

Dr. MASON'S

SPEECH,

RELATIVE TO THE RESIGNATION

OF HIS

PASTORAL CHARGE,

IN THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK.

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAMS & WHITING, NEW-YORK,

PHILADELPHIA.

PRINTED BY JANE AITKEN, No. 71,

NORTH THIRD STREET;

.....

1810.

PREFACE.

IN obtruding his personal concerns upon the public, an individual subjects himself, and for the most part justly, to the charge of egotism. But when the public condescend to honour him and his affairs with their notice, the respect which he owes to their opinion imposes on him the duty of preventing or of correcting mistakes which may be greatly injurious to himself. Had the author of the following pages received only a tolerable share of candour from many who had easy access to the truth ; had not his feelings been wantonly sported with, and his character cruelly assailed ; had not representations tending to degrade him in the esteem of the community, been industriously cir-

culated ; he had never offered to the public eye a single line on so small a subject as the resignation of his pastoral charge. The necessity created by disingenuous treatment is his only apology for committing his explanations to the press ; and he trusts that by all good and honourable men it will be thought sufficient.

J. M. MASON.

Philadelphia 9th, June, 1810.

NOTE.

EXCEPTING some slight verbal corrections ; the addition, in a few instances, of a sentence or part of a sentence, not varying the argument, nor altering the meaning ; and the insertion, (in pp. 58, 59,) of a paragraph which happened to be omitted in the delivery, the ensuing speech is printed exactly as it was spoken.]

ERRATUM.

In page 17, line 21, for "are" read "is."

DR. MASON'S
S P E E C H, &c.

*Associate Reformed Presbytery of New-York,
Thursday Evening, May 24th, 1810.*

PRESENT.

Rev. JAMES MATHEWS, *MODERATOR.*

MINISTERS.

JAMES SCRIMGEOUR.
JOHN M. MASON. D. D.
JOHN M'JIMSEY.
GEORGE STEWART.

RULING ELDERS.

GEORGE LINDSAY.
DERICK AMERMAN.
PETER R. SPRINGER.

DR. MASON called up the papers which he presented to the Presbytery on the 17th, instant, at Newburgh; which were read, as follows, viz.

No. 1.

"To the Moderator and Members of the Associate Reformed Presbytery of New-York, to meet at Newburgh, on Wednesday the 16th day of May instant.

"Reverend Brethren,

"SERIOUS reflection, often repeated, and, for a considerable time past, habitual; accompanied also, if I do not entirely mistake, with scrupulous caution and fervent prayer against an improper bias, has convinced

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me that my longer continuance in my present congregational charge, will be favourable neither to my own peace, nor to my people's benefit, nor to the general interests of our church.

“NOT that I have ought to accuse my people of.” Their fidelity to their engagements; their kindness to myself; their respectful attention to my ministry; their public spirit; their orderly deportment, ever since my settlement among them, have endeared them to my heart; and shall forever sweeten the memory of my relation to them.

“BUT I find, by experience, that parochial cares, to which my own judgment not less than my ordination vows, attaches high importance, are incompatible with the work which the Head of the church has been pleased to assign to me; and, accordingly, I do not so much as pretend to perform the duties resulting from them.

“I SEE the congregation suffering for want of an efficient pastoral inspection; and I anticipate, with alarm, the consequences of this evil, unless preventive measures be adopted speedily.

“I HAVE used, without success, the only means in my power to avoid the step which I am now forced to take.

“My congregation are fully apprized of my intention, and of my reasons; as will appear from the document herewith presented. The decisive expressions there used are to be interpreted simply of my resolution to pursue my present application; and not as interfering, in any degree, with the submission which I owe to the authority of the Lord’s house.

“I AM forbidden by every Christian principle, and by every honourable sentiment, to retain a station of which I cannot fulfil the duties. I am equally forbidden to sacrifice the greater trust to the less: and, as faithfulness to both cannot co-exist, I have only the afflicting alternative of praying the Reverend Presbytery to release me from my pastoral connection.”

J. M. MASON.”

New-York, 8th May, 1810.”

No. 2.

“*To the members of the First Associate Reformed Church in the City of New-York.*

“*Christian Brethren,*

“I HAVE requested your attendance this evening, in order to lay before you the result of my reflections, upon a subject which has long been a source of painful uneasiness to my mind.

“IT is now nearly seventeen years since it pleased God to call me to the ministry of reconciliation, and to assign

me to this congregation as the immediate scene of my labours. The flower of my days has been spent with you. The course of my services has been marked with much imperfection, and many failures; but marked also, as I humbly hope, by some degree of acceptance with God, and usefulness to man. Being the sole pastor of the congregation I was bound to perform all the duties of that responsible office in so far as I was really able. For several years after my settlement among you, the state of my health, as you well remember, forbid, almost altogether, my discharge of those important functions, which are comprehended under the general term of *Parochial duty*. When this impediment was removed, others were created by trusts and employments so extensive in their nature and so imperious in their obligation, as to demand my first care, and to consume the leisure which I should otherwise have enjoyed. Thus year after year has glided by, duties of high moment to your welfare have been unfulfilled, and the prospect of their being fulfilled by me, is more distant than ever.

“PERCEIVING, as I do, their absolute necessity to your prosperity; knowing that the omission of them gradually weakens the bond of affection which should closely unite a pastor and his people; estranges the mind of individual members from the sense of their common interest in each other; enfeebles the power of social action; and relaxes the nerves of efficient discipline—Persuaded that Christian instruction, exhortation, reproof, and consolation, are circumscribed in

their influence, and lose much of their effect, when they are not brought home by a discreet exercise of pastoral inspection ; and accounting the respect paid to merely public talent but a meagre substitute for that ardent attachment which dies away under the suspicion of neglect ; feeling, I say, the weight of these considerations, it is impossible for my heart to be tranquil. My inquietude does not arise from self-reproach. As the highest of all authority, even the indisputable authority of him whose I am and whom I serve, has released me from parochial duties, by calling me to others which are incompatible with them, my conscience is pure. My anxiety is caused by the damage which your interests must sustain in consequence of parochial duties not being performed at all. Your patience under the privation, and your kindness to me personally, increase, instead of diminishing my difficulty. These things I frankly communicated to you at a congregational meeting in the fall of the year 1807. Although I had frequently spoken of them in private, I did not think it could answer any good purpose to bring them before you collectively, so long as I could not see how the inconvenience was to be remedied. But when a remedy appeared to me as within reach, I embraced an early opportunity of proposing it, which I did at the meeting alluded to, by recommending the choice of an assistant to whom the parochial duties should be exclusively committed. I was disappointed. Beside the embarrassment of our national affairs, which, for a time, paralysed almost every effort, a more serious check was given to the measure by the

state of our finances, which, it was supposed, could not be made sufficient to cover the additional expenditure without either distressing or banishing the poorer part of the congregation. My next concern, therefore, was to devise some means of so augmenting our resources as to remove this obstacle. After very maturely considering the matter, and balancing the advantages and disadvantages both to this congregation, and to the church at large, I suggested the propriety of building a new and more spacious place of worship. As I had no doubt of the practicability of this scheme, and of a sufficiency of numbers speedily to fill the house, my calculation was, that a revenue might be secured, equal to all expences ; and also that sources would be opened of further support for our Theological Seminary with which, in a great measure, our whole body and a vast amount of Christian interests allied to it, seem likely to stand or fall. But I was again disappointed. The same objection recurred. A new church, it was imagined, could not be erected without oppression to a considerable portion of the congregation. I found also a settled opposition to the plan of my having an assistant on any terms. What the extent of it is, I have not so much as endeavoured to ascertain, because I perceived it to be enough to involve the prosecution of my wishes in much difficulty. Upon the whole I am convinced that my proposal cannot be carried through with that cordiality which is indispensable to your comfort and to my own. The question is decided. My last hope of extricating both you and myself from our perplexed condition, and yet preserving our rela-

