



Mr. Perkin's Sermon,

AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

Rev. Calvin Chapin.



THE
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A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. Calvin Chapin,

TO

THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE

IN THE THIRD CHURCH

OF WETHERSFIELD,

IN THE PARISH OF

STEPNEY,

APRIL 30, 1794.

BY NATHAN PERKINS, A.M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN WEST-HARTFORD.

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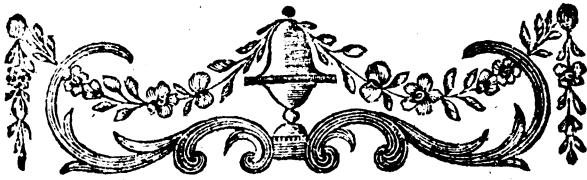
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The Author.





An Ordination Sermon.

I TIMOTHY III. I.

This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work.

AS mankind entertain different and opposite opinions upon all other subjects, so it is not to be expected that, on religion, the most important and interesting of all points, to which their attention has ever been directed, there should be an exact uniformity of opinion. The structure of the human mind, as well as human body, and the genius and education of men are very different. Some are favoured likewise with much greater means and opportunities of improvement than others. Not only inclination of which some are destitute, but leisure of which others have none, is necessary to pursue moral and intellectual enquiries. Besides, so many frailties and imper-

fections attend man, so many prepossessions from tradition, from reading wrongly directed, or other sources, carry his mind from the pure dictates of reason, and shut his eyes upon the truth, that it is matter of surprise, not that we think so differently from each other, but that we think so much alike. Diversity of opinion is in one view, however, to be deeply regretted, because where there is a multitude of opposite ideas it is impossible but that there should be some erroneous ones. And all error on moral subjects is not only unhappy, but dangerous. Mistakes in judgment, indeed, about circumstantial and unimportant points, do not necessarily imply perverseness of heart, or criminal negligence in the investigation of truth and duty, or endanger our future felicity.

THERE must be more light in the church, before there can be a complete uniformity of ideas on the grand subject of religion and morals. Before we shall all see eye to eye, or be exactly of one mind and of one heart, in the things of God, we must wait till the openings of celestial glory, when that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face, and shall know even as we are known. In the doctrines and worship of the church triumphant there will be no dissenting opinions—in its music no discordant notes—in its harmony no interruption—in its peace no end. It is peculiar to the church militant that there should be discordant opinions, opposite interests, and a mixture of errors and imperfections. But so far is the want of uniformity in doctrines and rites from being a valid objection, though it hath been often urged, against the truth and reality of reli-

gion, that it is no other event than might be reasonably supposed would take place. This want of uniformity opens a field for the display of the most amiable virtues, candour, ingenuity, charity, and mutual toleration. When the benevolent mind surveys the christian world, the various communions into which it hath been divided, the unchristian manner in which they have treated each other, the doctrines and tenets, the modes and forms, which in one age and another, and in one country and another, have been, by turns, adopted and exploded, it will in the strongest manner, feel how imperfect man is :—how prone to wander into the wilderness of error human nature is :—how necessary mutual forbearance and condescension are :—the sacredness of the rights of conscience :—and the propriety of being rigid as to self, and candid to others.

It is well known that very different opinions have been entertained of the nature, powers, and office of the christian bishop. While some who are to be revered for their abilities, learning and piety, contend that christian *bishops* are an order in the church of Christ, superior to that of *presbyters, elders, teachers, or pastors*, invested with higher powers and privileges, particularly of conferring exclusively HOLY ORDERS. Others, at least, equal for their literature, abilities and piety, contend with a similar ardour, that there are only TWO ORDERS of officers, known in the New-Testament in Christ's kingdom, or in the earliest and purest ages of the church, and are willing to risk an appeal, not to the scriptures alone, but to the christian fathers, quite up to the days of the apostles. These two orders of church officers are presbyters and deacons. This is not either a

proper time or place to enter into this controversy, either to consider the arguments or pleas for episcopal ordination alone, or to offer our defence for the validity of presbyterian ordination and ministrations. Eminent pens have been employed on both sides of the litigated question. Suffice it to say, that we conceive that there are not only sufficient, but abundant proofs from the writings of the apostles, that pastors, teachers, elders, presbyters, overseers, or bishops in the New Testament mean one and the same order of men :— that presbyterian ordination is valid :—and that we have ample authority to convene together for the solemn purposes, for which our *letters missive* have brought us to this place, on this day. If any think otherwise, we request them to remember that we differ from them no more than they do from us. Consequently, if we merit a reproof from them for our difference from them ; they, in their turn, must be reprimanded by us for their dissent from us. Perhaps, it may not be amiss, to remark here that the text was not chosen either from pride and affectation, or a wish to exalt the presbyterian or to depreciate the episcopalian cause. Much more important purposes are intended.

