

DR. SNODGRASS' DISCOURSE

AT THE

INSTALLATION

OF

DR. M'AULEY.

THE
TRUE GROUND OF ESTEEM

FOR

THE MINISTRY,

A DISCOURSE

Delivered in Murray Street Church, New York, on Thursday Evening,
January 31, 1833,

AT THE INSTALLATION

OF

THOMAS M'AULEY, D. D. L. L. D.



BY WILLIAM D. SNODGRASS, D. D.

Late Pastor of said Church.



New York:

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1833.

“At a meeting of the SESSION OF MURRAY STREET CHURCH, on the evening of the 31st January, 1833,—It was resolved, that the Rev. Dr. SNODGRASS be requested to furnish the Session with a copy of his Sermon, delivered at the Installation of the Rev. Dr. M'AULEY as Pastor of this Church, for publication.”

Extract from the Minutes.

S. WALKER, *Clerk.*

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THE Author of the following Discourse has consented to its publication, not because he supposes it to be entitled to this distinction on account of its merits, but because he was not willing to frustrate the wishes of the officers and members of the congregation to which it was delivered. His connexion with them, as their Pastor, for a period of more than nine years—his voluntary separation from them in a state of entire cordiality and kindness of feeling—and the satisfaction with which he contemplated their choice of a successor, all combined to render the occasion one of deep and pleasing interest to him, as well as to them. He is happy in the opportunity of perpetuating the recollection of this interest, as far as it can be done by committing the substance of the exercise, in which he was invited to engage, to the press. And he hopes that those who received his remarks with so much favour at the time of their delivery, will be in some measure profited, as well as gratified, by perusing them in their present form.

DISCOURSE.

1 THESS. v. 12, 13. "We beseech you, brethren, 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."

1 COR. iii. 5—7. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth."

You ought to be aware, my hearers, that in regulating your regard for the ministers of Christ, there are two extremes to which you are exposed. They lie in opposite directions from each other, and are to be avoided with equal care. One is the extreme of placing *too low* an estimate upon their office and labours; and the other is the extreme of thinking *more highly* of their persons and performances than you ought to think.—Both these extremes were exemplified in the errors of judgment and feeling which sometimes appeared in the days of the Apostles; and, whether we consult the subsequent history of the church or observe her present condition, we must acknowledge that the human mind is characterized by an evident proneness to these evils in every age. I give a true account, not only of my own experience but also of the experience of others who are near me, when I say, that there are many hearers of the Gospel from whom we receive no sympathy or assistance; and some who are even betrayed into the sin of giving us to understand, both in word and action, that they have but

little regard either for us or for the employment in which we are engaged. And yet perhaps we can all testify, on the other hand, that we have met with cases of attachment to our persons and ministrations, which have been strong, even to an excessive and unwarrantable degree—inasmuch as they have seemed to indicate too much reliance upon us to the exclusion of a proper degree of dependence upon God.

Now the two passages, to which I call your attention this evening, may be considered as meeting these evils in their respective directions; and, when properly interpreted in the light of each other, they will serve to remove them both, and to exhibit the true ground which the ministry should occupy in the affectionate regards of their fellow-men.—The one which is taken from the Epistle to the Thessalonians will teach, that when your attachment to them grows out of a proper estimation of *the work* in which they are engaged, there is scarcely any danger of excess;—because the apostle not only permits but expressly requires you, “for their *work’s* sake,” “to know them,” and “to esteem them very highly in love.” And the one which is taken from the Epistle to the Corinthians will show, that when your affection for them is founded upon any thing *else* than a right valuation of their work—upon such grounds, for example, as some peculiarity in their personal appearance, or in the character and style of their public ministrations—then they are in danger of being overrated, or of assuming a degree of importance in your estimation which they do not actually possess in the estimation of God. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? So then neither is he that planteth *any thing*, neither he that watereth.”

The truth and propriety of these views, I shall endeavour, on the present occasion, to establish and illustrate,—believing that, if we walk in the light of these scriptures, we shall be guided to proper apprehensions in reference to this general subject; and believing, also, that no subject could be more suitable to the design for which we are now assembled and to the special transaction in which we are this evening to engage.

I. In the first place, then, I declare on the authority of the apostle to the Thessalonians, that **THE WORK**, in which the faithful ministers of Christ are employed, **SHOULD RAISE THEM TO AN EXALTED PLACE IN THE ESTEEM AND AFFECTIONS OF THEIR FELLOW-MEN.**

I say the **FAITHFUL** ministers of Christ, because they are the only persons of whom the apostle speaks. An *unfaithful* minister is one who *neglects* the work to which he professes to have been called; and therefore to expect him to be esteemed for his “work’s sake,” would involve a contradiction in terms. In yielding to this suggestion, however, you are not to go to the opposite extreme and suppose, that the labours of a minister must be attended by any prescribed degree of popularity and success, before he can be accounted faithful, and therefore entitled to the esteem and affection of which we now speak. This would be equally far from the meaning and foreign from the design of the apostle. It is the work itself, and not the manner of its performance or the results to which it leads, which he exhibits as the ground of your respect and attachment. And, that you may know what this work is and therefore whether it is or is not performed by those who sustain the office of the ministry among you, you are furnished with plain and ample descriptions of it, both in its general nature and in its particular departments. In its general na-

