

A

SERMON

DELIVERED ON

WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 21, 1854,

AT THE INSTALLATION OF THE

REV. E. SMALLEY, D. D.,

AS PASTOR OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TROY,

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.,

MINISTER OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALBANY.

WITH THE CHARGE TO THE PASTOR,

BY THE REV. E. E. SEELYE,

AND THE ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE,

BY THE REV. E. HALLEY, D. D.

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TROY, N. Y.:

A. W. SCRIBNER AND CO., PRINTERS, CANNON PLACE.
1854.

Troy, June 22, 1854.

REV. DR. SPRAGUE—

MY DEAR SIR:

At the expressed desire of numbers who heard your Sermon at my installation, last evening, I am happy to request of you a copy of said Sermon for publication. It will be a valuable memento in the history of this Church. Hoping that you will not deny this earnest request,

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

E. SMALLEY.

ALBANY, June 26, 1854.

REV. DR. SMALLEY—

DEAR SIR:

I need not tell you that the Sermon preached at your installation was not written with the remotest view to its being printed. If, however, as your note intimates, it is the wish of yourself and your friends to possess it, as marking an important event in the history of your church, I cheerfully place it at your disposal; and the more so, as it gives me the opportunity thus publicly to welcome you to our neighborhood, and to renew to you the assurance of my high and fraternal regard.

W. B. SPRAGUE.

SERMON.

PSALM XIX : 7.

THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT, CONVERTING THE SOUL.

LET me ask you to transport yourselves in imagination for a moment, to some community in which Paganism, in the very worst form, has never even divided her empire with any other religion. Imagine vice of every kind to be there, unrestrained by any influence from within, or from without, or from above. Imagine fraud and falsehood, revenge in all its fury, sensuality in all its loathsomeness, every thing that can debase, every thing that can pollute, to belong to the established order of things; or rather to form a part of the universal disorder. Behold the child of adversity looking on all sides for consolation; but no comforter rises up to wipe the tear from the eye of sorrow. Behold the dying man, moving tremblingly along through the dark valley without knowing where it terminates; struggling with fearful but undefined anticipations of the future; and finally yielding up his spirit in wild uncertainty, if not in blank despair. There are al-

tars there, in which you may recognize engines of death. There is worship performed there, but it is such as devils ask for. In short, the very rites of religion are acts of revolting and degrading vice ; and there is every thing to make you feel that you are in an antechamber of Hell.

Suppose now that there should appear in the midst of that population, unblest with the first beam from the Sun of Righteousness, a Christian—a true Christian—an eminent Christian ; one whose light was always shining before men, and whose heart was always beating in love to God and his fellow-creatures ; and suppose he should be there on a mission of good will, and should act out the Christian so distinctively and impressively that his character should become a thing of mark ; suppose it should be noticed that his grand aim seemed to be to do good to all around him ; that he was composed and even joyful in the midst of tribulation ; that when he spoke of death, his eye brightened as if entranced by some glorious vision beyond the tomb ;—and suppose, still further, that some one should start the question—whence this singular specimen of human nature—whence this passion for making others happy—whence this meekness under provocation, this fortitude in danger, this serenity in grief, this fearlessness to lie down and die ? Let the Christian hand over his Bible to the Pagan inquirer, and his questions are all answered.

Read this Book, study this Book, and you shall be in possession of the secret of this moral renovation, this spirit of benevolence, this inward tranquillity. The soul is indeed naturally dead in trespasses and sins ; but here is the perfect law of God, *converting* the soul.

What I design in this discourse is to refer Christian character, in some of its leading elements, to the influence of divine truth ; in other words, to show that, however great the difference between the true Christian and the mere man of the world, the application of the word of God to the heart and conscience of the former, fully accounts for it.

Allow me here to say, in order to prevent misapprehension, that I do not undertake to separate the word of God from the Spirit of God, nor to show precisely how the two are combined in the work of moral renovation. But the thought which I wish particularly to illustrate is, that *the truths of the Gospel have a natural adaptation to the production of the spiritual life and to the formation and growth of the Christian graces*. Take any distinctive characteristic of the true Christian you will, and I will show you the *rationale* of it, in some truth or truths which I will bring to you out of the lively oracles.

There is one general remark that applies equally to all the virtues and graces that compose the Christian character ; namely, they are all expressly *en-*

joined in the Bible—in other words, they are required by divine authority. And when the character and government of God are considered, in connection with the fearful peril that must hang upon the foot-steps of disobedience to the authority of such a Being, this, of itself, must form a most commanding motive to obedience. The fact that God requires me to be and to do whatever is implied in the Christian character and the Christian life, ought to press upon me with the weight of a world; ought to constrain me to the most vigorous efforts not only to embrace the religion of Christ, but to make the highest possible attainments in it.

But we will consider this subject under several distinct particulars. I say then

I. In the first place, the grace of *humility* is the legitimate production of the seed of divine truth.

What is the representation that the Bible furnishes of the natural character of man? It is that he is a rebel against his Maker's authority; and as such, is justly exposed to his righteous displeasure; that his heart is fully set in him to do evil,—so that when the highest considerations that infinite benevolence can suggest, are left to act upon him, without being seconded by the higher influence of God's Spirit, he opposes to them a deliberate and persevering resistance. The Bible represents the race as having fallen in their great progenitor; as habitually imitating him in his transgression; and

as justly exposed to the most terrible of all penalties—the death eternal. Say whether this is not a fearful character for a race to possess—a fearful condition for a race to be placed in.