THE character and office of the christian minister or teacher, are beautifully delineated in the verses below my text. St. Paul, who was exceeded, or even equalled by none of his apostolic brethren, well knew the nature of that office, which the christian bishop was to sustain. The qualifications of the office as enumerated by him are these : a bishop must be blameless—vigilant—sober—of good behaviour—given to hospitality—apt to teach—not given to wine—no striker—not

greedy of filthy lucre—but patient—not a brawler—not covetous—not a novice lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. *Moreover he must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.* The same character and office are thus drawn by the same hand. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.* In the primitive apostolic sense, the word *bishop* signifies the same as a *presbyter*, however it may be used in modern times. And, that the scripture knows of but two orders of church-officers is plain from this passage of St. Paul, in which he addresses the private brethren and public officers of Christ's church. *Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ to all the SAINTS in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the BISHOPS and DEACONS.* These remarks are all that are necessary, here, to be made concerning the *primitive* and *modern* use of the word *bishop*.

WHAT is further intended, by divine assistance, is to consider,

1. How the christian minister or teacher is set apart to his work.

2. WHAT his work is.

3. AND, the goodness of it.

1. OUR first enquiry is, how the christian pastor is set apart to his work. In our meditations

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on this part of our subject, we are to be guided altogether by the light of revealed truth, the only measure of our duty. Thence indeed we ought to take our religion, blending with it neither tradition, superstition or enthusiasm. Had mankind, with meekness and a teachable frame of mind, less influenced by human names, traditions, and forms, been contented to believe and practise only as directed, by the great prophet of his church, our divine master, they would have enjoyed a happy uniformity compared to what the world has ever yet known.

RESPECTING the manner of consecration to the pastoral office and work, let us enquire not what ecclesiastical councils—not what the tradition of men—not what different sectaries—not what visionary enthusiasts have said, but what faith the scripture, from which as far as any depart, so far they are in an error and renounce the prophetic character of the great founder of the gospel. That the pastoral office is a divine appointment and not a mere human institution is most clearly evident from the whole strain of the New-Testament, has been often affirmed and well illustrated on occasions like the present, and is a most important point. If it were ever proper and necessary to adduce arguments to establish this point; it is so now, and it will be so as long as the christian church shall remain on the earth; and that will be, till the earth itself, or the present mode of it, shall be no more. We will attempt, then, to bring into one concise view, the chief of what the word of God in the New-Testament informs us on this subject.

THE christian Pastor or Elder as much, though

not as immediately, has his commission from heaven, as the apostles themselves. *And no man*, observes the apostle to the Hebrews, respecting the ministerial office, as divine, in its institution, *taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron.* The office is of divine appointment and not a human device. And every true minister of Jesus Christ comes into the work by the right door. He never runs before he is sent or duly authorised—authorised by those who are invested with the office; for he remembers the punishment inflicted upon those presumptuous persons who offered *strange fire before the Lord.* They ventured to take common fire and not the consecrated, and to offer it without a divine warrant. None may minister in holy things, but such as are appointed in the right or scriptural manner. *How then*, most reasonably doth St. Paul ask and argue in the following beautiful climax, *shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.* All faithful and true ministers of the gospel are called and sent of God, and no man is at liberty to take up the office of himself. He must go through the requisite trials, as to his motives and qualifications. Our Saviour, to prevent all mistakes, has informed us, that he himself is the door of admission to the pastoral office. As the business of his ministers is to feed and watch his flock, so dear to him, so he marks out the way, in which they are to be admitted. *Then said Jesus unto them, again, verily verily, I say unto you I am the door of the sheep.*

All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the DOOR, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and go in and out and find pasture. The thief that climbeth up some other way, cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. Most clearly do these passages prove that the pastoral office is a divine institution. The language indeed is highly figurative, but so easy to be understood that all that is wanting to understand it, is a careful attention and honest and unprejudiced heart. The plain meaning is that the lord of the harvest must find and send forth his own labourers. The owner of the vineyard alone has a right to call and employ workmen. He whose the flock is, must see that they are fed, guarded, and tended. *Hirelings* are those who have no regard for the flock, but to the wages only. They care not how much they scatter and divide them, or how weakly and sickly they are. Thieves and robbers are those who come, uncalled and unbidden, in a sly concealed way, to steal and kill—to make separations and divisions; to take them away from the fold.

NO MAN, however exalted an opinion he may, through self-flattery and ignorance, entertain of the eminence of his own piety, or splendor of his abilities, may of his own accord presume to act in the ministerial character. It is no evidence that

a man is fit for sustaining that sacred character because he thinks he is,—or because he reproaches others,—or boldly declares that regular inducted teachers take too much upon themselves,—or that he thinks he has so much religion; that *woe is unto him*, if he preach not the gospel. That the peace of the church might be preserved—the gospel kingdom promoted, and that lying impostors and artful deceivers might be prevented; a regular method of investing men with *holy-orders* is prescribed: and, very plainly prescribed too: and nothing but pride, arrogance, ignorance, and party zeal keep all people from adopting this, as a fixed point:—nay, it is perfectly reasonable that there should be a *prescribed* method. Our divine Lord, out of tenderness to his people, and as a remarkable display of wisdom, has given that warning against false prophets and unauthorised teachers, which we feel, and which the experience of ages proves, to be needful. *Beware*, says he, *of false prophets which come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; ye shall know them by their fruits.* Persons who come in their own name, and act by their own authority, as impostors and false prophets did all along in the Jewish church, are *false Prophets* indeed; and lyars, and with such the Christian, as well as the Jewish church, before it, has in all ages and countries, been infested. They always come with deceiving arts and intentions, professing great humility, great meekness, pure zeal, ardent love to souls,—clandestinely getting into private houses and leading away weak and unstable minds, and pouring forth, at every convenient opportunity, the most DISMAL MOANS over the deadness and languor of the churches, and especially their regular teachers: not without artful hints of their

