

THE
CONSTITUTION, CHARACTER,
AND
DUTIES,
OF
THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT
THE ORDINATION
OF THE
REV. GILBERT M^c MASTER,
IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DUANESBURGH,

BY ALEXANDER M^c LEOD, A. M.
Pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation in the city of New-York.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.

NEW-YORK:

Printed by J. Seymour, No. 118, Pearl-street.

1808.

A SERMON, &c.

JEREMIAH III. 15.—*I will give you Pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

THE few pious people, who remained scattered through Palestine when Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office, were in great need of a public ministry. Like you, my brethren, who are to-day assembled, in order to receive a Pastor from your God, those, who, in the land of Israel, adhered to the covenant of their fathers, had been for years destitute of the solemn forms of public worship.

About fifty years before the time of this prophecy, Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib, and now king both of Assyria and Chaldea, that he might entirely subdue the efforts of the children of Israel to resist his despotic power, carried the ten tribes out of their country, and settled in their room, Idolaters from some other provinces of his empire*. Very few of

* 2 Kings 17. Ezra. 4. 2—10.

the worshippers of the true God remained; and these were without a Priest, and without a Sacrifice, and without an Altar.

The prophet Jeremiah lived to see the Church in Judea involved in similar distress. Yes, he lived to suffer much persecution in his own person, from those ungodly rulers who had succeeded to the throne of the pious Josiah; he lived, to witness the judgment of God on Jerusalem, at the commencement of their seventy years captivity, and to write the book of Lamentations over the fallen glory of Zion. His heart was tender, his passions were strong; he placed Jerusalem above his chief joy, and over the ruins of the Temple, no man mourned with a more sincere sorrow than this weeping prophet. Dark, indeed, was the page which his own experience occupied in the great volume of Time. But he was divinely instructed to look forward unto more pleasant, though distant objects. Cheered with the prospect, he wipes away the falling tear, and suppresses the sigh which was ready to burst from his affectionate heart, at beholding the calamities in which covenant transgression had involved the seed of Jacob; and he proclaims, according to the commandment, the future restoration of God's covenant people. The spirit by which Jeremiah was inspired, carried him into futurity, and showed to him the blessings of the Gospel. Types, and ceremonies.

and shadows vanish ; the ministration, which exceeds in glory, appears ; Apostles, and Evangelists, and Pastors, and Teachers, minister to the church of God. He sees the fulfilment of the covenant of Abraham. He sees Christian congregations regularly organized. He beholds the dispersed witnesses rallying around their standard, and receiving with joy the blessings of a settled ministry. He listens with delight to the promise which you now hear from the Sanctuary, “ *I will give you Pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*”

God has pledged his veracity to provide a public ministry for the service of his church—“ *And I will give you Pastors.*” He hath placed distinguishing marks on the ministry of which he approves—“ *Pastors according to mine heart.*” The sum of ministerial duty is the edification of the Church—“ *Pastors, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*”

You have now, brethren, the plan of my discourse before you ; and as we are met to-day, to ordain a Bishop for this church, it will not, I trust, be considered as impertinent, to lay before you the constitution, character, and duties of the gospel ministry.

I. God is engaged by covenant, to provide a perpetual public ministry for his church.

The Divine Being, in all his works, acts worthily of

his own infinite perfections. His government of the universe is characterized by perfect justice, and by perfect wisdom. But the church is in a peculiar sense his empire. It is the "Kingdom of God." He hath desired it as his habitation. All his other works are made subordinate to it. Here, his power and his glory are manifested. Honour and majesty are before him, strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. He combines with the splendour of his throne, a display of wisdom and of mercy. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. And he hath provided, that Christians, (from the nature of their faith, always eager for religious knowledge, but from their situation in this world almost perpetually occupied about secular affairs,) should be furnished with a *Ministry*, committed to the hands of men, whose time and talents should be exclusively devoted to the study and exposition of the Holy Scriptures, and the collateral duties of their sacred office—A ministry of divine institution—of perpetual duration—and secured by covenant.

1. A public stated ministry in the Christian Church, is a divine institution.

To the church of old, God communicated the revelation of his grace, by extraordinary characters. He "at sundry times and in divers manners, spake

in times past unto the fathers by the prophets." Until the time of Moses they had no written revelation, nor such a visible organization as required an ordinary stated ministry to conduct the solemnities of religious worship. It was in the days of Ezra that the reading of the law was instituted for the instruction of the Jews assembled in their Synagogues. Knowledge, by immediate inspiration, was not henceforth to be expected to continue among them. And, while they looked forward to a more complete organization of God's covenant people, after Messiah should appear to order his kingdom, they were habituated to those forms of public worship, in the synagogue, upon the model of which the Christian church, with some appropriate variation, was to have the public worship conducted after the exaltation of the blessed Saviour. The prophets, accordingly, (maintaining the unity of the Church under every dispensation,) predicted, that although immediate revelation should cease, the church should be no loser; but with a complete canon of Scripture, as the only rule of faith, God would provide for her a regular ministry, which should abundantly suffice in the room of the priesthood, which prefigured, in their offering of sacrifices, the Lord, our only New Testament Priest, of the prophets who were occasionally raised up to give increase of knowledge, and of the ministry of the synagogue which read and expounded the law. The Scriptures

of the Old Testament, therefore, as well as those of the New, compel us to believe that the Christian ministry is an ordinance not of the wisdom of man, but of the goodness of God.

We desire not to deceive you, my brethren. We desire not to impose ourselves upon your credulity, but to minister unto you as helpers of your faith. We are, indeed, earthen vessels. We are feeble and imperfect, and mortal. But we possess a treasure of unsearchable riches. We magnify our office. It is *authorised* by God,—it is the *gift* of our exalted Saviour, for the church which he redeemed—it is *sanctified* by the Holy spirit as the means of feeding the flock of God. But faith cometh by hearing. Hear ye, therefore, the word of God, and believe. Ministers are *appointed* by God. “ *I have SET watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem—And no man taketh his honour unto himself; but he that is CALLED of God—All things are of God—who hath GIVEN to us the ministry of reconciliation—And God hath SET in the Church, apostles**,” &c.

Ministers are *given* by the exalted Saviour to his Church. “ *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ*”—When he ascended upon high, “ *he gave some apostles—and some pastors and teachers—for the work of the ministry†*”.

* Isa. 62. 6. Heb. 5. 4. 2 Cor. 5. 18. 1 Cor. 12. 28.

† 1 Cor. 4. 1. Eph 4. 11, 12.

Ministers are *set apart* by the divine spirit to feed the flock of God. “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God**”.

This ordinance is not to be classed with those extraordinary manifestations of divine power which were intended to be of short duration, and being employed to introduce the Christian dispensation of grace into full operation, were necessarily limited to the earliest ages of the Church. Miracles have ceased, but the constitution of the gospel ministry is of permanent duration. This requires discussion. I solicit your attention both to the proposition and its proof.

2. It is the ordinance of God, that a public ministry should be continued in his church unto the end of the world.

Some divine institutions are of a temporary nature and use, and consequently of temporary duration. Statutes predicated upon circumstances which have ceased to exist, are no longer obligatory. To the church in the wilderness commandments were given, which ceased to be law, after Israel was settled in the land of promise. The ordinances which God had appointed relative to the Tabernacle, were superseded upon the building of the Temple.

* Acts 20. 28.

The whole ceremonial part of the forms of worship divinely appointed for the Hebrew church, was restricted in its duration to the time of Christ. The ministry of John ceased when Jesus was publicly revealed as the messenger of the Covenant. And when our Saviour offered himself as a sacrifice, without spot unto God, the typical sacrifice ceased to be his ordinance; and the *Sacerdotal order* perished with it. Christ Jesus is the *only Priest, the only Sacrifice, and the only Altar*, of the Christian church. Judicious Christians never use these terms in relation to ecclesiastical officers or worship, but in a figurative sense. The New Testament language and doctrine authorize no other use of them. ἱερεὺς, is never applied to a Christian minister. And although the word Priest is a derivative from ἱερεῖβυτερος, the common name of all ecclesiastical rulers, seeing it has been appropriated by the translators of the Bible to ἱερεὺς, it is a perversion of language to apply it otherwise than metaphorically to the Christian ministry—a perversion, however, which is the principal support of the high claims of both the papal and prelatical hierarchies.

Are we then to infer from the revocation of statutes designed for a temporary use, and from the abolition of the Jewish ceremonies and hierarchy, that the office of the ministry has ceased with the first ages of the Christian Church? By no means.

The ministry of reconciliation is always useful—It corresponds with the state of the Church in the world—No intimation was ever given by God of its intended limitation to the first ages of the gospel—But its very constitution implies its destined perpetuity.

All the objects, which were at any time proposed to be answered, by the institution of the Gospel ministry, remain still to be answered by it; and the means, once divinely authorized, must be continued to be employed, until the end be completely accomplished. There is nothing peculiar to any one age in these objects—the communication of knowledge—the conversion of sinners—the edification of believers—the conviction of gainsayers—the defence of the gospel—the organization of churches—and the directing the public worship of the congregation. The office, of course, which was originally appointed to accomplish these purposes, must continue to the end of the world. “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature—To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God—For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man*.*”

* Mark 16. 15. Acts 26. 18. Eph. 4. 12, 13.

