

(No. 1)

S E R M O N,

PREACHED before the

Reverend Presbytery

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N E W - C A S T L E,

O C T O B E R 11. 1752.

By *S. Davie* S. DAVIES, V. D. M.

In Hanover, VIRGINIA.

Published at the Desire of the PRESBYTERY and
CONGREGATION.

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed by B. FRANKLIN; and D. HALL, at the
NEW-PRINTING-OFFICE, in Market-street.

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TH E following Sermon, which was immediately addressed only to one Presbytery, by being published, becomes an Address to Gospel Ministers in general, who are all equally concern'd in the important Contents of it. And could my Recommendation have any Influence, I would humbly propose the serious and attentive Perusal of it, at least, to my young Brethren in the Ministry. And I fully persuade myself, that every one who is pious, will always be fond of those Attempts that tend to excite his Zeal in the Discharge of his Office. They, and only they, who do not love their Duty, will distaste Exhortation to it: For, who but are pleased with Excitement, do that in which they delight? The Christian, who loves the divine Ordinances, will be glad when others say to him, Let us go up to the House of the Lord†: And ~~from the same Principle~~ Ministers will be glad, when it is said to them, Ye that make Mention of the Lord, keep not Silence; and give him no Rest, until he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth§. We consider it as our Business, to teach others what they know not; to bring to their Remembrance what they know; and to exhort them to do what they know and remember. Nay, we rightly judge it necessary, To stir up the pure Minds* of sincerest Christians to what they not only know, and remember, but also desire to do: The

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† Psalm cxvii. 1.

§ Isaiab lxi. 6, 7.

* 2 Peter

same Conclusions will hold good in Respect of ourselves: For we cannot but own, that they who are employed in teaching Mankind, have need to be always learning; that all of us know not all Things; that what we have deeply studied may slip out of our Minds; that lively Impressions may be, in some Measure, effaced; that the Edge of our keenest Zeal may be blunted; and that Listlessness and Discouragement may, for a Time, succeed our most spirited and vigorous Efforts: Therefore we need frequent Motives to Fidelity and Zeal; nor can our most advanced Knowledge and Integrity supersede the Necessity of them.

If, then, such Adresses appear pertinent, on the Hypothesis, that all Ministers are wise and faithful, how much more, if it is supposable that some are of a contrary Character? If there are some, who content themselves with loose and superficial Harangues, more anxious to form an elegant and smooth Discourse, than a plain and pungent One; who aim not at the Heart, but only at the Ear, desirous to please, more than to edify, their Audience; and who neither design to admonish the Careless, or instruct the Ignorant: If some, on the other Hand, neglect the Improvement of their Minds, either from an eager Pursuit of worldly Riches, or cold Indifferency as to their Office, or a pragmatical Temper, obliging them to intrude themselves into every Business but their own; and hence are unable to compose any Thing that is either instructive or entertaining: If others care not whether their Hearers reap Advantage or not, provided they can but flatter themselves that they have done their Duty: And finally, if some are unguarded in their Lives, vain, or sensual, or evidently covetous: If such Cases are not only supposable, but certain, what Lover of Religion can forbear to remonstrate?

The benevolent Author of the present Sermon, while sincerely engag'd himself in promoting pure Religion, affectionately invites all of the sacred Order, to unite
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their Efforts in the same glorious Enterprize. Nor could be devise any more proper Measure to engage them, than such a publick Address. It is, doubtless, our Province to attempt the Reformation of our Fellow Sinners, as we are under the Obligation of solemn Vows to God for that Purpose. He is pleased to employ us as Instruments, in the Conversion and Edification of Souls, and will require at our Hanas those committed to our Charge: We should, therefore, Seek to find out acceptable Words†, strive to get into the Hearts of our Hearers, and so frame our Discourses as may most tend to enlighten, affect, and persuade. Thus must we act, if we would comport with the Design of our Office, and deliver our own Souls: And to urge our acting thus, is the whole Scope of the ensuing Discourse.

I cannot but perswade myself, that the judicious and serious Reader, upon observing the obvious Design and Tendency of this Sermon; the Pertinency of the Remarks; and the Weight and Solemnity of the Matter contain'd in it; will readily approve the Desire of the Presbytery and Congregation to have it published.

That the Divine Blessing may attend this Labour of Love, so as it may answer the pious End of the worthy Author, is the Prayer of

A Well-wisher to Zion,

S. FINLEY.

† *Eccles. xii. 10.*

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's Sake I will not hold my Peace, and for Jerusalem's Sake I will not rest, until the Righteousness thereof go forth as Brightness, and the Salvation thereof as a Lamp that burneth.

WERE the Associations of the Ministers of Jesus only intended as *friendly* Interviews, to cultivate mutual Benevolence, and to enjoy the Endearments of fraternal Affection, we could not but rejoice in the Institution: For *behold how good and how pleasant a Thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity!* But when at these happy Occasions they may not only reciprocate the Sentiments of unreserved Christian Friendship, but also concert proper Measures to regulate the Affairs of their divine Master's Kingdom, and, in their Turns, animate each other to a more zealous Discharge of their important Function, by humble Addresses from the Pulpit; they are constrained to meet together, not only by the gentle Impulse of *Friendship*, but from an obediencial Regard to the *Authority* of the great Redeemer, and a *religious Zeal* to promote his Interest in the World.

And so important are the Concerns entrusted to them, that they have need of all the mutual Assistance they can receive at such Occasions. They have not such *Trifles* committed to their Charge as Kingdoms and Empires, or the civil Liberties and Lives of Nations: Let Kings and their Ministers manage these as they please; let them sacrifice them to their Luxury, Ambition or Tyranny; Mankind receive but a trifling Injury; an Injury easily redressed,

fed, if the Negotiations of the Ministers of the Gospel succeed: For to them are entrusted the Concerns of *Immortals*, and all their Ministrations have a Principal Reference to an *everlasting* State; where all is awful, all is important; and where the most *insignificant* Circumstance, being endowed with the tremendous Attribute of *Eternity*, is of more Consequence than the *weightiest* Affairs of this transitory World.

This transient *Hint* concerning the awful Weight of our Office, has, no Doubt, already enkindled in your Hearts, my reverend Fathers, and dear Brethren, an ardent Zeal to exert all your Powers in the faithful Discharge of it, and to adopt, as your own, this noble Resolution of the Prophet *Isaiab*, *For Zion's Sake I will not hold my Peace, and for Jerusalem's Sake I will not rest, until the Righteousness thereof go forth as Brightness, and the Salvation thereof as a Lamp that burneth.*

This Resolution seems formed by the Prophet upon a Review of his own Prophecies in the two foregoing Chapters, concerning some happy Period, in which the Church of God should flourish, and be enlarged. *Zion* and *Jerusalem*, in the Dialect of the Bible, are very frequently used to signify the People of God, of whatever Country or Nation; and the Ground of the Metaphor is obvious; for *Jerusalem* being the *Metropolis* of the *Jews*, the peculiar People of God under the *Mosaic* Dispensation, and *Zion* being a remarkable *Eminence*, near the Temple, where the Worship of God was publickly celebrated; these Names are transferred to the *Gospel* Church in the Predictions of the Prophets concerning it; and borrowed from them by the Writers of the New-Testament, and used in the same Sense, for *all the People of God* in their various Dispersions over the Earth; as in the Language of the Old-Testament Oeconomy, they signified the whole
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Jewish Church. And in this Latitude we shall now take them; not only to adapt them to my present Design, but to include all the original Meaning of the Prophet, or at least of the omniscient Spirit who inspired him.

For tho' it be probable that the most of the Prophecies, in the last Chapters of this Book had a *primary and immediate Reference* to the happy Condition of the *Jews* as a Church, and as a Commonwealth, after their Restoration from the *Babylonish* Captivity; yet it is evident they had a *Principal and ultimate Reference* to some flourishing Periods of the *Christian* Church; such as the successful Propagation of the Gospel in the Apostolic Age; the yet more extensive Spread of it under *Constantine the Great*, when it became the established Religion of the *Roman* Empire; the memorable Period of the *Reformation* from Popery; and especially that happy Day, which from these Prophecies, and sundry other clearer and less figurative Predictions, we have Reason joyfully to expect; when God will *take to Him his great Power*, and erect the Empire of His Grace over all Nations; and when *the Kingdoms of the Earth shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ*. If we take but a superficial Survey of these and the like Prophecies of *Isaiab*, and compare them with the State of the *Jews* from his Time, to the Coming of the Messiah, we shall find that *some* of these Predictions cannot be applied to any Period of it in any tolerable Sense *at all*; and *others* of them, tho' in *Part* applicable to their Return from *Babylon*; yet cannot be supposed to have had their *compleat and final* Accomplishment at that Time, or any other, before the Coming of Christ, without making them such extravagant *Hyperboles*, as even the noble Licence of the Eastern Style cannot warrant.