Now there is salvation provided for man; but what kind of salvation is it? What are the teachings of the Bible in respect to the manner in which the curse experienced is removed, and the curse threatened is averted? Does the Bible exalt man into his own deliverer, and leave him to congratulate himself that his own right arm hath gotten him the victory over the powers of darkness? The language of the Bible is—“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” And again—“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” In short, the whole work of man’s redemption, from its beginning in the everlasting councils of peace, to its consummation in the immortal glory of all the ransomed, is a work of grace. Man has not even the merit of accepting the gracious provision that is offered him; for he is *made* willing in the day of God’s power.

And what is man’s character and condition in this life, even after the renovating work of the Spirit has been performed? Does he move about as a pure and spotless being, with no remains of a

corrupt nature ; with nothing to lay the foundation for an inward conflict ; as holy as an angel, and requiring no preparation for joining the society of angels, save the mere putting off of the earthly tabernacle? Let the Apostle, whose attainments in holiness, we may safely say, have never been exceeded, supply the answer to these questions :—
 “I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members ; oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”
 The uniform representation of the Bible is, that the Christian, so long as he continues in the body, notwithstanding he has within him the germ of immortal life and happiness, is still a miserably imperfect being ; that his life is a life of constant warfare, and that his security depends, under God, on his never ceasing vigilance.

Now lay together these different representations which we find scattered through the Bible, and say whether you can imagine any thing better adapted to form and cherish a principle and a habit of humility. Is it indeed so, that I am born in iniquity, and that my very earliest exercises as a moral and accountable being, have betokened my natural alienation from God—have I lived in the viola-

tion of the most sacred obligations—have I turned a deaf ear to God's warning voice, and even treated lightly the awakening motions of his Spirit—then surely it becomes me penitently to acknowledge my unworthiness, and thus to justify God's righteous sentence of condemnation against me. Do I indulge the hope that old things in respect to me have passed away, and all things have become new—but the history of this change, as I read it in the Bible, is identified with the shedding of the Redeemer's blood, and the gift of his Spirit;—it does not allow to me so much as a particle of merit—in being saved, I am only the subject of sovereign and undeserved mercy—shall not then the workings of this salvation in my soul,—shall not every recollection of my Saviour's sufferings, every triumph gained over the tempter, every beam of light from above, every hope of an immortal life, bow my spirit in the deepest humility, by reminding me not only of the contrast between what I know I was and what I hope I am, but of the grace that translated me from the one condition to the other? I look into the Bible, yet again, and there I read of the Christian's weakness and poverty and liability to wander even in his sanctified state; I look into my own heart and find that it is a faithful delineation of my own experience—and is not here also a consideration to keep me humble? If when I would do good evil is present with me—and this is Paul's doctrine

on the subject, to the very letter—can I—dare I—lift up my head before my Maker, as if there was nothing in my life, nothing in my heart, that might not challenge the scrutiny of an omniscient and infinitely Holy God?

II. The teachings of the Bible are adapted no less to produce and cherish *love to God*,—another of the leading elements of the Christian character.

The character of God, as displayed in his word, is supremely excellent and glorious. It is marked by no defect; it embraces every perfection. There are attributes which seem, at first view, to be opposed to each other—as justice and holiness, on the one hand, and goodness and mercy on the other; but upon a closer inspection, we find that they blend with each other like the colours of the bow, each rendering the other more transcendantly glorious. The divine perfections are not merely asserted in the Bible, but illustrated; not merely set forth in abstract statements, but brought out in palpable facts; in other words, in the history of the divine government. And the character of God as thus represented, is at once infinitely awful and infinitely amiable; and the feeling which it is fitted to awaken is a feeling not merely of reverence but of complacency and love.

But you will say that this supposes a previous holy taste; for how can he who is the subject of a prevailing corrupt inclination, have either an eye

to discern, or a heart to relish, the beauties of holiness? I admit indeed that the word itself, independently of the Spirit, could never communicate a holy taste,—could never render the divine character an object of complacence; though the Spirit works by the word, in some sense, even in accomplishing *this* result; but when the new and spiritual taste is once formed, then the principle of love to God is sustained and quickened, especially by the representations which the Bible gives of his character; and though the Spirit still co-operates with the word, yet the soul always feels that it is in its appropriate element while it is meditating on the revealed character of God; and the more it meditates, the more it loves and rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. But it is not merely the perfection of the divine character, but the greatness of the divine benefits, that is fitted to awaken and increase our love to God; and in this latter case, the principle takes the form of gratitude.—True indeed we have no need to go to the Bible to find expressions of the divine goodness; for the whole constitution of nature is fruitful of them; and if you were to shut your eyes upon them in the world without, you would still feel them every moment in the world within. But the Bible opens another field—it shows us that God is not only good but merciful—merciful not only to the bodies but to the souls of men; and it shows us how this

attribute of mercy runs, like a golden line, through the whole work of redemption; how it watched over the manger of Bethlehem; how it presided with justice amidst the scenes of Calvary; how it performed its part at the tomb of Joseph; how it breathes into the soul the breath of a regenerate life; how it embosoms itself in the divine providence for the safe conduct of the believer through his pilgrimage; and how, in the person of the Redeemer and the Judge, it will place upon his head at last a crown of life. Take the best measurement you can of the love of God and the love of Christ, as displayed in redemption; calculate, as well as you can, the worth of this redemption as it reaches down and takes the soul out of the horrible pit, and then identifies itself with an endless career of purity and bliss; and bear in mind that in all this you are only contemplating the plain representations of God's word; and say what can constrain your affections into the liveliest exercise of gratitude, if this does not. Whether, therefore, God is to be loved for what He is or for what He does; whether as the Creator and Ruler of the universe, or as our supreme and immortal benefactor—here, from God's word, goes forth an influence to form such a temper.

III. *Benevolence* is another of the attributes of the Christian character; and to this also the teachings of the Bible are eminently subservient.