being destitute of heart-religion. They always make people to err. What a warning against such have we in the following words ! *Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people to err, that bite with their teeth, and cry peace, and be that putteth not into their mouth, they even prepare war against him, therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision and it shall be dark unto you that ye shall not divine, and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark unto them. Then shall the seers be ashamed and diviners confounded ; yea they shall cover their lips, for there is no answer of God.* The best description of false prophets is that they come in their own name, unauthorized, and their business is to bite and devour the people, to divide and scatter them ; and the cause of religion has been more deeply wounded and more dishonoured by such, in the end, than by open and professed enemies.

Now if there were no regular, scriptural and public mode of separation to the work of a minister of the gospel prescribed, this consequence would follow, any one and every one might, at pleasure ; assume the office. And the effect of this would be, that confusion and disorder would for ever reign in Christ's kingdom ; as much as they would in the civil state, if any man and every man, who pleased, and when he pleased, should undertake to exercise the powers of government. The most subtle sophist cannot possibly assign a reason for the absurdity of the latter, which will not equally operate to prove the absurdity of the former. On the ground that any man might, of himself, take up the office of a christian pastor, we could never be guarded against deceivers, men of licentious principles and immoral lives. But our

Lord has expressly directed us to pay no attention to such wandering and self-created prophets. *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo ! here is Christ, or Lo ! there : believe him not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch if it were possible they would deceive the very elect.* The marks by which we are to know false prophets are very plain. The honest need not mistake them, if they will candidly and critically examine them. The design of false prophets, is always to divide and mislead people. And when they impudently spread themselves over the country, they ought not to be resorted to. They ought to be wholly neglected, and frowned upon, because they are a public nuisance, a reproach to religion, and materially injure society. Wherever a people listen to them, peace will be interrupted, ill will, and disputes, and loss of good neighbourhood succeed, and of course happiness among the people will be destroyed.

THE apostles, we know, received their commission or call immediately from Christ, and were able to prove their call by proper signs ; *and they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them by signs and wonders following.* When he was here, on earth, he gave to the twelve and afterwards to the seventy disciples, commission to go and preach salvation among the Jews. This commission after his resurrection, was enlarged by him : *all power, says he, is given me in heaven and on earth, go ye therefore and teach all nations.* As he called them immediately so he qualified them miraculously. After they had received this commission, they, by his special order, were to remain at Jerusalem till miraculously

qualified :—for, says he, *ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.* What is intended by the baptism of the Holy Ghost here, we learn from what took place on the memorable day of Pentacost, which was about ten days after, for then the gift of tongues was imparted to them, and they by this means, were furnished to execute their commission. How could they preach the gospel to all nations, unless they could speak their languages? The wisdom of the great head of the church shines conspicuously in that he calls none, whom he doth not qualify. All he doth is, indeed, wisely done. These disciples, thus commissioned and authorised by him, were to invest others with the sacred office of Christ's ministers. Paul himself, remarkably as he was converted, and the story of his conversion is well known to every reader of the inspired volume, did not presume to preach, till Annanias laid his hands on him, and by the express command of Christ, told him he was a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name among the Gentiles, as well as Jews. In the Church at Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians, the ordained elders and teachers, by a particular direction of the Holy Ghost, fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas when they were to carry the gospel among the Gentiles. These christian ministers of the New-Testament, who were themselves, regularly introduced into the work of the evangelical ministry, wherever they went, invested fit men with the office of pastors in the churches gathered by them : and transmitted the office to others.—They were to set in order all things in the churches, and ordain elders over them. The only way then which the gospel marks out for admission to the pastoral office is by those who are

already in office—by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands, committing to them the ministry of the word; commending them to the grace of God,—and giving them a solemn charge to fidelity. Private brethren of the church never, in one single instance, that we read of, presumed to invest others with the pastoral office. Lay-ordination is a modern invention having no support or countenance from scripture; and prelatical, in distinction from presbyterian ordination cannot claim a divine origin.

WHEN we carefully and critically lay together all that is said, in divine writ, on the great subject of ordination to the christian ministry, we shall find it was performed by those already in office. *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and robber.*—Christ is the door. To enter by the door is to enter by him; to enter by him, is to enter by his rule; and the rule which he hath given us, is by those who are themselves his servants in the holy ministry. He, indeed, calls by his grace and commissions his own ministers. He sends them, in a regular way, and qualifies them for their work. The institution of the gospel ministry is not a human contrivance. Man did not either invent or frame it. A gross error have those embraced, therefore, who conceive of it, as a human appointment.

Having briefly attended to the divine institution of the christian ministry or scripture-mode of introduction to the pastoral office and work,

2. WE are, next to delineate the work itself.—

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If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. What then is his work? His chief work is to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. And he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ. The edification of the church is the design of the work of the christian ministry. The great end of preaching is the advancement of the divine glory and the spiritual and eternal interests of men. To reconcile the world to God, to render mankind pious and happy, is the intended object. *And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, viz. that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.* In another place the apostle represents the ministers of religion as co-workers with God. *We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* To instruct mankind in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, persuading them to believe in the one and to obey the other, that they may be wise and good, is the minister's work, the supreme and ultimate mark which he is to fix to himself, from first to last, and at which he is to aim.

