

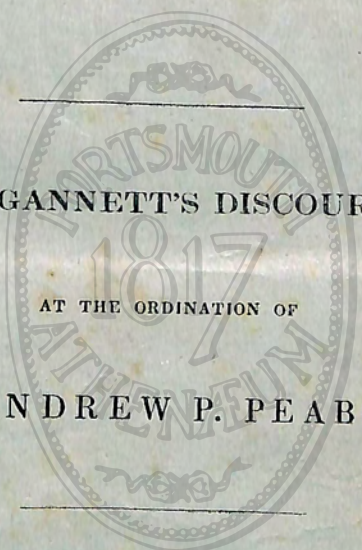
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MR. GANNETT'S DISCOURSE 5th

AT THE ORDINATION OF

REV. ANDREW P. PEABODY.



THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION

OF

REV. ANDREW P. PEABODY,

OVER THE

SOUTH CHURCH AND SOCIETY

AT PORTSMOUTH, N. H.

AS COLLEAGUE PASTOR WITH

REV. NATHAN PARKER, D. D.

OCTOBER 24, 1833.

BY EZRA S. GANNETT,

JUNIOR MINISTER OF THE FEDERAL STREET SOCIETY, BOSTON.

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FROM

DISCOURSE.

1 CORINTHIANS, IV. 1.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ.

THE institution of the Christian ministry is one on which it is impossible to look with unconcern. It may be viewed with very different feelings, according to the intellectual habits or the moral associations of men, but no one will presume to deny its intimate connexion with the state and prospects of society. In New England it has always been held in high esteem; and instead of thinking, with some, that it is passing into disrepute, I only observe in the changes of public sentiment concerning it, indications of a desire on the part of the people, and a necessity on its own part, that it should accommodate itself to the circumstances by which it is surrounded—circumstances very dissimilar to those under which it existed two centuries, or even half a century, ago. In satisfying this “demand of the age” it is of the first importance, that the ministry retain its essential character. The modifications which it may undergo must not affect its nature—must not make it anything else than the Christian ministry. As such it was instituted by the Author of our religion, and as such it must be continued among his disciples till there shall be no more opportunity for its exercise on earth. “Let a man so account of us,” says the most dis-

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tinguished of those in whose hands it was first placed, "let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ." And no words can their successors in the clerical office address with more pertinency to their contemporaries, or with more propriety adopt as their own motto. "Let a man" — every man, believer or unbeliever, religious or irreligious, friend or foe, if foes we have — let him "so account of us as of the ministers of Christ."

We have here then an unchangeable feature, or rather, as I before styled it, the essential character of the ministry to which our thoughts are drawn by the solemnities of this day. It is a Christian ministry — distinctively and emphatically Christian. The moment it forfeits this name, it aims a fatal blow at itself. From this statement probably no one in the whole world would dissent. But divers meanings may be given to the terms of which it is composed, and from this variety of interpretation it is easy to see that much practical diversity may arise. Our thoughts cannot more closely pursue the purpose of the present occasion than in seeking an answer to the question, Why the ministry receives this appellation? Why and how is it a Christian ministry? In the remarks which I may now offer, it will be my object to furnish a reply to this question.

I have said that there is an emphasis in this language. It is not used in a loose sense, for convenience only, or the sake of outward distinction. Such latitude of meaning is allowed to the word "Christian," that it might be thought we denote no more by it in this instance than when we speak of "the Christian world," or "a Christian land." But it has a more precise import in the connexion in which it is now quoted. It distinguishes, indeed, the ministry of Christendom from the priesthood of ancient or modern idolatries, and from any class of men whom Moses by divine command, or Mohammed from considerations of policy, may have clothed with peculiar functions. But can you, my hearers,

think that it expresses no more than this contrast? Did you call my brother to assume the labors of the ministry among you, and should you be satisfied to believe that he contemplated its responsibilities no further than they may be indicated by such an explanation? Or is "Christian," like "Orthodox," a word of indeterminate meaning, liable to fluctuations that may stretch or contract it to any degree within very distant extremes? It ought not to be so considered; for it does not describe the changing opinions of men, but the everlasting principles of truth. It has a meaning which it draws from the word and will of God, from his special mercy, and not from his general providence. It has, I say, at once a larger and a more exact meaning, which I will now endeavor to explain.

The value of the expression may be ascertained by paying a proper regard to five particulars.