It is the glorious Characteristic of the Revela-
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tions of that God, who comprehends the most distant *Futurities in one View*, to foretel some *intermediate Event* of lesser Importance, in such majestic Language as will naturally carry the Reader's Mind forward to some *more important Event* at a greater Distance, similar to it, in which these august Predictions have a more *complete Accomplishment*. Thus the Reign of *Solomon* is celebrated in such exalted Language, as can fully agree to none but a *greater than Solomon*, who now reigns over His *Spiritual Israel**. Thus the Coming of Christ in the Flesh, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*, is described both by the Prophets, and by Christ Himself, in such majestic Strains, and under such dreadful Images, as unavoidably suggest to us the most lively Ideas of his *final Advent*, and the *Conflagration* of the World †. And thus the Prophet *Isaiab*, while he has the happy Restoration of the *Jews* in View more *immediately*, is transported far *beyond that Period*, to those more glorious Seasons, when living Religion shall have an extensive Propagation thro' the World; when *Jerusalem*, in a spiritual Sense, shall *be made the Praise of the whole Earth*, and all Nations her Denizens: Or (to use his own sublimer Language) when *the Righteousness* of the Church of God shall *go forth as Brightness*; *i. e.* when her Holiness shall be conspicuous to all, and dart its Rays around, to illuminate and cheer her Friends, and to dazzle and confound her Enemies with its insufferable Splendour; and when her *Salvation* shall shine illustrious in a benighted World, *like a Lamp burning in Darkness*; and her Deliverance from her Enemies shall be visible to the whole Creation.

It is not likely that the pious Anxiety of *Isaiab's* Heart was relieved even with the *mistaken Expectation* that he should live to see any of these happy Periods.

* *Psalms* lxxii. † *Mal.* iv. 1. and many other Places in the Prophets. *Mat.* xxiv,

Periods. Whether we refer these Predictions to the *Restoration* of the *Jews* from *Babylon*, or to some flourishing State of the *Christian Church*, we are sure they were not accomplish'd in *his Day*; and we can hardly suppose he so far mistook his own Prophecies, as to expect they should: How then are we to understand his Resolution, "*I will not hold my Peace, I will not rest, UNTIL the Righteousness of Jerusalem go forth as Brightness, &c.*" Did he expect by his Importunities to effect an *immature* Accomplishment of his Predictions? Or did he resolve to continue in Importunities that he knew would be *fruitless*? The Solution of this is easy, and gives us a lively Specimen of the generous Ardour of his Heart, *q. d.* "It is likely to be my melancholy Doom, while I continue to deliver the Message of Heaven to an obstinate People, to sigh out my usual Complaint, *Who hath believed my Report? I have laboured in vain, and spent my Strength for Nought, and in vain.* But I joyfully foresee, by the Spirit of Prophecy, that a more happy Lot is appointed for some of my Successors: I foresee that the dear Church of God, for which my Heart is now broken with fruitless Anxieties, shall flourish and shine illustrious, in some future Period. But before that welcome Period arrives, my Mouth shall be silent in the Dust, and these Eyes shall never be blest with the Sight. However, *while* my Life is prolonged, and *while* my Heart is capable of this tender Solitude for *Zion*, I will unweariedly exert myself to introduce and hasten that blessed Season. *I will never be silent in ardent Supplications* at the Throne of Grace, but lay up a Store of Prayers before God to be then reminded and answered. *I will never be silent in declaring the Messages of divine Inspiration*, which not only foretel, but will have a happy Instrumentality to accomplish, that glorious Event; and these shall speak, when I am silent in the Grave. Or were I

blest with *Immortality* upon Earth, till the Arrival of that Period, I would *spend and be spent*, I would exert all my Powers, and exhaust all my Activity, in promoting the Weal of *Zion*, and expire in Agonies of Zeal for her Interests."

It is my present Design to make a feeble Attempt to diffuse the noble Spirit which animated this zealous Prophet thro' this Assembly; and especially to enkindle it in the Breasts of all of the *sacred Character*. For that Purpose I shall

- I. Mention some MEASURES which the Ministers of the Gospel should pursue for the Advancement of Religion in the World. And
- II. Offer some important CONSIDERATIONS to engage us to use such Measures with unwearied Diligence and ardent Zeal.

You see, my reverend Fathers and dear Brethren, that in the Prosecution of these Heads, my Address must be particularly directed to *You*: And tho' I hope a *sincere* Zeal for the Weal of *Zion* pushes me on, and my peculiar Confidence in your Condescension encourages me; yet it is not without Trembling and Hesitation I break thro' the Restraints of *Self-diffidence*, and assume this Province. I solemnly assure you, in the awful Presence of God, that it is far from my Heart to *insinuate* any Thing to the Disadvantage of any of you. Should I act thus, as it would be a manifest Violation of my indissoluble Obligations to you; so it would be a Contradiction to my settled Judgment. It is an unspeakable Satisfaction to me, that my Sentiments of you are such as enable me with the greatest Sincerity in this Manner to acquit myself from even the least Charge of entertaining so much as an evil Surmise of you. My Address insinuates no more than what the most eminent

eminent among you, amid all your valuable Acquisitions, will be the most ready to own, *That you are imperfect Mortals*, lamentably deficient in your most noble Attempts for God. My Address only insinuates, that your Minds are not capable of an *uninterrupted all-comprehending Survey* of all those tender and alarming Considerations, which in your thoughtful Hours of Retirement, or the painful Hours of your publick Ministrations, animate your Hearts with the most ardent Zeal, to promote that important Cause, to which you have devoted your Lives with the most generous Alacrity. I shall not therefore arrogate the Province of your *Instructor*; but humbly assume the Office of your *Remembrancer*, to present you with a *Review* of those Considerations, which I doubt not are familiar to your own Thoughts at Times; and when I have done this, I shall most willingly sit at the Feet of the *meanest* of you, and receive a Retaliation in Kind.

And you, my Brethren of the *Laitie*, think not yourselves unconcerned in this Discourse: 'Tis *your* Cause I am pleading; and therefore assist me with your Prayers, that I may manage it according to its Importance. You may also collect sundry Hints of the Duties *proper to you*, to promote the Success, and lighten the Burden of our Labours; and these I hope you will seriously attend to, from a suitable Concern for yourselves, and from a generous Sympathy with us.

I now proceed,

- I. *To point out some Measures which the Ministers of JESUS should pursue for the Advancement of Religion in the World.*

Here I shall only offer a few transient and superficial Remarks upon the necessary *Preparations* for the
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the Publick,---the *Subjects* we should generally insist upon,---the *Manner* in which we should handle them,---and the Sanction which our *Examples* and *Conversations* should give to all our publick Mini-
strations.

I. We should make *proper Preparations* for our publick Ministrations.

Man was not intended to *sleep* away his Existence in *Sloth* and *Inactivity*, but formed for *Operation*; and as an Excitement to this, it is wisely ordered, that *Pleasure* should intermingle with his *Exercises*, and that all his valuable Acquisitions should be the *Reward of Industry*. This Observation is particularly exemplified in those *intellectual Improvements*, which are essential to our Character as *Teachers* of Mankind. Those who, besides the Thirst for Knowledge, innate to reasonable Creatures, have had their Minds early turned to Study by a *liberal Education*, can certainly never lose their Relish of Knowledge, nor count a sedentary studious Life a Drudgery; especially when their frequent Avocations to the publick Discharge of their Office may serve as a noble *Recreation* to relieve them from the Melancholy, or Fatigue of close Thinking. Such whose Minds have been *refined*, both by human *Literature* and divine *Grace*, can certainly never prostitute their precious Time to the gay Delicacies of *facetious*, or the Fooleries of *trifling* Conversation, which they should devote to the Cultivation of their Minds, and to prepare themselves to deliver the Messages of Heaven to Mankind. And tho' they cannot free themselves entirely from *domestic* and *secular* Cares, yet surely they cannot indulge so sordid a Taste, after they have relished the sublimer Pleasures of intellectual Improvement, as to degenerate into earthly groveling Worms, and suffer the Affairs of this Life to engross their Time and Thoughts. If any in the sacred Character are capable of so much Meanness,
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they will prove a Disgrace to their Function ; and they will have the Mortification of seeing themselves excelled by Persons inferior to them in Parts and Education ; for a *barrén* Genius, diligently *cultivated*, will produce more useful Fruits, than the wild spontaneous Productions of a *luxurious* Genius, sufficient to *run waste* ; and the best Foundation of Learning laid in Youth will soon become a Scene of Desolation and Ruin, unless the Structure be carried on, and the Wastes of Time repaired, by diligent Study during our After-life.

