiness, by the same instituted medium. Perhaps, Christ’s healing the diseases of many by a *word*, during his residence on earth, might be designed to pre-signify the salutary influence, which his Gospel should have upon the souls of men. Every blinded understanding he hath thereby illuminated, every stubborn will thereby subdued, every carnal heart thereby purified, every boisterous passion regulated and restrained by it, gives fresh attestation to this truth—that the preaching of the Gospel, “to those that are saved, is *the favour of life.*”

Not only does it produce spiritual *life*, it also promotes spiritual *liveliness*. Not more refreshing to the animal spirits is some sweet *odour*, seasonably applied; than are the promises and consolations of the Gospel unto a Christian, when faint, feeble, and unfit for duty. Under the crosses and calamities of

life, too, he would be often apt to sink, were he not solaced and strengthened by these reviving cordials. What David says of the sweet refreshment he derived from the Scripture, will apply to the language and experience of every other believer.—“ Unless thy Law had been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction. This word of thine is my comfort in affliction, and in all my straits I am revived by it*.” Nay, to show that this language is not peculiar to one Saint, eminent for holiness, the whole Church is introduced saying—“ Thy words were found of me, and I did eat them; and they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart †.” On these accounts, persons of the highest attainments in Religion still need to attend on preaching, and on other ordinances of the Gospel: nor shall they be wholly raised above this necessity, until they arrive in the heavenly Zion, where “ in God’s light they shall see light clearly.”

* Psalm cxix. 50. 92. † Jer. xv. 16.

Which

Which leads me to observe, as an additional idea included in the text,

2. That the divine life *begun* on earth, by means of the Gospel, shall, by the same means, be carried forward to its *full maturity* in Heaven.

It is not “a favour of life *unto death*,” like the present transitory existence of the body, but “a favour of life *unto life*.” It seems to be a general law in the divine constitution, that there be a gradation, or progression, in the works of God. None of them, so far as we know, are fully completed, or brought to perfection at once. Every day this may be seen in the various tribes of the vegetable and animal worlds, as well as in the advancement of the human species towards perfection. Thus the seed sown in the earth, by a tedious process, arrives at maturity; and the untutored helpless babe, by degrees, attains to the strength and wisdom of manhood.—The same progressive plan seems to be observed in the *spiritual* world. The divine life in
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the soul of man, when first infused, is, like a grain of mustard-seed, small and inconsiderable ; others around can scarcely perceive it, nay it may be scarcely perceptible to the happy possessor. But strengthened by the word of God, as it's proper aliment, and nourished from time to time by supernatural influence, that which was once as an acorn in the field, becomes like a tall tree, in which the birds of the air may nestle and dwell. That gracious promise of the Head of the Church ascertains both the *means* and the *end*.—" I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment ; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day *." Though the word of God shall be rendered unnecessary, in the heavenly state, it is always useful to the Christian, during his continuance here. While here, he is but in a state of *minority* ; and therefore upon the ordinances of religion he must punctually attend, as being the proper means of his education, and preparation for his eternal inheritance.

* Isaiah xxvii. 3.

The present differs as widely from the future condition of the People of God, as *infancy* from *manhood*. In our present state of ignorance and infirmity, let us diligently improve divine ordinances, as the means of advancing in our spiritual stature and strength, “until we all come, through the unity of the faith, and through the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the stature of perfect men, in Christ Jesus*.”

The subject of the text being thus discussed, it is now time that I *review and apply* it, in a more direct reference to the service of the day.

1st, With what an awful impression of it's eternal consequences should every Minister undertake and execute his important office !

If nothing short of the vast issues of *life and death* are involved in it, it must require no ordinary share of wisdom, piety, diligence and zeal, to discharge it aright. Was Paul, a man of consummate prudence, and
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* Ephes. iv. 13.

of transcendent talents, both natural and acquired, so struck with the work, as to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" What shall we think of *their* presumptuous confidence, who, in a disorderly manner, and with very slender furniture, intrude themselves upon it! No wonder that such raw upstarts, and blind zealots, bring the Ministry into contempt; and that the souls of men run a dreadful hazard, by their petulance and folly. But, when a Minister duly deliberates on the importance and difficulty of his sacred function, and considers its consequences as reaching forward to eternity, this will stimulate him to diligence in preparation for it, and to fidelity in the discharge of it.