I. To the first of these I just now adverted, when I denied that it exhibited the *whole* force of the term. The Christian ministry acknowledges, propounds, and celebrates Jesus Christ as a Divine messenger. It does not speak of him as a good man, as a wise man, as the best teacher whom Providence has ever raised up, or the author of the most correct system of theology or the most comprehensive and pure code of morality that was ever prepared by the human mind. It is not content with describing him as a singularly excellent being, who fell a martyr to his philanthropy. It takes the ground neither of English deism, nor of German naturalism. It listens with as little sympathy to the criticisms of Paulus as to the ridicule of Bolingbroke or the arguments of Hume. Its first great truth, the foundation of its own existence, the topic of its continual instruction is, that God sent Jesus Christ into this world filled with his spirit of truth and holiness and endowed with a miraculous power, and did by supernatural means and independently of the usual courses of his providence set him forth a Teacher, Lord,

and Saviour. The divine mission of Christ is its belief and theme; — not a mission like that which Socrates had, through a sensibility of the spiritual nature in which he stands alone among uninspired men; nor like that which Howard had, through the impulses of a generous heart; nor like that which Moses and the prophets had, to accomplish certain local and temporary ends; but a mission which he received by direct inspiration, to proclaim to the world truths by which the whole family of mankind in all its generations might be benefited. The ministry is a bulwark against infidelity, whether it come under the form of French sophistry or American blasphemy. It has no regards but those of pity or abhorrence for him who treats the Gospel as a wicked imposture, or an ingenious invention, or a fortunate discovery. It goes out to labor with the badge of its service on its front — Christ our Master, the Son of God. It goes to warfare, bearing on its standard the inscription — Christ our Redeemer, whom the Father has made to be the Author of eternal life to them that believe on his name. You might as well overlook the sun in searching after the cause of light, nay, as well omit the Bible in enumerating the sources of faith in immortality, as suppose that the ministry can have any other foundation than that which was laid in the miraculous mission of Jesus Christ.

Familiar as this point is, and obvious as it may seem, I insist upon it, because it is not uncommon of late to meet with language calculated to produce an impression that faith in the divine mission of our Lord is of little value. Christian believers, and Christian ministers, are ranked with Infidels, although they be strenuous supporters of the truth, that Christ spake not of himself, but as the Father gave him commandment; as if the difference between a believer and a denier or a doubter of this truth were not immense — immense; as if to credit or to discredit the most important fact in the history of the world, and after the existence of a

God, the most important fact known to us in the history of the universe, were an alternative about which one need feel no anxiety. I do not say that a belief of this fact will make a man a saint, or save him from hell; but I do maintain that so far from being of little moment, it constitutes a broad line of separation between two classes of people, whom it is as unjust to confound as it is impossible to reconcile. The believer and the unbeliever contradict each other on a question, which according to the former is of greater interest than any that was ever agitated in the schools of philosophy or in the councils of cabinets. On this question the ministry offers itself as the champion of one of the parties, and by redeeming its pledge vindicates its title to the name of Christian.

II. The profession of faith in Christ as a Divine messenger is the origin of the second argument by which the ministry enforces its right to this name, viz. that, which alleges its acknowledgment of Christ as the supreme authority in matters of religion. The supreme authority; because in regard to instruction and duty it considers him as one with God. Christ is the representative of the Supreme Mind, the Infinite Lawgiver. In his own character he may be viewed independently of his peculiar relation to the Deity, but in his capacity of teacher he was only the organ of the Divine will. God spake through him. He was more truly the voice of God than is a book the declaration of its author's sentiments. What he said is the same as if it had come from the Invisible Glory through the simple channel of sound. He was "the Word," which was God, and when it dwelt in flesh uttered forth its mandates in the tone of conscious supremacy. The Christian minister recognises this truth in all his labors. Most diligently and cautiously does he inquire what Christ taught, but when that is determined, suspense is at an end. It is not for him to doubt if the doctrine be true, or the command obligatory; for such doubt is

precluded by the admission of a divine message. When his Lord's meaning is ascertained, though it be as strange as the system of Copernicus seemed to the men of his time, or as marvellous as the reply of Jesus to the young ruler, "Sell all that thou hast and follow me," he is bound to receive and obey the instruction. What! shall the soldier dispute the orders that emanate from the fountain-head of authority? May he set them aside on his own will or judgment? May the pupil, even if he be entrusted with some subordinate province of teaching, substitute his notions for those of the master and presume to question the propriety of his rules? Yes — the pupil may hesitate, the soldier may resist, and each of them merit praise, though he suffer for his independence, but the Christian minister must never, never set himself in opposition to his Lord. "To his own master" alone "he standeth or falleth," but to that master he does stand or fall; and wo to him, who acknowledging the divinity of Christ's teaching raises a question about the propriety of following its injunctions. Wo to him for the shame of his self-contradiction — wo to him for the mischief of his example.

