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S E R M O N,

A T T H E

O R D I N A T I O N

O F

Mr. FRENCH.

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S E R M O N,

Preached *September 23, 1772,*

A T T H E

O R D I N A T I O N

O F T H E

Reverend JONATHAN FRENCH,

To the Pastoral Charge of the Second Church of  
CHRIST in *Andover.*

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By EZRA WELD, A. M.  
Pastor of the Second Church in *Braintree.*

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ORDINATION SERMON.  
*Thomas Abbot.*

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E Z E K. III. 4.

*And he said unto me, son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.*

**S**INCE the human apostacy, the blessed GOD, in a gradual and very marvellous manner has been opening up the grand designs of his grace to self-ruined and miserable men. Early intimations of his mercy were given in that supporting promise of the seed of the woman, who, in some future time, should *bruise the serpent's head.* \*

THE first dawnings of divine revelation, like the early glimmerings of the approaching day, were very obscure and intricate: The great futurities respecting the Redeemer of men and his mediatorial kingdom, which lay immersed in the unfathomable deep of the divine mind, began in the first ages of the world to be pointed out by significant adumbrations, types, sacrifices, and ritual observances; and the light, from period to period, shone brighter and brighter to the perfect day of the gospel revelation.

THE ancient people of GOD were taught and admonished of their duty, and led into the knowledge of many of the divine purposes concerning the state, increasing greatness, and final glory of the church, by the Prophets

\* Gen. iii. 15.

phets, who for this end were furnished with the immediate guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. *The prophecy came not of old time by the will of man, but holy men of GOD spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.\**

THE necessity of divine inspiration in the first ages of the world, before mankind were favoured with a written revelation, is obvious.

THE Prophets who were then the Ministers of CHRIST had it in charge to declare to the people the messages, and only such as were given them of GOD. *Speak with my words unto them. They were to diminish not a word. †*

THE Ministers of CHRIST under the former and present dispensations, although they greatly differ in the circumstantial, yet they perfectly agree and harmonize in the essentials of their office. Their business then was to speak invariably as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; it is now to declare the whole counsel of GOD, To them he has committed the word of reconciliation, † to be diligently and faithfully explained and urged upon his people.

THE words, therefore, which I have chosen as a foundation for the succeeding discourse may with propriety be considered as applicable to the Ministers of CHRIST in all ages of the world. *And he said unto me, son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.*

THE import of the text being obvious, without considering its immediate connexion with the context, we may proceed to consider the following doctrine contained in the words, *viz.*

*THE true Ministers of CHRIST have a divine call, or mission from GOD to preach the gospel. Or they only have*  
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\* 2 Pet. i. 21. † Jer. xxvi. 7. † 2 Cor. v. 19.

*a right to preach the gospel who are called of GOD to that sacred work.*

To explain and establish the truths contained in the doctrine, we shall shew,

I. WHAT is implied in speaking with GOD's words, or in preaching the gospel. Then,

II. PROVE that they only have a right to preach the gospel who are called of GOD to that sacred work ; or that all the true Ministers of JESUS CHRIST have a divine call, or mission from GOD to preach the gospel.

HERE let it be premised, that to descend into a particular consideration of all that variety of things necessarily implied in preaching the word would far exceed the limits of a Sermon. Therefore, we can attend only to some more general view of the work.

I. IN preaching the word, all additions are carefully to be avoided.

THE truths that Ministers are to teach and inculcate are all prescribed and faithfully recorded in the holy Bible ; all are made ready to their hand. Not that they are confined to the words that are found written in the Scriptures, without liberty to comment upon, or explain the sacred text. The divine word is committed to them to explain to their Brethren, to whom by a divine call and ordinance they are separated to *minister in holy things*.

THE Scriptures consist very much in general propositions, many of which are pregnant with obvious sense, while others are more intricate and hard to be apprehended. Hence explanations are necessary ; and preaching the gospel chiefly consists in explaining and urging the truths contained in such propositions, shewing their connexion with and dependence upon one another,

another, and their agreement with the reason and nature of things.

THE limitation observed in the text, *Speak with MY WORDS unto them*, refers to the doctrines contained in the Scriptures, not to the words by which those doctrines are expressed. The truths, and only such as are contained in the word of GOD are to be spoken or taught by the Ministers of CHRIST. They have authority to teach nothing as divine truth, or as what demands the religious assent or reception of men, but what is contained in the oracles of GOD. Neither oral tradition, nor the decrees of the church are to be esteemed of any authority as articles of faith. This is evident by that reflection made by JESUS CHRIST upon the Scribes and Pharisees. *But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* \*

THE revelation of GOD is perfect ; it needs no addition ; was it otherwise, the inventions of men would not make good the deficiency.

THE Scriptures are not, like other writings, subject to "new editions, with corrections and amendments ;" nor are religious rites and ceremonies, for the greater embellishment and solemnity of divine worship, to be added ; nor yet terms of communion, not prescribed in the oracles of GOD, to be imposed. All innovations in worship are to be religiously avoided, as a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of GOD, and as an impious encroachment upon his high prerogative. With equal caution, in point of doctrine, are men to speak as the oracles of GOD. The apostle to the Galatians, with strong and solemn emphasis, has denounced *damnation against such as corrupt the word.* *But although we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.* *As I said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* † By the thunder of this apostolic anathema ;

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\* Matt. xv. 9. † Gal. i. 8, 9.

to what caution, to what solemn vigilance ought they to be moved *in labour in word and doctrine*; that they preach the word without mixture, in its simplicity and purity! Considering the present corruption and frailty of the human mind, how it is influenced by education, and naturally attached to first received principles, whether right or wrong; considering also the many fatal consequences of the prevailing influence of these early prejudices and prepossessions, it very greatly concerns all men, especially Teachers, cautiously to guard against them, lest by their own inventions they corrupt the word, and thus become subject to the above threatened penalty.