It is evident that the Success of our Ministrations very much depend upon the *Clearness*, and affectionate *Solemnity*, of our Discourses. These must be *clear* to enlighten the Mind, and *solemn* and *passive* to affect the Heart. Now, by preparatory Study, we may invent the most proper Arguments and Illustrations, range them in the most natural Method, and digest them into that Form which is most likely to catch the Attention, inform the Understanding, and strike the Passions of our Hearers. And, by Study, intermingled with frequent Excursions of the Heart to God in Prayer, and solemn Applications of divine Subjects to ourselves, we may make such deep Impressions upon our own Minds, as will give our Discourses those *genuine* Indications of affectionate Earnestness, and adorn our Delivery with that *natural* Air of Solemnity, which is the most powerful Oratory to our Hearers ; and which *Affectation* and *Grimace* attempts to counterfeit in vain.

'Tis true, indeed, that while our Minds are intently engaged in the *abstracted speculative* Contemplation of a Subject, we are too ready to forget its awful Reference to ourselves, and its Influence upon our eternal State ; and hence Study sometimes *deadens* us into senseless *Stoics*, instead of firing our Hearts with all those tender Passions which are so graceful in Christian Orators. 'Tis also true, that an
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over-eager Attention to the little *Niceties* of accurate Composition, does often enfeeble our Discourses with those excessive Refinements and languid Delicacies, which are far less useful, as well as far less graceful, than the expatiating, extempore, irregular Thoughts of a Mind deeply impressed with eternal Things. And I hardly know a Temptation more alluring, or more pernicious to delicate Minds, than these little Accuracies, so grateful to the Ear, and so pleasing to a luxurious Imagination. The best Way to remedy this Evil, and to reap the Advantage of Preparations for the Publick, is to diffuse a Spirit of Devotion thro' our Studies, to direct them to proper Objects, and to *avoid Extremes*. Let us, on the one Hand, take Care not to *degrade* the majestic Truths of the Gospel by an *indecent and slovenly Dress*; and on the other, not to *divest* them of their awful *Solemnity* with pert theatrical *Levities*, and beaush *Gauderies*. Let us not affect to *extemporize* to such an Excess, as to render our Sermons a Chaos of Embryo-thoughts, maimed Arguments, and rude Expressions; or a Huddle of passionate Reveries, without Matter or Method: And let us not so scrupulously *confine* ourselves in Publick to the Path we have laid out to ourselves in our Studies, as to admit of no extempore Amplifications, or occasional Excursions; for it is attested by the Experience of all that have made the Trial, that in the *Fervour* of our publick Addresses, a Variety of tender and passionate, and in the mean time *pertinent*, Thoughts will occur to us, which we might have sought in vain in the Coolness of our private Studies.

A *warm Heart* has always a *fruitful Invention*; and will spontaneously suggest Sentiments more striking to the Populace, and even to Hearers of Taste, than our premeditated and laboured Thoughts. And it would be a robbing our Auditory of one of the best Parts of their Entertainment,

suppress these devout Sallies and Excursions of a transported Heart, lest we should deviate a little from that *insipid Regularity* with which we have planned our Discourses. We all know that when a Thought *flashes* upon our Minds with *unexpected Suddenness*, it affects us more than those which are *familiarized* to us by frequent Meditation; and hence the *sudden Irruptions* of Ideas upon our Minds, in our publick Discourses, enkindle the Heart at once, and not only animate us at *that* Moment, but diffuse a peculiar Vigour and Pathos thro' the *Remainder* of our Ministrations. And therefore such a rigid *Confinement to our Notes* upon ordinary Occasions, as denies us this advantageous and oratorical Licence of expressing such extemporary Thoughts, is an ungrateful Imposition to a warm Heart, that would indulge its own Ardour, and a great Obstruction to the Fervour and Pathos of our Delivery, and consequently to the Success of our Preaching. And it is very doubtful, whether the languid Accuracy, and effeminate Nicety of such Discourses, can afford such delightful Entertainments even to a *polite* Auditory, as all Ranks, except those of a *squeamish* Delicacy, would find, in Discourses, *less correct*, animated by these *extempore Eruptions* of an affectionate Zeal.

It is probably the Lot of most of us to have Occasions so *frequently*, or *unexpectedly*, to preach, that we cannot make proper Preparations. And in this Case, it is our Duty, with a humble Dependance on the Aids of divine Grace, to improve such Opportunities; tho' at the Risque of our Reputation as *accurate* Preachers. Tho' in ordinary Cases, the assistance of the holy Spirit, does not *supersede*, but *suppose* the Exertion of our Powers in proper Preparations; yet at such Occasions we may, without Presumption, humbly pray for and expect it, tho' we have made little or no Preparations; and our Expecta-

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Expectation, shall not be frustrated. Tho' we should not conciliate so much popular Applause; yet we may do more Service to the Souls of Men, than at other Times by our most elaborate Discourses: And indeed it is no *impossible* Task for one, to whom the great Truths of the Gospel are familiarized by Reading, Meditation and Experience, to deliver an *extempore* Discourse, that may be very profitable to the Populace, and not justly offensive to Persons of superior Improvements.

2. Let us generally insist upon those *Subjects* that are *purely evangelical*, or peculiar to the *Religion of Jesus*, as best adapted to the great Ends of our Ministry.

It is necessary we should, at Times insist upon the great Duties and Truths of *natural* Religion, which are fundamental to *Revealed*; and particular Occasions may sometimes occur, which may render it necessary to dwell upon a *Sett* of Subjects, which would not be proper in *ordinary* Seasons. But as we are *Ministers of the New-Testament*, we ought to dwell *principally* on Subjects *purely evangelical*; and to know what these are, we need only study the Bible, and particularly the *New-Testament*.

Let us lay open the present Degeneracy of human Nature in all its naked Deformity; alarm the secure Conscience with the Glare of Conviction; awaken hardy Impenitents by the Terrors of the Lord; *overturn, overturn, overturn* their presumptuous Confidences, and sweep away *their Refuges of Lies*, and wound them, that they may give a welcome Reception to the Physician.

Let us then bring them into the glorious Light of the *Gospel*. Let us open up the Method of Salvation by free Grace alone, thro' the Mediation of our great Redeemer. Let us exhibit the blessed Jesus to a guilty World in all the *Glories*, and in all the *Sufferings* of his mediatorial Character; the
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infinite Dignity of his *Divinity*, and the Innocence of his *Humanity*, and the infinite *Merit* of his Obedience resulting from both these Sources. Let us exert all the Powers of Language to represent the Agonies of *Gethsemane*, and the Tortures of *Calvary*, and the guilty Cause and benevolent Design of all these Sufferings. Let us point to him lifted up on the Cross, as the great Expiation for Sin, and the resistless *Magnet to draw all Men to him*. Let us lay open the Tenderness of his Heart, and his Willingness to entertain the vilest of Sinners, upon their Application to him. Let us principally dwell upon what is generally distinguished by the Name of *experimental Religion*, the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration, of Faith, Repentance, and other Christian Graces. Let us adapt our Discourses to the various Cases of Saints and Sinners, to instruct, to wound, to comfort and support, according to their respective Exigencies.

And when we inculcate the *Duties of Morality*, as we undoubtedly will, if we declare *the whole Counsel of God*, let us diffuse an *evangelical Spirit* thro' our Discourses, and recommend these Duties with an express *Reference to Christ* in his mediatorial Character.