It is not his own opinion only which he must not erect into a tribunal of judgment upon the Lord Jesus, but he must not let any other human tribunal usurp the exercise of an authority which rests, where it was deposited by God, with Jesus Christ. He may not call any man, or any body of men, master in the concerns of religion. One voice has told him what to believe and what to do, and he has no more right to produce a confusion of sounds by letting other voices mingle with it, than he has to "cry peace, peace, when there is no peace." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," is the continual charge of the gospel. Let him to whom is granted the opportunity of consulting its oracles listen reverently. Let him exclude the sounds of earth, that he may receive the divine communication in its simplicity.

Shall I give up my privilege of sitting at the feet of Jesus for the sake of learning in any school of human origin? No — I will not seem to be so insensible to the value of his teaching who "spake as never man spake." Shall I permit others to tell me what are the commands of Christ, when I can learn them from his own lips? No — I dare not do this. I have no right to part with my liberty, for it is bound in inseparable union with my responsibility. I know not how some men have the courage to rest their faith on the decision of their fellow-mortals, when the Scriptures in which they may read the very words of a Divine instructor are in their hands. I should be afraid to choose any other master than him whom God has given me. I know not how some ministers can go into their pulpits and preach Calvin, or Swedenborg, or Wesley, instead of preaching Christ; or how some can quote the decrees of Councils or a Confession of faith, instead of the New Testament. Strange infatuation, that turns the disciples of the Son of God into vassals crouching before the shades of the sons of men!

I enlarge on this topic, my hearers, because, much as has been said for the last three centuries about free inquiry, no subject is less understood among Christians. As by some it is dreaded, so by others it is abused. On two questions it is not only right, but advisable for every one to inquire with the utmost latitude of investigation that circumstances may permit; on these two questions, namely, Was Jesus Christ a Divine messenger, and what did he teach; or to put them in a different shape, Is the New Testament true, and what is its meaning? On these points let whatever is pertinent be collected and sifted, till every one shall be fully persuaded in his own mind and shall be able to give a reason for his faith and hope. But when free inquiry passes these bounds, and assumes a right to place the instructions of Jesus on a level with the wisdom of ancient or modern times, it becomes insolent, and should be rebuked. If it be

criminal to exchange allegiance to the one Lord Jesus Christ for submission to human names or human assemblies, it is not innocent to treat the declarations of Jesus Christ as the language of fallible humanity. The one is treason, and so is the other — treason against the majesty of God.

III. The ministry is not confined however to an exposition of the teaching of Christ. It makes his character the subject of careful study — of frequent exhibition. The character of Christ; — on this infinite theme I wish it were possible for me to utter my own feelings. I call it an *infinite* theme, for such it appears to me. It has received far less attention, from Christians of every sect, than it merits. It comprises, I believe, a revelation of all that can be known of God or of human duty. The language of the New Testament respecting Jesus is very remarkable. Not only are expressions used which are connected with the name of no one else, but the general strain of writing in the Apostolic Epistles is suited to impress the reader with the idea of a greater superiority than could have been the result of his peculiar commission. Our Lord spoke of himself in terms which suggest such an idea. Most of our brethren in the Christian faith explain this language by ascribing to him an essential equality with the Divine Being, or by attributing to him an agency alike mysterious and indispensable in preparing the way for man's salvation. We cannot adopt either of these opinions, but we do not therefore deny the peculiar character of this phraseology. We find the key to its significance in the moral excellence of Christ. Unlike every other being that has appeared on earth, he was sinless and perfect. From the beginning to the close of his abode in the flesh no stain rested on his soul, nor did even the breath of evil desire for a moment darken his purity. We behold in him an unprecedented and unparalleled combination of virtues. He united the most dissimilar traits; dignity with humility, consciousness of power with meekness and tenderness, the most