WITH the apostle Paul, he is, comparatively, to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Again, *God forbid, says he, that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world—* Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is no other

name given under heaven whereby men can be saved. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Neither is there salvation in any other. He will come to his people not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, not studying how he may flatter the passions, please the fancy, or amuse, with the flourishes of rhetoric, the charms of language, and the elegance and smoothness of periods, but in the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of peace, in the *demonstration of the spirit and with power*; will not handle the word of God deceitfully, or endeavor to please men at the expence of conscience. He will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God to a lost world, or hold back any doctrine because it may not suit the taste of the age or be in repute. For in delivering the whole of divine truth, only can he be pure from the blood of all men. Every where, and to all men, on all fit occasions, he must testify repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. The law and the gospel he will proclaim, each in its place; for where the law is not rightly understood, certainly the gospel cannot be seen in its beauty and glory. All true religion consists in a conformity to the law of God, and compliance with the gospel of Christ. The essence of holiness is a conformity in heart to the law: By the law are the knowledge and conviction of sin. It must then be set before men plainly and faithfully, in all its purity, spirituality and extent—in all its awful penalties, and unchangeable nature. All the doctrines, the duties, the truths, the promises, the hopes, and the joys of the gospel are to be, in their order and beauty, illustrated and unfolded. No part of the counsel of God, respecting salvation, whether acceptable or unacceptable to the hearer, is to be withheld. The necessities and

not the wishes of hearers are to be consulted. The faithful minister is to seek how he may best profit his audience, and not how he may obtain the most applause. He must therefore teach all the doctrines of religion in their proper place and natural order ; expatiating most frequently and most largely upon the most essential and important, holding up the connexion of one with another, and with firmness and incorruptness, suiting his instructions to the real state and circumstances of his people. He will endeavor, as much as possible, to adapt himself to the different cases, characters, and dispositions of his hearers ; giving milk to babes and meat to men ; reproof, rebuking, with all long suffering and doctrine :— Sometimes alarming them with the terrors of SINAI, at others soothing them with all the melody of Zion. Like a wise and faithful steward, he will aim to give to every man his portion of meat, in due season, that none may suffer through his negligence, or perish because he did not give the needful warning.

IN addition to the preaching of the gospel, he is to dispense the holy sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, to meet subjects ; neither opening the door too wide, nor keeping it too close shut.

AGAIN, maintaining discipline, in this day of declensions, is a difficult part of his work. This is to be done with meekness and prudence, with wisdom and firmness. He is to be a peace-maker, in all his course, to assist as called in the providence of God, in healing divisions. A further branch of his duty is to bear a part in separating fit and qualified men to the work of the gospel ministry, always remembering this maxim, to *lay hands sud-*

denly on no man ; to do all that in him lies to have none introduced, but such as are found in the faith, pious in heart, in the judgment of charity, and of unblameable lives—men of prudence and discretion, of a literary education and good abilities. When we but cursorily consider the work of a christian minister, we feel a conviction of its greatness and arduousness, its importance and variety. The man of God, the christian pastor has work various indeed. He has no time to loose. Indolence and ease are far from what he has to expect. Of all men he has the most to employ him. That man who wishes to glide smoothly along the current of life, in ease and affluence—in idleness and freedom from care, must keep far away from the pastoral office. If faithful to his own soul, to his God, to his Saviour, and his flock, he must be both anxious and assiduous. No mistake of people, though very common, is wider from the reality, than that the ministerial character may indulge in ease and indolence. Were his work not in itself difficult or arduous, still its variety alone would call for all his abilities, activity, and time. Even the weekly preparations for the sanctuary, are enough of themselves, to occupy his whole time. No endeavours or exertions, on his part, are to be wanting, that these may be worthy of the attention of his people. The oil for the sanctuary must be beaten, or it will not burn with a pure and pleasing light. To undertake to open the great principles of any science, which we do not well understand, and which we have not accurately studied, is not only absurd, but bespeaks a large share of *impudence*. The science of religion is most extensive : It comprehends the knowledge of moral duties, of natural theology, and of revealed truth, making one grand harmo.

nious system, all the parts of which are mutually connected—mutually depend upon, and mutually illustrate each other. The preacher has not only to study the distinct nature and respective evidence of each, but to trace the connexion of all, and to lay before his hearers the proper proofs, both external and internal, of christianity. To compose a good discourse on any of the doctrines, evidences, or virtues of the christian scheme, requires not care and pains alone, but abilities. To seek out important truths, to have just ideas, to methodize and arrange in beautiful order, to exhibit them in various lights, to avoid repetition and improprieties, demands much study and judgment. To select suitable subjects, to treat them pertinently and accurately, to render them both awakening and instructive :—to obtain clear, consistent and right ideas of all divine truths and doctrines—and to clothe them in language, which unites simplicity and elegance, is an arduous task. The christian preacher who makes conscience of all his ways, who wishes to save himself and them that hear him, will often be oppressed with the difficulties of his work. Some subjects are so sublime that he trembles lest he should dishonour them by his method of discussing them. Merely putting together, it is readily conceded, serious words, without having any regard to ideas, enough to consume the portion of time allotted for the purpose of delivering a sermon, requires neither genius nor study ; is easy enough : But to compose a discourse filled with good sense, sound doctrine and useful truths, that shall instruct, that shall quicken, that shall convince, that shall warm the heart of the hearer, is one of the most difficult kinds of composition. And to prepare such weekly, let the candid judge what expence of thought and study is necessary.