ture, it is the work of converting sinners as well as of perfecting the saints and edifying the body of Christ. And in its particular departments, there is the work of *preaching the Gospel*—which consists, not only in declaring “the whole counsel of God” in the public ministrations of the sanctuary, but also in improving every other appropriate opportunity of “dividing the word of truth” in such a manner that every one may receive a portion in due season—proceeding for this purpose, according to time and circumstances, “from house to house”—approaching the rich and the poor, and dispensing advice and admonition to parents and children and masters and servants—directing the minds of the young to the peculiar counsels which the divine oracles have addressed to them—calling the attention of the old and the middle-aged to their duties and dangers—and bearing to those who are afflicted, either by sickness or by any other adversity, the instructions and consolations which are adapted to their case.—There is also the work of *administering the sacraments* of the church of Christ; and of doing this in such a way as to guard their purity and promote the edifying influence which they were intended to exert.—And, finally, there is the work of *employing the discipline* of the house of God for the correction of offenders—endeavouring, by all argument and persuasion, to reclaim those who have gone out of the way; and, at last, if they refuse to hear and repent, cutting them off and placing them, as to their connexion with the visible church, in the situation of “a Heathen man and a Publican.”

Now, it is your province, to determine in the exercise of charity and a sound judgment, whether those who profess to “labour among you” and to be “over you in the Lord” and to “admonish you,” are really engaged in the habitual

and faithful discharge of these duties. And if they are, you are then bound, without any regard to the popularity of their ministrations or the measure of their apparent success, to receive and obey the exhortation of the Apostle—not only to “know” them, by recognizing them *as* ministers of Christ in your deportment towards them; but, in the exercise of a positive feeling of regard, to “esteem” them—and not only so, but to esteem them “highly”—yea, more than this, to esteem them “very” highly—and, as if this were not sufficient to express the whole truth, you are called upon to esteem them very highly “in love,” for the sake of that work which they are performing with the ability and success which God giveth.

If you are disposed to inquire what there is in this work, which entitles those who enter upon it to this high degree of esteem and affection, I answer,

1. *Its object is to promote your happiness, from a HIGHER MOTIVE and in a far GREATER MEASURE, than can be claimed by any other employment in which you are served by your fellow-men.* Compare it, for example, with the work of a well qualified instructor of youth—whom you regard as a blessing to yourselves and the community, because he is labouring to discipline the minds of your children, and prepare them for the active duties of the present life. Or compare it with the employment of an eminent and conscientious Jurist—to whom you resort for advice, when your rights and property are in danger. Or compare it with the business of an experienced and skilful Physician—to whom you look, in times of sickness, for the means of arresting the progress of disease and restoring yourselves and those who are dear to you to the enjoyment of health. All these vocations are important in their respective spheres, and they often furnish examples of integrity and faithfulness and

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kindness, which are worthy of all praise. But those who pursue them are, in general, actuated by the same motive which impels the merchant in the transaction of his business, or the farmer in the cultivation of his grounds. They have selected these professions, in preference to other worldly employments, and are labouring in the discharge of the duties which they impose as an honourable and lawful means of worldly gain. In the case of the faithful minister of Christ, however, it is not so. All that he anticipates, in the form of pecuniary compensation, is measured out to him in the one rule, "which the Lord hath ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Every expectation, beyond this, he has offered up as a sacrifice at the commencement of his work. He has yielded his heart to the influence of a motive which is drawn—not from "corruptible things, as silver and gold"—but from the prospect of a crown of glory which fadeth not away. He has thought of his obligations to the Saviour of his own soul, and of the service which he might render to the souls of his fellow-creatures. And, turning his back upon the prospect of worldly gain, he is looking for a recompense in the peace of his own conscience and in the approbation of God.

Under the influence of this high and peculiar motive, he is labouring to promote your happiness in an eminent and singular *degree*. While the men of other professions are acting for you in reference to the interests of time, he is endeavouring to make you possessors of that which has "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." As a worker together with God, he comes into your sanctuary with "a balm for every wound and a cordial for every fear:"—In sickness, he brings you a Physician who can heal diseases of the mind as well as of the body; and, in all seasons of adversity, he points you to "a friend

that sticketh closer than a brother;”—Regarding you as inhabitants of this world, he sets before you “a light unto your feet and a lamp unto your path,” which, if followed implicitly, will guide you into ways of pleasantness and paths of peace:—And, viewing you as travellers to another state of existence, his object is to bring you into connexion with Jesus Christ as “joint-heirs” to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance:—If he sees you slumbering in security on the brink of eternal ruin, he comes to admonish you of your situation and rouse you to a sense of your danger:—If he finds you in a state of conviction for sin—weary and heavy laden under the burden of its guilt—he sets before you “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” in all the winning aspects of his love and willingness to save:—If he discovers that any obstacle is keeping you away from the arms of this bleeding and compassionate Saviour, he endeavours, by all appropriate instruction, to remove it:—And if, as the children of God, he hears of your sighs and lamentations over departed light and consolation and joy, he reminds you of the faithfulness of Him “who hath called you to his kingdom and glory,” and exhibits the ample provisions of the “everlasting covenant” in such a light that you cannot but exclaim, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” In short, his whole deportment towards you, is directed and controlled by the belief that it will “profit a man nothing to gain the whole world and lose his own soul.” And, therefore, he “reproves and rebukes and exhorts, with all long-suffering and doctrine:”—He labours “in season” and “out of season,” and endeavours to adapt his deportment and instructions to the varieties of character and condition which are

to be found among you—in the hope that you “may not perish but have everlasting life.” So that, in proportion as the soul is of more value than the body, and the interests of eternity are more to be regarded than the possessions and events of time, in the same proportion is a faithful ministry of more importance to your welfare than any of the other employments of men, which are conferring their benefits upon you.