delicate sensibility with an adamant fortitude, devotion to the will of God with boundless philanthropy, abhorrence of sin with compassion for the sinner, excellence on the broadest scale with fidelity to duty in the minutest details. In short, there was no defect and no excess. We cannot imagine his character despoiled of a single attribute, and not perceive that it would be injured by the loss. We cannot add a single grace, that would not mar its symmetry. We should call him an example of human perfection, if we did not remember that he was the image of the Infinite Father. It is this double capacity — this twofold relation, springing out of a single and unchangeable fact, which distinguishes Jesus amidst all others who have revealed truth or inculcated duty. He was the link between the human and the Divine, participating in the glory of the one without sharing in the imperfections of the other, yet having with the former a closer sympathy, if it were possible, than with the latter. It was his prerogative, and his alone, to say to those who were inquiring the way to heaven, "I have left you an example that you should follow my steps," and at the same time to reply to one who desired to see God, "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father." Before this prerogative all other distinction seems unsubstantial. What is the glory of office, even though it be the office of Mediator and Redeemer — what is this glory when compared with that of being at once the representative of the Invisible Deity, and the pattern for all future generations of men? It was a high commission which Jesus held, when he brought truth and grace from the bosom of the Eternal Father. It was a noble service which he rendered, when he became the Saviour of those who were ready to perish. It was an act to compel the admiration, even of the bad, when he died that others might live. But all this preëminence was lost in the blaze of that glory, which encircles his name as the manifestation of perfect excellence. In him were hidden all the treasures of knowledge and love.

In him truth was embodied. In his character the everlasting principles of the Divine government, the essential doctrines of religion, were manifested. "I am," said he, "the truth."

The character of Jesus presents itself to me both as a revelation and as a miracle, — a moral miracle, the only one of its class ever seen on earth.

"God in the person of his Son
Has all his noblest works outdone."

That one should have lived in this world, subject to the infirmities of the flesh and exposed to the temptations of life, spotless, faultless, absolutely destitute of sin, error and defect, may be more justly termed miraculous, than that the dead should have recovered the functions of vitality; for it had no resemblance in the history or the experience of men. Here Jesus Christ stood alone. "Greater works than these shall ye do," said he to his disciples, — greater miracles than I have wrought shall fill men with astonishment at your power; but not a greater miracle than I *am*, shall you offer to their admiration: he made no such promise. Peter, John, Paul was not a second Christ. No. He was alone in the grandeur and beauty and perfection of his character. And now, I ask, do you think this solitary wonder, this matchless reality, this monologue of existence, if I may so style it, was meant for no special purpose, or was intended only to prove the divinity of his mission? *That* was proved by other evidences, wonderful in themselves, and yet in comparison with this marvel, common-place — by his physical miracles, by his prophecies, by his resurrection. We must assign to this prodigy an adequate purpose, and while I can discover nothing short of that which considers it a revelation — not an evidence nor a sanction, not the credential nor the seal, but a revelation — of truth, while I find nothing short of this that will satisfy me, I rest here in the conviction that I have found its meaning, its purpose, its justification, its worth and its glory.

This character is the continual study and theme of the Christian ministry. It is, did I say? Oh! that it were more, ten thousand times more than it is. Oh! that the teachers of religion would give the time which they waste on vain researches, or yet more vain disputes, to this great field of knowledge, where they might find new beauty and wealth at every step. If preaching made this its more frequent subject, we should not hear so often of the dulness and monotony of the pulpit. One could not be cold or heavy when discoursing of perfection, real, living, heaven-born, yet earth-proved, perfection. One could not be wearisome in handling the topics of such an argument as that which the character of Jesus presents, for faith, for goodness, or for hope. Sooner might one rise on the wings of holy imagination to "heaven gate" and feel no desire to join

"The angelic host, that stand
In sight of God enthroned,"

than he could trace the lineaments of that excellence of which the writers of the Gospel have given us glimpses — glimpses only, yet bright with an imperishable radiance, — and not be moved to enthusiastic fervor. Oh! when will the ministry prove itself Christian, by its delineation of Jesus Christ?