2d. What an air of solemnity, and devout solicitude, should rest upon *this Congregation*, on such an interesting occasion. To you who stately assemble here, this is an *eventful* day; when you are called, as from an eminence, to look backward on the *past*, and forward to the *future*. Providence calls you particularly to *reflect*

on the many sweet seasons for spiritual improvement, you have enjoyed under the Ministry of my much-respected Father, who has for *twenty-six* years dispensed the word and the bread of life among you. You are called to *anticipate*, also, the pleasing prospect which this day opens to you, in which the authority, experience, and solidity of *age*, are to be combined with the ardour and industry of *youth*, for your spiritual advantage. Therefore,

3d. Suffer, my Brethren, the word of Exhortation.

My counsels shall be few, and chiefly connected with the subject of discourse; as the reciprocal duties, arising from your reciprocal relations, will be more fully and forcibly inculcated in the *Charge*. I would only say,

“Take heed *what* you hear.” Be not indifferent to the religious sentiments advanced by your Teachers, as if this were a matter of trivial moment. Truth and error

ror are opposite in their nature, origin, influence, and effects. Remember the hearing of the Gospel is not that easy, indifferent, uninteresting thing, which some seem to imagine: it is not like some simple medicine, which, if it does no good, will do no harm; it is rather like some strong, sovereign remedy, which is only applied when the case is desperate, and which, if it does *not cure*, will infallibly *destroy*.

“Take heed *how* you hear.” Beware of inattention and drowsiness—of insensibility and prejudice—of an over-critical and censorious spirit, in hearing the Gospel; these will obstruct your spiritual improvement, and, of course, greatly endanger your souls. Guard against a carnal covetous spirit; for a heart petrified by the love of this world, is a foil into which the good seed of the word cannot be sown with advantage. Enter the House of God with a mind open to instruction, and to the full influence of the truths you hear, cordially disposed “to obey that form of doctrine that is delivered unto you.”

“Endeavour

“ Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.” Of the necessity and advantage of this, I trust you are sufficiently convinced ; if you are not, the hundred and thirty-third Psalm will give you a lively picture. The prejudices of education and habit, the influence of great names, self-love, and a fondness for singularity, have in many societies been an endless source of schism and strife ; but by your *proved* fidelity ye have shown, that “ ye have not so learned Christ.” United in sentiment, affection, and practice, I hope, like the primitive Churches, you will continue to walk together in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and be multiplied. On all who walk according to this rule, “ peace be on them, and on the Israel of God !”

Continue to respect, cherish, and support your *venerable* and *aged* Minister, who has long been the messenger of the Lord of Hosts to you. Amidst the infirmities of age, and even amid the pangs of dissolving nature, you owe him every tribute of regard ;

gard ; and by rendering it unto him, you may smoothe the wrinkled brow of affliction, and help to close his eyes in peace.—And, I demand in behalf of my *young* Brother, whom I have been honoured to introduce to you,—the embraces of pure, kind, durable affection—the sympathy, attachment, and support due to one, “ who is set over you in the Lord,”—and the persevering importunity of believing prayer, for a *blessing* to accompany all his labours. Yet a little while, and both Ministers and People must “ give an account of their stewardship, and be no longer stewards” —the *one*, how they have fulfilled their Ministry—the *other*, what use and improvement they have made of all the *grace* that was offered in it. O that in the joys and triumphs of that day, *both* your Ministers may have a distinguished share ! saying of you, as Paul did of his charge at *Thessalonica*—“ For, what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming ?”

I conclude

I conclude by reciting his prayer for *them*, which shall be my earnest and constant wish for *you*: “AND THE LORD
“MAKE YOU TO INCREASE AND ABOUND
“IN LOVE ONE TOWARD ANOTHER, AND
“TOWARD ALL MEN; EVEN AS WE DO
“TOWARD YOU: TO THE END HE MAY
“ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS, UNBLAME-
“ABLE IN HOLINESS, BEFORE GOD EVEN
“THE FATHER, AT THE COMING OF OUR
“LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH ALL HIS
“SAINTS.*”—AMEN!

* 1 Theff. iii. 12, 13.

THE CHARGE

TO

MR. NICOL.