For, in the first place, the Bible gives a greatly increased value to human nature, by fully establishing its immortality and illustrating its capabilities of eternal happiness. Reason, it must be admitted, has something to say on this subject; but her teachings are limited, dubious, unsatisfactory; and after she has told you more than she knows, and all that she can conjecture, you feel that even the simplest question in respect to the future, is not fully answered. But the lively oracles not only assure us of our immortality, but they tell us every thing concerning the nature and the measure of the glory within our reach, that is necessary to form the highest motive to strive for it. If man, who is a creature of yesterday, were to exist no longer than till the body dies, and had no prospect of a recovered existence, he would be little worthy of the exercise of an exalted benevolence; and more than that,—there would be no sphere in which it could operate; for all the good to be accomplished in regard to an individual must have respect to this poor, short life—to this dying and corruptible body, whose condition, on the principle referred to, would really be a matter of very little moment. But when I open the Bible, and see life and immortality brought to light; when I recognize in every human form that meets my eye a living principle that will live forever; when I remember that in the most degraded and loathsome specimen of humanity that ever pas-

ses me in the street, there is a piece of God's workmanship that is susceptible of receiving a divine impress, and shining forth in angelic purity, millions of ages after the sun has done shining in his strength and the moon walking in her beauty; and when I remember still further that each of these immortal beings is as susceptible of wo as of bliss, and that the measure of the one must be as terrible as that of the other is glorious; I feel that there could not be a more worthy object of benevolence than man; for in the exercise of benevolence towards him, especially in caring for his higher interests, I am performing a work, the effects of which will pass along the whole line of immortality. Christianity teaches me not merely that he is my brother, but that he is my brother immortal; and not to relieve the wants of such an one, not to consider the interests of such an one, when it is within my ability to do so, would be an offence alike against reason and against God.

There is one circumstance revealed in the Bible which not only greatly exalts human nature, but stamps with peculiar honour all the ministrations of benevolence towards it—I refer to the fact that this nature has been worn, is actually worn now, by the Son of God. Shall we not reverence the nature in which J sus suffered? Shall we not reverence the nature in which Jesus reigns, and in which we shall behold him sitting upon the great white throne?

And shall we not find a new motive for doing good to our fellow creatures in the fact that He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God was made in the likeness of men? Shall not our benevolent impulses be quicker and stronger, when we remember that they are directed towards not only the beings for whom Christ died, but beings whom, through the common humanity, He permits to recognize Him as an elder brother.

And then there is the example of Christ recorded in the Bible—recorded for the very purpose of leaving an impress on the hearts of those who should contemplate it. Trace this adorable personage from his first appearance in Bethlehem, as a babe, to the last words with which He blessed his disciples, as the Heavens were opening to receive Him; pause where you will in his career, and notice what you will in his conduct; and you find Him always, every where, in the diligent performance of his mission of good will to men. He was always about his Father's business; and that business was to save and bless his erring creatures.—And his condescension in these deeds of mercy you are to estimate by the fact that He was in the form of God, when He thus took upon Himself the form of a servant. Who can hold to his thoughts this sublime example of benevolence, and shut up his own bowels of compassion? Who can study the life and the death of Jesus, with a heart open

to impressions, without even asking it as a privilege that he may make some fresh offering to relieve the wants, to supply the needs, to elevate the condition, of those who are legitimate subjects for his charity.

IV. It belongs to the Christian to exhibit *fortitude in danger, patience in adversity, serenity or triumph in death*: if we examine the constitution of the Gospel, we shall find that in it which will fully account for these exalted qualities.

Here is revealed the doctrine of a particular providence—the assurance that, however apparently adverse the course of events may be, all things shall ultimately work together for good to them that love God. Here is revealed God's paternal character—the fact that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them his covenant; and that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. Here death is revealed, not as an enemy to the Christian, but as a friend; as performing an office which the decree of infinite wisdom has made necessary to our entering on an immortal life, and upon which contempt will be poured by the scenes of the great resurrection day. Here too, Heaven is revealed as the quiet resting place of the spirit after all the storms of life are over; as the eternal habitation of both body and spirit, when the grave shall have given up the one to be gloriously re-united to the other.

Now who that walks in the light of these revelations and imbibes their spirit, will not be prepared to triumph over every form of human calamity? What though dangers seem to threaten, and the sound of an approaching tempest betokens the wreck of our best earthly hopes, can we not feel safe in the secret place of the Most High; can we not repose in the promise that his providence will be our covert from the storm; or if the storm should sweep us into eternity, that it will only hasten the day of our complete redemption? If sickness overtakes us and palsies our energies; if poverty comes and tries us by its inconveniences and privations; if bereavement covers us with badges of mourning, and some chamber in our dwelling echoes to the monsters tread, and the affections which used to find their object at home, go and linger about the grave; why should our spirits rise in rebellion—rather why should they not repose in serene submission,—when we remember that it is the hand of a Father that has struck away the prop on which we were leaning, and that the affliction we have experienced, is part of the instrumentality by which God designs to prepare us for Heaven? And finally, if the shadows of the last night of our earthly existence have fallen around us, and we have evidence that we cannot resist that our days are actually numbered, and that our *moments* will quickly be, what matters even this, if like martyr Stephen, we can

look up and see the Heavens opening for our reception; if we can feel assured that the last pulsation on earth is immediately followed by the first pulsation of an immortal life; that earthly objects fade upon our vision only to make way for our being absorbed and entranced by the glories of the Heavenly world? Who that amidst the agonies of death, should hear his Redeemer saying, "Come up hither, welcome to this purchased crown and throne,"—might not afford gratefully to respond—"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly?"