This institution also corresponds with the state of the New Testament Church in the world.

Divine revelation is now completed, and committed to writing. Before revelation was committed to writing, a succession of prophets, who taught by immediate inspiration, was necessary, and was provided by the head of the Church. Before the Old Testament canon was completed, and prophecy had ceased under that dispensation, God provided as an appendage to the Mosaic economy, the synagogue services for reading and expounding the law; and he remarkably blessed this institution as the successful means of a general diffusion of knowledge, the preservation of morals, and the preventing of idolatry. Since the period in which the New Testament canon was completed, no new inspirations are expected, and consequently extraordinary ambassadors, such as Apostles and Prophets, are not adapted to the situation in which God hath placed Zion. And yet these sacred writings in which the will of heaven is revealed, require study and exposition, and a constant application for the instruction of the successive generations of men. The Scriptures are, it is true, in the description of the principal features of the system of redemption, so full, so plain, and so forcible, that every man may readily perceive and understand what be the first principles of the oracles of God. But the perfection of

Christian knowledge, for the possession of which all are bound to strive, is not of so easy attainment. This requires the aid of talents, and piety, and literature, and faithfulness, to be exclusively devoted to its service; and, of course, a peculiar order of men, who shall be disincumbered from the ordinary occupations of life, that they may give themselves wholly up to their ministry. The rapid increase of knowledge in all other departments of science, and the facility with which general information is diffused among men, require increasing attention to Christian literature. The philosophy of the world would soon overwhelm with superior talents and acquisitions, the professed disciples of our Lord, had he not made provision for a standing ministry, whose exertions should be consecrated to the instruction of the man of God. The depths of divine wisdom contained in the Scriptures will afford to the most vigorous intellect, and the most unremitting industry, occasion for constant exertion and a plentiful reward. And the Lord's day calls upon every minister, for an exhibition of the results of his pious labours, in conducting the business of that public school of instruction, to which the youth and the aged, the learned and the ignorant, the weak and the strong, the saint and the sinner, are required to come on the first day of each returning week, to learn repentance and obedi-

ence, and to present their public devotion to the author of their lives and their mercies.

No intimation has been given to us that the Redeemer intended to limit the appointment of a public ministry to the first ages of the church. There is nothing contained in the nature or circumstances of the appointment from which such limitation can be justly inferred; nor is it any where throughout the New Testament expressly revealed that the ministry should become extinct before the end of the world. Divine ordinances, which do not contain a limitation to any specified time, in the nature or circumstances of the appointment, and which are not expressly limited by the authority which enjoins them, must be considered as of permanent obligation. This is not, however, a matter of mere inference.

The constitution of the gospel ministry, necessarily implies its destined perpetuity.

The extent of the commission given by the Saviour—the work appointed by him to be performed—and the promise of protection, all proceed upon this principle, that the church should never upon earth be destitute of a public ministry. 1. The *Commission* extends to all the earth, “*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations;*” and to the earth at all times and in all generations, “*Go ye into all the world, and*

*preach the Gospel to every creature**. 2. The work to be performed is not completed until the end of the world, “*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*†. 3. The promise of support is co-extensive with the duration of the office; and as the promise extends to the end of the world, so must also the ministry to which it is made, “*And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*‡.

An ordinance of heaven, of permanent usefulness and durability, certainly demands from the saints every possible exertion for its support and preservation. And every part of the church of God, having an interest in this appointment, is bound to exert itself for procuring a regular stated ministry. Christians have ample encouragement for such exertions,

3. God hath *covenanted* with his church to supply her congregations with a public ministry—“*And I will give you Pastors.*”

All divine administrations proceed upon the footing of a covenant establishment between God and man. The whole display of mercy, made in divine revelation, proceeds from the *everlasting covenant*

* Math. 28. 19. Mark 16. 15.

† Eph. 4. 13.

‡ Math. 28. 20.

which is between the Father and his only Son Jesus Christ, as the head of the election of grace. Saving grace is a covenant blessing, and all the means of grace are reduced into a covenant form. The existence of *saints* on earth, implies the existence of a people *really* in covenant with God; and the existence of *apparent* saints as necessarily implies that of a *visible covenant people*. This is the visible Church Catholic. Not the publication of the gospel at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost—not the personal ministry of the Saviour—not the baptism of John—not the covenants of Sinai or Circumcision, laid the foundation of this society. The covenant of grace secures in Christ a redeemed church, and the revelation of that covenant secures a body of people, visible in the world, and professedly in covenant with God, until all the elect be collected into heaven. Then, and not till then, shall we arrive at certainty, that the constituent members of the church visible are precisely the same with those of the invisible church elected in Christ Jesus, and called. We are however assured, my brethren, that since the revelation of the first promise, and the profession of faith made by the first pair, a church shall be continued in the world, in covenant with God—a people shall be visibly distinguished by their professed submission to the revelation of his grace, until the

end of the world. To this people God has pledged his word, his word of truth, to bestow upon them the means of knowledge, to preserve among them his ordinances. For this people, under the Christian dispensation, he has engaged to provide a public ministry.

1. Promises, made upon the footing of a permanent relation between God and his church, which havē respect to a benefit of a permanent nature, are to be understood as securing to the church that benefit indefinitely throughout every period of time. And although the promise should be expressed in language more appropriate to one period than another; this does not hinder the application of the benefit promised in any other period. The Old Testament phraseology will not deprive the New Testament church of her hope in the blessings which are promised of God. “*For the people shall dwell in Zion—And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the waters of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers—I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace**.” These promises are perfectly applicable to the Christian church.

* Isa. 30. 20, 21. & 62. 6.

2. Many promises delivered by the prophets were designed to refer immediately to the New Testament church; and were so applied by the apostles of our Lord. Some of these refer to the Christian Ministry. *Therefore my people shall know my name—How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace—Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice: with the voice together shall they sing:—All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace**.

3. The Redeemer, in whom the promises are made, and in whom they are accomplished, has solemnly engaged never to leave his church entirely destitute of a public ministry. He walks amidst the golden candlesticks. He holds the stars in his right hand. He gives power to his witnesses. He commits to his ministers the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He hath engaged that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church, and that he shall accompany his ministers until time itself shall terminate, and eternity be unfolded.

* Isa. 52. 6, 7. 10. & Rom. 10. 14, 15.

Never shall the Catholic church—the visible kingdom of God, be dissolved, or her officers annihilated. And although rising congregations be sometimes, as you have been, destitute of a fixed ministry; although there is no security against deaths and temporary vacancies; yet there is infallible ground of faith, that God will fulfil his covenant to those who wait upon him in the way of his commandments. To day he fulfils his promise to you—*And I will gather the remnant of my flock—and will bring them again to their folds—and I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them, saith the Lord**.

II. God hath set distinguishing marks upon the ministry, of which he approves—“ Pastors according to mine heart.”

Had the Christian church in its visible form been so distinct from the world, that every person who is not a sincere disciple, did profess himself a despiser of religion, there would be no difficulty in ascertaining precisely its members. But a wise providence orders it otherwise. “The tares grow up with the wheat until the harvest.” A complete separation would not correspond with the economy of this state of imperfection. Even the sacred office of

* Jer. 23. 3, 4.

the ministry has been invaded by unsanctified men. "The Priests teach for hire, and the Prophets divine for money." The head of the church hath left for his followers a caution to beware of a false ministry. "And many false prophets shall rise and deceive many—if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect—Some preach Christ of envy—speaking lies in hypocrisy—There shall be false teachers among you." We cannot, therefore, doubt that there exists a ministry, professing to be Christian, of which God does not approve, which is not his ordinance, which will not profit the people, which is, in short, an evil against which all Christians ought to be upon their guard. This subject, my brethren, is of too much importance to be lightly esteemed. You are called upon "to prove all things." You are bound to "try the Spirits." You are bound to judge for yourselves according to truth, and to reject those who have run unsent. You are bound to receive as the messengers of peace, and to support as the ordinance of Christ, the ministers of the church of God. "*Thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.*" They do not act in a friendly manner to the cause of religion, who attempt to stifle inquiry into the character of the Christian ministry. Those who love the gates of Zion, those whose souls are anxious to be fed by

Pastors according to God's heart, cannot easily be prevented from inquiring, How shall the ministry which is of divine appointment be ascertained? How shall *you* be able to test *our* several pretensions and claims? This is not to be done, by merely hearing a Preacher, and judging his eloquence, his earnestness, or his doctrine. A man may preach truth, and yet do it deceitfully, partially, and without authority. Neither is the fact to be ascertained by the number, or rank, or power of those by whom a ministry may be recommended. "Follow not a multitude to do evil—The wisdom of this world is foolishness—And all the world wondered after the beast." Nor is it to be ascertained, by the multitude of reputed conversions which accompany a person's ministry, whether or not he has the authority of Messiah. Many faithful ministers have had little visible success. The Redeemer himself stretched out his hands to disobedient and gainsaying people. And multitudes may appear much affected where there is really no gracious change of heart. They may *appear* sincere and zealous, in giving glory to God, and in singing Hosannahs, while as yet they are ready, under a change of external circumstances, to cry out with all their hearts, "Not this man, but Barrabas." The distinguishing marks which God hath set upon the ministry which

he approves, are, a *lawful call* to the office, and a *life corresponding* with its sacred functions.