2. IN preaching the word nothing is to be withheld or kept back; the whole truth is to be declared without reservation.

By the commission derived from CHRIST to his Ministers, they are obliged to teach his people *all things what soever he has commanded them.* \* St. Paul, in his valedictory Sermon to the Presbyters of Ephesus, calls them to witness that he had faithfully discharged his commission among them, by declaring to them the all counsel of God. *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* † What truths are suitable to be taught, infinite wisdom and goodness has not left to the decision of men. As no community or body of men have power authoritatively to decide upon articles of faith, so none may presume to point out what part of revealed truth, exclusive of another, is suitable to be treated of, and urged upon men.

IT is true there are doctrines revealed, or articles of faith contained in the gospel that have their difficulties, but not because of any thing in them in the least exceptionable, or contrary to the common sense or reason

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of

\* Matt. xxviii. 20. † Acts xx. 26, 27.

of mankind and the nature of things. It ought also to be considered that an objection to their being publicly taught is equally strong against their having been revealed, or inserted in the Bible at all; for if to teach and improve such articles of faith is of dangerous tendency, or unprofitable, the revelation of them must have been equally so, unless they had been pointed out and guarded by some distinguishing intimation from God. For men, therefore, to object to any revealed truth whatever as unsuitable or unprofitable to teach, must be esteemed a presumptuous censure of the divine conduct, especially since it is so particularly declared; *All scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, &c.\** In preaching the word, therefore, we are *not to shun to declare all the counsel of GOD.*

As to any systematical order in preaching the word, the Scriptures are silent; but "necessity should be a great disposer of a Minister's study and labours." †

THE most important and necessary truths are to be chiefly insisted upon, and where the eternal interest of the souls committed to his charge is an object realized in its infinite importance, a Minister will be naturally led to make the apparent spiritual necessity of the people his guide in the choice of suitable subjects; and this rule will infallibly lead him to insist chiefly upon points of the greatest moment and consequence.

BUT here let us descend into a more particular consideration of some things that are implied in preaching the word.

1. *THE style and manner.* The manner of treating divine subjects, and of address observed in the sacred writings, are no doubt best suited to answer the great ends of preaching the gospel; to instruct the ignorant, to alarm the secure, and to confirm and comfort the godly.

To

\* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † Baxter's Ref. Past.



To pursue the Scriptures as a rule in this respect is to study perspicuity, always endeavouring a conformity of expression to the nature and spirit of the subject.

THE style of Scripture is plain and nervous, and contains much of the pathetic and true sublime; the periods are easy and natural; the reasoning clear and most intelligible. To pursue, therefore, the manner of address, elocution, and reasoning observed in the sacred writings is the direct way to the greatest attainments in the art of true reasoning and persuasion.

THERE is a method of composition and address, although pleasing and enticing to an auditory, that ought not to be improved in preaching the word. St. Paul reminds the *Corinthians*, *That he came not unto them with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of GOD. My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of GOD.\**

AGAINST such as would ascribe the success of his ministry to an artful and enticing address, St. Paul had to say, in vindication of himself, that he did it not by a studied delicacy of style, nor by the powerful charms of *rhetoric*, nor by the intricate subtleties of *logic*. The truths he had to publish and preach to the world needed no artful colourings of this nature to recommend them; but he was studious to avoid what would be termed by the world, the delicacies of composition and style. *CHRIST sent me, says he, to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of CHRIST should be of none effect; †* “lest his success should have been ascribed to the force of art and not of truth; not to the plain doctrines of a crucified JESUS, but the powerful oratory of those who propagated them, and hereby the honour of the cross had been eclipsed.” † WE

\* 1 Cor. ii. 1, and iv. 5. † 1 Cor. i. 17.

‡ Henry, in Loc.

We are not, however, to understand the Apostle as exploding a graceful, animating style; in many other parts of the sacred writings, as well as his own, we find even inimitable instances of the *pathetic* and *sublime*. *The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:* He carefully avoided injuring good matter by the ill favour of a barbarous style, and studied not for a fine harmonious set of sentences, but only for acceptable words, such as would best convey to the mind the proposed idea or truth to be illustrated.

DIVINE truth is not recommended by the costly flows<sup>es</sup> of art; these may please the ear but never reach the heart; they are suited to amuse but not to save mankind. A conformity of *manner* to the *matter* treated of is requisite; this is essential to true *sublimity* and *pathos*. Where the subject is sublime and awful, as in all divine subjects, if the style is truly sublime it is plain, decent, and humble.

2. DIVINE truths should be suitably placed and timed. There are some truths which are applicable to the godly only; others have a peculiar respect to the ungodly. To the former, the promises of God, making sure the rewards of righteousness in another world are only applicable. To the latter the threatenings of God, making sure the punishment of the impenitent.

WITH respect to doctrine, exhortation, reproof, consolation, &c. a right timing and placing them is a consideration of great consequence. By a mistiming, and placing these, the truth will be exhibited with disadvantage, and its effect may be rather detrimental than salutary to the souls of men.