Our subject teaches us in what sense the true Christian has the witness within to the divine authority of the Gospel. It is no miraculous testimony that is here implied: the Christian simply notices the effect that has been produced upon him, and refers the effect to its legitimate cause: he finds that the graces that are produced in his soul are the very counterpart of the truths of God's word; and hence the truth of the Bible becomes to him a matter of personal experience. And there is little doubt that this kind of evidence is more relied on by the mass of Christians than any other. An ingenious skeptic might easily perplex, by his cavils, an unlettered peasant; and if we were to judge by the triumph of the one and the confusion of the other, we might suppose that Christianity stood at best upon a very weak foundation; but believe me, the infidel has made no

approach towards reasoning the Christian out of his convictions, when he has sealed his lips; for the Christian has something else to fall back upon; and that is his own inward experience: he knows that the Bible is not a forgery, because its teachings correspond to what he finds within him; and because he is conscious that it has accomplished a work upon his own heart, which nothing could have accomplished in which there was not a divine power. The skeptic may glory in his triumph; but it is a poor triumph at best; for it has left the humble Christian, whose faith he has assailed, as clear, and as firm, and as happy, in his religious convictions as ever.

Again: Our subject shows us what is the true test of Christian character. If we are begotten again to the lively hope through the word, then our characters, as regenerate persons, must bear, in some good degree, the impress of the word; our experience must be that which the word not only describes, but is fitted to produce. The Christian is at best an imperfect being, conscious of a vast amount of remaining sin; but then this does not vitiate his claim to the *character* of a Christian; for this is precisely in accordance with the Scripture representation. The Christian nevertheless has within him the elements of a perfect character—the embryo of all the Christian graces; and this is not only just as the Bible represents, but it is the

legitimate result of a belief in the Bible. Are you relying then with great confidence on some particular feature of your character as evidence of your heavenly birth; or are you greatly distrusting your claims to Christian character on the ground of some dark and dubious sign in your experience—in either case, it is your true wisdom to refer the quality which you are contemplating to the standard of God's word. However much you may have gloried in it, possibly you may find that it could not be the product of the seed of divine truth; however much you may have doubted in consequence of it, possibly it may turn out that the Bible recognizes it as something that is incident to human infirmity, and that has marked the characters of the best of men. I say again, if you will judge your character intelligently, you must inquire whether you are bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit; in other words, whether your temper and conduct are such as a belief in God's word is fitted to produce.

Again: Our subject teaches us that faith is, to the spiritual system, what the process of assimilation and digestion is to the bodily system. God has revealed in his word that truth by which men are to be sanctified and fitted for Heaven; and herein He has lodged the energies of His own Omnipotence. But then the truth does not work upon man as a machine; it does not arrest him and mould him into a vessel of mercy, independently of his

own volitions and efforts; but it moves his own moral powers; it diffuses itself as a purifying leaven through his whole moral constitution; it works within him as a divine power both to will and to do; and it accomplishes all this through the influence of faith. You believe God's truth, and it fills you with terror in respect to the future. You believe God's truth, and it brings you to the foot of the cross. You believe God's truth, and in the act of thus believing, you welcome Jesus as your Saviour. You believe God's truth, and you are humble and grateful and benevolent and ready to bear the cross. It is in the exercise of faith that you become a true Christian; and it is in the continued exercise of faith that your Christian character matures and brightens, and that you finally reach the fullness of the stature of a perfect person in Christ.

Finally: Does not the subject we have been contemplating, give great significance and impressiveness to the occasion which hath convened us?

As it is the office of the perfect law of God, or the truth revealed in God's word, to convert the soul, so it belongs to the Christian ministry to present the truth in such a manner as is best adapted to bring it home to the mind, both as light and as power. You, my friends, members of this Christian society, have reason, especially on this occasion, to thank God, for the establishment and preservation of this institution in the midst of you. Notwith-

standing the disappointment which you have recently experienced in the removal to another sphere of labour, of a deservedly esteemed and beloved pastor, you have not, like many congregations, been subjected to protracted vacancy, and the evils often consequent upon it—on the contrary, the Presbytery had scarcely performed the office of dissolving the pastoral relation here, before it was summoned to the more grateful office of reconstituting it,—and that under the most auspicious circumstances ; for the man whom you have chosen brings with him a character that may well justify the expectation, if life and health are spared, of a career of vigorous and honourable devotion to your highest interests. But forget not, amidst all the passing congratulations, that the mission on which he comes to you is one of awful moment—it is nothing less than to open to your understandings, and urge upon your consciences, and endeavour to lodge in your hearts, that perfect law of the Lord that converts the soul. No matter what else his ministry may accomplish, any thing short of this, must render it to you a *barren* ministry. But need I say that such a result is not to be anticipated independently of your own hearty and earnest co-operation ; for he cannot perform the double office of preaching *to* you, and hearing and believing *for* you. See to it then that ye do not discourage, enfeeble, neutralize his labours, by an indolent and

careless attendance upon them. See to it that ye do not render the sword of the Spirit powerless in his hands—that ye do not cause the message he delivers, to return upon you as a ministration of condemnation another day. See to it, Christians, that *ye* are found ready to help him in his high vocation; that thus the bright hopes which connect themselves with this occasion may be fully realized, and you and He may rejoice together at last in a glorious harvest gathered from this privileged field of Christian and ministerial labour.

May I not be allowed to congratulate *you* also, my dear brother, by whose courtesy, in connection with that of this venerable Presbytery, it is my privilege to bear a part in these introductory services. I confess that my feelings in meeting you on this occasion are somewhat modified by the fact that, like yourself, I was baptized, and to a great extent trained, and for many years exercised the pastoral office, in the Congregational church; and not till my right hand forgets her cunning, shall I cease to hold in grateful remembrance the scenes in which I mingled, the brethren with whom I was associated, in those early days. But I have found, and I am sure that you also will find, that the change, in passing from the body with which you *have been*, to that with which you *are now*, connected, has respect more to form than substance; and I cannot doubt, judging from my own expe-

rience, that you will have no occasion to regret, either in respect to comfort or usefulness, your change of ecclesiastical relations. I congratulate you that you come to a neighbourhood in which the churches and the ministers are at peace; that you come to a congregation in such good repute for intelligence, stability and zeal. I congratulate you on the unanimity and cordiality with which you have been called and welcomed to this important field. I congratulate you that you are immediately associated with beloved and honoured brethren, who will account it a privilege to be fellow-helpers with you unto the kingdom of God. I congratulate you on all that is auspicious in this hour. May your whole ministry among this people be an ever accumulating proof that the law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul.