BUT, how many other duties are to be performed by the christian teacher ; he is to seek the blessings of grace not for himself only, but for his people in general, and for the afflicted and distressed among them in particular. As he is to be the mouth of God to them, in the dispensation of the word, so he is to be their mouth to God in supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving. He has to conflict with the remains of sin in his own heart, in common with christians, and to bear with the ill humours, the prejudices, the passions, the peevishness, and censoriousness of the vile. He has to visit the sick, to pray with, counsel and assist in the last and important hours of life : to condole with and comfort, the mourning and sorrowful : to direct the inquiring : to admonish and reprove the wayward : to bind up the broken hearted. How much instruction is to be given to the ignorant who have no just ideas of God, of the law, of the Saviour, of themselves, of moral obligation and of duty ? How much exhortation to experienced christians to abound, more and more, in the works of the Lord. Did a people but realize the one half of the duties and difficulties of the sacred office, they would exercise the most generous candour ; and instead of wounding the feelings and reputation of their minister by hard speeches and opprobrious epithets, and of rendering him unhappy by neglecting public worship, they would endeavour to sooth his anguish and sweeten his lot.—I have now considered the work of the christian pastor, though in a very imperfect manner ; had it been delineated in all its fullness, a deep impresson would, no doubt, have been made upon the intelligent hearer.

3. It only remains to offer a few thoughts on **ITS GOODNESS** ; this was principally in view when

the subject was chosen to entertain the audience with, on the present occasion. It seemed not improper at some length, to discourse of the other branches of the subject, in order to prepare the way for this. And this part has, in some degree, been anticipated by what has been already suggested : for it is impossible for us to take a view, though superficial, of the nature and extent of the work, without being compelled to admit its goodness. The idea of its goodness is introduced with some formality by St. Paul. *This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.* It seems as if the apostle foresaw that there would be some, in all ages, who from a corrupt heart or corrupt morals, or bitter prejudices, would be inclined to disesteem and depreciate it : and therefore he prefaces his assertion thus, *this is a true saying*—what may be admitted without hesitation, what may be relied on with all possible safety.—The work is not good and desirable, because attended with worldly pleasure, honour, ease, or affluence. Our Lord suffered from the tongue of slander and from poverty : he had none of the pomp and splendor of this world ; he did not chuse for himself an easy and opulent station. The meek and lowly Jesus, who lived in a condition poor and despised, and died in pain and torture ; did not intend that his faithful ministers should have a large share of the riches and honours of the world. The work is not lucrative : it is not the road to promotion ; but the work is good as it is conversant about the greatest objects, the promotion of the glory of God, and the spiritual and eternal interest of man ; and it is a desirable office in this view of it. The wisdom and benevolence of the divine nature are displayed in all his works and ways. An infinitely wise

and good being does nothing in vain, or for unnecessary purposes. Whatever such a being does, is well done—is altogether best ; all things considered. Were there, consequently, no other reason to believe the work of the gospel ministry a good work ; this alone, that an infinitely wise and good Being has instituted it would satisfy the thinking mind. God originally formed all things for his glory ; he continually preserves them for the same important end. This indeed is his highest and ultimate end in the creation, preservation, and government of the universe. The divine glory is most illustriously manifested in the work of redemption, and all that appertains to it ; the office, consequently of a teacher in the church of Christ is designed to display the character, the praise, the majesty and glory of God, by exhibiting, stately, the important doctrines and truths of religion. The minister of the gospel is to be the mouth of God to the children of men, to declare his word and truths only, to reveal the treasures of his grace, the mysteries of his love, the richness of his mercy, and to speak forth the terrors of his justice to the impenitent, as well as to be the mouth of the people to offer prayer and praises to his eternal throne. He must accordingly speak the divine word faithfully, plainly, honestly and seriously ; he is to come to his fellowmen only with the messages of Deity, of his grace and goodness. What a great and infinite being is God ! He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, and wonderful in works—compared with him the whole universe is as nothing. Before him angels bow ; to him all the intellectual creation should offer unremittedly their homage. To honor this God, by dispensing his truths to men, is

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the work of his servants in the holy ministry : certainly then it is a good work. Moreover, inseparably connected with the divine glory, is the spiritual and eternal interest of man. That is important to mortals which concerns their happiness for the few fleeting days they are to remain on the theatre of life. Most deeply are they bound to attend, to what may be rationally supposed to secure their well-being while here below. But their spiritual and eternal interests, though lamentably disregarded by the generality, are infinitely more momentous than any or all sublunary bliss. And the immediate tendency of all preaching, is to invite man to chuse life and peace, to cultivate virtue and piety here, that he may possess glory and honour hereafter : to press him by all arguments, motives, and prospects, by all that is, or can be dear, by all that is great or interesting, the terrors of the law, the promises of grace, and the pleasing hopes of the gospel : to turn from every error and vice, to the ways of pure and undefiled religion. That work must be good, the end of which is so noble ; no less than the promotion of the glory of the Supreme Being, and the eternal felicity of man.