And, as falling in with the truth of this representation, it is interesting to observe, that wherever the comparative worth of a faithful ministry is referred to in the language of the Bible, it is set forth to our view as *the greatest blessing* which any country or community can enjoy; while the absence of it is regarded as *the greatest curse* which can fall upon the human race. In what language, for example, did Jehovah himself speak, when describing the most propitious of all the circumstances which were to attend the return of the Jews from their long captivity in Babylon? As recorded by his own Prophet, His declaration was, “I will give them *pastors*—after mine own heart—who shall feed them with knowledge and understanding.” What was it that He taught Isaiah to consider as sufficient to counterbalance every form and degree of earthly suffering which he might be called to endure? “Though the Lord give thee the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy *teachers* be removed into a corner any more: but thine eyes shall see thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee saying; This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left.” What was it that he instructed the Prophet Amos to regard as a heavier calamity than any of the desolating consequences of famine or drought? “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land,

—and it shall not be a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of *hearing the words of the Lord*. And they shall wander from sea to sea and from the North even to the East; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it.” Or, to come down to a still later period, what was it that the glorified Redeemer singled out as the most alarming of all judgments, when his object was to rouse a slumbering church to the discharge of its duty? “Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy *candlestick* out of its place, except thou repent.” The “candlestick” was the well known emblem of the ministry of the word; and, supposing that this backsliding community still retained some sense of the infinite value of this blessing, He threatens them with its removal, as the best means of indicating his displeasure and bringing them to repentance.

2. The work of the faithful ministers of Christ should raise them to an exalted place in the esteem and affections of their fellow-men; *because it is a work, in which they have GREAT DIFFICULTIES to encounter, and SEVERE TRIALS to endure*. Some, I know, are disposed to believe that this remark has but little foundation in fact, and that the practical operation of it is principally confined to the imaginations of the ministry themselves. This, however, was not the impression of the great apostle whose language we are now considering; nor is it the opinion of any of those who have made “full proof” of their ministry by endeavouring to walk in his steps.—I have a deep conviction, that if the peculiar discouragements which encompass the duties of this office could be fully known and estimated beforehand, the number of those who seek it would be greatly diminished. And, therefore, I regard it as a wise appoint-

ment that we are conducted to an acquaintance with these discouragements, only by experience and by slow degrees. In consecrating ourselves to the work, our minds are principally occupied by a view of its attractions. We are allured into it by the love of Christ, by his promises of assistance, and by the prospect of usefulness. And, having entered upon it, we pass unconsciously from one scene of its peculiar perplexities to another, until we are fairly and fully committed—until we have gone too far to retreat without dishonour to ourselves and obvious injury to the cause of our Divine Master—until our way is so completely hedged up on every side, by the providence of God and our own voluntary engagements, that we feel compelled to exclaim, “Necessity is laid upon us; yea woe be unto us if we preach not the Gospel!”

I cannot pretend, at present, to occupy the whole field of illustration in which the difficulties and trials of the ministry are embraced. In order, however, that this field may open before you, allow me to recall to your recollection some of the prominent characteristics by which this work is distinguished from all others.—Think, for a moment, of the difficult duty which devolves upon the minister of Christ in reference to *the spiritual condition of his own soul*. If he desires to be useful, he must not only be a “man of God” as to the fact of his conversion, but he must exhibit an eminent degree of piety and growth in grace;—He must fix upon his own mind a becoming and habitual sense of the presence of God, of his accountability to Him, and of the infinite value of the souls which are committed to his charge:—He must keep the flame of those affections, which he endeavours to raise in the minds of others, continually burning upon the altar of his own breast:—He must put far from him all exhibitions of pride and vanity and self-suffi-

ciency; and, penetrated with a deep feeling of love to Christ and compassion towards men, he must show forth the contrary virtues of humility and condescension and love. And, in a world in which so many opposite influences and temptations are continually at work, “who is sufficient for these things?”—Think, again, of the difficult work which he has to perform in the great department of *preaching the Gospel*—the difficulty of exhibiting its doctrines and duties and promises and threatenings, in all their variety and proportions and fulness—the difficulty of always delivering its message with a proper degree of simplicity and courage and earnestness and affection—the difficulty of adapting its instructions to the varied dispensations of Providence and the diversified conditions of human life—the difficulty of declaring the whole truth to all, without being influenced by the fear or incurring the displeasure of any—the difficulty of instructing the ignorant, of awakening the careless, of detecting the hypocrite, of comforting the mourner, of reviving the dejected, of restoring the backslider, and of leading the inquiring sinner to the cross of Christ. Remember, too, that while living under the pressing obligation of these duties, there are various other engagements which break in upon his time and draw largely upon the anxiety of his mind and the feelings of his heart. Some of these proceed from his domestic and social relations—others, from the public benevolent institutions which distinguish the age and place in which he lives—and others, again, from the obligations of his office *as pastor* of the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made him an overseer. As one who desires to be faithful in this office, he must attend to the wants of particular parts, as well as to the welfare of the whole;—He must take care of *the lambs*, as well as of the sheep which are fully grown; and, for this purpose, he must call

them around him at convenient seasons and feed them with food adapted to their age and strength;—He must counsel and admonish in private, as well as in public;—He must answer the calls which are made upon him from the chamber of sickness and from the house of mourning:—And if, after this, he has nothing left but an exhausted mind and the fragments of a broken hour to prepare him for the high duties of the sanctuary, he must still throw himself upon the help of God and go forward in the prosecution of his work.