1. The Pastor according to God's heart, has received a regular call to the ministry.

It is a general proposition of divine inspiration, That no ecclesiastical office is to be undertaken without a call from God. The head of the church was himself subjected to this law. And as there was no exception admitted in his favour, it is vain to expect it in favour of any other. *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron—So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son—called of God an High Priest* *. By a divine call to any work or office is meant, not merely that it comes to pass in the providence of God that a person is engaged in such work or office, but that he is employed by divine authority therein. The call of God to ecclesiastical office, is *inward*, when there is a divine influence experienced upon the mind, inclining and commanding the person to devote himself to the service of the Church. It is *outward*, when accompanied with external evidence for the satisfaction of the church. It is *extraordinary*, when a person is employed im-

* Heb. 5. 4, 5. 10.

mediately by the Divine Being, without the intervention of such human agencies as are regulated by stated laws. It is *ordinary*, when authority is conferred agreeably to such external order as God hath appointed to be observed as the standing ordinance of his empire. The *inward call* may satisfy a man's own mind; but others must, in order to receive him, have some external evidence. If this were not the case, there would be no end of imposture. No man is to be recognised as an ambassador of Christ without an outward call. The *extraordinary call*, is always accompanied with infallible evidence. The seal of miracles gives evidence of the authenticity of the commission, and is sufficient to remove all suspicion of fraud. To this evidence the Redeemer hath taught us by his own example to appeal. *The works that I do—they bear witness of me**. But miracles are ceased. It is only therefore for the *ordinary outward call* we are to look in examining the pretensions of ecclesiastical officers—And this consists in ordination by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. You will readily perceive, therefore, my brethren, that I consider such ordination as the first mark of the ministry which God approves. In defence of this sentiment, I pro-

* John 10. 25.

pose to show—that ordination is the ministerial call—that ordination is by the imposition of hands—that the laying on of hands belongs exclusively to the Presbytery.

1. Ordination constitutes the call of God to the ministry of reconciliation in the Gospel church.

Ordination is the authoritative designation of a person to office in the church of Christ, by those who have power according to the will of God to transmit the ministerial authority. According to the constitution of the Christian church, certain offices are created by the divine Redeemer, and this constitution cannot be put into operation unless persons are appointed to fill these offices. An extraordinary call from God is not now to be expected; these offices must therefore be filled up in one of two ways: Either every one who chooses may assume an office without ceremony and without qualifications, or some person or persons must have power, from the head of the church, to judge of the qualifications of candidates, and to reject them, or invest them with the office. The first of these ways is so evidently disorderly and absurd, that you will not require arguments to prove that it is not the order of the house of God. And the last implies all that I now contend for, that ordination constitutes the Minister. Under the Old Testament, none was admitted to

any ordinary office in the church without inauguration. The Priests and the Levites were by divine appointment publicly introduced into their ministerial offices, and the rulers of the Synagogue were never admitted without ordination. The head of the church was ordained of God an High Priest; and he ordained his apostles. Without ordination even Deacons could not be admitted to exercise power over the temporalities of the church*. Every where, in short, those who exercised the ministry were ordained by competent authority. And it would have been the height of absurdity to give specific directions about the qualifications of Elders and Bishops, and about their ordination, had every one possessed a right to assume the office at pleasure—had there been no ordaining power appointed in the church†. The conclusion is therefore irresistible—He who is not ordained, is not the ambassador of Jesus Christ. No plea of qualifications for teaching, no plea of necessity, can justify a violation of the law of Christ by intrusion into the Gospel ministry. Nothing short of immediate inspiration, of a special revelation from Heaven, can supply the want of ordination to a minister of the Gospel. “*How shall they preach except they be sent †?*”

* Lev. 8. Num. 8. John 20. 21. Acts 6. 16. & 14. 23.

† 1 Tim 3. 1—7. Tit. 1. 5—9. ‡ Rom. 10. 15.

2. Ordination to the holy ministry is to be performed by imposition of hands.

Upon this subject, my brethren, much variety of opinion has existed among those who profess the Christian religion. Some have supposed that *laying on of hands* was used only in extraordinary cases, and consequently ought not to be practised in ordinations. Others have considered it as a sacrament. It has been also represented as a significant ceremony, as a solemn farce, as a relict of popery, as a piece of clerical imposition. The early reformers of the church from popery, both in Scotland and in other countries, were not all exactly of the same sentiments about this ordinance. Although the great body of them considered ordination by imposition of hands as a divine institution, others insisted that it was not essential to the validity of ordination to lay on hands. In Scotland, the reformers admitted the practice; but in the 4th chapter of the first book of Discipline, it is judged not to be an essential part of ordination. It is certain that, in that country, dissenters from the popish establishment existed in organized churches for 70 years before this, and, probably, from a much earlier period; but I have not been able to ascertain, whether in any instance ministers had been actually ordained without the laying on of hands, either before or after the first book of discipline had been compiled.

Indeed, the sentiment expressed in the 4th chapter, in reference to this subject, did not long prevail, if ever it had received a general adoption. This book of discipline was drawn up by a few ministers, and subscribed by a part of the nobility who embraced the reformation in the year 1561. In less than two years thereafter, a general assembly was constituted, which gave directions for having it revised. Various causes, which distracted the church, prevented another system of policy from being completed for several years. And in the mean time the order of the church was regulated without any fixed standard by express acts of assembly. In the year 1758 was adopted the second book of discipline, which requires ordination by imposition of hands.

I shall not take it upon me, my brethren, to condemn the sentiments of such as say that ministers *can* transmit office-power to an approved candidate, by setting him apart in the name of the head of the church to the work of the ministry, without laying on hands; but I shall endeavour to prove, that imposition of hands at ordinations is a scriptural appointment—is the ordinance of God.

The Jews, among whom the Christian ministry was first constituted, were perfectly familiar with the practice of ordination to ecclesiastical office by the laying on of hands. They required no laboured explanations upon this subject. Every one knew

that the ministers of the synagogue were uniformly ordained in this manner. The Jewish rabbis, in proof of the antiquity of the practice, refer us to the time of Moses *, and urge, that all power originating from God, and exercised among them, is in this manner permanently transmitted. The learned Lightfoot was led into a mistake, by an inaccurate view of a passage in Maimonides, about the practice of the Jews, in the time of Christ, in ordaining their doctors. This mistake is corrected by the very learned Vitringa, who demonstrates that all ordinations were by the laying on of hands, and exhibits abundant evidence that the church in this respect followed the practice of the synagogue †. This fact will serve to throw light on those passages of the New Testament which relate to this part of ecclesiastical order. I shall now submit some of these texts to your consideration.

(1.) 1 Tim. 5. 22. *Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins.* The whole of the argument from the 17th verse respects the ministers of religion. Honour is due to them—they are entitled to a decent maintainance—they are not to be accused upon slight grounds—When they offend, discipline must be administered upon them with faithfulness and impartiality.—And in order to

* Deut. 34. 9. † Vitringa de Syn. Vet. Lib. 3. Cap. 15.

prevent the curse of a vicious ministry, orders are given that none be rashly ordained to this holy office; for those who, from negligence, admit base men to the ministry, are partakers of their sins. The meaning of the phrase, "*lay hands suddenly on no man,*" is, therefore, perfectly obvious—Let none be ordained to the gospel ministry who is not known to possess due qualifications. That this text refers to ordination is evident, because, 1. The whole argument of which it is a part refers to ministers. 2. This direction refers to what was the well known method of ordination to office. 3. Because the communication of miraculous gifts by imposition of hands, could not have been a subject of ordinary rules. It would be absurd to exhort the prophets, "Teach not error, while you are speaking by inspiration." But if this text refers at all to ordination, it establishes the doctrine of the imposition of hands; for otherwise the whole work of ordination would not have been included in the direction, "lay on hands."

(2.) I shall quote 1 Tim. 4. 14. *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.* The apostle is in this chapter describing the duty of a "*good minister of Jesus Christ.*" See verse 6. And he urges Timothy to exercise aright his own ministry. Verses 12—16. The gift, therefore,

(*χαρισμα*) in the 14. must be understood of the office-power conferred upon him. This is expressly said to have been conferred upon him with imposition of hands.