tion to each other, has vanished away. The higher duties which I owe to the church of God leave no place for the details of a pastoral charge. I am at best but a nominal pastor, and there is no probability of my becoming a real one. I stand in the way of one who might be such. I cannot consent to remain in a situation so afflicting to myself, and so injurious to you. The only alternative is that which I have adopted and am about to mention. An alternative not hastily resolved upon; distinctly anticipated long ago as a possible event; put off by my utmost exertions to avoid it, until I am shut up to it; pondered, with much tenderness and solemnity, at various intervals and under various states of mind; spread out, not once nor twice, "with strong crying and tears," before the mercy-seat; and not resorted to after all, but from a deliberate and thorough conviction of duty as in the sight of God, and as one that must give account. Brethren, we must part. My agitation and my anguish in announcing this to you are extreme. But the die is cast. The thing is inevitable. I have, therefore, to inform you, that it is my intention to resign my pastoral charge into the hands of the Presbytery of New-York, at their next stated meeting, to be held in the town of Newburgh on Wednesday the 16th day of May next ensuing. I give you this early notice that you may appoint, if you shall judge it proper, commissioners to attend the Presbytery, and make any representations which you may desire, so as to save the Presbytery the trouble of a special meeting. At the same time candour obliges me to state, that I have com-

municated my purpose, not as a matter on which my own mind is dubious or wavering ; nor as a manœuvre to accomplish, by indirect means, views which I directly attempted without success. My resolution is fixed, and cannot be altered by any steps which may now be taken.

I SHALL detain you no longer than to subjoin an observation or two for preventing mistakes. During the whole period of our connection the utmost harmony has subsisted between us. The reiterated proofs of your affection I shall cherish as a spring of grateful recollection while my memory retains her seat. Dissatisfaction with my people I have none. Neither am I influenced by pecuniary motives. Your last unsolicited, unexpected addition to my income, notwithstanding the evils under which you labour were not removed, is a proof that you are ready to preclude all just uneasiness on that score.* But my salary doubled, trebled, quadrupled, would not induce me to retract, or even to hesitate. The reasons of my present conduct would still operate with unabated force.

“NOR have I been impelled by private chagrin or resentments. I have no personal quarrel with any man among you ; and if I had, I should enjoy ineffable consolation from the assurance that the uniform tenour of my life puts me above the suspicion of acting from such paltry passions.

* Some months before, the congregation, without my request, expectation, or knowledge, unanimously voted the addition of 100 pounds per annum to my former salary.

J. M. M.

IN declaring my intention of resigning my charge, I am not to be understood as expressing any intention of abandoning the pulpit. To preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, is my honour and my happiness : nor shall I desist from my loved employment so long as I am permitted to abide in it; but shall continue to labour in the word and doctrine as God in his providence shall appoint me to a proper scene of action. In the interim between this date and the meeting of the Presbytery in May, I shall perform, if the Lord will, my public functions as usual.

THE respect which I owe to my more intimate friends, and especially to the members of session, demands an explanation of my silence on this interesting subject until the hour of my laying it before the congregation. It is not strictly a sessional business. Talking of it, while the facts to determine the issue were still in suspense, might have been interpreted as a threat, or at least as an indecorum toward the congregation. I also studied to shun the multitude of discussions to which it would have given rise ; and thus to spare myself and my brethren much pain which would otherwise have been unavoidable. My feelings at this moment justify my precaution : they are sufficiently excruciating without having been subjected to agony a thousand times repeated.

You will readily excuse me for not addressing you in person on this occasion. My heart tells me that I could hardly sustain the conflict. That heart is filled,

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and shall be filled with affectionate remembrance of you, and with fervent supplications for your temporal and eternal felicity, while the hand which expresses its emotions is able to subscribe the name of

Your friend and pastor,

J. M. MASON.

New-York, March 12th, 1810.”

The foregoing papers having been read, MR. ANDREW FOSTER, the commissioner of the congregation, stated, in a few words, their acquiescence in Dr. Mason's resignation, and their desire to have as much of his services as possible, in the form of supply.

Dr. Mason then rose and spoke as follows.

Mr. Moderator,

IF the circumstances under which I now address this Presbytery did not deeply agitate my mind, I should have forsworn the best affections of human nature. In the disruption of any ties which do not bind us to misery, there is something painful : but in the disruption of ties which form one of the most tender relations of life ; which time has made venerable, friendship sweet, and religion sacred, there is something at which the

heart trembles and shrinks away. I own that I have trembled; I own that I have shrunk, in the anticipation of this hour. Seventeen years of a comfortable, a cherished, and, I trust, not altogether a barren ministry, create feelings which the touch of rudeness would profane; and claims which none but the highest authority can set aside. I have peculiar causes of attachment to my people, and to the place where they worship. Both are, in some sense, my inheritance. Here my father prayed, and God heard him: here my father preached, and God gave him seals of his ministry and crowns of his rejoicing. The memorial of his faithfulness is perpetually before my eye; and in the spot over which I now stand, his flesh rests in hope. I have entered into his labours. The seed which he sowed I have been honoured to water. I have seen many of them who were the friends of his earlier and of his later days, who have also been my own friends, gathered peacefully to the tomb. I see others of them waiting till their change come. I meet every Lord's day; I discern around me now, the faces of not a few whom I may present before the mercy-seat, and say, "These are the children whom thou hast given me." Assuredly, were affection the only thing to be consulted, instead of cutting the cord which unites me to them, I should seek to entwine it more closely with every

ligament of my frame. But I am not my own ; I am not theirs. I owe a nobler allegiance than can grow out of their love ; and to that allegiance do I bow when I ask to be released from my pastoral charge.

Moderator,

THE system of every well regulated church is a system of fixed ministrations. For the lighter services of the pulpit ; for social prayer and exhortation ; generally, for the more public exercises of religion, an itinerant ministry, although, with the exception of *missionaries*, far inferior in labour, in care, in self-denial, in responsibility, may get along and be popular. But for sound exposition of the scriptures ; for “giving to every one his portion of meat in due season ;” for training up the youth ; for coercive and preventing discipline ; for carrying both the law and the gospel home to every man’s “business and bosom ;” briefly, for binding up and consolidating the invaluable interests of a Christian community, there is no adequate, and no appointed, means but a *stated* ministry. Without it there may be *preachers* in abundance, *pastors* there can be none. This broad and obvious distinction is recognized in the form of a call customary in our churches ; which, taking for granted that a minister is to *preach*, lays the

principal stress upon his pastoral character. True it is, that no man can be a scriptural pastor, who does not “feed his flock with knowledge and with understanding :” but he may provide their weekly food, plenty and good, and yet lamentably fail in his pastoral work. For my own part, the longer I consider the nature and design of the Christian ministry, the more does the importance of those functions which are termed *parochial duty*, rise to my view. I am persuaded, that without them no congregation can permanently flourish, nor any pastor be permanently comfortable. There are a thousand avenues to conviction which no public instruction can enter. A thousand difficulties to be solved which the pulpit cannot reach. There is an adaptation of general truth to particular circumstances, fit only for the private walk or the fire-side. There is a correspondence between doctrine preached and exemplified which forces its way silently, but most effectually, to the heart. By pastoral vigilance and prudence, abuses are to be checked, and scandals prevented, which when permitted to ripen for judicial cognizance, are often beyond remedy. It is of unutterable moment to couple, in the early associations of children, the idea of their minister with that of a spiritual father, and of their own relation and duties to the church of God—which is impossible without frequent and

affectionate intercourse. The want of this is the most fertile secondary cause of that absurd contradiction which reigns among the churches,—treating our baptized youth as if they were mere heathen. The feeble are to be strengthened, the lame to be healed, the wanderers to be hunted up and brought back. The drooping spirit is to be cheered; the thoughtless spirit admonished, the impetuous spirit restrained. The presence of a faithful pastor refreshes the soul, of labour, and sweetens the crust of poverty. His voice smoothes the bed of sickness, and mitigates the rigours of death. In short, his people expect from him numerous *attentions* which allow of no substitute. They furnish an irresistible argument for rich preparation before he begins. He will find it a hard effort to make up deficiency afterwards, and not withhold them. Yet, withhold them, and affection, the basis of confidence and of usefulness, gradually wears away. Talent may inspire admiration; it will certainly command respect; but it cannot extort love. On the other hand, there is nothing which men resent more promptly, forgive more reluctantly, and forget more slowly, than neglect. You may deny their requests; you may expose their errors; you may reprove their faults; but neglect them you may not. The civilities of life, and the friendly exterior may indeed remain;

but you shall find, on the first decisive experiment, that the power of their affection is gone. They always feel themselves neglected when the parish services of their minister are not rendered. Whether the neglect be real, or only apparent.— Whether there be just cause or not, for the omission, are questions which may have some influence on the progress of things toward this result, but will very slightly, if at all, vary the result itself. The services are not rendered, and that is enough. This night does my own experience seal the truth of my remark.