AT every period, and in every state of things the end of all things, presents itself to view, saying, Lo, I am at hand. A child born is in a progress toward death ; a building finished has already begun to decay, an union formed looks directly forward to the day of it's dissolution. In conferring and undertaking a pastoral charge, the parties are impressed with the thought that it must shortly be resigned, and an account rendered. The Christian Minister, like Moses, beholds his charge melting away day by day, and himself, though among the last, yet most certainly, with the rest, appointed unto death. The solemnity of this day exhibits the unremitting care of the ever-living Head and King of the Christian World, to preserve an uninterrupted oversight of his body the Church ; it exhibits the dignified union of a Moses and a Joshua ; the one, without repining, ready to communi-

cate a share of his respectability and usefulness to his younger friend; the other, without aspiring, disposed to divide and thereby to diminish the labour, to relieve the anxieties, to mitigate the troubles, and to promote the views of his aged associate, in the most honourable of all employments. Propitious be the connection to all concerned!

In discharging my part of the duty imposed, by the appointment of the Presbytery, on this occasion, I might have satisfied myself, Sir, with recommending to your study and imitation the pattern immediately before your eyes, that of your respected predecessor, and now affectionate colleague. Were he not present, I would have attempted a delineation of that pattern: but I must not pain his ear with a representation of the manner in which he has departed himself through the course of a long, acceptable and useful ministry, both here and in Scotland, though his heart must secretly rejoice in reflecting upon it, neither must I expose myself to the suspicion of employing adulation, even by speaking the truth. I resort, therefore, to a still
more

more impressive example, and a still higher authority, by referring you and myself, and all our brethren in the Ministry, to that part of the valedictory address of the great Apostle of the Gentiles to the Elders of the Church of Ephesus, which we have recorded Acts xx. 26—28.

WHEREFORE I TAKE YOU TO RECORD THIS DAY, THAT I AM PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN. FOR I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE UNTO YOU ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD. TAKE HEED THEREFORE UNTO YOURSELVES, AND TO ALL THE FLOCK OVER THE WHICH THE HOLY GHOST HATH MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO FEED THE CHURCH OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.

What administered consolation to the Apostle, in finally saying farewell to a Church which he dearly loved, which he had planted and watered, furnishes many a useful hint to you, how to conduct yourself in a Ministry on which you are just entering.

Could he confidently appeal, at the close, to the office-bearers and members them-

selves of the Church of Ephesus, respecting the tenderneſs, the diligence, and the fidelity which he had diſcovered in diſcharging the truſt committed to him? Endeavour, my dear Sir, at every particular period, and in every particular exerciſe, of your Miniſtry, to act ſo as to lay a foundation for a ſimilar appeal; that at the laſt, when the whole paſſes under review, you may be able to commend and approve yourſelf to the hearts and conſciences of all. It is matter of joy and rejoicing to have the teſtimony of your own mind, that you have dealt faithfully with the ſouls of men, but it is a very high additional ſatisfaction to enjoy the concurring teſtimony of thoſe among whom you have laboured in the word of the Goſpel; and what is of ſtill higher importance, “of God alſo, how holily, and juſtly, and unblameably, you behaved yourſelf among them that believe,” and alſo among them who do not believe.

But what is the ſubject of this ſolemn appeal? “I am pure from the blood of all men.” The preſerving of the life of a fellow-citizen was deemed, in the purer times of the Roman Republic, the higheſt and

and most honourable act of patriotism which a man could perform. It was rewarded by a peculiar crown, which entitled the wearer to a seat among the highest order in the Commonwealth, in places of public resort. To take away the life of another unjustly, has, on the other hand, among all civilized, and even among barbarous Nations, been adjudged, and avenged as, the most atrocious of crimes. What then is the joy, what the crown of our Apostle, in contemplating, not perishable life rescued from the sword of the enemy, but immortal souls plucked as “brands out of the burning;” not a crown composed of a few fading leaves, but an unfading crown of glory; not a seat among the Patricians and the Gods of this World, who are vanity and a lie, and whose honours lie rotting in the dust, but among those “that turn many to righteousness, who shall shine as the stars for ever and ever?” And what then is the atrocity of being accessory to the murder of a spiritual being, formed after the image of the blessed God, and capable of never-ending felicity? How humiliating, how alarm-

ing to reflect, in how many various ways this worst of crimes may be perpetrated ! As the animal life of the man may be destroyed by starving, by poison, by the sword, and by other means innumerable, so the celestial spark, the spirit that is in man may be reduced to a state of spiritual and everlasting death, by withholding the proper and necessary aliment, the sincere milk of the word, and the strong meat of the mature : by infusing the mortal poison of false doctrine, religious or moral ; by the pernicious influence of seductive example. Happy the Minister who can, on a retrospect, speak peace to his soul on this subject.