(3.) You will perceive another proof of this doctrine, and of the importance in which it was held in the estimation of the primitive church, in Heb. 6. 2. *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of LAYING ON OF HANDS, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgments.* This text, however, in order to be understood, must be considered in connexion with the argument of which it is a part. The Hebrews are reproved for their slow progress in Christian knowledge, chap. 5. 11—14. The apostle exhorts them to behave as men of discernment, and in chap. 6. 1. to go on unto the perfection of Christian knowledge, *leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ* so firmly established as articles of faith, that they should not hereafter be under the necessity of returning *to lay* a second time their *foundation*. Far from encouraging indifference to any part of the Christian system, he exhorts every one to diligence in procuring information upon every subject. The convenient distinction between essentials and circumstantial, which has since been so industriously and, alas! so effectually employed in cooling the zeal, and in flattering the indolence of Christians, was as yet unknown. The apostles thought, that whatever was

worthy of God to reveal, was certainly worthy of man to receive and understand. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes, indeed, a distinction between elementary doctrines and those which are necessary to the perfection of the system ; but among the *first principles of the oracles of God*, and along with *repentance, faith, the resurrection, and the judgment*, he enumerates also the sacrament of baptism and the Christian ministry. This is unquestionably the meaning of the text under examination. The doctrine of the "*laying on of hands*," is one of the *principles of the doctrine of Christ*, a fundamental doctrine in the perfect edifice of Christian knowledge. It cannot at all apply, in this case, to the act by which the gift of miracles was conveyed. The Hebrew converts would not readily so understand an expression which they were in the habit of using themselves, in their synagogues, as synonymous with ordination. Miracles were of temporary use ; the ministry is permanent. Without their continuance, the church is complete in doctrine and orders ; but without a ministry, she cannot even exist in her organized visible form. And if the ministry be at all referred to in the text, it follows that regular ordination is by the laying on of hands.

(4.) I shall examine one other passage of the New Testament in corroboration of this doctrine. Acts 13. 2, 3. *The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Bar-*

nabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And, when they had fasted and prayed, and LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM, they sent them away. From this it appears that the ministry at Antioch were divinely directed to *set apart* Barnabas and Saul, two of their number, to a certain work to which God had called them; and that these two ministers were accordingly set apart by their brethren to that work, by the imposition of hands. Upon this work, it also appears from verse 4. they immediately set out. After an absence of three years, they returned to Antioch, “*from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled**.” Upon their return, they declare to the church that the work had been accomplished, unto which they had been especially called of God, and solemnly set apart by them. They gave to their brethren an account of that work—Christian churches have been organized among the heathen.—“*He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles†.*” This solemn transaction was not an *ordination* to the ministry; but a *call* to employ the ministry, which they had already for many years possessed, in a *special mission*, to form churches among the Gentiles, who were hitherto sunk in idolatry.

* Acts 14. 26.

† 14. 27.

Perhaps it may be objected, by those who consider this transaction as an ordination to the apostleship, why all this solemnity about a mission which was already authorized in the general commission given to the apostles, "Go ye into all the world?" If no new powers were here given, wherefore these revelations, prayers, fasts, and this imposition of hands? Had not multitudes of the Gentiles been already converted in Cesaria, in Arabia, and in Antioch? And if this exposition be true, what relation has this transaction to the doctrine of ordination by the laying on of hands? A simple statement of facts will, I trust, remove all these objections, and satisfactorily show that this argument is not irrelevant to the case in hand.

Josef was a native of Cyprus, and a Levite by descent. In his native island he possessed an estate which he sold, for the service of the church, paying the price at the apostles' feet. He devoted his talents also to the public service; and for his pathetic eloquence, received from the apostles, within a year after the ascension of our Lord, the name Barnabas, the Son of consolation*. In the year 42, and the 9th of his ministry, this good man, full of

* Acts 4. 36. υἱος παρακλησεως. The Son of Exhortation, or Comfort. The preacher who touched and rejoiced the heart.

the Holy Ghost, was sent from Jerusalem to preach at Antioch in Syria. In this city his ministry was remarkably successful. He stood in need of ministerial aid; and having visited Tarsus, he prevailed upon Saul to accompany him to Antioch, where they laboured with great success for a twelve-month. It was at the close of the year 44 that they were both called to that *special mission*, to which they were *set apart by imposition of hands*.

Saul, afterwards called Paul, was a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. While "*breathing out slaughter*" against the disciples of our Lord, he was miraculously converted on the road to Damascus, in the year 35. Being called to the ministry and endowed with the Holy Ghost, he preached in the synagogue of Damascus; and going from thence into Arabia, he preached the Gospel to the Jews in that place for two years. In the discharge of the duties of the office, to which he had received, from God, an extraordinary call, he journeyed from place to place, until the year 44, when he was sent from Antioch along with Barnabas, to present to the Presbytery of Jerusalem, the collection made by the Christians in Syria. This was on the 9th year of his ministry. While he was in Jerusalem, he entered upon a certain occasion into the temple, fell into a trance, was caught up into the third heavens, saw the Lord, and received from him immediate directions and super-

natural endowments to qualify him for the work of Apostle to the Gentiles. After his return to Antioch along with Barnabas, they were publicly *set apart* to their *mission*.

Every thing was now ready for admitting the Gentiles into the bosom of the church of God, without subjecting them to the law of Moses. Nothing of this kind had hitherto taken place. The gospel was confined to the city of Jerusalem for the first year after the ascension of our Saviour. The persecution, however, in which Stephen suffered martyrdom, scattered the preachers of the gospel, except the apostles themselves, abroad through Palestine and the adjacent provinces, in which the Jews had formed settlements. These preachers taught the same doctrine and order which had been followed by the church at Jerusalem; and multitudes of the Jews every where embraced the faith. For eight years, the gospel was preached exclusively to the descendants of Abraham*. It was in the year 41 that the Gentiles were first admitted into the church. And these first fruits were, previously, proselytes to the Jewish religion †. Cornelius was a devout man, before he heard the gospel; and yet it occasioned much astonishment and much controversy among the disciples, that even he and those who believed

* Acts 11. 19.

† Acts 10 —. & 11. 20.

along with him, and along with him received the Holy Ghost, had been admitted by the apostle Peter to the privileges of the church. During the three ensuing years, however, the proselytes of the gate, in great numbers, joined the disciples of Christ, and at Antioch they first became distinguished by the name Christian. For these eleven years, the Jews and the proselyted Gentiles were nevertheless the only converts. They constituted the different Christian churches which had hitherto been organized. The idolatrous Gentiles had not yet been invited to repentance. For this work a *special mission* is with awful solemnity now provided.

Although the apostolic commission, "*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations,*" authorizes the preaching of the gospel to all men, there exists even to this day, a powerful discouragement to missions among the heathen. Their habits of thought and of life, are entirely different from those which we cultivate; and we cannot reason with them from Scriptures which they have not received as a rule of faith. In that day, it appears to have been the universal opinion, that the promises peculiarly respected the seed of Jacob. It required a vision to convince the apostle Peter that it was lawful to evangelize even the devout gentiles. Much more must it have been necessary, to provide special instruction about opening the door of faith to the pagans.

And after the conversion of the heathen, a question would immediately occur, how are they to be formed into regular assemblies or churches? In organizing congregations among the believing Jews and proselyte Gentiles, there was little difficulty. These had already been in the habit of submitting to the direction of a divine revelation, they had been habituated to the exercises of public worship. They had been accustomed to the discipline and government of the Synagogue. The method of ordination by the laying on of hands, was perfectly familiar to them. It was entirely otherwise with the idolatrous Heathen. It was therefore necessary that the first mission to them should be so conducted as to establish a model upon which all ordinations among them should be performed. Being totally unacquainted with a ministry of divine appointment, and with the forms of ordination to that office, nevertheless, it pleased God to provide that they should speedily upon their conversion, be organized into churches, have elders ordained among them, and the ordinances of God stately administered. So important was to be the influence of this event, "opening the door of faith to the Heathen," upon the future character, and history of the church of God, that the first mission is conducted as if it had been itself the beginning of the gospel dispensation; as if all that preceded it had only been preparations for *breaking*

off the natural branches, that the Gentiles might be grafted into the good olive tree, that the casting away of the Jews might be the reconciling of the world.

In Antioch, a heathen city abounding with Gentile proselytes converted into the Christian faith, Barnabas and Saul, both born on Gentile ground, receive their mission to the Heathen, with circumstances of extraordinary solemnity. The Holy Ghost *called* them—Their brethren in the ministry were commanded by a voice from heaven to *set them apart*—They were set apart with fasting and prayer, and *laying on of hands*—And being recommended to the grace of God, they departed on their mission. They considered this as the divinely appointed *model* for setting apart, to the pastoral office in the Churches which they were about to organize, candidates duly qualified for the ministry of reconciliation. That Paul and Barnabas understood it so is manifest. They practised upon it. During three years, they travelled among the nations, reducing them into the faith of Christ, ordaining elders in every Church, and with prayer and fasting recommending them unto the Lord in whom they had believed, and thus organized the first Churches of the Gentiles, without drilling them through the synagogue, or subjecting them to the law of Moses.

This argument, therefore, my brethren, while it corroborates our “doctrine of the laying on of

“ hands,” also exhibits the mode of Presbyterian ordination. And you will now be prepared to examine the evidence which I shall lay before you.

3. That ministers are ordained to office, by the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery—That Presbyterian ordination is God’s call to the ministry.