Of those things which assume more directly the form of *trials*, there are many which befall the minister of Christ, to which other men and Christians are not exposed; or, if exposed, not in the same degree. In consequence of the peculiar position which he occupies in the public eye, he is especially in the way of the various forms of *evil speaking* which are abroad in the community. It is of the peculiar nature of his work, to “testify of the world, that the deeds thereof are evil;” and, for this reason, he is often reproached by those who “hate the light” and will not come to the light lest their “deeds should be reproved.” In their practical judgment and daily conversation, he is accused, sometimes of illiberality and bigotry, and sometimes of enthusiasm and fanaticism. He is regarded and spoken of, as a narrow-minded enemy of all innocent recreations and enjoyments—or as a credulous believer in doctrines and mysteries which throw an unnecessary gloom over the domestic and social relations of life—or as a designing hypocrite, who is governed by no higher motive than the prospect of human popularity and worldly gain. Among the very people who attend upon his ministrations, he sometimes meets with those who assist in turning the current of defamation against him. Having become his enemies, either

because he has told them the truth or for some other reason, they avail themselves of all convenient opportunities of whispering unfavourable suggestions into the ears of others, in reference to his official character and conduct—of condemning him on account of things which he does and things which he does not—and, sometimes, of even originating and giving currency to unfounded reports, which are calculated to undermine his reputation as a Christian, as well as to circumscribe his usefulness in the peculiar service to which he has devoted his life.—In connexion with these efforts of his enemies, he has sometimes much to endure from those who profess to be his friends—from fluctuations in their temper and deportment—from irregularity in their attendance upon the means of grace—from backwardness to assist and encourage him in his labours—from the want of harmony and mutual love among themselves—and from other evident signs of a general and growing insensibility to the concerns of the soul. In coming into the Sanctuary or the place of social prayer, his heart is often chilled by the absence of those whom he expected to meet. The message from God, in the preparation of which he had wept and prayed, is delivered without producing any visible impression. At the close of one Sabbath after another, he retires to his closet and exclaims, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” He sees those, to whom he would gladly become the means of salvation, apparently ripening under his ministry for a more aggravated and awful perdition. Though never so faithful in proclaiming to them “the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of the vengeance of our God,” they remain in a state of indifference and unconcern; and are thereby filled up as “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.” And, while he mourns over them, his soul is often

pained within him, by the inconsistency and unfaithfulness of some who belong externally to "the household of faith." They walk in such a manner as to compel him to suspect, and sometimes to say "even weeping" that they are "the enemies of the cross of Christ." And here, let it not be forgotten, that, while surrounded by these sources of trial, he must continue in the discharge of his regularly returning duties, day after day and week after week, as if there were nothing to perplex or discourage him. When the hour appointed for his ministrations arrives, he must come forward, whatever may have been his opportunities of preparation before-hand and whatever may be the frame of his mind at the moment. He must stand up for the avowed purpose of instructing and comforting others, though he feels the need of light and consolation for himself. He must attempt to awaken the feelings and inflame the zeal of his fellow-Christians, though he is condemning his own heart for its insensibility and coldness.—And, at some seasons, these various considerations and feelings gather upon him so thick and fast and lie upon his spirit with such an oppressive weight, that he is well prepared to exclaim "O that I had the wings of a dove that I might fly away and be at rest!"

Now, if it be true, that there are difficulties and trials in this work, at which these remarks furnish only a superficial glance, then there is good reason for saying that those who enter upon it for the purpose of doing good to their fellow-men and promoting the glory of God, are deserving of that deep and heart-felt regard of which the apostle speaks.

To these considerations, I shall only add

3. That the ministers of Christ should be esteemed "very highly;" because their work is one, *in the faithful*

undertaking and performance of which they subject themselves to a peculiar degree of RESPONSIBILITY. “Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God;”—but, in every individual case, this account will proceed according to the rule, “unto whomsoever much is given of the same will much be required.” And it is easy to see that while this rule imposes one degree of responsibility upon you, it imposes another and a higher degree of responsibility upon us. In God’s own estimation, while you are *the inhabitants* of Zion, we are *the watchmen* who stand upon her walls—while you are *the subjects* with whom the Prince of Peace is negotiating, we are *the ambassadors* to whom he has committed the treaty and terms of reconciliation—and while you are *the sheep* of the pasture over which the Redeemer presides, we are *the under-shepherds* whom he has appointed to protect you from danger and provide you with food. In what solemn and awful language does the Prophet exhibit the bearing of one of these similitudes,—when he says, “Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man! thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand?” This, my hearers, is our responsibility—and this responsibility, we bear, for your sakes. We watch for your souls “as those who must give account” in an eminent and peculiar sense. And, for this reason, we are not using “swelling words of vanity” to exalt ourselves above measure, but are uttering “the words of truth and soberness” when we call upon you to “know” us, and “esteem” us “very highly in love” for our “work’s sake.”