By what means did Paul preserve himself “ pure from the blood of all men ? ” He “ shunned not to declare all the counsel of God.” What a dignified representation have we here of that Gospel which we are commissioned and commanded to preach to every creature ! “ The counsel of God.” It is not a device of the human understanding ; the matured result of human deliberation,

ration, with all the imperfection of human ignorance and insufficiency lying heavy upon it: it is not the partial and temporary expedient which a sense of wretchedness might have suggested, but the eternal “purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;” a plan of unerring, efficient wisdom, completely adapted to its object, and fulfilling its design. This instructs us, my beloved brother, from what stores we are to draw the supplies which we are, from time to time, to administer to them who hear us.—“The lively oracles of God,” they declare “the counsel of God.” Avail yourself, by all means, of your learning; avail yourself of the wisdom of past ages; avail yourself of your own knowledge and experience; avail yourself of the counsel of wise men your contemporaries; but God himself alone supplies the means of melting the stony heart, of awakening the slumbering conscience, of making the broken spirit whole, of “quickening the dead in trespasses and sins.” Let not your spirit presume to direct the spirit of the Lord, to supply what you may deem defective,

defective, to rectify what the pride of the schools may consider as erroneous, to explain what is designedly left in obscurity. Substitute nothing of your own in the room of what God hath written, mingle nothing of your own to mar the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. Nothing is adapted to the necessities of the soul of man, but the word of life. That starving soul cries aloud for bread: Will you give him a stone? or are you weak enough to imagine that the stones of a philosophy, “falsely so called,” are to be miraculously transformed into the bread of life? He asks a fish: Will you for a fish give him a serpent, to destroy not to feed? If God is pleased to give any testimony to the labours of his ministering servants, it is just in so far as they declare “the word of his grace.” “The treasure is,” indeed, “in earthen vessels,” but is for this very end, that “the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

But farther, the Apostle felt himself constrained to declare not only what *was* the counsel of God, but *all* the counsel of God.

He

He who is employed as a messenger, and who acts under a commission, must not exercise a discretionary power of adding, suppressing, or altering; if he does so, he is chargeable with a twofold infidelity. He is unfaithful to his employer, whose exact meaning he ought to have exactly conveyed in exactly his own words; and he is unfaithful to him to whom he was sent, who has an undoubted title to know the exact purport of what is addressed to him. Even Balaam who “loved the wages of unrighteousness,” and was under a violent inclination to corrupt his message, unequivocally declares his assent to this; “I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more:” and again, “I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind, but what the Lord saith that will I speak.” And the great Messenger of Messengers expressly declares of himself: “I can of mine own self do nothing:—because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me:” and, “the doctrine is not mine, but the
Father’s

Father's which sent me." In the spirit of his divine Master, our Apostle, in like manner, consoles himself in the reflection of having found grace to be faithful at once to God and to the souls of men, by keeping nothing back, nothing that was profitable to men, disguising no truth, palliating no truth; and herein he becomes our ensample to deliver the mind of the Lord, and that only, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear;" under the tremendous sanction of another apostolic declaration, respecting the completeness of the word of prophecy. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

FOR I TESTIFY UNTO EVERY MAN THAT HEARETH THE WORDS OF THE PROPHECY OF THIS BOOK; IF ANY MAN SHALL ADD UNTO THESE THINGS, GOD SHALL ADD UNTO HIM THE PLAGUES THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK: AND IF ANY MAN SHALL TAKE AWAY FROM THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF THIS PROPHECY, GOD SHALL TAKE AWAY HIS PART OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE, AND OUT OF THE HOLY CITY, AND FROM THE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK.