It is not my intention, to deny the propriety of permitting candidates for the ministry to make a public trial of their gifts, to deny the right which a Christian congregation has to elect its own pastor, or to deny the duty of constituting a fixed relation between a minister and a particular charge. No, by no means. It is a very prudent practice, which admits young men who have been preparing themselves for the service of God in the gospel of his son, to make public trial of their talents before different congregations, as well as before ministers and presbyteries. The students of the law were admitted to teach publicly in the Jewish synagogues before ordination. It was upon this principle, that Paul had every where easy access into the Jewish synagogues, and was allowed by the rulers to preach publicly to the congregation. This is not a dividing the Christian ministry. No part of it is committed to probationers. They are upon trial, and when they have made a sufficient public trial of their gifts,

they ought either to be ordained to the ministry, or remanded to private life.

Every Christian congregation has a right to choose its ecclesiastical officers. This is congenial to the maxims of natural equity, and to the spirit of the gospel. It is necessary to the edification and the comfort of the Church, to the dignity and purity of the ministry. It was the practice both of the synagogue and the primitive church. Care should of course be always taken to obtain in some decent and orderly manner the sense of a congregation, respecting candidates; their voice, in fact, should be heard, in calling to the ministry among them, the person who is appointed thereunto. And yet the call of the congregation, is no part of ordination. It communicates no power. It only invites to the exercise of the power, otherwise communicated, in a certain part of the church of God. It is necessary to a regular Episcopacy. A vague ministry, is undoubtedly indecent and improper. Every congregation should have its pastor. This is the scriptural bishop—the minister, who has a fixed charge of which he has taken the oversight. None is owned by God's word as a bishop, except he who has an appropriate charge. The apostles were not bishops, although they were all presbyters. They had no fixed congregations, although they were ecclesiastical rulers. The pastoral connexion, the episcopate, ought not to be rashly

violated. It is constituted by the Holy Ghost*. But while I admit all this, my brethren, I still contend, that presbyterian ordination alone, constitutes the ordinary ministerial call.

(1.) The ministry of the synagogue was uniformly constituted in this manner. A number of those, who were themselves ordained, did set apart others to the same work, and confer upon them equal power with themselves by imposition of hands. Upon this model the churches, consisting of Jewish and proselyte Gentile converts, were organized with their respective pastors.

(2.) In the 12th year from the erection of the Christian church, when the Gentiles were to be converted, and entirely preserved from the bondage of the Jewish ceremonies, lest it should be thought that presbyterian ordination by imposition of hands was one of these abolished ceremonies, there was a very solemn transaction at Antioch, in which a divinely appointed model of it was exhibited in the mission which God employed in creating the Gentile churches. And that there should be no kind of pretence hereafter for dispensing with this practice, as of synagogue origin, the Holy Ghost ordered the presbytery of Antioch not to dispense with it in that mission which laid the foundation of the Christian church

* Acts 20, 28.

among the Heathen nations, even in the case of those who had for years before exercised their ministry among the Jews. Accordingly Paul and Barnabas introduced the practice on that very mission*, and established it upon a basis entirely independent of Jewish tradition.

(3.) Three years after this mission was completed, Timothy received presbyterian ordination in one of those newly constituted Gentile churches. He was ordained *by Paul, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery* †.

In the year 47, Paul preached at Derbe for the first time, and on his second visit, which took place three years thereafter, he met Timothy in that place. This youth was in high esteem among all the churches of Lycaonia. In the course of this journey, and within the same year, we find him assisting in the public ministry of the gospel at Thessalonica. He must therefore have been ordained before they departed from Lystra. Paul was now on his journey, carrying the decree passed at Jerusalem, respecting the law of Moses, to the Gentile churches. None of the apostles accompanied him. Even Barnabas was no longer his fellow-labourer. From him he had parted at Antioch, in consequence of a dispute about John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. The presbytery which laid hands on Timothy, therefore, was ei-

* Acts 14. 23.

† 1 Tim. 4. 14. & 2 Tim. 1. 6.

ther that of Lystra, or one met for the purpose, and composed of Paul and Silas, (and perhaps Titus,) who accompanied Paul from Jerusalem on this journey.

(4.) I shall quote in proof of presbyterian ordination, the apostolic commission, as illustrated by apostolic example. This commission stands upon record in Matt. 28. 19, 20. *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. AMEN.*

In these words, the head of the church confers ministerial power upon the Apostles. And it is perfectly evident, 1. that to the ministry alone, office-power is committed: 2. that this power is transferable unto the end of the world: 3. that equal power is committed to all the Apostles: and, 4. that this power is in its *fullest extent* transferable. We here, therefore, behold a ministry constituted by the head of the church, complete in all its parts, subsisting in perfect equality, and possessing the right of transferring their whole power into the hands of others, *unto the end of the world.* Every ordained minister must accordingly possess complete ministerial authority. He can not be a minister without possessing the whole power delivered into the hands of each of the

Apostles, except in those cases in which Apostles acted under an immediate inspiration of God. And inspiration, whether in Apostles or others, universally, entitles to the exercise of authority superior to the ordinary ministry. The reason is obvious. All are bound to obey God. It is equally obvious, that if any individual Apostle had the power of ordination, every other Apostle had similar power; and every ordained minister may by his own power ordain another to the ministry. This reasoning is, I confess, insufficient to establish the necessity of ordination, being performed by a presbytery—by a plurality of ordained ministers: but it completely establishes these two propositions: 1. Ordination is to be performed by ministers only: 2. All ministers have, in ordinations, equal power. It leaves nothing relative to my argument, undetermined, except this question; Whether is ordination to be performed by one minister, or by several ministers united? And, if it does not decisively establish Presbyterianism, it certainly destroys the claims of Independency and the Prelacy. But we do not rest here. The practice of the Apostles, recorded with approbation in the canon of Scripture, will determine whether a Christian minister is to be ordained to office by an individual Presbyter or by a Presbytery. And if, upon investigation, it should appear that *one* can ordain, nothing can justly be inferred favourable to the

Prelacy. Nor can it be denied, that prudence and decency require the union of both counsel and action in admitting a candidate to the holy ministry. Ministerial parity would still remain a matter of divine right, and Presbyterian ordination would be acknowledged, a prudential measure, in perfect conformity to God's ordinance. But I contend for more than this. I assert without fear of contradiction, that the Scriptures record *many instances* of Presbyterian ordination, and *no instance* in which an individual did ordain. In the Jewish synagogue, ministers were uniformly ordained by a plurality of ordained officers. Timothy was ordained by a Presbytery. Paul and Barnabas, not separately, but jointly, ordained Elders in all the churches which they had planted. And there is not a passage in the whole New Testament from which it can be justly inferred that one minister ever did ordain another. It has indeed been inferred from two texts of Scripture, that an individual *may* ordain; but the inference is false. This will appear upon examination. 1 Tim. 5. 22. "*Lay hands suddenly on no man.*" The argument of our opponents from this text, is as follows: It is a specimen of their mode of reasoning. "Timothy is directed not to ordain any man rashly, therefore he must have had the power of ordination committed to him, individually." To state this argument, is a sufficient reply to it. If an

elder brother hath recommended it to me to be cautious in admitting candidates to the ministry, am I therefore to claim prelati- cal authority? Or rather, is it not the duty of every minister, as much as it was that of Timothy, to lay hands suddenly on no man? The other text referred to, is Tit. 1. 5. "*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.*" The argument from this text is considered by the friends of the hierarchy as conclusive in favour of their system. It is this: "Titus was left in Crete in order "to supply what was defective in its ecclesiastical "organization by ordaining Presbyters, he must "have therefore possessed the right to ordain in his "individual capacity." Need I add, my brethren, that the premises do not warrant the conclusion? It is indeed certain, that Paul left Titus in Crete, that he might ordain elders. And it is probable that Titus did ordain. But it is also equally probable, that as Paul ordained Timothy, so did Titus ordain ministers in Crete, by *the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*. And it is most certain that no proof to the contrary can be produced. The common language of the church is, that the minister, appointed by the Presbytery to be their organ in the ordaining prayer, does ordain the candidate. This phraseology never conveys the idea that he was alone

in the sacred work ; and this will be presently exemplified in your sight, when, agreeably to appointment, I shall ordain among you this candidate, by prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*.

* The defenders of Prelacy are very unfortunate when they refer to Scripture for proof. They are much more at home among the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. This text gives a blow to their pretensions, of which they do not appear to be aware. It proves, 1. that the organization of the Church in Crete was incomplete when Titus was left there ; 2. that, in order to render it complete, several elders must be ordained in every city, in every congregation. Every Church in the apostolic age had several elders. This was essential to its organization. Acts 14. 23. But modern Episcopalians require no more than one Presbyter to each Church. And yet they talk, (modestly enough to be sure,) of their most excellent Church, of its Apostolic origin and order. I hear your claims, and observe your zeal, said a shrewd Farmer to a zealous Episcopalian of Utica, but where is your religion? We had little of that to show, added the respectable Episcopalian, who told me the story.