To men under a sense of their guilt, and danger of *the wrath to come*, enquiring what they shall do to be saved, the example of the Apostle has determined the  
immediate

\* *Ecl.* xii. 10.

immediate and suitable answer; *Repent and believe.* To *Titus* it was given in charge by *St. Paul*, to affirm constantly that they who have believed be careful to maintain good works.\* But in answer to a convicted sinner, enquiring what he should do to be saved, to exhort him to be careful to maintain good works would be without the least propriety; it would be a mistiming and a displacing divine truth: For although it is the duty of all men to be careful to maintain good works, yet to answer the above query, by an exhortation to good works, would be to evade the question, and to injure the truth; for good works were never made the condition of our justification, but faith alone. A very particular attention must be given in the division of truth, as the circumstances and cases of particular persons vary; otherwise, how shall the word of truth be rightly divided, † and so a portion given to every one in due season? ‡

3. THOSE truths are to be insisted upon that are fundamental, that lie, as it were, at the bottom of the system, and are as a key to all others.

1. SUCH as respect *God*; his natural and moral perfections, such as his infinite power and knowledge, absolute eternity, omnipresence, and infinite majesty. Moreover, his infinite righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness.

TRUTHS that relate to the *Deity*; his certain existence, his infinite perfection and glory, are fundamental to many other truths of the highest importance; yea, all other truths in some sense arise out of those that relate to the being and perfections of *God*.

PARTICULARLY, from the perfections of the *Deity* arises a certainty of his universal providence and government, and the infinite rectitude of all his works. Hence also the certainty of the absolute foreknowledge of

\* *Tit.* iii. 8. † *2 Tim.* ii. 15. ‡ *Luke* xii. 42.

of God; an exact plan and pre-determination of all possible events, both in the natural and moral world, and that the present scheme of things, chosen and established of God, respecting all possible events in the universe, is necessarily the best, and therefore the only one possible to have been adopted. \*

MOREOVER, from a consideration of the infinite dignity, rectitude, and excellency of the ever blessed God, we justly infer the infinite evil of sin, and the necessary everlasting duration of the punishment of the finally impenitent. These with many other most important truths naturally arise to view from a consideration of the infinite perfection of the glorious Deity.

2. SUCH as respect man; his obligations to God perfectly to love him and to be like him, arising from the  
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\* To suppose the present plan of things, chosen and established of God, could have been omitted, and another adopted in its room, is the same as to suppose the divine mind admits of change, or that God can alter his purposes; for all his volitions and determinations are coexistent with himself. It is humbly apprehended, we are not to conceive of God as first taking a view of all possible plans or schemes of government, revolving them in his infinite mind, and then chusing one rather than another. This would be to make him such an one as ourselves; first reasoning upon premises, and then descending into conclusions, according to previous discoveries: Whereas all his volitions, his plan of government, and determination of all events, both in the natural and moral world, are the necessary emanation of his infinite perfections or nature, and coeternal with his being. As light is coeval with the sun, and its rays are a necessary emanation from it, so the divine volitions and determinations are coeternal with his being, and necessarily emanant from his nature. To suppose the  
divine

the infinite perfection of his nature, and the express declarations of his will. That infinite perfection and glory of which the blessed God is eternally possessed, renders him infinitely worthy of the perfect and everlasting love of all intelligent creatures; and from his infinite worthiness of the creature's perfect love arises an infinite obligation on the creature to love him perfectly; for the obligation must be equal to the reason or ground from which it arises. Hence the inviolable nature of the divine law, and the impossibility of any abatement of its demands upon the creature; hence also the impossibility of justification by the deeds of the law, or the imperfect obedience of men; and hence the necessity of the atonement, and the interposition of sovereign and absolute mercy in the salvation of sinners.

AGAIN, the disconformity of man to God, in consequence of the apostacy and the totality of his depravity, expressed in the Scriptures, sometimes by *enmity against GOD*; \* sometimes by being *without strength † dead in trespasses and sins*; ‡ and by many other definitive expressions, by all which we are led to view the depravity of man, as consisting in real opposition to God, and  
 aversion

divine volitions are not coeternal, with God, and so a necessary emanation of his nature, is the same as to suppose God had existed an eternity before he had any volitions or determinations about his plan of government; for if his volitions are not coeternal with, and a necessary emanation from his nature, then his volitions had a beginning: If they had a beginning, then before they began God had existed an eternity without volitions, without choice or determination about his moral government. A thought impossible for any to admit! Therefore, the present plan of divine government is the only one possible to have been adopted; or it is what it is as necessarily, as that God is necessarily what he is.

\* Rom. viii. 7—† v. 8. ‡ Eph. ii. 1.

aversion from his true character, and not in any mistaken apprehensions of him.

THIS view of the case is confirmed by those words of our blessed Saviour to the Jews. *Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* \* We have here a perfect discovery of the nature of man's inability, or want of power to please God, as it consists in the want of love to God, and in real aversion from, and opposition of heart against his true character and government; and hence we see the consistency of our moral weakness, or want of moral power to do those things that are pleasing to God, and our blameworthiness for not doing them. If our want of power to love God and to live devoted to his will arises from, or consists in our disaffection to God and his laws, or from our chusing to walk contrary to him, it is easy to see our inability to duty is a sinful defect, for which we are wholly and infinitely to blame.

MOREOVER, from this view of man's depravity and moral inability, opens up the necessity of divine power in regeneration; it exposes the insufficiency, or unaptness of moral swasion to change the heart, and shews that the tendency of divine truth impressed upon the carnal mind is only to convince of sin, and not to reconcile the soul to God. †

WE

\* *John xv. 24.*

† The truth of this depend upon the nature and totality of our depravity. If our depravity consists wholly or chiefly in the want of a right speculative knowledge of God and divine things, then an impression of the truth upon the mind, or being led to a right speculative knowledge of God is all that is necessary to our loving God. In this view of the case, the truth opened up to the carnal mind has a tendency to reconcile the soul to God: Yea, reconciliation depends upon this only; for, according to this view  
of

WE see further, the nature of that change which takes place in the soul in regeneration ; that it is a moral change,

of the matter, the soul is not properly opposed to GOD, or at enmity against him, but it is opposed only to a mistaken notion or idea it has formed of him ; hence a rectification of its mistake is all that is necessary to be done to reconcile it to GOD. But if our depravity consists in our want of love to, and in a total aversion from GOD's real character, then it is plain that a knowledge of GOD's true and real character, or an impresson of those truths upon the mind that relate to GOD, and by which his character is most clearly illustrated, tends to convince of sin only, and not to reconcile the soul to GOD.