SUPERADDED to those general reasonings which apply to all pastors and their people, is a consideration of peculiar force in its application to myself. To me, sir, has been committed, that honourable but most arduous and responsible office, the office of forming the minds and habits of our rising ministry. On me it is severely incumbent neither to lay nor permit to be laid, in so far as I can hinder it, any stumbling-block before their feet. What is the fact? They hear me urge parochial duties as indispensable. They know that I perform none. They, at the same time, see my congregation apparently flourishing.— What is likely to be the present conclusion?

Manifestly this : either that I do not believe my own declarations, or, that, supposing me to be sincere, I over-rate the value of parochial duties. What is likely to be the future result? Manifestly this : supposing that any of them should neglect their own charges, they will comfort themselves by quoting me. They will remember the general fact, and will forget the circumstances which render it no precedent for their imitation. They will also be tempted to hold in light estimation the sacredness of their ordination-vows, one of which expressly promises diligence in parochial work. And thus, in the very act of betraying their trust, they will endeavour to quiet their consciences by pleading the example of their instructor to justify their treason. No example of mine must afford any colour for such an abuse.

WITH this manifold conviction bearing upon my spirit, viz.

1. THAT parochial duties are essential to the prosperity of a congregation :
2. THAT my people were suffering, in their most precious interests, for want of them :

3. THAT it was impossible for me to perform them :

4. THAT the state of feeling which arises from supposed neglect, in their omission, was every day becoming more visible :

5. THAT the omission of them set an example which my students, should they be so inclined, might hereafter abuse to the incalculable mischief of the churches—

WITH all these distressing convictions haunting my soul, I ask, moderator, and I put the question home to every member of this court, and to every person within these walls, how was it possible for me, without the utter extinction of whatever is holy or honest in man, to remain easy, or inactive. Yes, sir, I have had on this subject, hours of anguish to which no one was witness but the great keeper of secrets. Large and repeated draughts of bitterness, in comparison of which all that others have suffered on my account, are no more than the straggling drop. Often, often, did I interrogate myself. "Are you not pastor of this congregation?" "Yes." "Do you fulfil the engagements contracted at your ordination?" "No." "Are not the congre-

gation suffering from the omission?" "They are." "Is the omission wilful on your part?" "That I can answer firmly in the negative." "Why, then, do you not adopt some remedy?" "Because there is none within reach."

THUS did I commune with my own heart and with my God, when some I doubt not, imagined I was utterly unconcerned. Nor did I break silence to men, unless in a very general way, until an opportunity occurred, as I thought, of disembarassing myself, and my congregation. Then I lost no time in explaining, first to the session and trustees jointly; and afterwards to the congregation, the interference of my public trust with the details of congregational labour. I frankly told them that these details I could not perform, and therefore would not so much as attempt it. That I felt myself liberated from the necessity by the authority of my master in heaven, who had assigned me other work of larger interest and more imperative obligation. That I could not, however, with a good conscience, stand by and see their spiritual edifice decay; nor abstain from giving them open warning; and pointing out the only means of preventing the ruin consistently with my remaining their minister.—That means was the

procuring of an assistant to whom the parochial duties should exclusively belong.

THIS was in the fall of 1807. The proposal was differently received by different persons. Some, I know, were decidedly favourable. Others were decidedly and actively unfavourable. They urged “the general inconvenience of collegiate charges as experienced in this city.—The unseemliness of allotting two ministers to the same congregation in New-York; the one preaching, the other sitting idle, while so many places are destitute of the Christian ordinances altogether—and the impracticability of providing for two ministers without such an increase of burdens as should either oppress our poorer members; or expel them from our sanctuary.”

THESE are all the avowed reasons which came to my ear, and I suppose they are all which could be plausibly produced. The first confounded a connection of two ministers in one congregation with the union of two or more congregations in a common charge; and therefore had no force at all which would not equally shew the impropriety of more than one minister in the same town or city. The second was dictated by that very common but very small calculation, which

sacrifices substance to shew ; and is never contented unless a minister be wedded to a congregation, although his labours, in a different form, repay the church of God, in advantage to her general interests, a hundred fold. The third, *viz.* that my expedient “ would distress or banish our poor,” I never believed nor do I now believe to have any real foundation. Facts are against it. The poor themselves did not urge it. But it is not unusual for men to frame opinions for the poor, and act as their advocates ; while at the same time, these very poor are often ignorant of the whole matter, and disclaim, upon the first information, the sentiments attributed to them. Let me speak freely, for I speak with certainty. The poor, not those who subsist upon alms, but those who acquire a decent support by honourable industry, are grievously injured. My experience enables, and respect to a highly meritorious class of the community enjoins, me to testify, that the poor are not the first to decline their share, and more than their share, of public burdens. Were the opulent to contribute, in proportion to their power, the *tithe* of what is contributed by the poor, there could never be any want of means for the noblest purposes of beneficence. Yet as the poor are frequently misled into notions and conduct which if left to themselves, they would never have adopted;

and as a plea founded upon professed regard to them, is well suited to enflame their minds, I did not judge it advisable to press my point, till I was prepared to meet the principal objection with an answer more decisive than reasoning: especially as some alleged, doubtless in proof of the general disaffection toward my plan, that it was espoused, in the meeting of the congregation, by only a solitary individual. This is extremely fallacious. Modest men, unaccustomed to appear in public, can rarely overcome their diffidence so far as to speak in a promiscuous assembly. Their feelings are mistaken, because not expressed; and inferences are drawn from their silence the very reverse of the truth. But, taking the fact as it is stated, viz. that only an individual espoused my cause; let it never be forgotten that *that* individual was ALEXANDER CAMPBELL. A man whose value I knew well, but knew too late: and who is now without peradventure, in a better world. Allow me, sir, to say of him,—it is the only opportunity I have had of paying my tribute to his memory—allow me to say, without discourtesy to any of our surviving friends, that for all which belongs to native energy, united with unbending integrity, and an utter abhorrence of petty intrigue, he has not left his superiour among us. Without learning himself, a man of mere learning was a plaything

in his hand.—Without political training, he was a politician of larger and of sounder brain than the most of those whom *we* call statesmen. But he was modest—he was retired—he was not seen but in the effusions of unfettered confidence : he was not seen at all by the mass of those with whom he habitually conversed. I have wondered that, in the holy providence of God, such rare intellect should have been expended upon blocks of marble, when it might have been appropriately occupied in rearing the moral edifice of a nation. But he is gone to a scene where his faculties shall not miss their employment : his dying lips breathed out the virtue of the blood of the cross.—I pass by his tomb, and repeat in my sorrow, “ yes ! here—(with no

Perhaps)—in this neglected spot is laid
 A heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
 Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.”

PARDON my digression—I return.