IV. Its right to this epithet may meanwhile be established by a fourth circumstance — its devotion to the same purposes which Christ labored to promote. These purposes may be expressed in two words, the salvation and perfection of man. His salvation, his deliverance from the tyranny and pollution of sin; his perfection, or the harmonious developement and culture of the powers of his nature. For these ends Jesus toiled and suffered. From the first to the last scene through which he passed these were the objects which he kept in view, and which he sought undaunted by the difficulties and perils that met him at every step. Think you that he entertained a purpose that could be embraced by a more narrow

beneficence? Or think you that it was for any personal end that he lived and died? We know little indeed of our blessed Master, if we impute to him any design which was not subsidiary to that of redeeming and enlightening the soul. He could not have sought honor; for his chaplet was a crown of thorns. He could not have coveted fame; for he was condemned to bear the reputation of a malefactor. He aspired to no political dignities or emoluments; for he preserved an unbroken silence on political affairs. He did not invite disciples to his side by promises of wealth or power; for he told those who became his followers, that they must suffer persecution and "be hated of all men for his name's sake." He held out no inducement of a worldly nature. His religion was spiritual, and its design was made known from the first. The angel proclaimed it, when he said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Our Lord disclosed it in the early part of his ministry, when he commanded his disciples, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Such passages as these indicate, too plainly to be mistaken, the two-fold purpose of his mission,—the recovery of the bad, and the progress of the good. Does any one still say that he looked at some other result? At what other, I pray you, that is not identical with this, or auxiliary to it? Was it "to bring life and immortality to light," that Jesus trod the path to Calvary? But of what value would be this revelation, if it did not afford motives for abandonment of sin and consecration to virtue? Did he live and die for the glory of God? But how can the glory of God be enhanced, except through the submission and obedience of his creatures? Brethren, the purpose of our Lord's mission is written in living letters. You may read it in the facts of his biography. The sun is not clearer at unclouded noon, than is the moral design of his teaching and suffering as it shines through the New Testament.

Now the ministry copies Christ in this respect most closely.

The purposes for which its own labors and sufferings, whatever they may be, are endured, coincide with those which led Jesus to his death. It burns with desire to effect the salvation of the sinner and the improvement of the righteous. Its objects are moral and spiritual objects, not such as may be realized in this life only, but such as stretch themselves forward into eternity. Do you ask, for what end the minister is striving in his prayers with God and in his entreaties with his people? See you that man who is sunk in depravity, loathsome even to the eye of pity; or his neighbor, who with a more decent deportment still betrays a heart bound to this world both by love and by habit? Observe the minister in his addresses to those men, in his remonstrances, his arguments, his appeals. He is seeking to bring them to God. He holds himself in a measure accountable for their character. He rests neither day nor night in the prosecution of methods by which he may subdue their obduracy. And now note the result. His words, that had long fallen like the rain on the flinty rock, at last sink into their hard hearts. They are moved; they are humbled; they are brought to repentance. Sin has lost what heaven has gained, and the ministry has proved itself not more a blessing to man, than a laborer in the same cause for which Christ poured out his blood. Again, do you mark one whose life bespeaks a soul true to its own interests as an immortal spirit? Observe the minister in his intercourse with him. What affectionate entreaties to persevere in duty what encouragement and help in surmounting the difficulties which lie in the path to perfection. Visit the penitent sinner, or the triumphant saint, when he makes his bed in death, and you may hear thanksgivings to God for having sent him such a counsellor and friend. The ministry may be abused, perverted, defiled. But its legitimate aims are the moral rescue and advancement of human beings. The relations of time change, the things of earth perish, but the soul is immortal, and in joy or sorrow must it spend its existence as

it shall follow or slight the revelations of duty which are made to it by voices within and voices without itself. The ministry is raised on this truth as its basis. It was founded by him who, in the bold figure of the Apostle, is himself its "corner stone"—"Jesus Christ the righteous," who became the beginning of this structure of beneficent influences, that he might show to the world how ardently he desired the renovation and perfection of man. Let the ministry be faithful to the design and the spirit of its founder, that it may be entitled to bear his name.