FURTHER, to suppose our depravity consists chiefly or wholly in the want of a right speculative knowledge of GOD's real character, is to render the carnal mind partly or wholly excusable in its being at enmity against GOD : Yea, it is to render it rather virtuous than vicious ; for it is enmity against GOD, or his character, as it now apprehends it to be ; but if it apprehends it to be what it is not, then it is not at enmity against GOD, but against something that is not GOD, or an image, which is a creature of its own imagination ! But to be at enmity against a false image, or idea of GOD, is not a criminal affection, but an affection that is laudable. Hence our depravity, so far as it is sinful, consists not in the want of right speculative knowledge of GOD, but in the want of love to, and in aversion from his character, speculatively and rightly understood. Hence it follows, that the tendency of divine truth impressed upon, or opened up to the carnal mind, tends only to convince of sin, and not to reconcile the soul to GOD. *By the law is the knowledge of sin. Rom. iii. 20. I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Rom. vii. 9, 10. Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father. John xv. 24.*

consisting in a holy disposition or temper, or affection of heart : Not in any new logical or speculative discovery of the nature and perfections of GOD ; but only in a new moral taste or holy affection, to which the beauty of holiness is supremely pleasing and delightful.

THE necessity of this moral change in the soul, in order for the true happiness of men, is clearly evident. The beauty of holiness, from which the happiness of all holy beings is derived, is the very object against which the carnal mind is opposed. Hence to enjoy GOD, or to be truly happy, a new heart, moral taste or temper is requisite.

THE foregoing things we have hinted at, as what are necessary to be kept in view as fundamental truths, without which the character of fallen man, and the gospel method of salvation cannot be understood, or clearly apprehended. But to what has been said, it is necessary to add,

3. SUCH truths as respect the Mediator : His real divinity and humanity ; the necessity of his obedience unto death, for the removal of the objections that lay against the exercise of mercy, in the actual salvation of the ungodly, *that GOD might be just, and yet the justifier of them who believe* ; the Mediator's righteousness imputed for the justification and compleat salvation of men, or, as that, on account of which GOD freely renews the soul, grants repentance towards GOD, and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, justification, the indwellings and comfort of the Spirit, persevering grace, and life eternal.

THESE are some of those fundamental truths which give an opening into the immense field of natural and revealed religion, and are, therefore, much to be insisted upon and frequently urged upon men.

WITHOUT attending to these fundamental truths, a  
man



man may indeed preach the truth, and nothing but the truth ; but to preach the GOSPEL is also to hold up to view its fundamental doctrines, such as are peculiar to the gospel revelation.

To dwell upon points of moral duty only, and to urge them by motives taken from temporal or eternal concerns, notwithstanding moral duty is every where urged in the sacred Scriptures, and it is a point unalterably settled, that *without holiness no man shall see the LORD* : \* Yet, I say, to dwell upon points of moral duty only, is to keep the peculiar glories of the gospel concealed.

THE moral law is written upon the heart, which is evident, in that they that *have not the law* (revealed) *are a law to themselves*. † And by the gospel revelation, the moral obligations of men are represented with far greater light and evidence, and urged by motives infinitely superior to those apprehended by the light of nature. But the *glorious gospel* is employed not only in teaching our obligations to holiness, and its necessary connexion with happiness, but it *makes known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is CHRIST in you the hope of glory whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS, whereunto I also labour*. ‡

IT is evident the Apostles gloried in, and dwelt very much upon those doctrines which are *peculiar* to the gospel. Although they by no means neglected others, yet they well knew the salvation of men did not depend upon the knowledge of their moral obligations to God, nor their acceptance with him, upon any of their volitions or doings. They therefore taught another way of acceptance with God, and eternal life ; a way for the knowledge of which we are beholden to divine revelation

\* Heb. xii. 14. † Rom. xi. 14, 15. ‡ Col. i. 27, 28, 29.

on only, there being in the light of nature not the remotest intimations of it. They taught CHRIST as the way to eternal life : *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* \*

THEY insisted upon holiness as the necessary qualification for the subjects of the heavenly kingdom, and that *faith without works is dead.* † But the obedience of CHRIST unto the death they ever taught was the thing, and the only thing that opened a door for the honorable exercise of mercy in the salvation of men. It was this alone that vindicated the divine law and government against the complaints and false aspersions of a revolted world, and this was the only thing necessary to be effected to open a way for the free and honorable exercise of infinite mercy, in the actual bestowment of pardon, sanctification, and eternal life upon the guilty sinner. The design, nature, and fullness, therefore, of the atonement for the justification and salvation of men ought to be most fully and explicitly illustrated, as well as those duties earnestly recommended and urged which flow from a principle of supreme affection to God.

To the foregoing observations may be further added, that besides their common ministrations and labours among their people, Ministers, when occasion requires, are to *contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.* ‡ They are *set for the defence of the gospel.* §

HOWEVER desirable it is that professing Christians should *all speak the same thing*, and that there should be *no divisions among them*, but that they should be *perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment* ; || yet when corruptions prevail in the church, and the essential doctrines of the gospel are subverted, denied, or neglected, then to contend for the truth, and to con-

tend

\* 1 Pet. i. 19. † Jan. ii. 17. ‡ Jude iii.  
§ Phil. i. 17. || 1 Cor. i. 10.

tend earnestly is not commendable only, but a duty that lies with peculiar incumbency upon the Ministers of JESUS CHRIST.