I should be glad, if our time on this occasion would permit, to bring before you the principal *ways* in which your esteem for the ministers of Christ ought to be shown, and to point out those respects in which there is the greatest danger of failure in the discharge of this duty. These particulars, however, we are compelled to omit, in order to afford room for the next main topic of consideration,—which suggests the idea

II. That, WHEN ANY THING ELSE THAN THEIR WORK BECOMES THE GROUND OF ATTACHMENT TO THEM, THEY ARE IN DANGER OF BEING OVER-VALUED ; because, in any other view, it is scarcely possible to estimate them at too low a rate. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth *any thing*, neither he that watereth.”

This language was intended for the rebuke of certain members of the Corinthian church, who had fallen into the habit of disputing with one another as to the comparative merits of different persons who had been preaching the Gospel among them. Some awarded the palm of superiority, in point of talent and eloquence, to one; and some, to another. One declared that the ministrations of Paul were the most able and likely to be the most successful, while another contended that he was altogether inferior to Apollos; and, therefore, less worthy of being supported by the affections and co-operation of the people.—Now the Apostle declares, that in all this they were actuated by corrupt and carnal motives—that they had lost sight entirely of the correct and Christian view of the subject—and that they were expressing their preference for their respective favourites, on account of things for which they deserved no

credit at all. Paul and Apollos were not the authors of their own peculiarities of mind and manner, or of the different degrees of success which attended their labours. The former, could no more have preached in the style and with the voice of the latter, than he could have made "one hair of his head white or black;" nor could Cephas have calculated with any degree of confidence, that the same effects would follow his ministrations in one place, which had accompanied the exertions of his fellow-labourers in another. God, himself and alone, was the efficient agent in the production of all these diversities of character and degrees of success. He not only created Paul and Apollos and Cephas, as men; but he moulded and superintended them, as ministers of Christ. And the very fact, that he made them different from each other, was of itself a sufficient proof that these differences did not essentially affect the ministerial character and qualifications of either. If the "person" of Paul was "mean" and "his speech contemptible," he was not less a minister of Christ on that account. And, if Apollos was adorned with all the natural accomplishments which were opposed to these defects, he was not more a minister of Christ for this reason. And therefore, in allowing these minor peculiarities to become the scale according to which their esteem and affection were graduated, the people of Corinth were influenced by insufficient considerations and were departing from the line of their duty.

In view of this fact, then, I remark,

1. That the ministers of Christ are overrated *when there is great importance attached to their PERSONAL APPEARANCE, to their NATURAL TALENTS, or to their ACQUIRED ACCOMPLISHMENTS as men.* I have, indeed, but little hope of gaining for this remark the attention and favour

which it deserves. It strikes at the root of an evil which began to spring up, as we have seen, under the very eye and management of inspired men, and which has continued to grow until its existence has become almost universal. The church has been accustomed to cherish this evil so long, that the contrary truth is an item of "sound doctrine" which she will "not endure." And, for one, I have no hope of seeing the light and feeling the warmth of the millennial day, until a visible and thorough revolution of sentiment and conduct shall occur in reference to this particular. At the present time, it must be obvious to every one, who will inquire after the truth for a single moment, that the greater part of all the professed esteem for the ministry which exists in our country—especially in large and populous places, where they are to be found in the greatest numbers—is an esteem for them on account of things which do not enter essentially into the constitution of the ministerial character and work. Go into almost any congregation, in which all hearts are united in the love and all voices in the praise of him who conducts the devotions of the sanctuary: listen to their expressions of attachment: analyze their feelings until you have ascertained the ground upon which this attachment rests. And what is it? It is not the great and single fact that he is a faithful minister of the Gospel; but, in most cases, it is that he is an interesting and perhaps an eloquent man—a man whose peculiar cast of mind and manners they admire—a man who preaches the Gospel in a way which is adapted to their taste—a man who renders himself agreeable and engaging in the intercourse of social and private life—a man who possesses the faculty of managing his fellow-men—or a man who is distinguished by a peculiar talent for other departments of labour than those which appertain immediately to this service. And

this is not all. For, while their esteem for their favourite is built exclusively upon such grounds as these, they are of course prepared to entertain a low opinion of all others in proportion as they are supposed to differ from him in these respects. Another man may preach the Gospel with as much simplicity and faithfulness and affection; and yet they cannot relish his exhibitions of truth, either because his manner does not please, or because their minds are prejudiced against him on account of some other consideration which is equally unimportant in itself. If providentially thrown in the way of his ministrations, they manifest an air of indifference, and sometimes of positive dislike, which seems to say, ‘God *could* not bless such labours, if he would?’ In this way the apostle’s rule of judgment is either forgotten or reversed. The affections of men, instead of reaching *the work* of the ministry, terminate upon *the instrument* by which the work is performed; and the instrument, instead of being valued for the “work’s sake,” is esteemed and loved on its own account. Few are found to agree in the truth, “neither is he that planteth *any* thing, neither he that watereth;” but many are heard to say, in the language of “them of old time,” “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas.”