WHATEVER was the state of private wishes, nothing was done. A number talked; none exerted themselves, and the decisive moment passed by. Then came the EMBARGO, which will be had in unblest remembrance, so long as a measure so absurd, immoral, and destructive, shall be entitled

to a "bad eminence" in the records of the world. —Our little bark was locked up in the universal frost; and nothing could be done till Mr. Erskine's thaw in the spring of 1809. The revival of our commerce and the cheerful activity which it diffused, seemed to be a proper juncture for suggesting a second measure, which, by removing the danger of too heavy a pressure on the poor, might not only accomplish the first, but open new sources of both comfort and usefulness. This was *the erection of a larger and more commodious house of worship*. Accordingly, on the 16th of May last, I presented to the board of trustees, through their chairman, a memorial of which the following is a copy, viz.

"Sir,

"I HOPE I shall not be thought officious in asking the early and decisive attention of the trustees to an object of confessed importance, and which has, for some time back, been a frequent topic of conversation among the members of our own, and our neighbouring churches.—I mean the erection of a new and larger place of worship.

"I HAVE often expressed an opinion that a place of worship should be of a moderate size; very little, if any, more spacious than the one which we already possess. And to that opinion, as to a *general* rule, I still adhere. But this rule, like all others, I find by experience

to have exceptions. A great city produces habits and circumstances which cannot be controlled by a small section of its inhabitants, and which prudence directs them to turn to their advantage. It is a principle in human nature, that every thing, to be respectable, must be on a scale proportioned to the scene of action. Large cities, therefore, will have large dwelling houses; large buildings for civil purposes; large establishments for charity; and, on the same ground, large churches. Viewing the subject in this light, I am compelled to yield to the reasons which require us to prepare, without delay, for providing a larger and more commodious house of worship.

“WE owe it to our own relative standing in the community, which will be materially affected for the better by such an alteration.

“WE owe it to the claims upon our liberality for great and noble purposes of beneficence, which it will be in our power to answer more extensively, as well as more easily, by an increase of reputable members.

“WE owe it to our own children who very shortly must be expelled from our sanctuary, unless room be made for them.

“WE owe it, finally, to the great interests of religious truth and order which our Lord and master has committed to our hands, and which we are bound both by his authority and his love to extend as far as we can.

“THE measure, therefore which I have taken the freedom to recommend *must* come into operation before long, whether we will or whether we will not. In this alternative, the sooner the better. If it is to be done at all, my persuasion is, that it should be done *now*. My reasons are these :

“THAT which *must be done* hereafter, and *may* be done now, ought, for that reason alone, to be done *now*.

“THEY who do not seize Time by the *forelock*, will find it very difficult to hold him by the *back of the head*. In plain words. If we wait till circumstances command us, when it is our power to command circumstances, we commit an act of indiscretion of which we shall repent but once, and that is forever after. This congregation has already lost to an immense amount of comfort, if not of property, by permitting *occasions* to pass by unimproved.

“THE impediments to the public prosperity are again removed, and the return of commerce and active business has diffused cheerfulness and spirit through the community. Strike while the iron is *hot*. Six months hence may be too late.

“THERE is a strong religious sensibility in the city peculiarly favourable to the undertaking.

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“THE congregation is ripe for it. It is a subject of conversation and anxiety ; and some are ready to step forward with liberal donations.

“A NUMBER of respectable and religious families are waiting to see if they can be accommodated. They cannot and ought not to remain unsettled. The prospect of procuring seats will determine them. Otherwise they must and will go elsewhere.

“THE expence of building will be much less to us than to others after allowing for the ground and materials already our own ; and, deducting from the additional cost the amount of donations which will be made, the balance will be comparatively trifling ; and, by a judicious mode of arranging the finances of the congregation, will be speedily extinguished. Had the thing been done seven years ago, we might now have flourished in an eminent degree, and been nearly if not entirely out of debt. Should the present opportunity be suffered to slip ; we may in vain look for another like it for a dozen years to come. There are *critical periods* in the history of societies as well as of individuals, which if once lost, are lost forever. The present seems to be such with us. Should the trustees see the matter in this light, as I flatter myself they will, not an hour should be lost in forming their purpose, making it *public*, and following it up with *active measures*.

The whole extent of my personal efforts they know they can command, and that I am,

“ With perfect respect and attachment,

“ Their much obliged and obedient,

J. M. MASON.

“ *New-York, 16th May, 1809.*

“ *The Chairman of the Trustees of S. P. Church.*”

THE subject was certainly important ; the manner of communicating it respectful ; and the reasons for a prompt attention to it, not absolutely contemptible. Yet notwithstanding the subject, the manner, and the reasons, I never heard one syllable from the board till about six months after ; that is, on the 7th of November. And all that I then got was this laconic message, that they had “ postponed the consideration thereof for the present ! ! ” I shall not affect to conceal that I was deeply wounded. A right to judge for themselves they undoubtedly had ; and I never thought of objecting to their freest exercise of it, however different their conclusions might be from my own. But I, too, had my rights. On a subject deeply interesting to my private peace, my public character, and the prosperity of our churches, I felt that I had a right to be heard ; to

be heard speedily ; to have my proposals fully considered ; and if they should be inadmissible, to have the reasons for rejecting them fairly stated. But that such a paper as I offered should be tossed carelessly aside—that I should be suspended on the tenter hook of anxiety for six months—that even the consideration of my memorial should then be postponed, indefinitely, without the smallest notice by the board of one of my reasons, and without assigning one of their own, was such a departure from all the decorum of life, that submission to it would have been inconsistent with self-respect, and would have curdled the very milk of Christian meekness. My feelings were, I believe, intelligibly conveyed to the board in another letter three days after ; and there the business, under that view of it, ended. I wish to be perfectly understood as referring to the Trustees in their *corporate*, not their *individual* capacity ; and as criticising their *act*, not their *motives*. I had not then, nor have I now, the smallest suspicion that they, or any one of them, *intended* to be uncivil. For I have not yet learned to suspect a bad motive, when a better is equally reasonable. I had ever ranked them among my personal friends ; I had done nothing either to incur their resentment, or to forfeit their esteem ; and, therefore, I could not, without violence to my own mind,

impute to them any wilful contumely, although their *act* was pretty highly spiced with that quality. I regret the necessity of adverting to this occurrence at all. But as it is an essential link in the chain of events which led to my present application, the mention of it was unavoidable.

WHATEVER injury the message of the Trustees did to their intention, their *act* could not be mistaken. It was, unequivocally, their official negative upon the scheme of a new church. What other interpretation could it bear? To say the very least, such a postponement, after so many months for deliberation, betrayed an indifference, which, when hard pressed, would break out into resistance. With a bias of so much wealth and influence, as centered in the board, against my plan, or without that bias for it, how should it succeed? I could not reasonably imagine the trustees to be alone in their feelings and policy; for I never so much as dreamed that a proposal to build a new church should find its way into the box of secrets. There was, also, no method of bringing the question fairly up, but what should put myself at issue with the Trustees before the bar of the congregation—an experiment fit only for madness to adopt. Each side would have had its supporters; and a miracle could hardly have saved

us from intestine war. Such a consequence my soul shuddered at; and resolved upon no account to hazard.

I ENTREAT my brethren to look, now, upon my situation. Two years before, I had told my people that I saw their prosperity fading for want of attentions which it was impossible for me to give; that I could not consent to the further progress of the mischief; and besought them not merely for my sake, but for their own; for the sake of their families, for the sake of the church of God, to provide an additional minister. The measure is declined; and the only reason which had even the shew of solidity is the burden which it would impose on the poor. I wait patiently for a fit opportunity of meeting this difficulty: I find it in circumstances favourable to the erection of a larger house of worship; an expedient which, in the nature of things, would have thrown the weight where it ought to lie, upon the shoulders of the rich; and would have extended our resources through their means. The plan is smothered for six months—it is, then, dismissed, unconsidered, without the common forms of courtesy.—When called up in private conversation it is opposed by men of influence; and, to my utter astonishment, opposed upon the old ground—sympathy for the

poor ! In short, I perceived a fixed determination to discountenance and defeat it. What is the amount ? “ You have told us, sir, that the duties of the congregation cannot be performed, nor its interests cherished, nor your own heart be at peace, without an assistant. You shall have no assistant.” “ Why not ? ” “ We cannot furnish one without so raising the rents in our little church as to distress the poor.” “ Build another one, and let the rich bear the burden.” “ No, sir, collegiate charges are bad. It would not look well to have one minister in the pulpit and another sitting and hearing him—you will drive the poor away.—In one word, you shall not have an assistant upon any terms ; and your comfort, and your cares, and the interests of the congregation, may help themselves as well as they can.”