CHARGE TO THE PASTOR.

BY THE REV. E. E. SEELYE.

RESPECTED AND BELOVED BROTHER :

You are now occupying the responsible position of a Pastor over this Congregation. A new field of labour is now before you, and it is with hope and confidence the Presbytery bids you enter upon it. The occasion is one which suggests the propriety of a few words addressed directly to yourself, with reference to the deeply interesting circumstances which surround you; although I cannot hope to advance any thing which your own prayerful reflection has not already anticipated.

We have no formal instructions to make out for you. When any human government sends out its ambassador to a foreign court, it furnishes him with full dispatches which clearly indicate to him what questions of diplomacy he is to treat about, what terms he is to propose, and what are the fundamental principles which are to govern him in all his negotiations. But a similar duty does not devolve upon us, when we install you over this people. For

your instructions are already made out. The whole subject matter of your ministry is furnished to your hand in the word of God. As a Church Court we claim no right to add or take away aught from the truths revealed. We have no new doctrines to propose—no rites and ceremonies to institute. All we can say to you on that point is: follow your instructions,—study well your dispatches,—keep close to your commission, and prove faithful, as God's ambassador to this people.

It is not necessary that I should attempt at this time to draw a picture of pastoral life, or to paint on the perspective of the future, the diversified experiences through which you must expect to pass. For you have already tried the ministry. You cannot but know something—yea, much of the routine of labour and of duty,—of the pleasures and the difficulties, the promises and discouragements, the hopes and the solitudes of one who is appointed to watch for souls. I know of nothing strange or peculiar in the state of this Congregation, of which you are now the Pastor. You will find a people, I believe, not essentially unlike other congregations which you have already known.—You will, in this church, doubtless meet with the same variety of experiences which you have elsewhere found already,—professing Christians in all the different stages of Christian life; some adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour, and others

encompassed with manifold temptations; some full grown men and others babes in Christ; some progressing but slowly in faith and knowledge, and some, alas, who you may fear have a name to live but are dead. We know it is thus elsewhere, and it will be strange if you find it not so here. There will be much to cheer you, and some things to discourage you. As your acquaintance with your people becomes matured, and their characters shall be developed by succeeding circumstances, your own wisdom and past experience will teach you how to carry yourself among them, and to adapt your ministrations to all the peculiar emergencies which transpire; and with that same fidelity to your Master, which will prompt you sometimes to lead them as a son of consolation, you will at other times become to them a son of thunder. Thus there will doubtless be to you the alternate lights and shadows of ministerial life;—hours of gloom and hours of gladness;—seasons of discouragement, and seasons of refreshing. For all these, I trust you are prepared.

I deem it unnecessary for me to detain you at this time with a detailed account of your specific duties. The call which this congregation has given you, and your installation over them by the Presbytery, are a sufficient expression of their confidence in your piety and wisdom to apprehend what those duties are, and to perform them as God shall

give you strength. A few observations of a more general nature will be all that I shall offer.

Need I remind you, my Brother, of the importance of assiduously cultivating your own personal piety, as a means toward the successful prosecution of your work?—I can conceive of no more thankless and soul-crushing task, than that of a godless minister endeavouring to play the part of a Christian teacher to win the approbation of the world. I can conceive of a truly Christian man ministering in holy things with comfort to himself, only when his heart is fully in his work, and when the graces of the Spirit are in lively exercise in his own soul. Intellectual discipline and study are indeed necessary. But the discipline of the heart is also indispensable,—that discipline which is secured only by constant self-examination and prayer.

It is indispensable to your own peace and comfort in your work. If you would not go to your pulpit like a galley slave, if you would not be again and again sick of the ministry, and hackneyed and disgusted with cares, if you would not go through your routine of labours mechanically, and heartlessly, and drudgingly, then must you watch your own heart; then must you live in fellowship with Christ, and with a felt apprehension of the things of Christ.

Would you labour successfully, you must preach from the depth of your own experience, and speak that you do know, and testify that which you have

seen. This it is, that will give an air of sincerity to all your teachings, and enable you to commend yourself to the consciences of your hearers. Let your whole heart, then, be consecrated to your sacred work. Let your whole faith grasp with a firm hold the great, living doctrines of the cross; and preach them to your people, like one who knows their preciousness and power.

Again. Let me suggest to you the importance of cherishing a warm affection for this people.—You ought to love them, if you expect to benefit them. Only let them see, in all your ministrations in their behalf, that you earnestly seek their good,—that you are willing to exhaust your strength for them, and give your time for them,—let them feel that when they are sitting under your ministry, they are not listening to the voice of a hireling who careth not for the sheep, but to one who loves their souls, and you may then find a door of entrance to their hearts. You may then deal plainly with them. You may make them sorry for a time, as Paul did his Corinthian brethren, but instead of turning upon you with malice and fierce recrimination, they will sorrow after a godly sort, and eventually thank you for your kind, but faithful reproof.