V. It only remains for us to inquire, by what rules the ministry governs itself in the prosecution of its high objects, and the answer to this question will present the last reason which I shall give for its assuming the name of Christian. The ministry governs itself by the example of its founder. The minister takes Jesus Christ as his model, both in his public and his private life, in his official and his personal character. His teaching is fashioned after the pattern which the Evangelists have permitted us to behold through their transparent pages. But how can this be, when there are so many different styles of preaching in the world? With the greatest diversity of style, there may yet be a common resemblance to the same model. John wrote not as Paul wrote; yet who does not feel in reading their Epistles that they had both learned of Jesus. Men may however mistake the manner, as well as the substance, of our Lord's teaching. What can present—one cannot help asking, at least in his own thoughts—what can present a more painful contrast to *his* delivery of truth, than is sometimes exhibited within the walls of our churches? Sound and violence, indiscriminate reproach and coarse threat, extravagance of sentiment and wilder extravagance in its enunciation—are these things to be discovered in the history of Jesus? I cannot imagine two pictures more unlike, than the "meek and lowly" Messiah, sitting on the mount near Capernaum, or on the shore of its

beautiful lake, and discoursing to the multitude in words which compel them to acknowledge that his meekness is but the ornament of his authority, and the modern "speaker," as he is not inaptly termed by many persons, whose speech exhibits neither just thought nor right feeling, but disgusts those whom it does not frighten, and enslaves them whom it subdues. Mildness and dignity were the characteristics of our Master's teaching. He loved the sinner, even while he called him to repentance. He saw in every servant of evil a child of God estranged from his heavenly parentage, but not insensible to the solicitations of parental love. A sympathy with the indestructible capacities of the soul must be cherished by him who would show that he understands the character or life of Jesus.

Still more important is it that Christ should be the model of personal excellence. Let no one intrude into the sacred office, who has not been a patient learner of those things which he will inculcate on others. Shall the instructor be himself untaught? or the teacher overthrow his counsels by his example? Forbid it, every principle of self-respect, every emotion of benevolence. Better that idiocy should enter the pulpit than wickedness. Better, oh! incalculably better, that the ministry should cease, than that it should be a monument of disgrace, weighing down the community with the burthen of its shame, and filling the hearts of all good men with grief. But it is not negative excellence that the minister of Christ should be anxious to maintain. Consecrated as well as clean hands must hold up the ark of the Lord. Be our teachers of righteousness men who, like Jesus, shall instruct by example even more than by precept. Be they those who in the simplicity of their purpose and the fidelity of their course shall covet a resemblance to him. Was Christ blameless? Such let his servants strive to be. Was Christ superior to every earthborn motive? So let his

ministers be. Let them reflect his image, even as in him was seen the reflection of the Divine character.

The ministry, as it has been now described, maintains the divine mission of Christ, acknowledges his supreme authority, reverences his perfect excellence, pursues the ends which he contemplated, and copies the example which he has left. Such a ministry I denominate Christian. One which did not bear all these characteristics might possibly deserve the name. But I desire not to see in our churches a ministry which does not possess them all. With them all well defined and sustained, this institution might defy the assaults of unbelief, and prejudice, and sin. It was observed in the commencement of this discourse, that in adopting the changes which would be forced upon it by the demands of the age it must not part with its essential character. I may now be permitted to say that I do not believe any change is required, except such as shall restore this character from the obscurity in which it has been involved. Make the ministry thoroughly Christian, and it will enjoy the respect and confidence of the people — their full and free support — their admiration and gratitude. Some persons are alarmed at "the signs of the times." I see no occasion of fear, except in the possibility of mistaking the import of these signs. They tell us as plainly as if it were written in radiant letters on the firmament, that Christianity must be vindicated and made to triumph by recurring to its original character, and they who are set for its defence or its advancement must cast off all extraneous influences. The people demand consistency; they will not take any other proof of sincerity. They are right; let them not abate their requisition. Let it be the measure which the clergy shall apply to themselves.

The ministry which shall be Christian in the respects that have now passed under our survey will be a sufficient, as it will be the great, instrument of establishing Christianity in the

minds and hearts of men. Neither skepticism nor irreligion is natural to man; but ignorance and neglect may make him a prey to both. False or inadequate instruction may incline him to the evils from which we are most anxious that he should be saved. It is the duty of those who occupy the clerical office to enlighten and to persuade. It should be their object to bring men to Christ. The Christian world are asking the execution of this service at their hands. There is no want of curiosity or desire on the part of the people. The religious sentiment is continually throwing itself out in forms which bespeak its restlessness under the oppression to which it has been condemned, as some plants are known to grow into unnatural shapes in pursuit of the light without which they could not live. Now let the world have what it wants — Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life." Hold up your Master, ye who would be "accounted as the servants of Christ"; hold him up, I say, before your fellow-men. *I* say? Providence says it, in notes that might make angels start. Hold him up to the faith, the love, and the imitation of mankind. Go not into the pulpit, go not in the ministry, seek it not, keep it not, unless you will present in its various offices Christ "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." It is not philosophy, it is not rhetoric, it is not speculation, with which you must satisfy the souls of men; but it is Christ "the bread of life," Christ "the image of God," Christ "the hope of glory." Oh! we must be Christian, fathers and brethren, in this service; Christian in our purposes, Christian in our feelings, Christian in our conversation, Christian in our preaching, Christian on every day and in every scene of life.