These, and the like, are the important Doctrines which should generally sound from our Pulpits; and by these a degenerate World is most likely to be reformed. They are not indeed agreeable to the modern Taste in some Places. These humble Doctrines of the Cross are deemed the *Cant of Fanaticism*, and must be exchanged for languid Harangues upon ingenious Speculations or moral Virtues. But it is this *Foolishness of Preaching* alone that will be found the happy Expedient to save perishing Multitudes: And let *the Jews require a Sign*, and *the Greeks seek after Wisdom*; we will not humour their vitiated Taste; but will *preach Christ crucified*,
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tho' to the Jews he should be a *Stumbling-block*, and to the Greeks *Foolishness*; for to them that are called, whether Jews or Greeks, whether learned or illiterate, Christ is the *Power of God*, and the *Wisdom of God* §; and numberless are the happy Conquests, which these almighty Doctrines have gained over the most obstinate Sinners.

3. Let us handle these, and all other Subjects of our publick Discourses, in that *Manner which is best adapted to the great End of our Ministry*.

To illustrate this Head, I shall only offer a few transient Remarks; and as some of them are perhaps originally my own, I humbly submit them to you for the Sanction of your Approbation.

It is evident that *Plainness* ought to be the Property of Discourses intended to *instruct*; especially such as are addressed to Persons of *weaker* as well as stronger Capacities: Let us therefore study to make all our Sermons as *plain* and popular as possible; and for that End take the most *natural* Method, whether it be consistent with the modern Artifice of *designedly concealing* the Method, or not; and use a *plain familiar Style*, tho' it should want some of those laboured Ornaments which might render it more agreeable to ourselves, and two or three of our Hearers. This *Perspicuity* of Language is very consistent with the *purest Elegance*, and the *true Sublime*; for a *polite* Style is not a Composition of *hard Words*, *Scholasticisms* and *exotic Expressions*; and consequently it is only *burnished*, by *paring off* these *Barbarisms*. It is certainly very congruous and ornamental, to clothe divine Truths in tender, delicate, significant or majestic Language, according to the Nature of the Subject; and this will recommend them, not only to *delicate* Ears, but to the *Populace*; if we do not become *unintelligible*, under the Pretence of being *elegant*. The Language of
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the New-Testament, a little varied, to conform it to the present Dialect, is, perhaps, the best Standard for our popular Style.

Again; Let us endeavour to cultivate and improve the *Peculiarities* of our respective Genius's, and not indulge a vain *Affectation*. The *Peculiarities* of the *Mind* in different Persons are no less evident than *those* of their *Bodies*; and it is the Duty of a Minister of the Gospel, having discovered the *peculiar Turn* of his own Mind, to *follow Nature*, and not to *force* himself into the Channel where the Genius of another runs, because perhaps it may appear more large or agreeable. And this *Diversity of Gifts* conduces not a little to the Benefit of Mankind, as it is adapted to the correspondent *Variety of their Cases*. *Affectations* of the *Peculiarities* of others, whether in Body or Mind, are always *unsuccessful* and *ridiculous*; whereas if every Man would cultivate his *own Turn* of Mind, it would admit of valuable Improvements, and prevent the unnatural Drudgery and Reproach of *Mimickry*.

This Remark might be illustrated by a *Variety of Instances*; but I shall at present only particularize one, which I chuse, because we are most apt to err in this Respect; and that is, *An affected Imitation of the Style of others*. The natural *Variety of Style* is perhaps as great as that of *Voices*; and if every one carefully improves his *own peculiar Style*, and takes Notice of the Language of others, not to adopt it, but to *polish his own* by it, he will refine it into tolerable Elegance and Propriety, however awkward it was naturally; tho' it will be still inferior to that of those whom Nature has blessed with a spontaneous Flow of ready and elegant Expressions. But when we read or hear a Style much better than our own, we are apt to be so much out of Conceit with our *own*, and so charmed with the *other*, as immediately to attempt a *forced Imitation* of it, and

we succeed just as ill as we would do, should we affect to assume the *Aspect*, or counterfeit the *Voices* of others. We may borrow a splendid *Patch* or two, and tack them to our Discourses; but the Want of *continued Uniformity* will discover the *Plagiary* or the *Mimick*.

And as *Youth* is peculiarly addicted to this Foible, I humbly hope, my *coeval* Brethren, you will pardon me, if I direct this Caution particularly to you. We hear the masterly and polite Discourses of our Fathers in the Ministry, who have the Advantages of *extensive Reading*, mature Thoughts, and long Practice, which we cannot pretend to: We hear them with Pleasure and Applause; and thro' an injudicious Eagerness to equal their Abilities at once, or perhaps from a secret Tincture of Vanity, we are prompted to imitate them in their Style, their Method, or their Delivery. But our *Imitation* degenerates into a *fruitless and ridiculous Affectation*, which discovers at once our *Want* of their Accomplishments, and our *Ambition* to be esteemed possessed of them. Let us therefore, my Brethren, confine ourselves to the Truths we know, and handle them in the best Manner we are capable; and let the superior Accomplishments of our Elders, like a Prize conspicuous at the Goal, animate us to take the same Steps they have taken, in Hopes, thro' a Course of Years, to arrive, in some Measure, at their Eminence.

Further; When the Nature of the Discourse will allow of it, let us address ourselves *particularly* to our Hearers. For this Purpose let us address them *in the second Person*, that they may observe we are speaking to them. Mankind are naturally averse to apply the Word to themselves, and prone to consider it as an *abstracted Speculation*, in which they have no particular Concern; and therefore every Artifice ought to be used to turn their Thoughts upon

upon themselves; and it has this Tendency, when we use a Form of Address *particularly directed to them*; whereas when we speak of *Saints and Sinners* in the *third Person*, they virtually forget that *they are either*, and so do not observe the particular Reference of the Discourse to *them*. It was in this *pointed* Form of Address that Christ † generally preached to his Hearers, and I have humbly used the Freedom of exemplifying it, my reverend Fathers and Brethren, in this Address to you.

Finally; Let us deliver our Discourses with a *grave and affectionate Solemnity*; avoiding the wild Reveries of *Enthusiasm*, on the one Hand; and the droaning Heaviness and serene Stupidity of *Stoicism*, on the other.---The Ministers of the *rational* Religion of JESUS should always *speaking the Words of Truth and Soberness*, with a composed and solemn Gravity. They should indeed be *passionate* and warm; but when under this Pretence, any put on a *distracted fanatical Air*, they expose their Function to the Contempt of the World; and in their Admirers will only raise boisterous Transports of *irrational Passions*, which will soon stagnate into *Stupidity*, or hurry them into enthusiastical *Extravagancies*.---On the other Hand, our Delivery should be
vigorous

† Dr. Doddridge has this very pertinent Note on *Mat. vii. 9.* where Christ addresses his Hearers in this pointed Form, *What Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone?*---“Young Preachers will, I hope, observe
“ (says the Dr) how much *Life and Force* it adds to these Discourses of our Lord, that they are so *closely directed*, thro’ the
“ whole of them, as an *immediate Address to his Hearers*, and
“ are not *loose and general Harangues*, in the Manner of those
“ *Essays*, which are now grown so fashionable in Pulpits. If
“ any are grown too *polite*, to learn *true Oratory* from Christ.
“ I wish they would at least learn it from *Demosthenes*” [and
“ *Cicero*, who are remarkable for this pointed Form of Address
“ *in their celebrated Orations*] “and who, I doubt not, would
“ have admired the Eloquence of this Sermon” [on the
“ *Mount.*] *Fam. Expos.* Vol. 1. § 42.

vigorous and affectionate, and expressive of the deep Impressions the tremendous Things we speak make upon our own Hearts. There cannot be a more shocking Incongruity, than to *sleep* over such awful Subjects, and address ourselves to perishing Immortals, on the Brink of Eternity, in *cold Blood*; and I hardly think it possible for one that has any just Sense of eternal Things, to put on a careless stupid Air, when speaking of them; unless, with a Kind of *awkward Dissimulation*, he suppress the genuine Workings of his Heart by unnatural Violence. Such is the Constitution of human Nature, that we will *spea*k in earnest, when we *are* in earnest. If we observe the most unpolished Speakers, when they are in earnest, even in common Conversation, we will find that *Nature* teaches them such *Expressions*, such a Modulation of the *Voice*, such *Looks* and *Gestures*, as bespeak their Earnestness with inimitable Eloquence. And certainly when we feel the *Allmighty* Energy of eternal Things, we cannot but give evident Indications of it in our Delivery: Let us therefore throw off the Mask of so *awkward* an Hypocrisy, and discover the inward Ardour and passionate Concern of our Hearts, if we would act the *Orator*, the *Minister*, or the *Christian*; for our Hearers will hardly think *us* in earnest, when we give no Evidences of it; and we cannot expect that *they* should feel the tremendous Importance of those solemn Things, which they see us handle as trifling *Levities*, or the Materials of a light popular Harangue to amuse them.