In the next place, the work of a christian minister is a good work, as it is an honourable employment in itself. It is no doubt proper for the ministers of Christ to magnify their office : not indeed by bestowing on it high-sounding appellations, but by acting in character, and faithfully discharging all the important duties of it, and living accordingly. The best way to magnify the office is to act up to the spirit and dignity of it, and never to leave undone any of its duties. There is no ground to expect that honour which cometh

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from men. The sacred office is not, and ought not to be the road to worldly honour or preferment, or opulence. Christ's kingdom is not of this world; and his ministring servants, who are appointed to preach the glad tidings of salvation, ought not to look for any large portion of worldly honour. But still the work of the christian pastor is deserving of esteem in itself, because its intention is so benevolent and exalted. Persons who hate piety and morality, (and christian morality as well as christian piety has its enemies) will always disesteem the work.—Through the prejudices of education, some will be enemies to it; for many are educated to hate all order, all appearance of religion, and especially all who are clothed with the sacred office. Some who have given themselves up to work wickedness, who are immoral and profane, will be hostile to all the faithful teachers of religion. And such as have imbibed loose principles, or are infidels will, of course, be opposed to them; and will leave no expedient unattempted which may probably depress and injure them; and the frailties of those who sustain the sacred office, instead of being covered with the veil of charity, are usually expatiated upon, with an air of triumph. That unworthy men may be invested with the office is not denied: but it is unfair to make the office responsible for the errors or imperfections of those who sustain it.—Wherever there is a general depravation of morals, and infidel principles are embraced, there we are to expect warm exertions to depress, injure, and malign a faithful and orthodox ministry.

WHAT is now contended for, under this head of discourse, is that the office is in itself honourea,

ble, and to be esteemed for its own sake. *We beseech you*, says the apostle Paul to his brethren at Thessalonica, *to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you : and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.* Pride of office, like all other pride, is ridiculous. To annex high-sounding titles to an office bespeaks arrogance, and looks like a desire to have ones person in admiration. All vanity of this kind is usually despised, and always ought to be. The unworthy and ignorant we must cheerfully give up to all that reproach which they merit. When all this is granted, we contend that the work of the gospel ministry is an honourable employment ; and the scripture represents faithful ministers as *embassadors of the prince of peace—* as *stewards of the mysteries of God*, and uses a variety of other expressions which denote an honourable calling.

AND, there is, thirdly, besides the dignity of the office in itself, a rich pleasure in the duties of it. If a rich pleasure accompany the duties of it, to those who faithfully exercise them, or use the office well, then it must be a good work, a most desirable employment. In what light, it is a pleasing employment, will be now stated. While it is a painful, a laborious, un lucrative, and, in the eyes of the wicked, a disreputable employment : it is after all a most pleasing one ; a most desirable office.

THE man who has no love to religion or is not a good man, cannot, it is readily allowed, enjoy the pleasures of virtue. In order that the work of a minister may be to him a pleasing one, he must, in the first place, be a good man—the re-

generate man. For if he have not a pious heart, faithfulness can hardly be expected. Inward, experimental religion fills him with love and pity to perishing souls—makes him willing to spend and be spent in his Lord's service—smooths every rough way which he hath to travel—sweetens every bitter cup which he hath to drink—enables him to rise superior to the difficulties which surround him—to meet the dangers to which he may be exposed with cheerfulness—and disposes him to activity and diligence in his work. Joined to personal religion there should be penetration, soundness of judgment, strength of memory, quickness of apprehension, vivacity of imagination, a warm feeling heart, and all adorned with a liberal education. A man who enters the work from worldly ends—from improper motives, however rich his powers of mind may be, or extensive his science, though his ministration be allowed to be valid, cannot hope to enjoy any real pleasure in it. From vanity he may indeed feel some complacency. His pride may be gratified from that popular applause which he may receive. But, after all, he will drag on heavily in his work. Conscience will often severely reprimand him, either for his sloth or insincerity. He will go through his work therefore with coldness and reluctance. On the other hand the pious and faithful teacher takes an unspeakable delight in the duties of his office—in opening the counsel of heaven to men—in proclaiming the gospel of peace—in dispensing to the perishing the bread of life. In such evil days, as the present, he will have much discouragement and gloom. He mourns over his want of success; and tears flow at the sight of abounding iniquity, that so few are savingly benefitted by the gospel. The greater the ardour of his love

to his master and precious and immortal souls, the more poignant the grief of unsuccessfulness. But if faithful, the blood of souls will not be required at his hands. Though Israel be not gathered yet he will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord ; though much study be a weariness, yet the satisfaction resulting from literary improvements is great, and more than a balance to the toil of study. It is a happiness that we may love and serve God in general ; but the happiness of being instruments of his glory in the salvation of men, is pure and sublime.