RELIGIOUS controversies, though in themselves grievous to a benevolent mind, yet are often necessary; and their consequences have been of eminent utility to the church, for such is the truth, that the more it is canvassed and tried, the clearer and the brighter it shines.

WE must further briefly observe, the gospel is to be preached with solemnity, with affection and earnestness.

THE inconceivable importance of the work; the awful nature and weight of the truths to be delivered; the necessity of men's *receiving the truth in the love of it*; the natural aversion of sinners from the truth, and the final and important account both Speakers and hearers are to render to God, of their speaking and hearing the great things of the gospel: I say, a consideration of these things should move to the greatest possible solemnity, earnestness, and affection in preaching the word. How suitable is it that a work that concerns the life of souls in another state of existence should be attended to, and performed not only with diligence and caution, but even with seraphic fervency, tenderness, and zeal. With what pressing ardency and incessant earnestness did the Apostles call upon men to attend to the great salvation; they *prayed*, they *intreated*, they *besought men to be reconciled to GOD*: \* Yea, to the language of words, they were not unused to add the still more pathetic and moving language of tears. *I ceased not*, says the Servant St. Paul, *to warn every one night and day with tears*. † *I wrote unto you with many tears*. ‡

INDEED when the eternal salvation of men is the theme, to overrate or overact the importance of it is impossible. Such is the *glorious gospel*; such the importance and consequence of the truths it reveals, that to  
speak

\* 2 Cor. v. 20. † Acts xx. 31. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 4.

Speak of them, and to treat upon them with an air of indifference is to treat them as what they are not, and implicitly to deny them to be what they are.

THUS I have shewn, although very imperfectly, what it is to speak with GOD's words, or what is implied in preaching the gospel.

I AM next to consider the call to this most important work, and to shew,

II. THAT none have a right to preach the gospel, but such as are called of GOD ; or, that all the true Ministers of CHRIST have a divine call, or mission from GOD to preach the gospel.

FOR the illustration of this proposition we shall shew,

1. WHAT we are to understand by this call of GOD.

2. THAT all the true Ministers of JESUS CHRIST, are thus called.

3. WHEN any one is called of GOD, or in other words, when it becomes a man's duty to preach the gospel.

1. WE are to shew, what is to be understood by this call of GOD.

A CALL from GOD to any office or work supposes it is the duty of the subject to undertake and perform it. Or when GOD makes it the duty of any one to preach the gospel, he then calls him to that work in the same manner as he calls him to any other incumbent duty. When a man can see it his duty to engage in the work of the ministry he at the same time sees himself called of GOD to that work ; for it is GOD's making it his duty that determines his call. No man is called of GOD to the performance of any thing, before the performance of the

the thing required, becomes a duty; and whatever a man can determine to be his duty to do, of his call from God to the performance of it, he has equal evidence. Its being made a duty, and being called of God to preach the gospel are the same thing.

2. IT is thus, that all the true Ministers of JESUS CHRIST are called of God.

THE notion of a true Minister of JESUS CHRIST, is one that has a *right* to preach the gospel; for to preach without a right is the part of an impostor, but a man's right to officiate in any office, or to perform any act whatever depends upon its being his duty; for to perform any action that is not required as a duty, is to do what is forbidden; for all actions or doings of moral agents are such as are either required or forbidden of God; for no action of moral agents is indifferent: All ~~that~~ *they* do is pleasing or displeasing to God. A man's right, therefore, to do any action can be determined only from its being his duty to perform it. Hence none have a right to *preach* the gospel but those of whom God requires it as a duty. Therefore, all the true Ministers of JESUS CHRIST are called to the gospel ministry by its being made their duty to undertake it.

THE ordinary Ministers of the gospel as well as the ancient Prophets, the forerunners of CHRIST, and the Apostles, his immediate successors and Ministers extraordinary, are to be considered as thus called of God. When our blessed Saviour ascended into Heaven, among the important gifts he bestowed upon men, the Apostle enumerates not only *Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, but Pastors and Teachers for the work of the ministry.* \*

THAT GOD designed to establish and maintain an order of men in his church who should give themselves to the work of the ministry, is evident by the promise annexed

\* *Eph* iv. 11, 12.

nixed to the commission given to the Apostles ; *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations : And lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the world.* \* Hence all the faithful Ministers of CHRIST may say with the Apostle ; *All things are of GOD, who hath reconciled us to himself by JESUS CHRIST, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.* † They are under a special commission from GOD to negotiate the affairs of his gospel kingdom in the world, and to *beseech men in his stead to be reconciled unto GOD.* ‡ Such an order of men GOD has established in his church to continue to the end of the world ; and all that truly belong to this order, or have a right to officiate as Ministers of CHRIST, are such of whom GOD requires it as a duty, and who have been led to devote themselves to this work from a sense of duty.

3. WE are to shew, when a man may be said to be called of GOD, or when it becomes his duty to preach the gospel.

THERE are two ways in which men have been called of GOD to this work, *viz. extraordinary and ordinary.*

1. WE shall enquire what it is to be called in an *extraordinary* way. This is to have the mind of GOD manifested in an *extraordinary* manner.

IT was in this way the Prophets and Apostles received their mission from GOD. The former were generally called by *visions* and *voices*, sometimes by the immediate impulse of the Spirit. The latter were chiefly commissioned by CHRIST himself, while he was personally present with them.