4. Let us give a *Sanction* to all our publick Ministrations by our *Example and Conversation*.

That *the Force of Example is greater than that of Precept*, is a trite and true Observation. A Deviation from our own Instructions will disqualify us to declare the whole Counsel of God, as it will either confuse and dash us with conscious *Skame*, or tempt

us, in Mercy to ourselves, not to urge the *Strictness* of evangelical Holiness. An imitable Practice will *adorn the Doctrine of Godliness**, and prevent *the Name of God* from being *blasphemed* in the World §; and it will procure Veneration to the Ministerial Office, and so facilitate our Access to the Minds of Men, and promote our Success.

We may also in our *common Conversation* with Mankind find proper Occasions to intermingle some *pious Reflections*, without *Imprudence* or *pharisaical Ostentation*; and these occasional Remarks may be of great Service, both as they may suggest solemn Thoughts to those we converse with, and as they may convince them that we still retain, amid the Pleasantries of Conversation, something of that zealous Spirit of Devotion which flames in the Pulpit.

It is certainly highly incongruous, and even criminal, for Persons of good Taste, and extensive Improvements, who have Materials in Readiness for instructive and entertaining Conversation; and especially for Persons whose Office obliges them to improve all Opportunities of doing Good; to waste their Time, which is sacred to God, and his Church, in idle Visits; and to carry on their Part thro' the tedious insipid Course of a trifling Conversation. Such awkward Condescension sinks them into Contempt; and entire *Silence* would be more graceful. I am far from recommending an *unsociable Reservedness* and Austerity, which is very indecent in the Followers of *the Son of Man*, who *came eating and drinking*, and conversing with Freedom; and this Extreme may be easily avoided without commencing talkative *Triflers*. In short; Let us endeavour so to conduct ourselves, as that we may borrow the Appeal of *St. Paul*, "*Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and*

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* *Tit. ii. 10.* § *1 Tim. vi. 1.*

§ *Rom. ii. 24.*

unblamably we behaved ourselves among you; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a Father doth his Children ||.

These are all the Remarks which the narrow Limits of a Sermon will permit me to make under the first Head; and if a Consciousness of my own Failures, or want of Acquaintance with the Conduct of my Brethren, has led me to give some *needless* Cautions and Directions; I presume upon your Goodness to *forgive me this involuntary Wrong*.

I now proceed,

II. *To offer some important CONSIDERATIONS to engage us to pursue such Measures as have been mentioned for the Revival of Religion, with unwearied Diligence and ardent Zeal.*

And here, such Numbers crowd upon me, that the most expressive Eloquence could not exhaust them in the longest Discourse; and such is their Almighty Energy, that sure the most insensible Heart cannot resist it. I may reason,---from the important *Ends* of our *Office*,---from the *Difficulty* of our *Work*,---from the *Shortness* and *Uncertainty* of our *Time*,---from the great *Need* of a general *Revival*, and more extensive *Propagation* of Religion in this degenerate Age,---from the *Advantages* we would receive from it,---from the *happy Consequences* of a *faithful Discharge* of our *Office*,---and from the *Earnestness* of other Beings about the Souls of Men, which are entrusted to our Care. Let me remind you, and myself with you, of some of those tender and animating Thoughts upon these Topics, which no Doubt have often cast you into Agonies of pious Zeal, in your solemn Intervals.

1. Can we survey the important *Ends* of our *Office*, and not be animated to the most unwearied Diligence to pursue them?

These

These are *not* to hoard up the Rubbish of earthly Treasures, which Death must rend from the most eager Grasp; *not* to immortalize our Names, among the dying Inhabitants of this World, or to be blown to the Dust with the Breath of popular Applause; tho' for these Men have dared the Dangers of Sea and Land, patiently undergone a Series of the most painful Drudgeries, and even run the Risque of their Lives. Our *Ends* are *not* to relieve Captives, to heal the Sick, to supply the Necessitous, or to diffuse Streams of temporal Felicity around us: Tho' to a generous Heart it would be a Heaven to wander like a Pilgrim with these beneficent Powers thro' a miserable World. But the *Ends* of our Function are *infinitely more important and benevolent*: To reclaim obstinate Rebels to a due Subjection to the King of Kings; to diffuse the Knowledge of a Saviour's Name thro' a dying World; to open the Dawn of cheerful Light upon them that dwell in Darkness and helpless Sorrow; to heal the wounded Spirit with the Balm of Calvary; to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with HIS OWN BLOOD; or to say all at once, To save perishing Immortals from intolerable, irrecoverable, eternal Ruin and Misery; and to bring them to a happy Immortality, to enjoy the utmost Perfection of Felicity, such as becomes the Goodness of a God to bestow, such as is equal to the mature Capacities of Creatures formed for ever-growing Improvements: *These* are the great, the noble and beneficent Ends of our Office; and may our grateful Praises crown the Head of our condescending Master, who has made such extensive Beneficence the *Business* of our Life; while the rest of Mankind are doomed to meaner Pursuits. I doubt not but the blessed Jesus counts it the greatest Honour he could put upon us in this mortal State; and he justly expects that we should form the same Esti-

mate of it. The *Consequence of every Sermon, of every Sentence*, delivered in the awful Name of God, is more important than the *Fate of Kingdoms*. If our Negotiations *succeed*, what an illustrious Train of happy Consequences follow, which shall extend their blissful Influence to the remotest Periods of an interminable Duration! On the other Hand (if you can bear up under the overwhelming Horror of the Supposition) should our Ministrations *fail* of these happy Ends, thro' our Languor or Inactivity, alas! how dreadful the Consequences! Our *God* is deprived of his just Honours; our *Jesus*, who was born, who lived, who died, who ascended to his native Heaven, *for us*, is neglected; the precious *Means of Grace* are in vain; or rather like effectual Medicines, they *kill*, whom they do not cure; our *Fellow Sinners*, dear to us by a thousand Ties, are lost,---irreparably,---eternally lost! lost *in* the dismal Realms of Desolation, Torture, and helpless Despair! lost *to* all the boundless Joys of a happy Immortality! and (which may give the keenest Wound to our Hearts) lost thro' *our Carelessness*! Sure, in this Case, Horror would seize us to look upon ourselves, the inhumane Accessaries to the *Murder* of our Species. Now seeing the Ends of our Office are so important and tremendous, can we *yawn*, can we indulge a slothful *Inactivity*, in the Pursuit of them? No; we could sooner be dilatory and remiss in snatching our Children out of a devouring Fire, than in this more important Concern. *For Zion's Sake we will not hold our Peace, and for Jerusalem's Sake we will not rest, &c.*---Especially since,

2. Our *Work* is extremely *difficult*; and therefore, without the warmest Zeal and most indefatigable Diligence, we *cannot* obtain those important Ends.

We have to do with a *guilty* World, who have forfeited the Influences of the divine Spirit; and
God

God may withhold them when and where he pleases ; and tho' he gives us sufficient Encouragement that our Labours shall not be in vain, yet he distributes his Grace with the most free and majestic *Sovereignty*. Hence we often *plant* and *water* in vain, because an incensed *God denies the Increase* * ; and none will *believe our Report*, because *the Arm of the Lord is not revealed* §.---Tho' we offer *eternal Life* to Men upon the most *reasonable* Terms, it is the most *hopeless* Proposal we can make to the World. They are *ignorant* of its Importance, and unwilling to be taught. They are *careless* about it, and hate to be alarmed. They are *averse* to the Means of obtaining it ; and in Spite of all our weightiest Arguments and most melting Expostulations, they *will*, they *obstinately will* persist in the enchanted Paths of Sin and presumptuous Security. Tho' we offer Pardon bought with the Blood of God, to Criminals condemned to everlasting Punishment ; tho' we offer Health and Life to languishing dying Souls ; we are regarded as *importunate Babblers*. Their Head-strong Lusts prevail against our strongest Arguments, Arguments enforced with the tremendous Authority of the supreme Majesty, steeped in the Blood of *JESUS*, and moistened with our own compassionate Tears. If we subvert their false Hopes, they will soon rebuild them. If we flash the Light of Conviction upon their Minds, they shrink into Darkness again. If we awaken them to some serious Concern, they relapse into Security before the next Sabbath. The Farmer *finds* his Ground as he *left* it ; but we must *cultivate* and *re-cultivate* ; and the Labours of the *Sabbath* can hardly repair the Wastes of the *Week*. It is our hard Task to teach the contentedly Ignorant ; to humble the Proud ; to break Hearts of Adamant ; to interrupt pleasing Security with Peals of unwelcome Alarms ; to govern

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* 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

§ *Isai.* liii. 1.