It may be added, in the fourth place, that the goodness and desirableness of the work of the gospel ministry appear from its having a benign aspect on civil society. Morality and virtue contribute more than all things else to the prosperity of the state. Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. As vice universally diffused will gradually weaken, and, in the end, destroy the best system of government, so virtue will strengthen it, and render the subjects happy. Righteousness exalteth a nation. Religion teaches us to obey the laws of society ; adds the energy of conscience and moral duty. It sheds abroad the richest of social blessings ; promotes peace, order, justice and benevolence. It makes men good, from thence the transition is easy and natural, to regular citizens and obedient subjects. Its office is to subdue the turbulent passions, to enlighten and purify ; and of course to prevent the growth of those evils which destroy the happiness of the social life. By bringing men together to the same place of worship, it softens and polishes their manners : It teaches them kindness, humanity, condescension and good will. Now the work of the christian pastor is to

spread the glories of this religion, not only by his doctrines, but by exemplifying its virtues and graces in his life ; for he is to be an example to others in faith, in purity, in charity, in peace, in love. He is to persuade men of their obligations to pray for each other—to wish well to all—to seek the peace of government, its honour and stability, and that they are bound to do nothing which shall be detrimental to the high interest of society. He is to teach them temperance, regularity of deportment, sobriety, truth and righteousness—to put away all guile, wrath, evil speaking, and whatever else is evil. He is to impress their minds with a sense of the guilt they contract by indulging a wish or desire which is contrary to purity, justice, and benevolence, and to persuade them to enter on no line of business or conduct incompatible with moral obligation. All this tends to make good citizens, and of course to advance the happiness of the community. If therefore we had no reference to another world, it would be wise to maintain the gospel and to attend upon its institutions, for the purposes of carrying the welfare of civil society to its greatest perfection.

LASTLY, But though the work of the minister of Christ have this salutary tendency as to the welfare and glory of civil society, yet it looks beyond all that is on the earth, and its chief worth lies in preparing man for the blessedness of the kingdom of God in heaven. Would we see all the goodness of the work, now under consideration, our views must be extended not only through all the changes of a changing world, but to a dying moment—the final judgment—and the joys of a blissful immortality. The comforts of religion,

in those trying moments when flesh and heart must fail us, are inexpressibly supporting. United to the Redeemer, the soul is secure. Faith upholds it : Hope transports it. With composure it bids a long adieu to the world : It sees the approach of the last enemy without dismay, and quits this mortal stage triumphing in the all-cleansing blood of its Saviour, who descended into the lonely abodes of the grave, that we might rest there in peace.

WHEN dismissed from all that was, or could be dear, here in this world, it appears unembodied before its Maker, an infinitely holy God, and hears its sentence with joy. Behold it entering on its future inheritance, which exceeds in richness and grandeur, all it ever hoped for, or could, in its most lucid hours, conceive !——It looks round through all the immense regions of bliss with astonishment, and becomes possessed of a happiness, which will never be interrupted : which will never terminate : and which will forever increase. It joins the general assembly of the church of the first-born. Among the countless millions who compose this vast, this happy assembly, there is not one cold heart, one dissenting voice, one discordant note. “ The celestial flame of love, like ethereal fire, is communicated from heart to heart :—the heavenly harmony catches from tongue to tongue, and glory to God and the Lamb is the united, the repeated acclamation. Angelic harps and voices join the heavenly concert, swell the bold and solemn note, and complete the full music of heaven. Loud hallelujahs croud every song, and anthems of celestial praise, to him who loved us and gave himself for us, resound through all the heavenly palaces.” To all this boundless, endless, extatic

glory, the office and works of the evangelic ministry tend to bring us. Certainly then it is a **GOOD WORK.**

I HAVE now imperfectly touched the three things proposed, the consecration of the christian minister to his work—the work itself, and the goodness of it, and should proceed to the many useful reflections resulting therefrom, but the discourse, though brevity has been studied, is already protracted to a too great length, and will therefore be concluded with an address to my worthy brother, at whose request I speak on this occasion, and to the church and congregation who usually worship in this place.

AND our subject may be first addressed to the candidate for ordination to the work of a christian pastor. You will indulge me a few words on the present interesting occasion. The scene which now opens upon you is of unspeakable importance. It becomes you to enter upon it, with a due sense of its difficulties, and of your dependance on him, who has an infinite fulness to supply all our wants. You are about to engage in a design of the highest moment, that of preaching the everlasting gospel to your fellow men. See the people whom you are to instruct!—To them you are to declare the whole counsel of God, with all simplicity and sincerity. To them are you to break the bread of life—to preach the pure and plain truths of religion in such a manner as will, in your judgment, be most likely to answer the end. How affecting the thought of having the care of precious and immortal souls committed to us! and how anxious must, therefore, this day be to you, a day big with