I embrace the opportunity, which this note affords me, of recommending to all, who make the subject of the Christian ministry their study, the excellent Letters of Dr. Miller, and the masterly review of a *Collection of Essays, &c.* which appears in the Christian's Magazine. I wish both these works were universally known. I wish also that Presbyterians fully knew the strength of their adversaries. I would therefore recommend to their perusal, Dr. Hobart's Apology, and a work which I have read since this discourse was sent to the press, the

I have now demonstrated, that a lawful call to the office, is one of the distinguishing marks which God hath set upon the ministry which he approves; and I proceed to show also,

Secondly, That the Pastor according to God's heart, has a life corresponding to the functions of his holy office.

There is a striking analogy between a saint and the church. Grace is not complete until it terminates in glory; and the church militant is imperfect. Professions are frequently hypocritical, appearances are often discovered to have been without reality. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?—And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Ministers may have a divine call to the office, and yet afterwards give themselves up to the service of Satan, and betray their master. Judas was an Apostle. There must therefore be a check upon Christian confidence. It

Letters of Dr. Bowden. When the judicious and pious reader has admired the animated declamation of the former, and the patient researches of the latter writer, he will conclude that neither of the Dr.'s knew much about the system of grace, or the constitution of the Christian Church. The latter work contains a summary of Episcopal arguments. These arguments, however, when opposed to the shield of faith, are feeble as the dart of Priam. Such weapons are not so terrible to Presbyterians, as was the sceptre of Elizabeth.

is not sufficient that the Pastor has been regularly called, he must also adhere to his instructions. He that is *near the heart of God*, בלבי, has not only received a regular ordination, but also continues to perform faithfully the duties of the pastoral office. Ministers are to be honourably received, and diligently watched. While they continue to live a life corresponding to their ministry, let them be esteemed as the servants of God, as the ambassadors of Christ. But when they shall have forsaken God, let them be rejected by the church. You will bear, my brethren, with our personal infirmities; you will sympathize in our calamities; you will pity our intellectual weakness; you will mourn for our unsuccessfulness; and if we should never acquire great popularity, we are not, merely on that account, to be rejected of the church. Not great attainments in eloquence, not courtly manners, not a talent of pleasing the high or the low, not popularity, nor even the degrees of success with which a ministry is accompanied, can determine whether a Pastor be far off, or near the heart of God. He is a Pastor approved of God, who is *pious, diligent, and faithful*.

(1.) A ministry evidently impious, will meet with few advocates. This evil can be tolerated only in a church which has far departed from truth and holiness. It is not indeed necessary that we should

have infallible evidence that a man is regenerated, in order to recognise him as a minister of Christ. Such evidence is impossible without a revelation from heaven. But before he is invested with this holy office, the candidate must be required to exhibit all the satisfactory evidence of which the case admits. He must manifest his faith *by his works*. It is of no importance that he *say he has faith*—that he tell us of his conversion. We look for the fruits of that faith. These we examine, and of them we judge. A Christian minister, destitute of piety, is in a deplorable condition. He makes it the business of his life, to serve a master whom he hates, to explain a law at which his heart is in enmity, and to illustrate promises which his own soul rejects. He preaches a salvation of which he does not approve, and recommends a heaven which he never seeks. He describes terrors which are thickening around him, and he teaches others to escape a hell into which he is himself hastily travelling. But the Pastor according to God's heart, my brethren, is a man of piety. He loves the doctrines of the Gospel. These have been to his soul, green pastures and refreshing streams. To be united to Christ, as a member of his body, to be taught by the spirit of adoption, is a source both of confidence and joy. Filled with humility, he admires in transports of delight the sovereignty of God. Grace appears to him pure,

and calm, and great, and wonderful. The pious minister is constrained by the love of a crucified Saviour, and he loves the Father with his whole strength and mind. God appears to him in the communications of his Holy Spirit, as an infinite fountain of divine majesty and sweetness, pouring out his all-sufficiency, and like the sun in its glory, pleasantly diffusing both light and life. This encourages him,

(2.) To diligence in his sacred office. He feels the value of the soul. He knows it to be immortal. He perceives the danger of sinners; and anxious for their salvation, he warns them of it frequently and fervently. Giving himself *wholly up to the duties of his ministry*, he renders subservient to it, his plans and his actions, his studies and his meditations. In the closet, upon his knees, he offers his flock to the Chief Shepherd; and, from the pulpit, he invites that flock to his master's fold. From house to house, he visits, he examines, he exhorts. In afflictions, he soothes; in temptation, he admonishes; in sickness, he comforts; and in death, he resigns their departing spirits into the hands of that God who created both him and them.

(3.) The Pastor, who is near the heart of God, is faithful to God and to his church. Without corrupting the word of truth, or handling that word deceitfully, he preaches Christ crucified, as the sum and the substance of true religion. He deals plain-

ly with sinners, uninfluenced by their frowns or their smiles. He unfolds their guilt, their depravity, their obduracy of heart; and he summons them to repentance. He explains the sovereign love of God, and the atonement made by the Saviour; and he demands obedience to the great commandment, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." He insists upon the necessity of conversion, and of holiness; and explicitly and repeatedly declares, that unless a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. He inculcates, upon every one, attention to all God's ordinances; he shows them how they are to *behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church*. In a word, he faithfully teaches them to *observe all things whatsoever God hath commanded*.

III. The sum of pastoral duty is the edification of the church.

This, you will recollect, is according to my arrangement, the third and last general division of the discourse. In the text, that minister, which God approves, and in mercy bestows upon a congregation of Christians, is represented as one "*which shall feed with knowledge and understanding*." The edification of the Christian church is, in fact, the object of all gospel-ordinances. And to the attainment of this object, discipline as well as doctrine, is subordinate. The original words are more comprehensive and expressive, than the words "feed with knowledge."

רעם ורעו רעה, is translated in the Septuagint, ποιμένας ποιμαίνοντες ποιμαίνοντες, *Shepherds who shall pasture you, performing the duties of a shepherd*, with knowledge. This embraces, the whole business of a shepherd about his flock, the whole care which he takes for their preservation and increase. And the faithful shepherd must, of necessity, provide pastures for his flock ; inspect, from time to time, their state ; designate his own sheep from other herds ; and exercise over them that power which is necessary for their welfare. The edification of the church cannot be promoted, with intelligence, by the pastor, unless he teach, inspect, seal, and rule, the several persons who are committed to his charge, *that he may watch for their souls as one who must give an account*. The duties of the gospel ministry, are, therefore, to preach the gospel—to examine the state of the congregation—to administer the sacraments—and to exercise ecclesiastical power for the preservation of order in the church.

1. The Pastor according to God's heart, preaches to his congregation the gospel of Christ. This is the food which he diligently provides for immortal souls. This gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Christ crucified is the substance of it. And this subject is far from being contracted. No, my brethren, it embraces whatsoever is useful for the perfection of the man of God. Preaching the gospel is an official exhibition of the system of grace in

all its parts, accompanied with a direct offer of all its blessings to all sinners, and with fervent admonitions to receive and improve the offer, and the gift. God is exhibited to view in all his attributes. Man is described, as a creature, dependent upon God, rational and accountable, bound to know, love, and serve God perfectly, and labouring under the guilt and the pollution of sin, original and actual. The Redeemer is revealed in his person and offices, as he really is, God manifested in the flesh, our prophet, our priest, and our governor, the only mediator between God and man, and our only Saviour. Salvation, through him, is *offered*, to every one, without terms, and without conditions. And the pre-requisites to the *enjoyment* of happiness in heaven, are explained, and required of all: Faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, love to God, and holiness in heart, speech, and behaviour. Union with Christ by faith is manifested as the only ground of pardon and acceptance, the only source of grace and holiness, the only foundation of morality, and the only fountain of perfection, and felicity, and glory. The spirit of God is exhibited in his divinity, and excellency, and efficacy—the author of all motion, all beauty, and all glory. He is revealed as the Sanctifier and the Comforter. The doctrine of conversion is explained, and the necessity of conversion is urged upon every conscience. The Holy Scriptures are explained, and the truths of inspiration are

illustrated and applied. The history, the prophecy, the precept, the doctrine, the promises, and the ordinances, yea, all the parts of the counsel of God, are displayed without fear and without partiality, by the faithful pastor. The order of God's providence is marked and proclaimed. The events which fulfil predictions, and the duties which, from the signs of the times, devolve upon Christians, are duly exhibited. The perversions of science, (falsely so called,) and the misrepresentations of Scripture, dangerous to the sentiments and morals of men, are detected and refuted. The order of the church of Christ is vindicated; and the history, of God's judgments upon the nations, is unfolded. Men are taught to introduce the principles of Christianity into full operation, in all the various relations of life, and Jesus, the Saviour, is proclaimed as *Head over all things*, the governor, and the judge of the universe.