Headstrong Obstinacy; to cheer inveterate Melancholy; to reason down unreasonable Fears, which regard our Arguments no more than a Whirlwind; to confirm Inconstancy into Perseverance; and *who is sufficient for these Things?*---The *World* also conspires to heighten the Difficulty of our Work. The *Things* of the *World* divert the Thoughts of Men from their eternal Concerns, and meeting with Hearts naturally susceptible of their Influence, make deeper and more lasting Impressions with Trifles and Phantoms, than we can with the majestic and substantial Realities of the eternal *World*. So true is the Observation of our divine Master, *The Cares of this World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, choak the Word, and it becometh unfruitful* †: The *Men* of the *World* likewise unite their infernal Efforts, and as it were bind themselves in a Curse, to obstruct the Success of our Ministry. These Missionaries of Hell, with a Zeal that may reproach our Luke-warmness, exert themselves to propagate the Contagion of Vice, and occasion those to relapse, who seemed upon the Recovery by our Instrumentality; and it requires no small Degree of Vigilance and Courage to counteract their malignant and too successful Industry.---But this is not all; our Ministrations meet with Opposition, not only from Earth, but from the *malignant Powers* of the invisible *World*. *We wrestle not only with feeble Flesh and Blood, but with Principalities and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darkness of this World* ||; the gloomy Gods that *work in the Children of Disobedience**; these catch away the Seed of the Word §, and blind the Minds of them that believe not **. And tho' we sleep, or confine ourselves to idle Privacy, these infernal Lions with unwearied *Vigilance*, are roaming this Wilderness in Quest of Prey ††; and unless we keep

† *Matt.* xiii. 22. || *Eph.* vi. 12. * *Eph.* ii. 2. § *Matt.* xiii. 19. ** *2 Cor.* iv. 4. †† *1 Pet.* v. 8.

keep the strictest Watch, they will seize the Sheep of our Fold, and lead them with malignant Joy to the Slaughter. I may add, that our *own Infirmities* render our Work much more difficult. O! could we get free from the stupifying Influence of Sin; could we always keep our own Spirits deeply imprest with the dread Importance of eternal Things; were we always duly sensible of the Value of one immortal Soul; then would we be as watchful over our Flocks as their *Guardian Angels*; then the *Labours* and *Fatigues* of our Ministry would be more natural to us than *Recreations*. But alas, we share in the general Degeneracy; and have not, as yet, obtained the perfect Cure of that Disease, which has indisposed all the Powers of human Nature for the Exercises of Devotion.---And is our Work so extremely *arduous*? And shall we engage in it as tho' it were the *easy Amusement* of our slothful Hours? Our Work *must* be done or we and Thousands besides are ruined for ever; and yet it *cannot* be done without the most vigorous, persevering and earnest Endeavours. Let us then, my honoured and dear Brethren, let us exhaust **all our Powers, spend and be spent**, in our arduous and difficult Undertaking. Let us *cry aloud, and not spare*; let us *lift up our Voices like Trumpets* †; *For Sion's Sake let us not hold our Peace, and for Jerusalem's Sake let us not rest, &c.*---Our utmost Diligence will appear yet more necessary, if we consider,

3. The *Uncertainty and Shortness* of our *Time* for Labour.

We know not how soon our Mouths may be silent in the Dust; and every Message we deliver to our Fellow-Mortals may be the last. Death perpetually lies in Ambush, ready to spring upon his Prey; and he may *break* in upon our Studies; or *surprize* our Breath in the Pulpit, and leave the
Sentence

† *Isai. lviii. 1.*

Sentence *unfinished* upon our Lips §. And can we trifle away our uncertain Time in a languid Discharge of our Office? Can we trifle, when we know not but we may be summoned from the *Pulpit* to the *Bar* of our supreme Judge? Can we trifle, when all our Opportunities of Service to a wretched World may so soon be over?---But the longest Time we can possibly expect for public Usefulness, is that between our *Entrance* into the Ministerial Office, and the inactive Period of *old Age*. Beyond the Grave indeed there is an *endless Duration*; but oh! that's intended for sublimer Purposes; for *reaping*, and not for *sowing*; for *receiving our Wages*, and not for *labouring*. Now tho' we should arrive to the remotest Period of old Age, alas! how short is our Time compared with the Importance and Difficulty of our Work! It is but a Span, an Inch, an Hair's-breadth. With sundry of us a great Part of our Time, which should have been devoted to Preparations for the sacred Ministry, was wasted in a thoughtless Estrangement from God, and a stupid Unconcernedness for that Cause, in which we heartily engaged *when it pleased God to reveal his Son in us**; and this has shortened the Time of our publick Usefulness, and robbed Mankind of many Days, and perhaps Years, of our Service. And how shall we redeem this Time, and make up this Loss, but by *redoubled Diligence*, and an uninterrupted, zealous Devotedness to God, and the publick Good?---But it is very improbable that many of us shall arrive at the most advanced Period of human Life. We belong to a
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§ This Remark lately received a solemn Confirmation in the Death of the Rev. Mr. Hugh Conn, who as he was observing, "That Death may seize us the next Moment," as soon as he had expressed the Word *Moment*, fell back in the Pulpit, and immediately expired, June 28, 1752.—See the *Virginia Gazette* of July 30, 1752.

* Gal. i. 15, 16

languishing, dying Fraternity. The wasting Fatigues, and pining Anxieties of our Calling, have a peculiar Tendency to flatter our Constitution, and prey upon our Vitals. This Truth we have seen written in the Dust of some of our more laborious and successful Brethren, who have died *Martyrs of the Pulpit*, in the Prime or Meridian of **Life**, and left the Churches in Tears. *We* must soon follow; yes, my Brethren, *we* who have now the Care of Souls, and the Management of the Affairs of the Church, must soon resign them into other Hands, and retire from publick Life into the Chambers of Death. Then Sinners may perish, and Saints may languish *for us*; we cannot relieve them. But the *Living*, the *Living*, they may praise the Lord*, and advance the Weal of the World in their Pilgrimage thro' it. Let us therefore imitate our Lord, and work while it is Day, that like him, ~~we~~ may breathe out our Life in that comfortable Declaration, *I have glorified thee on Earth; I have finished the Work which thou gavest me to do*§. Sure we cannot yawn and sleep over our Work, on the Brink of Eternity, within a Step of the Supreme Tribunal. Sure *dying Men* cannot speak to *dying Men* about Matters of *eternal* Consequence in *cold Blood*. O Let us act as *Candidates for Eternity*; and *whatsoever* our Hand findeth to do, let us do it *with our Might, for there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whither we are going*†. *For Zion's Sake, &c.*

4. Can we reflect upon the *great Need of a general Revival and more extensive Propagation of Religion*, and not be fired with Zeal, vigorously to pursue all proper Measures to obtain it?