The

The expression which St. Paul uses in explaining his own conduct, merits your most serious consideration. “I have not *shunned*,” says he, “to declare all the counsel of God.” It plainly implies that he had been under strong temptation to soften and to suppress. His integrity and candor had exposed him to much opposition, obloquy and persecution. Had he dared to dissemble, he might have escaped a great deal of the enmity which he had to encounter for telling the truth; but he had counted the cost, and deliberately formed his determination; and at the very moment of his making this address, though uncertain as to particulars of suffering, he had the near and certain prospect of enduring whatever the malice of bigotry could devise or inflict. AND NOW BEHOLD, I GO BOUND IN THE SPIRIT UNTO JERUSALEM, NOT KNOWING THE THINGS THAT SHALL BEFAL ME THERE: SAVE THAT THE HOLY GHOST WITNESSETH IN EVERY CITY, SAYING, THAT BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS ABIDE ME. BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME, NEITHER COUNT I MY LIFE

LIFE DEAR UNTO MYSELF, SO THAT I MIGHT FINISH MY COURSE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD, ACTS XX. 22—24. And it was not the infirmity of nature, or the desire of exciting compassion, but an immediate revelation from Heaven of approaching events, which induced him to add, ver. 25. AND NOW BEHOLD, I KNOW THAT YE ALL, AMONG WHOM I HAVE GONE PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, SHALL SEE MY FACE NO MORE.

Through the goodness of God, my Brother, you have not to apprehend a rancorous, persecuting opposition, in fulfilling the Ministry which you have received of the Lord ; on the contrary, you have the almost certain prospect of recompence, of reputation, of support, of encouragement ; you enter on your ministerial career under every auspicious aspect of Providence, with almost every possible advantage ; a fair and unblemished character from the scene of
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your past exertions in the cause of the gospel ; many seals of an acceptable and useful ministry ; the good will of all your brethren in the south and in the north ; the unanimous call of a harmonious and affectionate people ; “ other men have laboured, and you are entering into their labours ; ” but ah Sir ! with all these in your favour, it is far from being impossible you should be tempted to *shun* to declare all the counsel of God. There is in gentle natures a reluctance to give pain : the partiality of friendship may blind the eye of the understanding ; a man who would bid defiance to the sword of the persecutor, may be intimidated by the sneer of the scorner ; a state of ease may superinduce a state of security, and a state of security is ever a state of danger : even a man’s good qualities sometimes prove a snare to him ; hence the importance, the necessity, of blending prayer with vigilance ; of adding to the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, the boldness of the lion.

Further,

Further, your pastoral care must be extended to “ ALL THE FLOCK OVER THE WHICH THE HOLY GHOST HATH MADE YOU OVERSEER, TO FEED THE CHURCH OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.” It is not surely without reason that the Apostle deals so much in universals on this interesting occasion. “ I am pure from the blood of *all* men :” “ I have not shunned to declare *all* the counsel of God :” take heed to *all* the flock.” The good, the chief shepherd makes no distinction between sheep and sheep, except such as peculiar delicacy of character and condition renders necessary. “ He shall feed his flock like a shepherd : he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young :” and ill does it besit the under shepherd to set store by distinctions which his great principal despises. In the house of prayer, at the table of the Lord, “ the rich and the poor,” the noble and the ignoble, the learned and the illiterate, the prosperous and the disappointed “ meet together, the
Lord

Lord is the maker of them all," and they together constitute "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." What, therefore, God hath blended, that let not man dare to discriminate. Our order is accused by the world, of fawning upon, and flattering the rich and the great; if this reproach be founded in truth, do what in you lies to wipe it away: if particular respect and attention are due to any class or description above another, the wretched of every denomination have undoubtedly a superior claim upon him who professes himself the disciple of a master whose prophetic and historic character it is "to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort those who mourn," and who delivered it as the great test of his divine mission, that "to the *poor* the gospel was preached."

The hands of the presbytery have this day set you apart to the holy ministry, and particularly to the superintendance of this flock; but unless the Holy Ghost confirm the designation, what we have done is a poor unmeaning ceremony, useless to you,

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and unprofitable to the church of Christ. But if, as we humbly trust, you “ have an unction from the HOLY ONE,” constituting you an overseer of the flock, O then “ go forth another Gideon in this thy might,” and thou shalt save many of the Israel of God out of the hand of the enemy of souls; hath not “ the Lord sent thee? The Lord is with thee thou mighty man of valour.”