A ministry of a different character has too often arisen to vex the Lord's heritage — a ministry that might remind one of the cold scintillations which play across the northern heavens, or of the parching rays of a tropical sun, or of the unequal fervors of our own climate, but not of that "great light" which

God has set in the firmament of the Christian world, constant alike in its radiance and its warmth. Worse ministries even than these there have been, such as have no emblem among beautiful or honorable things, no similitude but among the monstrous productions of nature. An infidel ministry, incredible though it seem—France was cursed with it, is cursed with it. A worldly ministry—the dependencies of Rome have endured it and groaned under its oppression. A selfish ministry—England has bewailed its sinecures within her Establishment. A Platonic ministry, and an Aristotelian ministry—they flourished for ages within the pale of the Christian church. A Jewish ministry—it has reigned in pulpits of the old and the new world. But a Christian ministry—a ministry which would own no teacher but Christ, and no authority but his, and would cherish and inculcate no spirit but his, and would meditate no aim, and copy no example but his—such a ministry—oh! where has it been seen in the long interval of seventeen centuries and over the broad surface of the earth?

Where has it been seen? Forgive the injustice of the question, ye memories of the faithful who once labored in the heart of Asia, within the fastnesses of the Alps, among the hills of Scotland, and on the shores of the New England plantations. Nay, forgive me, ye spirits of the true-hearted and holy, who in the bosom of every church that has borne the name of Christian have proved your own right to wear that name. Rebuke me not, ye servants of the Lord, who are now in any and in every land redeeming the pledge which you gave when you set yourselves apart for this work,—ye heralds of the cross, ye ministers of salvation. I meant not in the earnestness of my desire for better things to be unmindful of the reality or of the promise, that are like visions of heaven to the eye of faith. Frown not on me, my hearers, as if I forgot in whose place I am standing, as if the Christian ministry under which you have rejoiced in the

days of its strength had not become a name and a praise throughout the land, or as if I knew not that, as there is no title which he in whose person it has been heard and seen among you would so much desire that it should have merited, there is none which it has more carefully honored, or more faithfully earned, than that of Christian. The Christian ministry—its influences have been felt, God grant they may long be enjoyed, here. Nor here only, nor here chiefly; but on every spot whence rises the sound of worship to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever may now be found, wherever in future time shall stand up, the ministering servants at the altars of our religion, may they be “accounted” by themselves and by others as “the ministers of Christ,” may their ministry begin and end in him who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Fulfil our prayer, oh ye truths that subdue the human heart! Fulfil it, oh ye wants and destinies of man, that shall come up and plead in his behalf with the consecrated instructors of our race! Fulfil it, oh ye responsibilities of the sacred office, that shall throw your giant shadows across the path of negligence, to turn back the step of folly! Fulfil it, oh ye teachings of Providence, that remind us of our duty and quicken us in its performance! Fulfil it, oh thou Spirit of love and holiness, that wast sent to watch over his church, when Jesus ascended to the Father! Amen.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.*

BY THE REV. THOMAS B. FOX,

OF NEWBURYPORT, MASS.



MY BROTHER,—The solemn prayer hath ascended in your behalf, you have listened to the serious charge, and you stand here the pastor of this church—the colleague of one whom we all honor and love, for whom we all ask the choicest of Heaven's gifts. It is my part of these interesting services to give you this right hand, a token of the fellowship of my brethren and myself. I trust its warm pressure tells you to your heart, that we sympathise with you. We too have received the “badge of apostleship.” We know what strong emotions, what doubts and anxieties, what solemn anticipations of unknown and untried toils fill the heart when it looks forward to the requisitions of the Christian ministry. And if the thought, that we have felt as you now feel, will give you comfort and consolation, cherish it, my brother, for it is the truth.