The love which you bear them will also prompt you to acquaint yourself, as far as possible, with the different circumstances and experiences of the different members of your congregation. You need

not be a stranger in their houses. You need not keep at a studied and majestic distance from them in order to magnify your office. You will not do it, if you love them as you ought. Yours will be the pleasing task to move among the families of your charge, not with the air of a cold hearted censor, but as a familiar and sympathizing friend. You are the one to whom they can unburden their cares without restraint, and look for counsel and encouragement. Your place is by the humble fire-side of the poorest Christian, as well as by the sumptuous board of some rich parishioner. They will look for you by the bedside of sickness and in the chamber of death. They will ask the tribute of a tear around the coffin of departed kindness, and the warm pressure of your friendly hand, when the hand they once loved to press is stiff and cold. And can you give them all this, unless you love them? Can you rejoice with them who rejoice, and weep with them who weep, unless you feel a oneness with your people, a strong attachment toward them, and a tender interest in their welfare? Surely not.

Again. Let me exhort you not to rest satisfied without seeing the results of your labours in the ingathering of souls. You certainly are warranted in looking for fruit in its season. You certainly may preach in faith; in a clear expectation that your preaching will take effect, that God will bless it and souls be saved by it.

It should be a sore disappointment to you to see your congregation going home Sabbath after Sabbath just as they came, and no sinner awakened, and no anxious one lingering behind to ask you what he must do to be saved. Is it said that experience shows this to be the general fact? True, but would not a different experience follow from labours prosecuted with a different expectation? Would not more be done, if we had faith to look for it? Is it sheer presumption for the man of God, as he walks up and down the valley of vision, to have his ears open and his eye intent to catch the sound and to see the bones stirring and the dead quickening? Rest assured that the measure of your success, will bear some proportion to the measure of your faith. Go to your work then, believing that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Cast your eye around for signs of promise. Pray for your people, and preach to them as though you were impatient for their salvation. Let them discover that in all your labours, you are expecting something—like Elijah on the top of Carmel, bidding his servant to stand on the mountain brow and gaze seaward for the little cloud, while he prayed long and earnestly for rain. Should disappointment attend your efforts, let it quicken you to humility and self-examination. Only rest not contented till you can point to the fruits of your travail, in those whom you have begotten in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Finally: Let me charge you to keep in view your final reckoning and reward. You watch for souls as one who must give account. You will labour best by keeping the Judgment habitually before your mind. It will be well for you to feel that there is a keen eye upon you all the while, and a reckoning day awaiting you, to look upon your ministry from some stand-point in the future when it shall be finished.

The reward of your ministerial fidelity should be enough to prompt you to diligence and sustain you in discouragements. Think of the glad approval of the faithful minister meeting him as he closes up his earthly labours, and points to the seals of his ministry, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." Keep your eye upon the crown; it will cheer you in despondency; it will revive your hope. Heaven is not so far off, as it often appears to be. A long work day seems now opening before you here, but in a little while you will rest from your labours. Be thou faithful unto death. Accustom yourself to an habitual look-out towards eternal things, a familiarity in thought and meditation with things to come. Then may you endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Then may you take heed unto yourself and unto your doctrine, and in doing this you shall both save yourself and them that hear you.—"And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. E. HALLEY, D. D.

MY DEAR HEARERS :

May I not congratulate you on the interesting purpose that has convened you this evening. You were recently deprived of the services of a beloved and talented Pastor by his acceptance of a collegiate chair in a literary institution of our country.* It not infrequently happens in such circumstances that a considerable time elapses ere the Church obtains another, and in the meantime its former harmony is rent by dissensions and its character for efficiency and general excellence greatly impaired by unholy passions that have been engendered. By the interposition of a kind providence you have been preserved from both of those evils. Your period of vacancy has been of brief duration, and through it, your measures have been characterized by entire harmony, and concert, and resulted in the cordial and unanimous choice of the Pastor who has been this evening installed among

* The Rev. T. P. Field, Professor of Rhetoric in Amherst College, Mass.

you. The solemn and arduous duties connected with the faithful discharge of the pastoral office have been satisfactorily exhibited by the preceding speaker. But there are important duties also devolving on you. Transfer not, I entreat you, the exclusive responsibility arising from the relation formed this evening, to your Pastor. With whatever skill he may exhibit the doctrines of the Gospel, and with whatever earnestness and eloquence he may address himself to your hearts, the benefit of his labours will be entirely neutralized among you, if you do not faithfully execute your duties as "hearers of the word." Believing that you desire his ministry to be eminently blessed among you, permit me to subjoin a few plain and practical suggestions, by the careful observance of which your Church will be eminently "a prosperous vine which shall give forth her fruit."

I. This Church will flourish under the ministrations of your Pastor if its members evince an ardent attachment to the ordinances of religion. These are institutions of divine appointment, designed to increase our knowledge, our piety and usefulness on earth, and to qualify us through the discipline and activities of the Christian graces here, for the glories of an imperishable inheritance. God has also promised to honor the assembly of his saints with his blessing, and the experience of the Church in every age has borne testimony to the efficacy of

these ordinances in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. "Love then the gates of Zion, more than the dwellings of Jacob." Be joyful "when it is said to you let us go unto the house of the Lord, let our feet tread his sacred courts." Prepare for the sacred services of the sanctuary by prayer and private communion with God. Thus shall you be fitted for engaging with a devotional frame when you meet to engage in its public duties. A person who attends a political meeting soon breathes the atmosphere of the place, catches the enthusiasm of his party, and is borne along in the resistless tide of eloquence which advocates some important measure. It is otherwise in a religious assembly. Its discoveries are not so palpable to the mind. Its truths are not so welcome to the heart. Its interest do not so naturally associate themselves with our trains of thoughts, nor so promptly lead to vigorous action. Hence the propriety of invoking Jehovah "to send forth his light and truth to us, before we go to the altar of God."