THESE extraordinary calls of GOD it is probable were improved only with respect to the first Ministers of CHRIST, such as *Prophets* and *Apostles*, as we have no intimations

\* *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.* † *2 Cor. v. 18.*

‡ *2 Cor. v. 20.*

intimations of any ordinary Ministers, even in the apostolick ages of the church, that were in any extraordinary way called to the ministerial office. There have been them *indeed* who have made pretensions to an extraordinary mission from GOD, since the age above-mentioned; however, their pretensions have been without evidence to support them.

THOSE who have been subjects of an extraordinary call from GOD, have always, as was justly expected of them, evidenced their mission by some extraordinary gifts of prophesie or miracles. The same pretensions in this age of the church require the same evidence to support them that was necessary in that. The scripture evidence of an extraordinary mission from GOD is extraordinary gifts: Hence a pretension to the former without the latter is always to be esteemed a delusion.

2. WE are to shew when a man is called in an ordinary way to the gospel ministry. This ordinary call consists chiefly in *qualifying gifts* and *providential disposals*.

THAT a man may determine himself called of GOD, the following things must meet and concur.

1. A GOOD understanding of the Scriptures. These are what he is called to teach and explain to men: *Speak with my words unto them.* These are to be taught without corruptions and diminutions. On the one hand to declare all the counsel of GOD: \* *To diminish not a word:* † And on the other to give the genuine sense of the inspired word without corruption, requires a large and good acquaintance with the Scriptures, to attain to which, much study and close meditation are necessary. Without a good acquaintance with the genuine meaning

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\* *As* xx. 27.    † *Jer.* xxvi. 2.

of the great and more fundamental truths of revelation a man can never suppose himself called of God to teach them; for it is certain God would never call those into his service who were thus disqualified to perform it. To be well indoctrinated in the truths of divine revelation is therefore necessary for those that are to labour in word and doctrine. \*

2. To be persuaded of his call from God, a man must be able to determine with some satisfactory certainty his spiritual acquaintance with, and love to the truths he is to teach. That God calls none but such to officiate as *Stewards* in his house, both reason and revelation unite to confirm. Would a wise and good Prince call into his service an enemy to his person and government, and intrust him with the most important and interesting matters, upon which the safety and welfare of his subjects depended? And may it be thought that the glorious King and head of the church, who is infinitely wise and good, will send such to beseech men *to be reconciled to GOD* who themselves are not reconciled? Will he call such to stand for the defence of the gospel who *desire not the knowledge of his ways*? Besides, God has clearly manifested his will in this respect, in that thrice repeated question put to *Peter* by our blessed Saviour; *Lovest thou me more than these*: † And then upon the profession of his affection, the commission and charge given him by *CHRIST* to feed his sheep and his lambs: In this conference we doubtless have a necessary qualification for the Ministers of *JESUS CHRIST* pointed out, which is supreme love to him. To those, whose affection for their divine Master is genuine and supreme, other endowments being suitable, he gives in charge to feed his sheep and his lambs. He calls such as are in his interest, that is, his friends, to speak his words; to speak in his name and in his behalf. The Apostles were careful that

\* 1 Tim. v. 17. † John xxi. 15, 16, 17.



that the *word of reconciliation* should be committed to *faithful men*, men of religion, men of GOD. Without this all other qualifications do not furnish men for the *ministry of reconciliation*, and to become *workers together with GOD*.

ST. Paul gave it in charge to *Timothy*, and in him to the Ministers of CHRIST in all succeeding generations, to give himself *wholly* to the work of the Ministry. The work is great, and of such awful consequence, that a man need be free from all worldly incumbrances and embarrassments, and to go into the most vigorous exertion of his abilities to fulfil it; for *who is sufficient for these things!* A principle of fidelity, or the love of GOD implanted in the soul is, therefore, a necessary qualification for the Ministers of JESUS CHRIST.

3. A MAN'S acquaintance in human literature and knowledge must be such as to enable him to teach with plainness, and to apply with pertinancy and pungency divine truth.

ALTHOUGH a sufficient acquaintance with the Scriptures and other suitable endowments to open and apply them are not in themselves enough to determine a man qualified for the work of the ministry; yet these qualifications are necessary for the Ministers of CHRIST, whose business it is to feed the flock of GOD *with knowledge and understanding.* \*

How a man has attained to these necessary qualifications, whether by private or public education, is not material.

4. THAT a man may determine himself called to the gospel

\* Jer. iii. 15.

gospel ministry, to the above cited qualifications must be added his own prevailing inclination to the work, arising not from a view of worldly dignity or reputation, but from a real tenderness and cordial regard for the salvation of men. *Feed the flock of GOD which is among you, take the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being Lords over GOD's heritage, but being examples of the flock.* \*

5. A door in providence must be opened for his improvement in the work.

SUCH as GOD designs to improve as workers together with himself in building up his gospel kingdom in the world, he directs by his providence to their particular station in his vineyards. This is commonly determined by an invitation from the people.

NOTHING can be more evident than that GOD never designed to obtrude upon people, Ministers that were not of their own chusing. Even the Apostles themselves were not to continue in a house or city but by the consent of the people: *Into whatsoever city ye enter and they receive you not, go your ways, &c.* †

THE salvation of their souls is one great end a people should have in cheerfully supporting and encouraging the gospel ministry; it is therefore reasonable they should be satisfied in the abilities and sentiments of those to whom they commit so important an interest, and that they should not be set over them, but by their consent.

HOWEVER, although the consent or invitation of the people is necessary, yet the voice of the people is not always

\* 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. † Luke x. 10.

ways to be considered as the voice of God. Other considerations may sometimes greatly preponderate their unanimous choice. But when all other considerations concur with the unanimity of the people, the call is as clear as the nature of the thing will admit.