Such a subject, my brethren, as this gospel which we preach, so interesting, so various, so copious, and so magnificent, most assuredly requires the devotion to its service of talents and erudition. In order to qualify a man to preach this gospel, it is necessary that he have good sense, extensive information, and much experience. He must be a man of reading, of study, of piety, and of prayer, in order to become a workman who needeth not to be ashamed. Such a subject as this also requires that it be discussed plainly, solemnly, and fervently. Nor is

it altogether unimportant to the edification of the church, whether the gospel be preached by the pastor to his congregation, by reading in their hearing, or by what is generally termed extempore speaking. To this question I have paid some attention. And, from the observations which I have been enabled to make, I conclude, that it is more agreeable to the mind of God, in the institution of the gospel ministry, that the pastor should *speak* to his hearers, from the fulness of his understanding and his heart, upon a subject which he has thoroughly studied and digested, than that he should confine himself, entirely to the *recitation* of words which he has committed to memory, or to the *reading* of a manuscript which he holds before him. The voice of *nature*, the voice of *scripture*, and the voice of *experience*, are certainly, in favour of extempore sermonising. 1. This is the order of nature. Speech is the natural mode of communicating our thoughts to others. Writing is an artificial substitute for speech; and by its means we converse with those to whom the voice cannot reach. But when we address those who are present, it is more natural that we *speak* what we know, than that we either *repeat* what we have committed to memory, or *read* what we have written. 2. All scriptural example is upon the side of extempore preaching. Thus, the ministers of the synagogues taught and exhorted. Thus, all the apostles and evangelists practised.

Thus did also our blessed Saviour. Having read his text, he “*closed the book,*” and gave the meaning. “*And he began to say unto them,*” &c. Luke 4. 20, 21. And, 3. Experience also recommends this example to our imitation. The most successful ministers, in the best days of the church, thus preached the gospel. The early reformers, in this as well as in other particulars, imitated the example of the primitive pastors; and the most eminently successful ministers in every age, did likewise. If at any time, signal awakenings have commenced under the ministry of one who habitually *read* sermons, it was found necessary to employ *preaching* extemporaneously, in cultivating the field and in gathering the harvest.

There are also many strong objections against the opposite method. It restrains the inventive faculty of the preacher; it diminishes his dependence upon God’s spirit, while actually engaged in his ministry; and it prevents those intellectual exertions, which, excited by the occasion, give birth to the most natural and forcible remarks. It is also calculated to impede the discharge of other duties. The Pastor of a congregation, who, during an ordinary life, serves one church, must neglect parochial duties, if he is under the necessity of writing two sermons every week. This labour must likewise prevent study. In short, the habit of *reading* or *recitation* has gone far toward banishing discipline, and toward filling the church

with a superficial ministry. It has had another injurious effect. For as action and re-action are equal and contrary in the moral, as well as in the physical world, it has driven the great body of the people away from the churches of the regularly educated ministry, to follow declaimers, who have nothing to recommend them but their natural and extemporaneous eloquence. Nor is this all. Those who cannot preach except by reading, have sometimes been placed in a very disagreeable predicament. If they are called upon, in providence, to preach, and have not a sermon in their pocket suitable to the occasion, they become justly liable to the terrible charge, Isa. 56. 10. "*Dumb dogs ; they cannot bark.*" Indeed, if the practice of *reading* were universally adopted in the public worship of the Lord's day, it would go far toward the total overthrow of the ordinance of the Christian ministry. As any one may write, so any one may read, and then there is no necessity for an ordained ministry to preach the gospel.

The apologies offered for this innovation have always appeared to me unsatisfactory. "There are some ministers who cannot correctly explain religion, unless they confine themselves to discourses previously written." I trust, my brethren, this apology will never be made for *your* pastor. I believe the principle of it is incorrect ; and I venture to say, that every man who can write well, and can read well, would have spoken well, had he cultivated

attentively the talent of speech. What! shall there be found men of talents for every other department that requires eloquence, except for the ministry of Christ's gospel? In the senate, and at the bar, men of information and of taste have listened with interest to extempore eloquence. But it has been said, "There are some congregations which feel so little interest in the great doctrines of religion, as to have no relish for discussions which are not recommended by correctness of composition:" a compliment which I hope shall never be paid by its pastor to this congregation. I shall now dismiss this subject, after I shall have observed, that men of superior talents and acquisitions will certainly command respect, whatever be the mode in which they address their hearers; but these valuable endowments might be employed much more successfully in the service of the church, by cultivating an extempore elocution, than by reading sermons. Let the *Ambassador for Christ*, be thoroughly acquainted with his Bible; let him enrich his mind with various knowledge; let him correct his thoughts by frequent composition; let him accurately digest the subject about which he is to speak, and let him enter the pulpit and address his congregation in total dependence upon his God; let him pour out his heart, not *with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power*, and his gain in spiritual effect will far counterbalance his loss in elegance of expression.

2. The pastor of whom God approves, is in duty bound, from time to time, to examine the religious state of his congregation.

This is the work of the Christian bishop. The duty of inspection, is in Scripture combined with that of feeding. And every pastor is, of course, a Bishop. 1 Pet. 5. 2. "Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof*." Acts 20. 28. "The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers †, to feed the church of God." It is evidently, therefore, both the duty and the right of every minister to exercise in his pastoral charge that power of inspection, on account of which the name Bishop is bestowed upon him.

The abuse which the prelacy has made of the word Bishop, has not only cherished its Anti-christian usurpation, but has also greatly contributed to banish from the church that religious inspection of congregations, which is necessary to their edification. That convenient interpretation which separates inspection from teaching, places the people beyond the reach of ecclesiastical rule, and soothes the indolent pastor in his total neglect of parochial duty. You will recollect, however, my brethren, that the pastor which God hath promised to give to his people, is one according to his own heart. He shall feed the flock of God, inspecting their religious state. He inquires, from time to time, into their

* *Επισκοπευτες*, exercising the power of a Bishop.

† *Επισκοπους*, Bishops.

progress in Christian knowledge. He examines, in the light of truth, the correctness of their views, their sentiments, and their experience. He takes account of their conduct in relation to all the practical duties of Christianity. He takes care to acquaint himself with the facts, which, more than any declarations, evidence their religious character. Personal interviews, family visitations, and public examinations, are employed with all possible frequency, for the edification of the church. And thus shall the pastor be enabled to divide rightly the word of truth, to give them meat in due season.

3. It is the duty of the Christian pastor to administer the sacraments of the New-Testament, to the members of his church.

Sacraments are instituted by Christ, for the confirmation of our faith; and they manifest our separation from the world. These sacraments are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are seals as well as signs of divine grace to the heirs of salvation. But the administration of them is committed unto the hands of fallible men, who cannot judge the heart, or determine the state of any man. The rule of administration, therefore, is not our *opinions* of a man's state, but our *knowledge* of facts respecting the applicant. He is considered as in covenant with the church, who receives the seal, as the property of the church; who receives its mark, as a member of the church; who receives its peculiar badges

of distinction ; he, in fact, is necessarily considered as already enlisted in the cause, to whom the oath, the sacrament, is administered. The facts to be ascertained, in order to administer the sacraments aright, are therefore two. 1st. Is the applicant within the covenant which exists between the visible church and God? 2. Considering the special character of the sacrament to be administered, is there no unfitness in the visible state of the applicant to the reception of the ordinance?

Children cast by providence within the bosom of the church, are, according to the dispensation of grace, within the covenant; they are church-members. It is the birthright of every one who is born of believing parents, or of whose parents one is a believer, to be a church-member. Every bud upon the branch belongs to the good olive-tree, as well as the branch itself. Such children are to be baptized; because there is nothing in the nature of the ordinance unsuitable to infants. It seals and recognizes their visible covenant connexion, and it may seal their engrafting unto Christ. Children are inadmissible to the Lord's Supper; because in their admission, the special object of the ordinance could not be answered. They are incapable of that intellectual entertainment which commemorates the death of Christ.

Baptism has very improperly been called Christening: and this name cherishes the superstition which

gave it birth. It is maintained by many, that Baptism makes the subject both a church member and a Christian—that it regenerates. The Pastor according to God's heart, will not, however, my brethren, err so egregiously in this matter. It shall be his care and his delight, as it is his duty, to administer the seals of the covenant according to the divine direction. The adult who makes an intelligent profession of the gospel, whose conversation is exemplary, and joins the church in covenant with God, is admitted to baptism, is admitted to present his offspring in baptism, and is admitted to the Lord's table also. Anxious to present his flock perfect in Christ Jesus, the pastor warns them to conform to the primitive example which he himself adopts as the model of a regular church, enjoying its sacraments and its doctrines. Acts 2. 41, 42. *They that gladly received his word were BAPTIZED: And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in BREAKING OF BREAD, and in prayers.*

4. It is the duty of a Christian minister to exercise authority over his flock. This is necessary to their edification, and it is included in the exercise of the duties of a pastor. It is implied in *feeding* with knowledge. The Greek verb which we generally translate feed, and which comprehends the sum of pastoral duty, signifies to rule as well as to teach, and is frequently so translated in the New Testa-

ment*. The power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven is in the hands of every Christian minister. It has been committed to him by the Head of the church. The use of the key of *rule*, as well as that of *knowledge*, belongs to him. And in the exercise of spiritual power for the edification of the church, he must maintain order, examine scandals, call the disorderly to account, admonish and rebuke with all authority.