It is no part of my intention, in these remarks, to intimate that you are necessarily committing sin, when you prefer the ministrations of one servant of Christ to those of another. Instead of this I maintain that, under proper circumstances, this is not only to be allowed but even commended. Suppose the case of one, with whose ministerial and devoted labours you are especially acquainted: suppose him to be the man, who was the instrument of conversion to your own soul, or the means of salvation to multitudes in the community in which you reside. If you did

not entertain a peculiar affection for him, you would not only impose an unnatural check upon the exercise of your social feelings, but you would fail in the duty of esteeming him for his "work's sake." His work has been brought into closer contact with your mind and heart than the works of others; and therefore your sentiments and feelings towards him should be characterized by a corresponding degree of liveliness and strength.—My object, then, is not to condemn a preference *on proper grounds*; but only to exhibit the prominent fact that this preference, as we see it around us, is generally based upon grounds which are *improper*.—And, while I speak of this as an extensive evil in the church at large, I cannot but regard it as a prominent sin of the denomination to which we belong. I believe candour will compel us to acknowledge, that there is no other, in which congregations are so often thrown into confusion by differences in opinion and taste as to the minor peculiarities by which the faithful ministers of Christ are distinguished from one another. It frequently happens, on this account, that parties are formed and dividing lines are drawn throughout the entire circle of a worshipping assembly. Some declare in favour of the services of one individual, and some in favour of those of another. And, in some cases, the controversy proceeds and increases in warmth and bitterness, until an incurable alienation of feeling obtains, between those who ought to be "one, even as Christ and the Father are one."

In view of this evil I feel disposed, this evening, to thank God that those of you who belong to this congregation have escaped it, in coming to the choice of one who is to occupy the place where I now stand and where I have often stood before. When I resolved to resign this place to the occupation and care of whomsoever the Lord might send, I was

not alone in the apprehension that collisions of opinion and taste might occur in the choice of a successor, and lead to unpleasant results. I was forewarned by some, who were unwilling to be persuaded of the propriety of the step which I was about to take, that, before the necessity for such a service as that in which we are now engaged would arise, there would be "divisions among you:" to use the simple language of an Apostle "I partly believed it:" and, for a while, there were some indications which seemed to imply that this anticipation was about to be realized. But the God of love and of peace has been better to you than our fears. And it now demands a tribute of praise, that within the lapse of so short a time your eyes are again to see your teacher, in harmony with one another, and in the immediate prospect of his labours among you.

2. The fault of overrating the ministry appears, *in laying too much stress upon THE IMPORTANCE of this institution, as viewed in comparison with OTHER MEANS of doing good.* And this remark I regard as one of no inconsiderable degree of practical importance; because it comes in contact with many cases which occur in real life;—I mean the cases of those who are not contented to labour in any *other* employment than the ministry—although, in entering upon it, they are compelled to run counter to the external indications of Divine providence. God forbid! that I should utter a word to chill the affections or change the purpose of any rising aspirant to this office, whom the Lord has called. I know that whosoever desireth the office of a bishop desireth a good work; and I believe that the harvest truly is great while the labourers are few. But I also believe, that the incumbent of this office should be "apt to teach"—that he should be able "rightly to divide the word of truth"—and that he should not "be entangled with the affairs of this

life" that he "may please him who has called him to be a soldier." And therefore, when I see an individual pressing into it without even a moderate share of that aptness to teach which an inspired Apostle declares to be essential, or when I find him willing for the sake of entering upon it to involve himself in pecuniary or other worldly embarrassments which are likely to follow him through life and to prey upon his spirits until the hour of his death, I regard him as contending against the providence of God and as running away from a sphere in which he ought to remain, under the false impression that the ministry is the only employment in which he can expect to be useful.—And, of the same general class to which these examples belong, there is another case, which, perhaps, you have often seen—I mean the case of an individual who is brought to the knowledge of the truth comparatively late in life; and who, after his conversion, regards himself as called to abandon his established vocation and to devote the remainder of his life to the work of preaching the Gospel.—Now I do not affirm, that in all such cases the path of duty has been mistaken; but I believe that many who have pursued this course have diminished, instead of increasing, their facilities for doing good.—Let the ministry have all the importance to which it is fairly entitled, (and when properly viewed it is scarcely possible, as we have seen, to consider it too important) but let it never be viewed in such an exclusive and all-absorbing light as to cast other opportunities and means of usefulness into the shade. There are numerous other ways of advancing the interests of the cause of Christ, which are equally acceptable to God, and better fitted to the talents and circumstances of the great majority of men. The Apostle Paul refers with as genuine satisfaction to the co-operation of "those women," who had laboured with him

in the Gospel, as he does to the services of his proper companions in the higher office which he sustained. And I have now in the eye of my mind many followers of Christ, who are occupying their respective places—on the bench and at the bar—in our halls of legislation and in the ranks of mercantile and commercial life—in our Sunday Schools and other associations for the spread of the Gospel—whom I should be sorry to see, abandoning the spheres in which they now move and entering upon the office of the ministry. In taking this step, they would throw away means and close up doors of usefulness, for which nothing in their new relation could afford any adequate compensation. And therefore, instead of encouraging changes like these, except in extraordinary cases, I had rather use all influence to prevent them. While the church is confessedly in need of “more labourers” for the harvest, this harvest is quite as much in danger of suffering for the want of more piety in the other departments of life, as for the want of a greater increase in the numbers of the ministry. Let the day once come in which examples of devotion to the service of God shall be so numerous in the various walks of worldly business as to exercise a controlling influence—and then, candidates for the ministry will come up from every quarter—the means of qualifying them for the sacred office will be provided in abundance—and all other things in human society, will so work together, that “righteousness will go forth as brightness and salvation as a lamp that burneth.”