FURTHERMORE, a call may doubtless be clear where the invitation from the people is not unanimous, and perhaps in some instances as clear as where it is. Yes, further, where the opposition is great, a man may be clearly and fully persuaded upon good evidence of his call from God.

IN cases of this nature every circumstance is to be considered and weighed, and the conclusion drawn neither from the union nor disunion of the people considered alone.

6. To render the evidence of a call from God clearly, conclusive, and satisfactory, to what has been already said must be added, the approbation and consent of those who have been already called of God, and put into the ministry: For the Chief Shepherd has appointed these with solemn caution to invest others with the sacred office. It is therefore necessary that those who would *take a part in the ministry*, \* should seek the advice and approbation of such as by divine appointment are set to open and shut the door of admittance; for the order of the gospel is to be kept up and attended to inviolably. Therefore, when the Ministers of CHRIST, under whose immediate cognizance it comes, have given careful and serious attention to know the religious sentiments, experience, and other qualifications of one that offers himself to the work of the ministry, and do advise and stand ready to assist in ~~the~~ separation thereunto: By this and the foregoing considerations he may doubtless with safety determine

\* *Heb. v. 4.*

mine himself called of God, and may and ought to submit himself to be invested with the holy office, by *the laying on the hands of the Presbytery*, \* which also he may do with a full assurance of the promised presence and approbation of JESUS CHRIST.

WE have now gone through the things which were proposed for our consideration, from which many useful observations, by way of *improvement*, might be made; but time will permit us to say nothing more than what is contained in the following Address,

1. To our dear Friend and Brother, who is now about to receive *the ministry of reconciliation*.

DEAR SIR, the foregoing considerations teach us, that GOD still guards the ministerial office by a sacred inclosure. Of old it was made over to one particular family by a special divine grant and order, and none but such as belonged to that family might presume to officiate in the Priest's office.

UNDER the gospel dispensation, the Apostle tells us, that no man taketh this honour upon himself but he that is called of GOD, as was *Aaron* † How men are now called to minister in holy things we have already shewn.

HENCE they that take upon themselves the sacred ministry while destitute of those qualifications above considered, intrude themselves upon the office, and run before they are sent.

IT should be the inquiry of every one who *desires*  
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\* *Heb.* v 4. † *1 Tim.* iii. 1.

*the office of a Bishop,\** Whether they are called of GOD, as was Aaron? In a matter of such consequence, a man ought to inquire with great caution, Whether his call is from GOD? Whether his qualifications are such as to enable him to discharge the work in such a manner, as in this way, profitably to serve mankind? Whether his acquaintance with the truths he is to teach be sufficient for teaching? And whether he has a *spiritual* discerning of the truth. He ought carefully to look to the motives that influence his mind to engage in the work, and to take heed that they are genuine, that they are the glory of GOD and the salvation of men. For if a man be not in some good degree possessed of such qualifications, and influenced by such motives, he is not called of GOD. But to engage in this work without a call from GOD is to engage in opposition to GOD; it is to act against duty; for such as are not called of GOD to this work are implicitly forbidden: For that which it is not a man's duty to do, it is his duty to forbear. Hence to engage in the work of the ministry without a call from GOD is an act of rebellion against *him*. Therefore, men ought cautiously to examine themselves as to their call from GOD before they engage in the work.

WHAT success those may have in preaching the gospel who are not called of GOD, is what no considerate man will presume to say; for GOD has sometimes improved the vilest of men in the business of preaching the gospel, nor may the validity of their ministerial acts be disputed. However, that ungodly men, such as have not the glory of GOD and the good of souls in view as the leading and governing motive of their engaging in the work; that these men should be improved as instruments in building up a kingdom so opposite in its nature to the propensity of their hearts as the gospel kingdom is, must be concluded possible only, not probable.

\* 1 Tim. iii. 1.

ptobable. Nor may ungodly Ministers look for any other than an aggravated condemnation, because the blood of others as well as their own will be required at their hands. Especially may *they* expect a most *aggravated* condemnation, who not only run before they are sent, but preach another gospel, or neglect the great essentials of the gospel revelation, and insist only upon topics of natural religion and morality, which things although necessary in their place, yet are not any thing peculiar to the gospel, and, therefore, can never lead men to the knowledge of the only way of salvation. If the great doctrines which are peculiar to revelation be omitted, or but casually glanced at; if they be esteemed and treated rather as matters of speculation than of necessary importance for the salvation of men, moral duties will be urged to no saving purpose. Therefore, not only the truth, but the whole truth must be urged, and especially such truths as are truly fundamental and lie as it were at the bottom of the system, and from which all other truths naturally result, and appear in their true and genuine light.

WE are confident, Sir, from your well known character and religious sentiments, you are one of those who will conscientiously *declare all the counsel of GOD*, who will hold back nothing, who will *diminish not a word*.

You will indeed be in danger of censure from some, of contempt and ridicule from others; for the world are opposed to the gospel plan of salvation: The truths that are the most needful to be insisted upon are not the most pleasing to the carnal mind, but the contrary. Hence arises a temptation to *daub with untempered mortar*,\* and to heal the wounds of the soul *slightly*. But, as with the blessed Apostle, we would have

\* *Exek. xiii. 10.*

boldly have it to say, we are *pure from the blood of all men*, we may not *shun to declare all the counsel of GOD*. *Diminish not a word.*

To preach the gospel is indeed a serious and awful undertaking : A matter of this nature, and importance cannot be treated with too much deference and solemnity ; for if an Apostle said, and that with reference to himself, *who is sufficient for these things*, well may the ordinary Ministers of CHRIST, and particularly in so degenerate a day as this, take up the *standard* \* with a trembling heart and hand.