Look round the **World**, my Brethren, look round your own Congregations; and the most ge-
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nerous

* *Isai.* xxxviii. 19. § *John* xvii. 4. and ix. 4. † *Eccles.* ix. 10.

nerous Charity which you can indulge, under any rational or scriptural Limitations, cannot avoid the unwelcome Conclusion, that *Multitudes, Multitudes are in a perishing Condition*. We would willingly turn away from the Evidence; but alas! it glares upon us from every Hand; and robs us of the Pleasure so agreeable to a benevolent Mind, viz. That of congratulating Mankind upon the Prospect of their Happiness. Multitudes give us the clearest Discoveries of their utter *Want* of all real Religion; and the Case of many others is so *doubtful* as to stagger even our credulous Charity. *Lord! who hath believed our Report? And to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? There is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy Face from us, and hast consumed us because of our Iniquities* §. A general lethargick Security prevails, and the Angels, who are employed as the Spies of the World, are, no Doubt, returning that Account which *Zechariah* heard them giving in Vision †, *We have walked to and fro thro' the Earth, and behold, all the Earth sitteth still, and is at rest*. We have indeed been the Witnesses, and sundry of you the zealous Promoters of an extensive religious Concern thro' this Land, which, notwithstanding the many real or imaginary Extravagancies that attended it, we still dare to call a *Work of God*, and the Remembrance of which will be still fresh upon our Minds, and intermingle with our most solemn Thoughts in the nearest Views of Eternity. But alas! that *Harvest is past, that Summer is ended, and Multitudes are not saved* *, and now *Ichabod* †† is written upon all our Assemblies, THE GLORY IS DEPARTED; which may shock us as the *Hand-writing upon the Wall* did the *Chaldean Monarch* ‖. But few are awakened, and the Impressions that are made by the Dint of Preaching, soon wear off. Many of the Children of

§ *Isai. lxiv. 7.* † *Zech. i. 11.* * *Jer. viii. 20.*
 †† *1 Sam. iv. 21, 22.* ‖ *Dan. v. 5, 6.*

of God are languishing; the *Things that remain are ready to die* **; and it is well if this *epidemical Contagion* has not infected the *Pulpit*. And can we be the *unconcerned Spectators* of so mournful a Scene? Can we behold the impending Ruin of Thousands, and not exert ourselves to avert it? They are related to us by the most endearing Ties, and we are under the strongest Obligations to promote their Salvation. They share in the same common *Humanity* with us, and are all *made of one Blood, and the Offspring of one common Father* †. They are our *general Charge* as we are Ministers of the *Catbolick Church*; or our *particular Charge* as we are Pastors of *particular Congregations*; and we are accountable for their Souls; and if, while we are *busy here and there, they are gone, and lost, our Life shall go for theirs* *. Or some of them may be united to our Hearts by additional and more tender Ties of *Friendship* or *Relation*. And shall they perish, while we carelessly look on? Can we spare a Child, a Neighbour, a Parishioner; nay, can we spare the vilest *Slave* to Hell, and carelessly resign him to the bloody Hands of infernal Monsters; Humanity cannot bear it; Duty forbids it; Friendship breaks our Hearts at the Thought. Rather than be Accessories to such hellish Cruelty, let us cry to God, let us cry to Men; let us *warn every Man*; let us *teach every Man in all Wisdom, that we may present every Man perfect in Christ Jesus* §. *Ye that make mention of the Name of the Lord, keep not Silence, and give him no Rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth* ||. Physicians have no Time to trifle, when their Patients are dying around them, and *Death has entered in at their Windows*. An *Emperor of the World catching Flies* ††, is not so incongruous a Sight,

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** *Rev. iii. 2.* † *Lut. xvii. 26, 28.* * *1 Kings xx. 40.*
 § *Col. i. 28.* || *Isai. lxii. 6, 7.* †† Like *Domitian the Roman Emperor.*

as a Minister of the Gospel prostituting too great a Share of his Time to trifling Conversation, or to the little tempting Delicacies of polite Literature; while Thousands of Immortals are perishing around him. And here it is natural to add, That nothing but a *general Revival* and *very extensive Propagation* of Religion can answer the Exigency of our Case. Even in this Season of general Security, we probably have the Happiness of observing a *few* in our respective Congregations awakened, and hopefully turned to the Lord; otherwise we could hardly refrain from the peevish Petition of *Elijah*, “*It is enough, now, O Lord, take away our Life §.*” These joyful Seals of our Ministry animate our Hearts; and we ought not to *despise the Day of small Things* ||; for it is a Mercy that deserves our eternal Praises, and the congratulations of all the heavenly Hosts, that so much as *one* Heart has ever been turned to God in this guilty World, which might justly have been doomed to universal Ruin. But alas! my Brethren, what is the Conversion of *two* or *three* here and there, when there are such *Multitudes* in all Places Strangers to God? Here we must indulge an insatiable *Avarice*, and never say, *it is enough*. When *Multitudes* are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; *Multitudes* must be quickened; or *Multitudes* are eternally undone. And how can we bear to see the Evil that shall come upon the Daughter of our People? Since then nothing less than a *general extensive Revival* of Religion can answer our Case, let us exert ourselves to promote it. All our Endeavours indeed will be ineffectual, till the Spirit be poured upon us from on high ††; but it is only in the Way of Diligence, that we can expect this Blessing. For Zion’s Sake therefore let us not hold our Peace, &c. until her Righteousness go forth illustrious, diffusing its Rays around thro’ a benighted World; and till her Salvation be conspicuous

cuous and *extensive*, as a *Lamp* which scatters the Particles of Light far and wide in the surrounding Air. And oh! we humbly hope, that having learned Prudence by *Experience*, we should know better how to conduct ourselves in such a Season, and to carry on the Work, than in the late Revival, when we were cast into pleasing *Consternation* by the *Novelty* and *uncommon* Circumstances of the *Phenomenon*.---And as such a Revival would have the happiest Consequences upon the *World* in general, so,

5. *We ourselves would receive peculiar Advantages from it*; and therefore a Regard to ourselves should engage us to promote it.

It would both *sweeten our Labours*, --and *qualify us for them*. Whatever Pursuit Men are engaged in, nothing tends so much to lighten their Toils, as the Prospect of *Success*; and the most *painful Exertion* of their Powers, which shall *obtain the End*, is less tiresome than their *languid Essays* which they expect will be *in vain*. And I need only desire you to consult your own Hearts to be informed, how much Alacrity the Prospect of *Success* would diffuse thro' all your most painful Labours. We speak with *Sorrow* because we speak with *Discouragement*; we speak rather from a Sense of *Duty*, than from *Hope* to be heard. *To whom shall we speak and give Warning, that they may hear? Behold, their Ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken; behold, the Word of the Lord is unto them a Reproach; they have no Delight in it* §. And must it not be a tiresome Employ, to be *obtruding* Entertainments upon Mankind, which they have *no Relish* for? Our Lungs are worn out, in neglected Cries to the obstinately Deaf. *The Bellows are burnt, and the Founder melteth in vain*, when it is his fruitless Task to refine *reprobate Silver* †; and no Wonder he grows weary of the Employ. But with what Pleasure

§ Jer. vi. 10.

† Jer. vi. 29, 30.

sure would we study, and pray and preach, if we saw the great Ends of our Office accomplished by these Means! With what Pleasure would we break the *Bread* of Life to those that *hunger* for it; and offer a Saviour, and all the Blessings of his Grace, to such as would eagerly *embrace* the Offer! And thus it would be in a general *Revival* of Religion. Therefore for *Zion's* Sake let us *not hold our Peace*, &c.---And as such a happy Season would *lighten* our most painful Labours, so it would, above all other Things, *qualify us for a proper Discharge of our Office*. Then all the devout Passions would be reciprocally communicated between *Minister* and *People*. Then should we feel the *silent*, but *powerful Oratory* of their speaking *Looks*; and the apparent Impressions made by *one* Sentence, would animate us to deliver *another*; and thus our *People* would *preach to us*, *while we are preaching to them*. Then instead of catching a contagious *Deadness* from the Aspect of our Auditory, every Countenance would flash a *Spark* of heavenly Fire into our Hearts, and render us *burning and shining Lights* §. A devout *Sympathy* would guide us, as by a Kind of *Instinct*, to the most proper Measures of dealing with them. Then would our preparatory Studies be happily interrupted by the welcome Intrusions of anxious Souls, not to *teaze* us with *trifling Enquiries*, but to ask, *What shall we do to be saved?* and to unbosom themselves to us about the various Exercises of their Hearts; from whence we might collect more *pertinent* Materials for Discourses adapted to the Cases of our Hearers, than all our intense Studies could furnish us with. Let us therefore, my Brethren, exert ourselves in our respective Spheres to promote a general Reformation, as the *readiest* Way to our *own Improvement*. For *Zion's* Sake let us *not hold our Peace*, &c.---But should a sovereign God re-

fuse

use, as he justly may, to crown our Labours with such extensive *Success*; yet they will not be in vain; for consider,

6. The *happy Consequences of a faithful Discharge of our Office*, tho' it should not have any remarkable *Success*.

We all know how much it is for our Comfort, to be free from anxious *Suspensions about our Call* to the Ministerial Office. Horror throbs thro' our Veins at the very Supposition of our being *Intruders*. Now, if God supplies us with Grace faithfully to discharge this Office, upon our regular Introduction to it, it will help to confirm our Judgment, that he approv'd our entering into it.---Again; We know how much it is for our Interest, and the present Tranquility of our Lives, *to cultivate Friendship with Conscience*, to prevent Bosom-broils, and the agonizing Remorse of Guilt. And this is the happy Consequence of a faithful Discharge of our Office. Whereas a secret Suspicion that some have perished thro' our Unfaithfulness, and may be now in the infernal Regions, imprecating the heaviest Curses upon our Heads, must wound a Heart of Stone. Better be harrassed with all the Furies of Hell, with the Gourd of conscious Innocence, than to be *haunted* with the *Ghost* of our *past Days*, that we have *murdered* and *buried* by Sloth and Carelessness.---Further; The important Hour of *Death* is before us; an *honest* Hour, and justly famous for speaking the Truth without Flattery; and we would make not only a *comfortable* and *safe*, but an *honourable Exit* from this mortal Stage: We would expend our *last Breath* in recommending to all around us, that Saviour, and that Religion, which have been so familiar to our Lips *in Health*; and give them the clearest Evidence that we can venture our *own Souls* with Courage upon that Foundation on which we have endeavoured to build *their Hopes*.