Under this department of the subject, I remark

3. That the ministers of the Gospel are overrated by *those who expect them to succeed in their labours without* **THE FAITHFUL CO-OPERATION OF THE PEOPLE.** And by **THE PEOPLE,** I now mean especially, the members of the visible church, who are associated with them, either as *sub-*

ordinate officers or as *private members*.—A ministry, which is intended to operate *by itself* and *alone*, is an institution of which there are no traces to be found in any part of the Scriptures. That which they establish and require is a ministry which has “*helps*” intimately and essentially connected with it. And these helps are of various kinds, as well as of different degrees of importance. To use language adapted to our own ecclesiastical organization, there is, for example, the help to be derived from *the Elders of the Church*,—who occupy the situation of “*overseers*,” as well as of rulers,—and who are expected, in a variety of ways, to increase the efficiency, as well as to lighten the labours of the Pastoral office. If qualified for their station, they may be of essential service by their grave and consistent deportment—by their wise and seasonable counsel—by their uniformity and activity in works of faith and labours of love. Occupying as they do an intermediate place between the pastor and the people, they may do much to guard his reputation and give direction to his labours, to lift up his hands when they hang down and confirm his knees when they are feeble. They may assist, in instructing the young, in visiting the sick, in forming and conducting associations for prayer, and in bringing the whole body under the cementing influence of that love, which is “*the fulfilling of the law*.”—And in addition to their co-operation, there is also the assistance to be derived, from the affectionate countenance, the upright conduct, the well regulated activity, and the persevering prayers, of all *the other members* of “*the household of faith*.” Without help from this quarter, the great Apostle himself could not proceed, with feelings of satisfaction or with hopes of success. Any thing like unkindness from his fellow Christians always discouraged him, while their affectionate attentions refreshed and re-

vived his spirit:—If they stood “fast in the Lord,” he could exclaim, “*Now* we live;” but, if their conduct gave room for the suspicion that, notwithstanding their profession, they were “the enemies of the cross of Christ,” he could not refrain from “weeping:”—No one can peruse his history without perceiving that he attached great importance to their activity and zeal;—and, as an evidence that he could not dispense with their prayers, how often does he exclaim, in substance, “Brethren, *pray* for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified!” In these respects all faithful ministers are like-minded with him. And, for this reason, every member of their respective churches may do something to help, as well as to hinder them, in the performance of their duty. They may all show, by the affection and kindness of their demeanour, that they appreciate his labours and sincerely bid him “God speed:”—They may all exhibit such a high and commanding tone of piety in their lives, as to furnish him with so many “Epistles of Christ,” which he may submit to the perusal of his impenitent hearers for their instruction and conviction:—They may all be active in promoting the great interests of the Kingdom of Christ,—some in one department and some in another—one in conversing with his friend or neighbour about the things pertaining to salvation—another in superintending or conducting the exercises of a Sabbath School—and another in managing some of the various details which are connected with the successful progress of the Missionary, Tract, or Bible cause:—And, finally, they may all pray for him with enlarged desires, and “watch thereto with all perseverance;” they may bear him and his ministrations to the throne of grace, in the closet, in the family, in the social assembly, and in the public sanctuary; and they may say, with an anxiety which will not be de-

nied: "O God, save thy people! and give not thine heritage to reproach!" "Let thy work appear unto thy servants and thy glory unto their children: and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea the work of our hands establish thou it."—Happy is the man! who is called to the service of a church, the members of which are thus employed in their respective spheres. It is like a "whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." And, under the promised blessing of its Great Head, it "maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

But I hasten to say

4. That the ministry are overrated by those who expect them to succeed in their work, without the effectual influences of THE SPIRIT OF GOD. And I am sorry that the limits of this exercise will not allow us to dwell upon the important bearings of this remark. For, if I do not greatly misapprehend the signs of the times, it inculcates a practical truth, in reference to which, there ought, at this moment, to be "line upon line—line upon line—precept upon precept—and precept upon precept." In an age of so much Christian enterprise and activity, we may expect the enemy to be on the alert—watching for all convenient opportunities of sowing "tares among the wheat." And, if he can succeed in no other way, he will do it by transforming himself into an angel of light. This is the way in which he is approaching the minds of the ministry, in some parts of our Zion, in reference to the present subject. He is persuading them that, in order to accomplish the great end of their preaching in reference to sinners, they must first convince them that they are ABLE in their natural state to repent of their sins and obey the Gospel—that, until they

are convinced of this, they will never feel the proper weight of their responsibility and obligation—and therefore that this idea ought to be kept prominently before their minds in its simple, naked, and unconnected form. And, in carrying out this view, there are many who use such language as *fairly implies*, if it does *not positively assert*, that the influences of the Holy Spirit are *not necessary* in the great work of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Concerning every representation which has even a tendency to lead the minds of men in this direction, I wish to say, on the present occasion, that the sound of my voice and the feelings of my heart are against it;—and, if I could ascend a watch-tower sufficiently high to command the attention of all “the sacramental host of God,” I should be glad to call upon “every one that hath an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” It is a leading purpose of Jehovah’s infinite mind, that the scheme of human redemption shall be so executed that no flesh shall have reason to “glory in his presence.” Keeping this purpose in view, he has “chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.” He has committed “the treasure” of the Gospel to “earthen vessels,” that all the universe may see that “the excellency of the power” is of Him and not of us. And therefore those who attempt to take “the power” *from* Him, either directly or by implication, will ere long be brought to their proper place:—They will be *humbled*, either here or hereafter:—They will be brought to confess in eternity, if not in time, that, from the beginning to the end, the work of human salvation is “not by might nor by power, but by the spirit of the Lord of Hosts.”