I have now done with the doctrinal discussion of this text. I have endeavoured to give you satisfactory evidence, that the Ministry of the Gospel is a permanent institution of Christ, secured to his church by his faithful covenant. I have given you a general view of the constitution, the character, and duties of that ministry, and I shall shortly proceed, according to appointment, to set apart by prayer and the laying on of the hands of this Presbytery, the candidate whom you have chosen to the ministry of this church. Until that work is accomplished, I shall postpone the application of my discourse. And may the Father of our spirits, from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift, realize to you, in the pastor which you are about to receive, the promise of my text—*And I will give you Pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. AMEN.*

* Ποιμαίνω, Mat. 2. 6. Rev. 2. 27. and 19. 15. Homer frequently styles his kings, Ποιμενίς.

After Prayer and singing a Psalm, *The Formula of Questions*, &c. was read, and the Candidate, having given to each question a satisfactory reply, was ordained by prayer and the "laying on of hands," to the ministry of reconciliation, and settled to the pastoral office of the Congregation. The application of the Discourse immediately followed in the Charge, 1. to the Minister, and 2. to the Congregation.

CHARGE TO THE MINISTER.

You stand now, my brother, before this congregation, in a relation in which you never stood before. You are their Pastor. You stand before the ministry of the church in a new relation. You are invested with authority as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. You stand before that God who is the witness of the solemnities of to-day, in a new relation. The Holy Ghost hath made you an OVERSEER. You occupy a post of honour, and a post of danger. You stand in a needy station. Permit me, to warn you of its difficulties; to admonish you of its duties; and to assure you in the discharge of these duties, of an all-sufficient help.

In doing this, I claim, over you, no prelatical authority. In office, and in power in the church of Christ, you are equal to any man upon earth. The Apostolical commission has been transmitted to you unimpaired. You are an ordained Minister. I claim over you no other power than what the actual preacher has a right to exercise over every hearer—the power of divine truth over the conscience*;

* Such was the power which the Prophets and Apostles pos-

When we pervert that truth, our words are without authority, and resistance becomes virtue.

sessed and exercised. In them it was extraordinary. They were not limited to expositions and applications of the written revelation. They were inspired to make new revelations. And who can lawfully resist inspiration? The gift of inspiration clothed the Apostles with an extraordinary character. This, and not any Episcopal or Archi-episcopal power, gave them authority over all the churches. At present, the scriptures of the New Testament, as well as those of the Old, possess authority over all the churches. The same authority did the Apostles possess in their day. They were miraculously qualified to guide the faith and the worship of Christians. These *divine gifts* are distinct from the *commission* which constituted them ministers. The commission is perpetually transmissible; but the extraordinary gifts, and the powers connected with them, have terminated. Indeed, while they continued, they were exercised only on extraordinary occasions. In common cases, the Apostles acted as mere Presbyters. Acts 13. 1—3. and 14. 23—27. and 15th chapter throughout. Never, but when acting by inspiration, did the Apostles assume any power over the ordinary ministry. Never, otherwise, did they claim superiority over Presbyters. Paul exercised the right of directing Timothy, and prescribing for Titus, for *He spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost*; and that was a warrant for the actions of these two Evangelists. Paul is long since dead, but the *authority* which he exercised over these ministers, remains, undiminished; not in the hands of an ambitious Prelate, but in the Holy Scriptures. The epistles are, to-day, as binding upon us as they were on Timothy and Titus. The Apostles themselves, in the very exercise of their superior power, and with their inspired lips, teach the doctrine of Presbyterian parity. 1 Pet. 5. 1. “The *Presbyters* which are among you, I exhort, who am also a *Presbyter*.” 2. “Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof”—as *Bishops*, Επισκοποῦντες. 3. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage”—Not as *masters of the clergy*. κατακυβερνοῦντες τῶν κληρῶν. 5. “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.” There are not, in fact, two crea-

We have, to-day, my dear brother, presented you to this church, as the gift of God, for their edification. We hope you are the fulfilment of the promise of our Saviour to this people, *I will give you Pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* In this hope, I repeat to you the words of the Apostle Peter, "Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." You have indeed to encounter difficulties in your pastoral office, of which you are not yet fully aware.

There has been no opportunity for you hitherto to feel the difficulty of managing aright the spiritual concerns of a congregation. You have not felt the tender tie which binds the pastor to his flock. You have not felt, in all its exquisite anxieties, the responsibility of a watchman who must render unto God an account for souls. Under new circumstances, also, corruptions, which have been supposed extinguished, will again revive. Passions, which have been considered as destroyed, will be excited into fresh contentions. A multiplicity of undescrivable anxieties, will put your temper to a severe trial. Your self-denial will be frequently put to the test. Your reputation will be assailed by enemies. Your words will be misunderstood, and your motives mis-
 tures in the universe more dissimilar, than a *Christian Bishop* and a *Dignitary* of the church of England.

represented. Your most disinterested exertions will often be undervalued. I know your congregation. I have long known them. I love them and esteem them. They will endeavour to make you in every respect comfortable. But they are human. They are imperfect. And it is always difficult to direct and to control several active, inquisitive, high-spirited, and diversified minds, so as to effect one great object, the edification of all, and the good of the whole church of Christ. To these difficulties, is added the power of Satan, which you will have to resist in all its devices. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Amidst these trials and difficulties, you must, nevertheless, continue unwearied in the work whereunto you are now ordained.

Having in view the edification of the church, it becomes you to stir up the gift that is in you. It is your duty, my brother, to cultivate, by frequent and fervent devotion, close intimacy with your Redeemer. You must read and study the scriptures, as a sinner struggling for deliverance from the body of death—as a Christian growing in grace and in knowledge—as a critic weighing every expression, and thoroughly searching every subject—as a pastor, who, mindful of his people, collects diligently for their use.—You must read the scriptures as an an-

bassador for Christ, that you may understand and proclaim your master's will. In preaching Christ crucified, and in administering the sacraments, exercise both diligence and faithfulness. And let not the ordinance of discipline be neglected in your ministry. Take heed to your life and conversation, and let them be such as become the gospel. Be an example to the flock in all love and humility. Be patient, be sober, be vigilant. Visit your people, and strive to know them as men and as Christians. Indulge not, either in the pulpit or in private, personal animosities. Reprove and rebuke with all authority. Give not heed to slanders, and listen not to the tale of the censorious. In discipline, be circumspect and prompt, meek, but decisive. Show to your people that you seek their salvation, "of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." And in the discharge of these duties, put your trust in God. However great your difficulties and your duties, greater still is your support.

God is to the faithful minister an all sufficient help. He is a father and a friend. He will bear you up in your afflictions. He will deliver you from danger. He will strengthen you for your labours. He pledges his faithfulness for your support. To the commission which he hath, through us, to-day delivered unto your hands, he hath added a promise, which you will never forget. It will inspire you with a confidence, which gives energy and

dignity to your ministry. *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION.

I feel, my brethren, more joy than I can express, in turning to you, toward the close of the public duties which have to-day devolved upon me, in order to make application to you of the text which I have selected for discussion. “And I,” saith the Lord, “will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” For this object you have often sought; and you have often been disappointed. You have now succeeded. Behold the answer of your prayers. Your pastor is before you. Do you recognize him as the gift of God to you—as the ambassador of Christ—as the minister of your own choice? I know you do. And I charge you, in the name of the great God whose minister he is, that you continue to cherish toward him such a disposition.

He is entitled to your esteem. Many who have no sense of religion, esteem its ministers for their learning, their talents, their integrity, or their venerable deportment. Ignorant devotion also looks upon ministers with superstitious veneration. But we expect from you the exercise of a more intelligent respect for your pastor. Reverence your Lord and Saviour, embrace with love the work of salvation, and you will esteem highly for that work’s sake he

who preaches the gospel of peace. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!*

Your minister also has a right to expect submission from you to the authority which he exerciseth over you. This power is for your own edification. *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.”*

I need not, brethren, put you in mind that you are bound to support comfortably your minister and his family. When the church had called upon your liberality heretofore, she was not disappointed. And on this occasion, also, you have manifested the same disposition. You have made liberal provision for your pastor. Ministers deserve from their people a comfortable support. Spending their time, their talents, and their strength, for the good of the church, it is hard if the church will not provide for them. The labourer, yea, the common labourer, is worthy of his hire. And despicable indeed must that congregation be, which would not cheerfully communicate, until the minister who labours for their salvation could live as comfortably in the world as they do. I speak to every individual. You have not done your duty, until you have enabled your minister to live as well as you do. *“For God loveth*

a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

Let me also charge you to be much engaged in prayer to God for your pastor. That Christian, who habitually supplicates the throne of grace for a blessing on the ministry, will profit by the word. Cultivate also pious conversation with him, and provoke him to instruct you, in private, as well as in public. Let your houses be open for his reception ; and let your families be instructed to respect his visitations. Be manly, as well as pious. Indulge not toward him a censorious spirit. Trouble him not with tales of defamation. Join him, and support him in the maintenance of discipline, and in promoting the general interest of religion in the church. Confine not your exertions within the limits of your own congregation ; but, with a noble generosity, co-operate with your pastor in every plan which is calculated to spread the gospel, to provide a learned and pious ministry for the church, or to increase the number and strength of other congregations.

“ Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace ; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” Amen.