I DO not say that this process passed formally through any man’s mind : but I say that it is the true language of the *conduct* which I am considering. What then was to be done ? The only plan which could be devised for cherishing this people, consistently with my remaining their minister and the head of our seminary, had been rejected under both its forms. The alternatives are plain. Either I must foster the seminary to the detriment of my congregation : or my congregation to the detri-

ment of the seminary; or I must resign my pastoral charge. Could even a very moderate understanding co-operating with upright principle, hesitate for a moment? Retain my charge under all its embarrassments; after my solemn and public declarations; at the expence of wringing my heart, polluting my conscience, and stamping on my forehead the brand of hypocrisy! Abandon our infant seminary! Lay the axe to the root of a tree which the Lord's own right hand hath planted! which his gracious providence has watered; and of which his people are beginning to eat the fruit! Pour blasting and mildew over the green hope of our churches! Give the signal to Hell for a burst of Pæans to another triumph of her darkness! The suggestion is enough to make the Devil blush.—Nay, sir, to that institution I will say as the mourning prophet to the holy city—*If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning.* With that institution, whatever be the absurd confidence of dreamers,—with that institution, in all human probability, our churches stand or fall. In providing liberally for it, we are providing the bread of life and the water of life for generations to come. In permitting it to languish and to die, we shall help to bring on a famine of the word of the Lord under which our children and our children's children will sink down

into the arms of the second death, To the great interests of religion, many of which are bound up in that institution, I must be devoted in body, soul, and spirit. This is the sort of work for which God made me. "And wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" Far from my eyes be the gloom of that day; I mean, the blackness of that night—in which this fountain of life-blood to our churches shall be dried up. In the event of such a catastrophe, unless my views materially change, or providence should find me other appropriate employment, I should consider, and, without prejudice to the authority to which I am subject, I beg the declaration may be remembered, I should consider my ministerial commission as abrogated; and myself ordered, by my master in Heaven, off ecclesiastical ground.

SINCE, then, it was my duty to promote the greatest good of both my congregation and of the seminary; and since the continuance of my present relation involved the sacrifice of the one to the other, there was no choice.—I was shut up to the *necessity* of resigning my pastoral charge. I say "*shut up* to this necessity:" for the facts which I have submitted to the Presbytery shew, that it was not of my own seeking, nor of my own creating; that I struggled hard to shun it; but

E

was compelled to it; and I was compelled by nothing more directly than by the measures which were deemed proper by some of the brethren whom it has most deeply offended.

I ANNOUNCED my purpose to the congregation in my letter of the 12th March last. But before making this communication I had explored the consequences, and considered in what manner they might be directed to the happiest issue. The death of a good plan is often the birth of a better. God disappoints our hope, that he may give us something greater than we had hoped for. More than once has he been thus bountiful to my feeble efforts: I trust he will be so now. To quit the seminary, the city, or the pulpit; to take another parochial charge; to maintain my family with my private property, or upon the public fund, were equally out of the question. The expedient which presented itself as precisely suited to these complicated emergencies, was the *erection of a third church* upon such a scale and such principles, as should allow me to *preach the gospel statedly*, should also insure the benefit of a *complete pastor*, and should be able, without difficulty, to provide for both. This new plan was to be surveyed in two lights;

1st. As desirable.

2d. As practicable.

To me it appeared every way preferable to the first plan of pulling down the old church and erecting a new one on the same scite.

THE present building, which may last along time, would be thrown away.

THE materials, as I discovered from more correct information than I formerly possessed, would be worth nothing : the expence of preparing them for use being equal to their value when prepared.

THE design could not be effected without disturbing the graves of a great number whose friends and families are still in the congregation. On this subject human feelings are intractable ; and though their opposition might not perhaps, be invincible ; yet it would be very strong ; would be accompanied with vehement passion ; would require very delicate and dextrous management ; and even when subdued would leave behind it heart-burnings and animosities.

A **THIRD** building would yield all the advantages of a new one upon the scite of the first, even supposing the old one to be deserted ; and we should have the old one into the bargain. So that we should really have two churches for the same sum, which, on the plan of pulling the old church down, would be expended on one, with the mere difference of the ground on which it now stands. A third church, therefore, is preferable on the score of *economy*. It is preferable on much higher accounts.

THREE churches in one city, are in themselves, better for any denomination than two.

A **FOURTH** congregation may be formed much more easily from three, than a third from two.

LARGER revenue for our seminary may be derived from three than from two.—And this I viewed as an object of immense importance.

THE Presbytery of New-York has to sustain the heaviest pressure of our public burdens. It occupies a most interesting position in the body ; and therefore, the more you can increase its resources, the more will you promote the good of the whole.

ONE minister more than our number of pulpits, would enable us to meet pressing calls of public service, which would redound to the benefit of the body, and of religion at large; which are now almost impracticable; and which could then be performed without injuring our general interests through this Presbytery, whose prosperity and adversity are, pre-eminently, the prosperity and adversity of our whole denomination.

NEW-YORK is fast becoming the London of the United States. The habits and character of such a metropolis exert an incalculable influence. It is, therefore, of unspeakable moment to our state and country, that her habits and character be on the side of that "righteousness which exalteth a nation." The more of pure religion you preserve and disseminate in her, the more likely are you to produce so blessed a result. And though no one denomination can do every thing: yet each denomination may do something. Every evangelical church is one; and every one counts. The erection of a *third* church is, therefore, most *desirable*. But,

2. Is it *practicable* ?

THE question can regard no impediment but such as must arise from either want of *wealth* or want of *people*.

THE first admits not of a discussion. Should a man seriously assert that there is lack of wealth, the world would laugh in his face.

BUT where are your people? It is alleged that we have not enough to fill a third church; and, therefore, it is concluded that such a measure is premature. Had this course of objecting, for I will not call it reasoning, prevailed in other times, instead of two respectable houses of worship, we should now have boasted only a pitiful hovel.—When my father came to this city the whole congregation assembled in a small room; therefore it was a mad speculation to build a church larger than 25 by 20 feet! When the extravagantly big little place which was erected began to overflow, all prudent calculation was set at defiance in the building of this edifice, 66 by 56 feet.—And when here, again, we felt ourselves crowded, and ventured upon an additional church larger still, we certainly took leave of our senses! Really, sir, I am ashamed to hear men of any understanding talk so wildly. How shall you increase your numbers when you have not a corner to spare? The

only way to get people, if you can hold out other inducements, is to make room for them. You surely do not expect that they will stand in the aisles, or out of doors in sunshine and rain, or enter their names in a book of supplicants, and wait until you shall please to pronounce that there are enough to fill a larger house! In speaking of such egregious trifling it is hardly possible to be grave; and yet the pertinacity with which it is adhered to, proves that there is a grave principle connected with it; and that is, most evidently, a determination to resist the plan contemplated. I shall, therefore, give the objection a more direct answer than it would otherwise deserve.