HOWEVER, those who devote themselves to the holy ministry, in obedience to the call of GOD, though the work be great and formidable, yet the same that comforted and supported the Apostle under his infirmities, may comfort and support them. *And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* †

IF, Sir, your call is from GOD, as we believe it is, you may confidently rely upon his animating presence and sufficiency, which consideration is necessary to induce a *good man* to engage in the work which is before you : Nothing but this will embolden a *good man* to take upon him that solemn charge, which you are presently to receive *before GOD, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and elect Angels.* ‡

You enter upon the work with a *pleasing, animating prospect*. The peace and unanimity of this people in the resettlement of the gospel ministry seem to imply the gracious presence, and concurrence of the GOD of peace and unity, and that he designs to honor and happiness you as a distinguished instrument of usefulness in this part of his vineyard. May the event be as good and joyful as the prospect is favourable and animating. Should you

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\* *Isa.* lxii. 10. † *2 Cor.* xii. 9. ‡ *Tim.* v. 21.

prove a *successful* Minister of CHRIST, it will be by insisting much upon the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, the great fundamental truths of the Christian religion. By these *the great deep of iniquity is broken up*, the kingdom of darkness exposed, the character of apostate men set in its true light, the government and ways of God vindicated, and his infinite glory discovered in the redemption of sinners by the obedience of his Son.

MORAL duties must be affirmed constantly as necessary, men must be holy; they must be careful to maintain good works; without these all pretensions to religion are vain. But then, they must be taught another way of acceptance with God than by these. The light of nature knows no other way of acceptance with God: No other way of escaping the conscious demerit of sin, than by our own personal obedience; although this is the only way the light of nature, or our natural reason could prescribe; yet this could never be ~~regarded~~ consistent with our natural notion of obligation to the infinitely glorious Deity; and the nature of disobedience. But *the glorious gospel*, opens up a new, and living way, which JESUS hath consecrated for us through the veil of his flesh. \* Let us beware of altering the terms of our acceptance with God. This will render our ministry fruitless; yea, words then in vain. This will be to preach another gospel; and to bring upon ourselves that curse which is denounced, and stands recorded against those *that corrupt the word*.

IN a word, let us be concerned to *declare all the counsel of GOD*, and to speak as his oracles; for this is our commission; SPEAK WITH MY WORDS UNTO THEM. Let us, therefore, take heed to ourselves and to our doctrines, and continue in them, for in doing this we shall both save ourselves and them that hear us.

2. We cordially congratulate this church and people upon

\* Heb. x. 20.



upon their happy union and encouraging prospect in their present resettlement of the ministry among them, so soon after the *wide breach* \* which was made upon them by the decease of their *ancient and venerable Pastor*.

BELOVED Brethren ; great is the importance, great are the consequences of the relation you are now coming into with this our much respected Brother and determined Fellow Laborer in the gospel. The nature of the relation is such as obliges him *to watch for your souls as one that must give an account* ; and it also obliges you *to receive the law at his mouth*, as the Messenger of GOD, and *to esteem him very highly in love for his works sake.* \*

MAY you remember the consequences of your relation to him will be as lasting as *eternity* ; for while he labours among you in word and doctrine, he will be unto you a *savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.* † Keep in view the nature and consequences of this revelation ; this will move you to the tenderest affection for him, while he devotes himself *to spend and be spent for you* ; this will move you to take earnest heed to his ministry, to attend with diligence and caution the messages of GOD, which he shall, from time to time, declare unto you.

It greatly concerns you to strengthen his hands and encourage his heart in his labours among you, and to do nothing to grieve and discourage him. The work he is undertaking among you, IS GREAT and AWFUL ; he will need to *give himself wholly to these things.* ‡ His work is greatly incompatible with the cares and anxieties that arise from those worldly exigencies which very often take up and consume too much of that time which should be devoted wholly to the service of the *sanctuary*. He will also need *to strive*

\* *Thef.* v. 13. † *2 Cor.* ii. 16. ‡ *1 Tim.* iv. 15.

*Strive together with him in your prayers to GOD for him.\** May you rejoice in his light for a long time yet to come. May you never have reason to mourn your inattention to his ministry among you.

IN a word, may we, from time to time, *hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.* †

3. AND finally to this great assembly,

Is it as we have heard, that they that minister to you in holy things are to take heed that *they speak with the words of GOD* unto you, that they speak the truth, and the whole truth. And has GOD so guarded the ministerial office as that none have a license from him to assume it but *good men*, and who are otherwise suitably qualified and disposed? You may justly infer from hence it is a matter of the last importance that you suitably and cheerfully support and encourage the gospel ministry, and that you give the most earnest heed to the word of GOD, which it has pleased him, should in this way be inculcated upon you.

THAT men should attend to the gospel ministry, and receive the truth in the love of it, nothing less urges them than their eternal salvation. GOD, therefore, calls those to minister in holy things, who know the terrors of the LORD, and who will, therefore, preach CHRIST to them, not only from their speculative but spiritual knowledge of him; *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS.* † May you, therefore, be so happy as to take heed how you hear, § that the light which is in you be not darkness. || Pray for your Brethren that are in the ministry,

\* Rom. xv. 30. † Phil. i. 27. ‡ Col. i. 28.  
§ Luke viii. 18. --- || xi. 35.

stry, that they may with all confidence declare all the counsel of GOD ; that they may take heed to themselves and to their doctrines, that they may both save themselves and you that hear them. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. †

FINALLY, in the words of the Apostle, 1 *Thes.* v. 19 and on ; We exhort you, quench not the Spirit ; despise not prophesying ; prove all things ! Hold fast that which is good. And the very GOD of peace sanctify you wholly ; and we pray GOD your whole spirit and soul and body be presented blameless, unto the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

† *Rev.* iii. 34.

A M E N.