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your happiness or woe ! The tear of labouring distress must flow. The sigh will heave. Unutterable anxiety must fill your mind. The man who enters the work of the christian ministry knows not what a weight he takes upon himself till taught by experience. I feel most affectionately for you. I have attempted, in the above discourse, to set before you, the work you have to perform : its arduousness you will now endeavour to realize. I seek not to move your affections, but to solemnize your soul. Let your *first care* be to seek the spirit of pure and undefiled religion for yourself. It is a dreadful as well as difficult thing to preach an unknown Saviour. The most needful of all qualifications of a gospel minister, is to be a good man. This will make him faithful. This will make him studious and laborious in his work. This will make him useful. This will give him skill in guiding souls in the path to glory. This will enable him to enjoy himself in the duties of his office. This will inspire him with an ardent zeal in his divine master's cause. This will sweeten all his way.—*Next*, let all your abilities and literary acquirements (and you have had a happy opportunity to improve yourself in the sciences from the office you sustained at our college) be sacred to religion. Give yourself wholly to reading, meditation and prayer, that your profiting may appear unto all. Bend the whole of your strength to this one point, to be an able and faithful minister of the New Testament. Be not satisfied with merely doing the duties of your office, let them be well done—let them be done in the best manner. And for this purpose lay down a wise plan of study. Often, much is lost for the want of a judicious arrangement of our studies. Read much : but think more. Spare no pains to

enlarge your mind, and to furnish it with solid and useful knowledge. As much as may consist with your place and circumstances, cultivate an acquaintance and correspondence with men of science and largeness of mind. This is particularly necessary in the present day which boasts of its improvements and refinements, and in which christianity has many open enemies, pretending to philosophy and extensive reading. In your conduct be candid and liberal. While you love and admire the pure and strict principles of the gospel, carefully shun all bigotry and superstition. When men of genius and study differ from us, we ought diligently to weigh their arguments, and not hastily reject what they say, because they differ from us. A prejudiced and uncandid mind is most unamiable. We should be disposed to receive light from whatever quarter it may arise. Treat all men with propriety and your own flock with tender affection. Be prudent and firm :—do all in your power to preserve peace among your people : heal wounds, if any be made, with a lenient hand : exercise discipline with gentleness :—be a pattern to your people of every grace and virtue. Let the pleasing manners of the friend soften the gravity of office. Let condescension and dignity be duly blended. To say all, in a word, think for yourself in matters of religion : call no man master : and honestly preach what you believe to be the truth. Endeavour to adopt the best method of preaching the plain apostolic method—clearly opening your subject—rightly arranging all your thoughts—and pressing home divine truth on the conscience and the heart—bending all your efforts to this point, to save your own soul, and them that hear you—to make them GOOD and HAPPY.

BUT it is incumbent on me, secondly, to address the church and congregation who usually worship in this place.—My brethren, you have heard concerning the duty of your minister. He is to proclaim salvation to you, and the whole counsel of God, that he may be pure from the blood of all men. Behold the man—now your choice, to be set a part to the labours of the gospel among you! The solemnities of this day, will remind you of *past instructions*, which you have enjoyed from former pastors: and the holy providence of God in the death of your late pastor. May you and the afflicted family make a right improvement of the same.* Your mourning is now turned into rejoicing. How affecting are the vicissitudes of human life! We congratulate you on your pleasing prospect which opens this day. May you have reason to remember this day with great delight; and your children to bless it. Study the things which make for peace and wherewith one may edify another. How happy are peace and union among a people! Blessed is the condition of that minister who labours in word and doctrine among a people that are candid, united, affectionate, and attentive! Make it your care not to oppose unnecessarily, or afflict and grieve the heart of your minister. Avoid all prejudice, hatred, envy, and jealousies. Cultivate good will towards him and one another.

LET the spirit of the gospel reign among you.—

* The church of Christ, in Stepney, was organized, June 7th, 1727.

REV. DANIEL RUSSEL, ordained pastor the same day.

Died, September 16th, 1764.

REV. BURRAGE MERRIAM, ordained February 27th, 1765.

Died, November 30th, 1776.

REV. JOHN LEWIS, ordained January 24th, 1781.

Died, April 28th, 1792.

Let kind offices and a generous heart soften the lot of your pastor ; remembering it is in your power to make him a happy or wretched man : let your children be taught to respect him, for his office sake, and to venerate the institutions of the gospel. Encourage his heart, and support him by your friendship : above all by a regular, constant, diligent, and affectionate attendance on his ministrations in the sanctuary. Be always found in your place, bringing your families with you, as well as he in his, on each revolving sabbath.— Grieve not his heart by deserting public worship. It is most deeply to be lamented, that in our land so favoured of heaven, there should be such a growing neglect of public worship and things divine ; and such a flood of impiety, irreligion, profanity, error and scepticism rolling in upon us, and threatening our ruin. Your minister will be ambitious of being the honoured instrument of your salvation—of taking you all along to heaven with him. But he cannot compel you to go thither. He can point out the road : take you by the hand and encourage you by the way. But still religion is a voluntary thing—still you must “ walk on your own feet :” you must work out your own salvation. All the means of grace are to bring you to faith, repentance and happiness.— We wish you, this day, a blessing out of the house of the Lord. Finally brethren farewell, be of one mind,—live in peace ;—and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Let all the numerous concourse of people now convened, learn the importance of the means of grace and ministrations of the gospel. Make it your chief desire so to improve them, as that they may render you happy : seek the divine blessing to accompany them, and render them effectual to your salvation. Reve-

rence your Creator, your Saviour, your Bible, and your Conscience : remember all these require you to attend SUPREMELY to the things of eternity.— Do this, then, when time is no more, you shall ascend to the regions of the blessed. And now to the king immortal—eternal and invisible, be rendered through Jesus Christ ; all honour, glory, and praise, from all on earth, and all in heaven.—AMEN.

F I N I S.