ACCORDING to the best computation, the city of New-York contains one hundred thousand souls. Supposing, which is much too great an allowance, that one half will not attend public worship; and allotting, which is also too much, one thousand individuals, or one hundred and sixty seven families upon an average to each congregation, we should then need fifty places of worship for our present population. Now reckoning every thing in the shape of a church, their whole number does not exceed forty six. Deducting those which are merely nominal, the remainder does not exceed forty or forty two at the utmost;

so that we want for that part of our actual population which would attend the Christian ordinances if they had opportunity, not less than eight or ten new places of worship calculated for one hundred and sixty seven families each : and our population is increasing every hour. Therefore, unless we pay ourselves the ungracious compliment of believing that we carry about with us some Gorgon head to frighten folks from our sanctuary, when they eagerly flock to every other which can receive them, the fear that we shall not have people enough is altogether idle.

THE general argument from this state of our population is enforced by experience. A few years ago our brethren of the General Assembly erected a new church near Corlaer's hook.—It was soon filled up—The Methodists have erected new churches, and they are filled up—The Baptists have pulled down one church and they have built another in its place, and it is filled up. They have since added others. The Reformed Dutch church built a new one a very short time since, and it is filled up. Only two years ago, another Presbyterian church was built in Cedar Street, and it is filled up. Both these denominations now need another each: and our Episcopal friends, pro-

vident for futurity, are building and buying in every direction.

What has been our own experience? In 1793 this congregation could shew only about one hundred and eighty members. The house is seated for above eight hundred people, and when pressed will hold one thousand. Four years after, it was necessary to swarm. A new church rather larger than this was built in Magazine Street. A considerable section of the worshippers in this house removed to that—In less than two years they were replaced, and the new house was also filled. In 1804, when it was settled, the minister entered upon his charge with a body of people if not greater, certainly not less, than assembled in this place. I do not love to repeat grievances: and, therefore, shall not say a syllable of their subsequent calamities; nor of the cause which produced their second vacancy four years after. We know that, as a congregation, they were nearly annihilated. Yet the fragments of this congregation, having been bound together in a call to a new pastor, are already reviving. Even now, before the youth of high and early promise whom they have chosen, is set apart to his office, a stream of fresh population is pouring in upon them.

F

FOR ourselves, in this place, we have been long surcharged. A contrary representation has, indeed, gone forth: and from the idea that none have applied without being accommodated, the people have been left to *infer* that little if any more accommodation can be necessary. This is all a deception. I do not say *intentional*; but still a deception, and a gross one. It is not correct in point of fact. I can produce instance upon instance to disprove it. And if it were, the inference would be false. Multitudes who wished to be with us did not apply, because they considered their application to be hopeless. And thus reputable families have successively passed us by and been compelled to join others who had more precaution than ourselves. But why resort to external evidence? Let those who have really any doubts consult their senses. Let them believe their own eyes. Look around these walls. Every inch that can be covered with any thing in the shape of a pew, is occupied. With here and there an exception, the square pews have two, and some three, families each. If an individual wants a seat, there must be inquiry, calculation, negotiation, intreaty, in order to get it. Two evils are the immediate effects. *First*, our aggregate revenue is greatly diminished. The rent of a pew is divided among its occupants. The church gets no more

from its numbers, but the individuals give less. The same families which, if there was room, would pay for two or three pews, pay only for one. *Secondly*, the seat-holders have it not in their power to bring their friends with them ; and thus the most certain and regular fountain of supply and growth to a church, is almost dried up.

WITH such facts staring us in the face, we are gravely asked, Where are your people? It really sickens one's heart. If the existing circumstances of our city do not promise complete and speedy success to the plan which I have unfolded, there is no reckoning upon human things. Moral certainty is at an end. It was never yet seen that a proper ministry wanted hearers. Plant down an able and faithful minister *any where*, not under the reprobation of God for despising the gospel, and there is no fear of his preaching to the walls. In New-York, at the present juncture, the encouragement is flattering beyond former example. Our ascended Lord has shed down his blessing; there has been and there is yet, a steady and increasing anxiety for his word and ordinances. This is the time when every eye should be vigilant, every heart alert, and every arm nerved. Yet this is the time in which those to whom, in my charge, it peculiarly appertained to be active, have chosen to do noth-

ing. It was not my duty to wait upon their tardiness, nor to slumber in their languor. I have acted accordingly.

SUCH, sir, are the reasons which governed my conduct. I covet no subterfuge. I shrink from no scrutiny. "My record is on high." Most gladly would I now leave myself with my brethren; and retire from the further consideration of a question which has convulsed me with agony. But I owe to myself and to truth the indispensable duty of adverting to the treatment which I have received from quarters where I had a right to expect different things. I have been so long accustomed to be misrepresented; and I have so uniformly repaid calumny with contempt, that had the present been a common occasion, I should have contented myself with saying, "To me it is a small matter to be judged of you or of man's judgment;" and should not have turned upon my heel to avoid the imputations which have been heaped upon me. But forbearance has bounds. Impunity must not always embolden slander. There is neither wisdom nor religion in a man's allowing himself to be bitten, without resistance, by the tooth of detraction, when, as in the affair before us, the poison spreads into the remotest veins of his reputation.

AGAINST my people, as I have said, I bring no accusation. Even with injurious individuals, whom alone the subsequent remarks will annoy, I shall have no personal controversy. My object is to vindicate myself, not to criminate others. Personalities, therefore, I shall have none; nor any thing which can be supposed to have a personal bearing, unless conscience be the interpreter, or the authors of unkind insinuation have already published themselves.

IF ever my intentions were pure, my views disinterested, and my efforts directed to a good and noble end, I think they have been so in the measures which have now excited resentment, bitterness, and reproach. I had flattered myself that men who profess to be my friends might dissent from my opinion without disputing my veracity. Yet notwithstanding the tender and solemn declarations of the letter which you have heard, my testimony has been spurned; and the *substance*, the *motives*, the *controlling influence*, and the *form*, of my proceeding, acrimoniously censured.

WITH the evil which cleaves to human conduct there is, for the most part, a mixture of good. Bad plans often originate in good motives; bad motives enter into good plans. The best in-

fluences fail from an improper method of operation; and influence of the most hurtful sort finds shelter and acceptance in a popular manner. But in *my* policy, it seems, there was not so much as an *alloy* of good. The plans were bad; motives bad; influence bad; mode bad; all bad together—a frightful mass of depravity and folly.

“I HAVE deserted my post; I have forsaken
 “my friends; I have rent the congregation—I
 “have been actuated by mere pride. I have be-
 “come tired of my poor, religious people; and
 “want to sacrifice them for the rich and great
 “who have little or no religion. I have learned to
 “despise the friends of my father and my own
 “friends, who took me up and fostered me into
 “all the consideration I possess. I have grown
 “ashamed of my father’s countrymen and coun-
 “try.—I have trampled upon the practical wis-
 “dom of the good old men; and have yielded
 “myself to the direction of those with whom I
 “have not even been brought up; and, that no
 “species of evil counsel might be wanting, I have
 “fallen into the snare, and been prompted by the
 “instigation of the Devil—and the whole, whether
 “unadvised or ill-advised, has been done with
 “rash and headstrong temerity.”

Is it possible that such suggestions can proceed from Christian lips? They are applicable to none but a monster of iniquity.—They have all been applied to me, though perhaps not all by the same person. And for what? Why truly, moderator, because I would not retain a trust which I cannot fulfil! because I wish to promote, on the largest scale in my power, the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ! because I propose to form a new congregation with a direct reference to this end! But let us examine these charges.

1. “My *conduct* has been *bad in itself*.—I “have *deserted* my post.—I have abandoned my “friends.—I have rent the congregation!”