Allow no trivial apology, no unwarrantable plea originating in indolence or disinclination to interfere with your attendance. How many frame excuses, for "forsaking the assembling of themselves together" in the house of God. They are weary and they need repose, or they are feeble, and cannot bear the excitement of the services, or they are

sick and must remain quiet in their apartment, or there is a storm gathering which will sow the seeds of disease in their frame. Never advance an apology here, which you will be ashamed to present in the "presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Every head of a family also will exercise his parental authority, in bringing his children along with him, exclaiming like Joshua, "Whatever others do, as for me and my house I will serve the Lord." Few spectacles are more fitted to induce an angel to pause in his embassies through space, as a family in full muster in their seat on Sabbath, and the Christian parent, as he looks along the row of immortals soon to be introduced into the cares and temptations of the world, consigning them to the guardianship of Jehovah and exclaiming, Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me.

Nor in a church of this character will the Sabbath ever be mutilated in its services. Its worshippers will not rest satisfied with only one visit "to draw water from the wells of salvation," its morning service will not be attended with a dense mass of worshippers, and the following, be honored only by a select group scattered along our pews, "few and far between," but the holy Sabbath through all its ceremonial, will be regarded "the delight of the Lord and honorable."

The deportment of the worshippers will also evince the importance they attach to the services of the Sanctuary. There will be no drowsy and vacant countenances, no indications of levity or irreverence, but they will conduct themselves as those "assembled to hear the things commanded them of God." They will not desire to be amused with rhetorical figures, or harmonious periods, disquisitions on the arts and sciences or expositions of the political questions of the day. No, they will come "hungering and thirsting after righteousness that they may be filled." The Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, will be the theme to which they delight to listen. And they will regard it as a religion whose lessons are to be reduced to practice in their intercourse in the world. In the beautiful and comprehensive language of our shorter catechism, "they will attend on these ordinances with diligence, preparation and prayer, receive them with faith and love, lay them up in their hearts and practise them in their lives."

II. Your church will flourish under the ministrations of your Pastor if it is pervaded by a spirit of prayer. Perhaps the world never produced a race of saints equal to those of the apostolic age. Now from incidental intimations given of their habits and practices in the acts of the Apostles, it would seem that they attached far more importance than we do to the exercise of prayer, and de-

voted to it a much larger space of time. It would seem that almost all their religious enterprises were preceded or accompanied with prayer, and that they spent a considerable portion of every day in the exercises of private or social devotion. The prominence that they gave to this exercise is amply justified by the importance that the sacred writers assign to it in the epistles which they addressed to the Churches, "Pray without ceasing," "praying always," "continue instant in prayer," "be sober and watch unto prayer"—these are a specimen of their injunctions upon this subject with which their writings are so abundantly interspersed. How important is this duty to a church when taken into connection with the success of the Gospel. The blessing of God is indispensably necessary to give success to the means of Grace. The Pastor may be a man of talent, of piety, and zeal,—he may exhibit the Gospel in all the cogency of argument and all the pathos of persuasion,—he may conduct his hearers to the lightning wreathed brow of Sinai, or the ascending chariot on Mount Olivet,—he may preach and weep and exhort and entreat, but without the blessing of God, his ministrations will be only as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." How incumbent then on the members of a Church to supplicate that those celestial influences may descend by which the careless may be awakened, the impenitent converted, and the glory of God pro-

moted. By this instrumentality abundantly employed in the midst of you, you may expect "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Prayer is also an indispensable evidence of the Christian character, and if there be a member of a church who lives in the neglect of this duty he is a gilded potsherd, he is a whitened sepulchre, a tare among the wheat, a goat among the sheep, an Achan in the camp of the godly, a treacherous Judas in the family of Christ. Every Christian will maintain this intimate communion with God. He has wants that nothing but prayer can supply, perplexities that nothing but prayer can dissipate, aspirations that nothing but prayer can gratify. He will "pray to his father who seeth in secret, and his father who seeth in secret will reward him openly."

But a church where religion is prosperous will also abound in *family prayer*. There are some duties of religion resulting so plainly from the relations we bear to each other and to God that they scarcely need to be made the subject of positive precept, and are therefore left to the deductions of intelligence and the dictates of conscience. Of this nature is the one of which we are now speaking. We find our warrant for it not so much in explicit injunction as in its obvious connection with the glory of God, and our own welfare, in the rich promises of God's mercy to those by whom it is

observed, and in Scripture examples of Abraham, Job and others recorded with the testimony of the divine approbation. How salutary the influence of this service on the young of a household—cradled thus amid the influences of piety, accustomed to these periodical seasons of devotion, which no ordinary arrangement ever disturbs, listening to the fervency of prayers offered up in their behalf morning and evening, we cannot but expect that under such training, they “will remember their Creator in the days of their youth.” Such impressions are treasured up in the cells of the memory and become illuminated in the sunshine of future years. John Newton, Colonel Gardiner, and many others, who plunged into the excesses of vice, found that these recollections embittered the cup of intemperance and gave them no rest till they bowed to the authority of the Gospel.

In such a church, also, as I am now describing, meetings for *social* prayer will be instituted and numerously attended. In these, mutual love will be promoted, and the piety of its members advanced. Amid the engrossing scenes of business the Christian will hail these as resting places in the feverish game of commerce, desirable pauses in the journey of life. He will love to lay aside his ledger for his Bible, and to exchange for an hour the society of the worldly and the wicked for that of the righteous, and to look beyond the narrow and cloudy

horizon of time at those things that are unseen and eternal. And when we look at the world in its widespread fields of superstition and depravity—when we remember that sin is reigning and Satan triumphing, and iniquity abounding on every side, that Idolatry grasps its hundred millions in its iron servitude, and the Gospel is gaining few triumphs at home, shall not a Christian church be seen rallying around the mercy seat at these solemn convocations, bringing down divine influences by prayer to bless a preached Gospel in the midst of us, and to prosper the cause of the cross which has been unfurled in Heathen lands.