Once more, estimate the weight and importance of the Charge you have undertaken, by the price paid for its purchase: “ Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with *his own blood.*” What peculiarity, propriety, and boldness of expression! Paul had suggested the strange idea of the blood of a soul, meaning its vital principle, that to the immortal spirit, which the crimson circulating fluid is to the body; and in order to mark its unspeakable value, and to justify the deep concern which he took in it, he represents the church in general, and the soul of every individual believer, in particular, as redeemed *by the blood of God*, and capable of being redeemed at no less

less a price. What could warrant such language, but the truth of the Gospel history, and the real character of the Saviour of mankind? A spirit, the Father of spirits, hath not flesh and bones and blood as we have, but he who was, and is, God, assumed flesh and bones, and shed his blood to redeem the soul of man from everlasting death. O how "great is the mystery of godliness!" "These things the angels desire to look into." "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection!" Surely what God prized so highly, and purchased so dearly, well deserves your deepest concern, your most fervent prayers, your unremitting labours. Does duty at any time seem painful, and labour severe? You have but to reflect thus for a moment, the self same object cost the blessed Jesus agonizing pangs, a bloody sweat, the painful and accursed death of the cross; and then every murmur will be suppressed, every bitter thing will become sweet, and every difficulty disappear, and you will rejoice in spending, and in being spent, in that cause

for which your great Master suffered, and bled, and died.

All that I feel now incumbent on me, is to congratulate my ancient Father and friend on the comfortable prospect which opens upon his declining years; on having one like-minded with himself in managing the concerns of their common ministry, on having the felicity of sharing with him, in life, the affectionate attachment of a happily united people, and, should the course of nature prevail, of transmitting to him, with a departing benediction, the sole charge, and undivided affections, of an improving, increasing, edifying church of Christ. And I trust his valuable life will be prolonged by means of the tranquillity which the union we have been ratifying will diffuse over his mind, and the dignified ease and rest which it will procure for his body. The more it shall please God to extend it, the better I am sure it will be, in all respects, for his Timothy, and for their common care, and for the world.

I feel

I feel myself called upon likewise to congratulate this Christian society on their past enjoyments, on their present cordiality of affection toward their ministers and among themselves, and on their future prospects. These are to be the more devoutly acknowledged, and the more thankfully to be rejoiced in, that a cloud seemed to be gathering, which threatened winter before the season, pregnant with dispersion, alienation and change. But a gracious Providence has dispersed it, and your day shines with a redoubled lustre: instead of anticipated winter, you are called to enjoy the blessings of spring and autumn combined. You have now indeed a twofold object of regard, but though the persons are two, the office, the hearts, the interests, the exertions, the aim and end of both are one and undivided; and one let them be, one in your respect, your benevolence, your esteem, your munificence. Neither, I am confident, will feel gratified by any mark of preference conferred upon himself at the expense, and to the diminution of the other. You are happily delivered, as far as human
fatigacity

fragacity can give security, from the danger and inconveniency to which the supply of a vacant charge is exposed. For intrigue and cabal, and the various workings of the selfish passions, no room is left. See that you turn this most propitious circumstance to good account. You have only to maintain your existing harmony, to strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts of these good men, by your prayers, by your sympathy, by your regular attendance upon their ministry, and by keeping constantly in view the great object and end of the gospel ministry, the salvation of your immortal souls. This tribute of my gratitude and affection, will, I hope, be received as it is meant, for this Church has for many years been, and ever will be, dear to me; and I shall always consider myself bound to wish, and to pray for, its temporal and everlasting peace and prosperity.

And now, my dear young Brother, it remains that I commend you, and your labours of love, your body and spirit, your temporal and immortal concerns to the
great

great Lord of the vineyard, beseeching him to become to you a spirit of wisdom to direct, of judgment to discern, of fortitude to sustain, of holiness to sanctify, and of grace to help you in every time of your need.

“ Now the God of peace that brought again
“ from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great
“ shepherd of the sheep, through the blood
“ of the everlasting covenant, make you
“ perfect in every good work to do his will,
“ working in you that which is well-pleas-
“ ing in his sight, through Jesus Christ,
“ to whom be glory for ever and ever.
“ Amen.”

THE END.