No, sir, I have not. I never yet deserted my post, nor abandoned my friend, nor promoted discord. I have publicly announced my intention of asking a *release* from my present charge. But release is not desertion. It was not from my friends, nor from the congregation that I wanted a discharge; it was from an obligation to impossible duties. I shall be *pastorally* separated from those who befriend me, as much as from any of those who have expressed a wish to see me “humbled.” I shall be *personally*, and in pulpit-services, separated from none of them but by their own choice. If there be any desertion,

it is not I who desert them, but they who desert me. There is nothing to hinder them all from enjoying my ministrations as formerly, if they please. Should the whole congregation go along, it will only be moving from an old house to a new one. I own I would not wish it; because I wish to see *three* congregations, and all of them flourishing. I own I do not expect it; because I think it contrary to the principles of human action. And this was the basis of part of my calculation. But surely, sir, if some, following their own inclination, had rather remain where they are, they might have done so with good temper. There was no necessity for abusing me; and, I verily think, no Christianity in it. But it is, above all, most marvellous to profess their regard to my ministrations to be the cause of their disquietude, and prove that regard by preferring walls and benches to me and my ministrations too! To insist that they are grieved to part with me; then to tear themselves away by their own act: and, then, to turn round with wrath upon me for deserting them! Really, sir, this is out-sternholding Sternhold, in the highest style of performance.

2. My *motives* were vile. "I have been actuated by mere pride. I wanted to sacrifice my poor, religious people of whom I have grown

“ashamed, to the irreligious rich and great.—I
 “despise my father’s country, countrymen and
 “friends to whom I owe every thing;” &c. &c.

To all such insinuations I might, and to most
 of them I shall, oppose the unvaried tenour of my
 life.

MODERATOR, I have served this people for more
 than seventeen years. Malevolent eyes have con-
 tinually watched me, and I challenge the world
 to produce a single plan or measure of mine to
 justify in the slightest degree, the gentlest, (if the
 distinction of more and less gentle has place
 among them) to justify, I repeat it, the gentlest of
 all those foul insinuations. Opulence and gran-
 deur I have sacrificed to the church of God—to
 this people—and they know it. Talent in our
 country, need not enter the pulpit without being
 in some degree allied to the spirit of martyr-
 dom. The road to wealth and honours takes
 another direction. Other things being equal,
 the ministry, of all human professions, is the
 most helpless and unfriended. Since the time
 of my settlement here, lawyers, merchants, phy-
 sicians, have made their fortunes; not an indus-
 trious and prudent mechanic but has laid up
 something for his family. But should God call

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me away to-morrow, after expending the flower of my life, *my* family could not shew a single cent for the gain of more than seventeen years toil. And were it not for some private property quite insufficient for their maintainance and education, my wife and her children would be set adrift upon the world without bread to eat or raiment to put on. And yet, after my giving one of the strongest possible proofs of disinterestedness, men who have been accumulating the good things of this world and enjoying their religion too, come forward to shew their Christian zeal by charging me with motives not only selfish, but meanly and basely selfish. One would hope that the charity which thinketh no evil, might put a good construction where it is easy; and not rack its invention in search of an evil one, when it has first to get rid of both presumption and proof to the contrary.

I AM forcibly reminded of a memorable passage in the history of David. The Philistine of Gath had defied the armies of Israel, so that "they were dismayed and sore afraid." The stripling son of Jesse, who had gone down at his father's command to see his brethren in the field, heard the words of the boaster. His spirit rises: his blood fires: he offers himself to the combat. Shall not, now, all Israel cheer the gallant boy?

Shall not his bravery, his zeal, his love of country, his devotion to God, fill every heart with affection, and every tongue with applause? Shall not his brothers feel their bosoms swell with virtuous elation before this rising glory of their name?— Yet hear! “Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, why camest thou down thither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy *pride*, and the *naughtiness of thy heart*, for thou hast come down that thou mightest see the battle.” The language of David was noble, his resolution heroic; his object most magnanimous; and yet his friend, his kinsman, his brother, falls into a passion—charges him with deserting his post—impeaches his motives. This uncourteous greeting, a little modernized, would sound as follows.— “You pretend great regard for the honour of God, and the good of Israel. But it is your *pride*, sir; it is your dissatisfaction with your trust—it is your anxiety, and a corrupt one, to catch at an opportunity of gratifying your ambition, which has drawn you from your flock to the army. Go tend your sheep, sir, and it will be better for you!”—All this from a brother! Aye, from a brother! “What have I now done?” said the young saviour of Israel; “is there not a cause?” Yes, cause enough:

honourable cause: cause of which God shall transmit his approbation to the latest ages.— What then is the matter with Eliab? he overlooks the plain fact, and goes a *motive-hunting*.—There is an explanation.—Why, what evil has David done? what evidence is there of his bad intention? None at all. Ah! but Eliab's *vanity* had been mortified in the affair of the kingdom!

3. THE *influence* which swayed me is vile. “Keen sighted observers have penetrated the conclave; have discovered the wicked advisers; nay, have read the interior of my heart, and detected the machinations of the evil one—I have fallen into temptation.”

ON that rudeness which, uninformed of facts and undesirous of information, has invaded my private friendships, and has not spared even the hallowed circle of my family, I shall not descend so low as to make a single remark.

THE detection of the Devil in this matter is somewhat curious.

WE live in rare times. The love of change has taken a most boundless sweep. The infernal cabinet has not escaped. Hell has revolutioned her

policy; and the Devil tempts men to build churches to the glory of God our Saviour, and to work hard for the effectual preparation of an evangelical ministry! This is the best argument I ever yet heard for the dogma of universal salvation; as it shews something like the dawnings of repentance and reformation in a region whose history has hitherto been rather an awkward comment on the doctrine of our hyper-benevolent theologues. However, let me put in a word for Satan on this subject. I do verily believe him to be as innocent of aiding and abetting my plans for promoting the prosperity of the Christian church, as a devil can well be of wilfully undermining his own power. Seriously, sir, what must we think of this doctrine of temptation? It goes a great way.—It embraces all of our own connection either in the congregation or out of it, who deem my plan a good one and worthy of support.—It reaches to every minister and private Christian in other denominations, (and they are not a few) who have expressed themselves favourably, and have wondered at the “infatuation” of the opposition. Men friendly and unfriendly to us; religious and irreligious; have united in their judgment that the plan is well calculated to produce a strong, and beneficial result; and some of our own friends cannot explain its origin or operation without having recourse to

the machinery of the pit ! Perhaps they may flinch from this picture ; and disclaim such sentiments. Well. Why then do they talk of temptation ? And why do they continue hostile ? “ He casteth “ out devils by Belzebub the prince of the devils,” said the Pharisees of our Lord Jesus Christ. “ By “ whom then,” replied he, “ do your sons cast “ them out ? ” The Devil tempts me to aim at an object confessedly good. Who tempts the opposers ?

BUT if every other objection were set aside ; if substance, motive, influence, were all right ; still,

4. THE *form* of my procedure was totally wrong. How ? “ I concealed my intention.—I told “ not my congregation.—I consulted not with my “ friends whose age and experience entitle them “ to confidence.—Instead of gradually preparing “ the way, I took all by surprize.” And this is a principal source of offence and difficulty.

WHAT sir ? Do Christian men say, that no plan however good shall have their support unless they can appear as original movers of it ? And that they will disobey their understanding, their conscience, and their master too, without a previous compliment to their vanity ? I hope not. But the

objection says so. It was surely inconsiderate. I shall press the matter no further.