III. Your church will flourish under the ministrations of your Pastor if it is distinguished by its *purity*.

The Church and the world are invariably represented as societies distinct and widely dissimilar; “Ye are not of the world,” said the Saviour to his disciples, “even as I am not of the world.” “Ye are a chosen generation,” says an Apostle, “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, called out of darkness into light to show forth the loving kindness of our God.” A church absolutely pure, consisting only of genuine saints, is perhaps scarcely to be found on earth. The College of the Apostles, though it consisted of only twelve persons, contained one person who was a traitor and a devil. But though absolute purity is not to be expected, com-

parative purity is not unattainable, and every one "who has named the name of Christ will study to depart from all iniquity." The Christian character will be exemplified in their lives, as combining "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are of good report." Aim then at elevated attainments in holiness. Let all men "take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus." O, when a church is walking "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," its members will not resemble those non-descript specimens of the Christian character so unhappily prevalent in the midst of us, those shadowy abstractions where little more is seen of religion but the name. Such hollow hearted professors do incalculable mischief to the cause of religion. They cause "the name of Jesus to be evil spoken of," and strengthen the prejudices of the impenitent who regard religion as nothing but grimace and hypocrisy. What shall we think of professors of our holy religion, who sanction with their presence the temples of fashion, and the abodes of theatrical amusements, where the pious and the worldly, the gay and the grave can mingle in the same dance, or witness the same scenes where religion by universal sufferance is abjured, and a dangerous and seductive brilliancy is thrown over vice. Where then is the ignominy of the Cross? Where the

reproach of the world? Where the "testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God they have their conversation in the world?" Strive to maintain the consistency of your character, by the rectitude of your pecuniary transactions, the purity of your conversation, your forbearance under injury, meekness under provocation, and a general deportment "void of offense towards God and man." Live as something divine amid what is human, as heavenly citizens on earth, as candidates for a heavenly crown.

IV. Your Church will flourish under the ministrations of your Pastor, if it is pervaded by a spirit of love. How strikingly was this feature exhibited in the character of the primitive Church. Even their enemies were constrained to exclaim, Behold, how they love one another; as an evidence of this in the church of Jerusalem, "they that believed had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need." In their reciprocal affection for each other, as disciples of the same Master, and heirs of the same blessed inheritance, they found a sufficient compensation for all the sufferings to which they were subjected. Study my Christian friends to be "like-minded," "walk in love as Christ has loved you." Especially, let this be directed to those who are of the household of faith.

However humble may be their condition, however scanty their possession, esteem them as children of the most high. Let jealousies among families be unknown. Let the tale of calumny never circulate to injure the reputation of any brother, and be ready to put the most favorable construction on reports, affecting the character of another, until he is proved to be guilty. Believe me, few things prove more deleterious to the prosperity of a church, than when it is agitated by dissensions, and rent by factions. The dove-like spirit can never be expected to dwell in such an assembly, nor the holy graces he implants to flourish in such an incongenial soil. On the contrary, what a happy state does a church present when the obligations of the ever new commandment of Christ is felt. It is a little enclosure, fenced off from the warring and troubled world. The tumult and the peace are heard without, but all within is peace and confidence. "O, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The precious ointment that was poured upon the head of the high priest, diffusing its fragrance over all his robes, the dew of Hermon that descended on the mountains of Zion, hanging its countless gems of orient pearl and gold, in the morning ray on blade and bush and tree, when glittering in the beams of the sun, present not so grateful an image, produce not so pure and refreshing and delightful an impression, as the scene which a Church exhibits, when "the

multitude of them that believe, are of one heart and one soul.”

V. Your Church will flourish under the ministrations of your pastor, if it be pervaded by a missionary spirit. Every Church exists not for her own sake alone. The privileges and immunities entrusted to her, are also given for the sake of a world lying in wickedness. The province of the Church of Christ is not conservative merely, but aggressive. How mournful that she has so little walked worthy of her high vocation. Too often has she exhibited the spectacle of her friends drawing their swords against each other, in the way of conflicting opinions, instead of turning them against the common foe, and marching in one closely united phalanx, to pull down the strongholds of satan. It is high time to suspend these petty feuds, when error and heresy and infidelity are coming in to reap that harvest which should have been done by the Church. The present is a peculiar season of energy and activity, as to evangelical propogandism. Departments of christian benevolence are multiplying in every direction. Agencies, embracing almost every plan whereby ignorance can be instructed and vice eradicated and suffering alleviated, are spreading themselves on every hand. Sustain, then, as you have hitherto done,—aye, and if possible, with increased liberality—all the religious efforts of the age: the Bible Society and the Foreign Mission-

ary Society and the Tract Society and the Home Missionary Society, the Sunday School Union and the Bethel Flag, the Society for the conversion of the Jews, the Education Society, for training up youths to the holy ministry, and the Extension scheme, for aiding in the erection of Churches, in the destitute districts of our country. These are indispensable parts in that glorious system of machinery, which the Church is now employing for the regeneration of a lost world, and no doubt they will yet multiply into more ramifications, as fields of usefulness open up, or greater subdivision of christian effort may be deemed necessary. In all these efforts, my dear friends, study to be a Church of the times. Remember the high position you occupy, as the professed followers of Christ. The Church of Christ! What important resources are lodged in her. Her Scriptures and her ministry, her Sabbaths and her ordinances, her prayers and her self-denying efforts, are the hope of benighted and lost men. Strive ye, as a section of this, to multiply your efforts, that God's name may soon be known in all the earth, and his saving health among all people.

And now, my dear friends, I commend your Pastor and you to God and the word of his grace; may the relation now formed between him and you, be eminently a happy and profitable one, and may he through eternity, have many of you who shall be his crowns of joy and rejoicing.