But

But a Conscience of habitual indulged Unfaithfulness will damp our Spirits, and shut our Mouths; or extort from us hideous Complaints of our own Conduct. Guilt will spread a dismal Gloom over the eternal World; Guilt will weaken our Confidence in God; Guilt will torture us with Pangs severer than those of Death, at the Prospect of the Supreme Tribunal, before which the next Hour will place us. But oh! to have *this* for our Rejoicing, ~~not~~ *the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, and not in fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World, and especially towards our respective Charges**: How will *this* embolden us against all the ghastly Terrors of Death! O! the unspeakable Satisfaction of reviewing a Life spent like that of Paul, and being able to say with him, --- *The Time of Departure is at Hand: I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith* †. Then the Conscience of habitual *Devotedness* to the great *Business* of our Ministry, will counter-balance the melancholy Review of our *Unsuccessfulness*; and we will be able to say with *Isaiab*, *Tho' Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my Strength* §. Then the Seasons we have spent in honestly labouring for the Conversion of Sinners, will afford us infinitely more Pleasure, than those Hours, so sweet to us now, in which we have *rioted in intellectual Luxuries, or which we have wasted upon useless Curiosities*. We may be alarmed with the dying Complaint of the *indefatigable Grotius*, which, in this Assembly, I may relate in his own Words, without the Appearance of *Pedantry*, "*Prob! Vitam perdidit, operose nihil crendo*;" [Alas! I have wasted my Life, busily ~~doing~~ *doing nothing*.] And oh! let us beware lest we have *more Reason* for it, at last

* 2 Cor. i. 12. † 2 Tim. iv, 6, 7. § Isai. xlix. 5.

at last than he.---Finally; I might lead your Thoughts, *beyond this World*, to that *Crown of Glory* reserved even for *unsuccessful Fidelity*, but here a Hint is sufficient. We are lost in sweet Excess of Light, and over-whelmed with *the exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. If we may then but hear the Approbation of our almighty Judge *as good and faithful Servants*; if we may but obtain the *lowest Seat* in heavenly Bliss, our Reward will infinitely exceed all the Labours of Life. And let us *have a Respect to the Recompence of Reward*; and be animated by it to the most unwearied Diligence in the Work of the Lord. *For Zion's Sake* let us *not hold our Peace*, &c.

7. How earnest ought we to be in the Pursuit of the great End of our Function, when *other Beings* are so much in earnest about it!

Our important End (as has been observed) to snatch perishing Sinners from everlasting Millery, and bring them to a happy Immortality: And this is an Object of *universal Concern*, in one View or other, to *Heaven*, and *Earth*, and *Hell*, in all Ages. We know no rational Being careless about it thro' the whole Universe, but *Man*; *Man*, whose sole Interest lies at Stake. *For this End* JEHOVAH instituted his eternal Sabbatism, and formed this World, with all its magnificent Apparatus. *For this* he still continues the Revolutions of Time, and his single Hand supports universal Nature. *For this* the co-equal Son of God was born of a Woman, was laid in a Manger, was banished a helpless Exile into *Egypt*, endured the Hardships of Poverty, was hungry, was thirsty, was weary, was reproached, and persecuted. *For this* he wept Floods of Tears, he preached many a Sermon, he wrought many a Miracle. *For this* he was betrayed, denied, buffeted, spit upon, derided, sweat Blood, and bore the Weight of divine Justice; and oh! *for this*, he expired

pired, in Agonies unknown, on the accursed Tree; and descended to the Dust of Death. *For this* he broke the Bonds of Death, and burst his Way to his native Heaven; where he now intercedes with almighty Importunity for the *same* important End. *For this* the holy Spirit condescends to strive with unyielding Rebels, and makes the humble Mansion of human Hearts his Temple. *For this* the angelic Armies hover over this little Globe, and exercise the most vigilant Guardianship over Particles of animated Dust*. *For this* the Apostles were inspired with the Knowledge of the Gospel, armed with miraculous Powers to attest it, and sent forth to conquer the Nations to the Faith of Christ, with omnipotent Truth. *For this* they faced the united Terrors of Earth and Hell, and defied Death in its most formidable Shapes. *For this* Martyrs have bled; Saints have prayed, and laid up a Store of ardent Petitions before God, from Adam to this Hour: Our Ancestors in Office have exhausted their Strength, and worn out their Lives in painful Labours. *To prevent this*, the malignant Potentates of Hell have roamed this Wilderness with tormenting Solitude, for near six thousand Years; and united their anxious Efforts, with infernal Zeal, to bring Destruction on Mankind, tho' they know it will encrease their own. *To prevent this*, their busy Missionaries of the human Species among us, use all the Artifices of Persuasion, Reproaches, Flatteries, Persecution, and their own contagious Examples. Nay, *this* kindles War among Immortals. See Deities in Arms! See Michael and his Angels in close Conflict with the Dragon and his Angels! See two warring Worlds, not such as Europe and Asia, but warring Worlds of Angels, of Principalities and Powers, hovering over this Earth, this little Brand of Strife, engaged in ardent Fight! And for what?

* Heb. i. 14.

Not in their *own* Cause, but in *Man's*; in the grand Concern of the Souls, which are entrusted to our Care†.---And amid this *universal Earnestness*, what are *we* doing? Are we inactive and asleep, when engaged in Affairs that engross the Attention of the whole *Univerſity of Beings*? Shall Heaven, shall Hell, shall every Thing be in earnest but *we*? Will we be such shocking *Singularities* in the rational World? *The whole Creation groaneth, and travaileth together in Pain* §; and are our Hearts at Ease? O let us awaken; let us exert ourselves, Ministers and People. From henceforth let Matters wear a new Aspect among us. Let us labour with more Zeal than ever. *Let us travail as in Birth, till Christ be formed in our Hearers**. Let our Mouths be opened to them; let our Hearts be enlarged||. This we are obliged to; this we have solemnly promised; and oh! this we have resolved over and over; especially in that memorable

† Several of the Thoughts, in the preceding Paragraph, are expressed with peculiar Beauty and Energy, tho' with a different View, in *Night Thoughts*, No 7. Page 149).

Nor less intensely bent *infernal Pow'rs*

To mar, than those of *Light*, this End to gain.

O what a Scene is here!—LORENZO! wake;

Rise to the Thought; exert, expand thy Soul

To take the vast Idea: It denies

All *else* the Name of Great. Two warring Worlds!

Not *Europe* against *Afric*; warring Worlds,

Of more than *Mortal*! mounted on the Wing!

On ardent Wings of Energy and Zeal,

High—hov'ring o'er this little Brand of Strife!

This sublunary Ball.—But Strife, for what?

In their own Cause conflicting? No; in *mine*,

In *Man's*. His *single Int'reit* blows the Flame;

His the sole Stake; his Fate the Trumpet sounds,

Which kindles War immortal. How it burns!

Tumultuous Swarms of Deities in Arms!

Force Force opposing, till the Waves run high,

And tempest Nature's universal Sphere.

§ *Rom.* viii. 22. • *Gal.* iv. 19. || *2 Cor.* vi. 11.

morable Time when the blessed JESUS first re-
himself to us, and delivered us from our Agonies of
Guilt; and when perhaps our Resolution to de-
vate ourselves to him in the Ministerial Office was
first formed in Embryo. And by this Means we are
like to serve ourselves and those that hear us, as
turning to Righteousness, and to shine as the Stars
in the Firmament for ever and ever §. Amen.

* 1 Tim. iv. 16.

Dan. xii. 3.

T H E E N D.