But, in order that we may not even *seem* to go to an ex-

treme, of which some perhaps may be ready to accuse us, I remark, once more

5. That the ministry is overrated by those *who expect to be benefited by it without PERSONAL ACTIVITY and EXERTION in working out their own salvation.* And, I have no doubt, there are multitudes in relation to whom this remark is not only appropriate, but even deeply and vitally important. Indeed, it is a common practical impression among unawakened and impenitent men, that their free agency and active powers have nothing to do with the effects which this institution is intended to produce. They seem to regard themselves as beings, who are to be operated upon by the power of God, in something like the same way, in which a *physical* cause operates in the production of a physical effect—by the mere force or momentum of the cause itself, without any design or effort of will, on the part of the subject on which it is brought to bear. And therefore, when pressed with the obligation to *immediate* repentance—when called upon to believe and obey the Gospel *now*,—they are prone to excuse themselves, by saying, that repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and that God has never yet been pleased to operate upon them by the saving influences of his spirit. The consequence is that, instead of being benefited by the preaching of the Gospel, their spiritual condition waxes worse and worse:—The error which they have embraced, stands in the way of the very first step which they must take, if they would return to God;—It is the means of neutralizing the force of all the admonitions and counsels which are addressed to their outward ears:—However urgent may be the arguments and motives which are brought against them—from the flight of time and from the approach of death—from the love of Christ and from the wrath of God—from the

glories of Heaven and from the miseries of Hell—they continue to call for “a little more sleep! a little more slumber! a little more folding of the hands to sleep!”

Against this practical error, my impenitent hearers, I have often warned you in times past:—And, I embrace the opportunity, afforded in the providence of God, of doing so, with all affection, once more. God is calling upon *you*, as well as upon “all men every where, to repent;” and is persuading you to this duty by considerations of a high and peculiar kind. In the light of these considerations, he is expressing his *strong desire* that you would “return from your evil ways and live.” But He has given you no reason to expect, that any thing will occur in your favour, while you refuse the exhortation which calls upon you to “*work out YOUR OWN salvation.*” This is *your duty*;—And your encouragement to engage in it without delay and with confident expectations of success, is contained in the declaration—“*It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” You are not called to run the race in your own strength. “God,” Almighty, “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” has undertaken to interpose and prosper you in your course. While He calls upon you with his voice, He holds out to your view his omnipotent arm;—And if, with this arm extended over you for your assistance, you will not arise and begin the work, you will indeed be “without excuse;”—you will be “speechless” in the judgment of the great day; because you will stand before Him, not merely as inexcusable transgressors of his law, but as *wilful despisers of his offered grace*:—And, therefore, He will be just in what He judges and righteous in what He speaks, when He shall say to the ministers of his vengeance, “Take ye *the unprofitable ser-*

vant—bind him hand and foot—and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

I have now done all that I intended in the illustration of this important subject; and have only farther to request—that you will receive what has been said with a teachable and candid spirit—that you will turn it all into the form of a practical lesson for the present occasion—and that you will improve it, not only to your own spiritual profit, but also to the encouragement and usefulness of him who is now to be set over you in the Lord. Esteem him “very highly in love, for his work’s sake.” Think of *the measure* in which he is labouring to promote your happiness;—think of *the difficulties* which he has to encounter and the *trials* which he has to endure;—think of *the responsibility* which rests upon him, as one whose account is with God;—And, when you remember that he yields himself to all this, from a motive of love to Christ and to your souls, let him have AN EXALTED PLACE in your affectionate regard—afford him your sympathy, your countenance, your co-operation, and your prayers. But beware, on the other hand, of that *kind* of esteem and affection which grows up and rests upon false and forbidden ground. Don’t OVERRATE him—by attaching too much importance to the *minor peculiarities* of character which distinguish him from other faithful ministers of Christ—by laying so much stress upon his public ministrations as to undervalue the importance of *other means* of doing good—by expecting him to succeed in his labours without your constant, persevering, and faithful *co-operation* in your several places and relations—by anticipating good results from his ministry without *the influences of the Holy Spirit* to render it effectual—or by supposing that he can be the instrument of your conversion or sancti-

fication, while you *make no effort* on your own behalf.—In relation to these sources of danger “keep your hearts with all diligence; for out of it” may be “the issues of life,” while the neglect of it may terminate in your eternal death.

With these observations, I resign you to the care of him, whom you have chosen to “labour among you,” and to be “over you in the Lord,” and to “admonish you”—thankful for the privilege of meeting you in company with him this evening—and praying that, in connexion with him and under the guidance and blessing of the Chief Shepherd, you may “bring forth abundantly the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.”
—Amen!