BUT how were all taken by surprize? I had told the Session, the Trustees, the assembled congregation, more than two years before, that I could not and would not consent to the continuance of that unprosperous state of their affairs which I intreated them to remedy. Was *this* no warning? Did they think all my representations to be mere sound? A matter for a week's speculation, never more to be thought of? Is it my habit thus to trifle? When I renewed the subject, eighteen months after, in my communication to the Trustees, was *this* no warning? Did not *this* furnish to that respectable board a proof that patience is not submission? That I had not lost sight of my object, and was not to be diverted from its pursuit? If they overlooked so plain an admonition, and composed themselves to sleep for six months longer, the fault is not mine. When they had rejected my proposal under the guise of a postponement, I spoke still more pointedly. In my letter written three days after their very singular message to me, viz. on the 10th of November last, I went so far as to say, that since they rejected every plan which I could propose for promoting the good of the congregation, with-

out offering any substitute, and without taking any step whatever for removing the existing difficulties, I should trouble them no more—that I held myself utterly irresponsible for consequences—that nothing remained for me but to look out for some expedient for relieving myself and my congregation from our common embarrassment—*an expedient in which, for aught I knew, the concurrence of the Trustees might not be necessary!* Was *this* no warning? What was it? I thought it rather a broad hint—but it was not taken.—That I could not help. I had, some weeks after, an explanatory conversation with a committee of the board, who treated me with all the kindness and delicacy which became friends and gentlemen. But though I put the question directly as to the intention of the board on this most interesting topic, I could not get so much as even an opinion. Four months more slipped away, and nothing was done, nor likely to be done. I had long made up my purpose conditionally; I now made it up definitely; and, as I said to the congregation, “the die was cast.” These, Moderator, are facts. They are almost all upon record. The documents will speak for themselves. And yet a clamour is raised against me for taking every body by surprise. I did no such thing. I did not, indeed, say, in so many words, “I shall give up my charge un-

less you comply with my request." It would not have been discreet. But I certainly put the board in a way of drawing an inference for themselves with no other trouble than that of putting two very simple ideas together. If they were not at that trouble, I am not to blame.

"BUT, after all, why did I not *consult* before I "decided?" Consult whom? About what? "My congregation; or, at least my experienced friends "in the congregation."

REALLY, sir, the reception which all my previous overtures met with left me no heart to try another experiment. I had consulted and intreated, and remonstrated, and waited, without effect. Why should I subject myself to a new risk of finding how little my reasonings and my feelings were regarded? But I own that, without such a drawback, I would not have been, on the point of my resignation, a whit more communicative. I will tell you why.

To consult the whole congregation would have been a burlesque upon all counsel. How could so mixed a mass be either competent or impartial advisers? Consult them about the propriety of part-

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ing with what they professed to love! Is there a man living so unschooled in the knowledge of men as not to see that this is an absurdity? Would demonstration itself persuade any people on earth to give up, of their own accord, a minister whom they prize and are able to support? To consult them would be to ask them to set their faces with all their might against the project. It would kindle a flame; it could procure no counsel.

BUT I ought to have consulted "the respectable and experienced members of the congregation." That is, the very persons who were not to rouse nor repress, but simply to direct, the popular feeling. I might as well have gone, at once, to the popular feeling itself. There were other difficulties.

I HAD no experience to consult. Far from my thoughts be the least disrespect to men who, in their sphere, are worthy of all consideration. But human experience is as various as human pursuit. A man may have a world of experience on one subject, and none at all on another. If I want to embark in a mercantile speculation, I will consult the experience of the merchant. If I labour under a dangerous disease, I will consult the experience of the physician. If I am going to set up machinery, I will consult the experience of the

mechanic. If I wish to form a correct judgment on a point of national policy, I will consult the experience of the statesman. But I will never go to a statesman for advice about a steam-engine ; nor to the doctor for instruction about the foreign market : any more than I shall go to the merchant with a cancer, or to the brick-layer with a matter of state. Neither will I, in the discussion of a question which is to be settled by balancing general principles and relations, apply to an experience which lies quite in another course. The experience of merchants and mechanics is most important in its place ; but in measuring my faculties with their appropriate objects, and in ascertaining the bearings of our public interests, was of no use to me. When, therefore, I am reproved for not consulting my *experienced* friends, the reprover ought first to shew that their experience was of the proper sort. To stand alone, is, in fact, one of the evils incident to men who take a position or form a plan which is not embraced by the ordinary routine of life. Consultation with an experience which has nothing in common with their views and feelings, can only multiply difficulties and vexations. Their path is up hill ; and they can gain nothing but additional labour by inviting half a dozen or half a score of acquaintances, who will never be persuaded by any thing

but success, to hang each his weight about their necks. They must decide for themselves upon their own responsibility. I knew the condition, I accepted it, and have nothing to repent of, to retract, nor retread.

SUPPOSING, however, that I had adopted the method which has been dictated to me : let us see how it would have worked. Either my communications would have been kept secret or not. If kept secret, they could no more benefit the congregation, than the secrecy of the trustees about the proposal for a new church. When divulged, as they must have been sooner or later, they would have given as great a shock as my letter of the 12th March ; and would have been greeted with the indignation of the people, who would have considered themselves as handed over to the mercy of a few dark intriguers. Reverse the picture. Had the secret been blown, as most undoubtedly it would, not only should I and my confidants have been involved in a thousand angry disputes ; but it would have been said, not unplausibly, that I was fomenting a faction in the congregation to dispose of their dearest possessions without their knowledge or consent.

My counsellors, too, might have differed, and given opposite advices. Follow both I could not. They whose advice was not followed, would have been quite as much displeased to have it rejected, as not to have it asked. It is also far from improbable that my own results would have differed from both, as much as they from each other; and so all would have been affronted. It would then have been discovered that I never meant to be advised at all; that I only made use of my friends as a screen for myself; and mocked them under the semblance of respect. It would have been said, that I enjoyed the advantage of all the intelligence, prudence, and experience of the best men in the congregation, and treated them with contempt. Would this have mended the matter? These are not after-reasonings. They passed distinctly through my mind long before I acted. I thought them then, and I still think them conclusive; and that the course which I took was the least hazardous, the most delicate, and every way the best. I have had no cause to change my opinion: for after the multiform investigation which the subject has undergone, I have not acquired a single new fact; nor have I heard a single objection which I had not frequently examined and dismissed.

A WORD more on this head. Considerable resentment was occasioned by a suspicion, which, as usual, soon grew into an assertion, that while I had neglected my old friends, I had all along consulted with others who had much less claim to my confidence. I heard of this, among a thousand other falsehoods; and to counteract it sent to the congregation a written declaration that I had formed my resolution without the advice or knowledge of a human being. The letter containing this declaration was publicly read: and yet, sir, the same insinuation, now become indecent and insulting, was afterwards repeated to me in no very equivocal manner. It was the lie direct in every thing but the formality of the expression.

I HAVE expounded myself without reserve, and now I cast myself upon the candour of my brethren. They will judge whether I have acted honourably or basely; and whether or not I have deserved the "hard speeches" which have been uttered against me, even by those who insist that they are my friends. In some instances violence of meaning has been accompanied with mildness of manner. But a dagger is not the less murderous because its point has been steeped in oil. But I have done; I wait the issue.

ME, sir, nothing can take by surprize. I am alike prepared for success or for defeat. I am prepared to see our holiest interests flourish, and to see them languish—prepared to see our budding hope, our little seminary, branch out its honours, shed abroad its foliage, and multiply its fruits; or withered, from the blossom to the root, by the deadly East-wind of prejudice and parsimony—prepared to see the men who shall refuse their becoming offerings to build up the temple of the Lord of Hosts, put their money in a bag with holes: sow much and reap little: their fortunes scattered to the winds of Heaven; and the iniquity of their covetousness or of their passion visited upon their children's children. The flying roll wherein is written "mourning, and lamentation, and woe," passes swiftly over the nations—I hear the portentous roaring of wild misrule. I see approaching the cloud of desolation which is to rain down upon the slumbering churches its tempest of brimstone and salt. My heart is pained within me.

FOR myself, an atom in the sum of things, God can do as well without me as with me. The paramount desire of my soul is to proclaim that Saviour whom I hope to meet in the clouds of Heaven; and to assist in rearing up young he-

ralds of his truth, who shall fight his battles and bear his glory when my feeble voice shall be heard no more, and my clay shall mingle with its kindred earth. I thank my Lord for all the goodness and mercy which have followed me to this day. But if the hand which has lifted me up is about to cast me down—"If he shall thus say, I "have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let "him do to me as seemeth good unto him."



DR. MASON'S request was granted: and on Friday the 25th of May, he was released from his pastoral charge.

FINIS.