But our fellowship will extend beyond the present moment, and so, therefore, must this expression of it. When in the solitude of the study you dwell upon “the deep things” of the Gospel, when you there hold converse with the “mighty

* Rev. Dr NICHOLS, of Portland, Me. who delivered the CHARGE, has, for reasons which the Society very much regret, declined giving a copy for the press.

dead" and the mighty living, when you strive to sound the depths and solve the mysteries of the spirit within, when you seek to be sanctified through the truth, that you may speak to this people "the things which become sound doctrine," and to nourish them with profitable instruction — then, if it will give strength to the toil-worn mind and animate to greater diligence, remember we sympathise with you; for the same labors and the same studies are ours.

When you stand in this pulpit — to declare the promises of God's love, to warn the sinful of their danger, to call your flock to the peace and rest of holiness — if by some your message is unheeded, be not cast down over-much; for ours is the same disappointment, and we will mingle our sorrow with thine. But when thy voice is heard and thou dost witness the seriousness of conviction stealing over the faces of thy people — when thou dost start the sluggard tear, melt the cold heart, and lead the willing penitent to the feet of Jesus — oh! then remember, such glorious moments, when the sword of the spirit, even in the hands of the weak, hath done faithfully its work, sometimes come to us, and we will rejoice with you in this, the laborer's best reward.

When you go from house to house, always with a word for your Master — when you bind the broken heart and speak peace to the troubled — when you break bread in memory of Christ, introduce innocence and infancy into the family of God, or wing with solemn prayer the spirit which is passing away from earth — when you are lifted with the thought, that, however humble, you are one of the great band of reformers, who are engaged in elevating and perfecting the soul of man; in fine, in all the duties and hopes, the trials and joys incident to the Christian ministry, remember, my brother, we are tried and straitened, comforted and made joyful, in all points like as you are, and that our sympathy and fellowship are yours. And not ours only. The things of which I speak are dear to those beyond the care of what

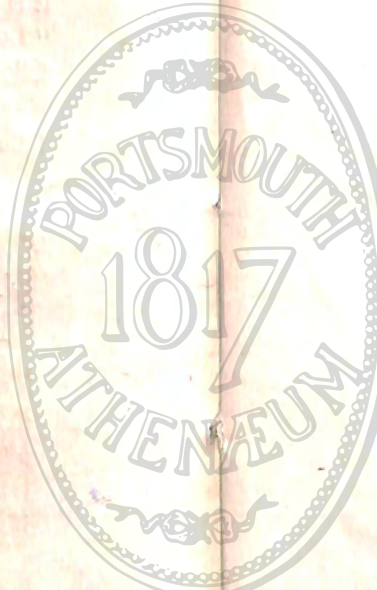
is merely earthly. The things which are of Christ are also of eternity. They engage the thoughts of angel and archangel. They call forth the sympathy of "the spirits of the just." Ay, more, the martyrs' noble host, the prophets crowned with light, the apostles' glorious company, and Jesus, the beloved Son, from the seats of the blessed, behold the transactions of this hour, and are sympathising with us. Is this delusion? You will not wish to dispel it. Is it a fancy? It is so full of hope and joy that we will indulge in it. But it is no delusion — no fancy. Hath not the Saviour said, "Lo! I am with you always"? Is it not written, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, — and if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship, one with another"? That light is the light of truth and holiness, and they who follow it, whether dwelling in tabernacles of flesh, bowing before the throne of God, or wandering free spirits through the universe, belong to a holy communion. In them the Saviour's prayer is answered; they are all one, as Christ and God are one.

Take then, my brother, once more, this right hand. Take it as a pledge of our fellowship on earth — take it as a sign that we welcome you a fellow laborer in the holiest cause — take it as a faint intimation of that perfect union with all that is beautiful, pure and true, which we shall all enjoy in heaven, if we are all faithful unto death.

ADDRESS TO THE SOCIETY.

BY THE REV. C. T. THAYER,

OF BEVERLY, MASS.



It is but appropriate and right, Christian Friends of this Society, that the hand of congratulation and sympathy, which has been extended to him who has just been inducted into the pastoral office, should be proffered also to you. Sincerely do we congratulate you on the pleasures and prospects of this occasion. We rejoice most heartily with you, that when he who has so long shone in this golden candlestick of the Lord, and in whose light you have felt blest indeed to walk, in the inscrutable Providence of God was withdrawn (though we would hope but for a time and in part) from the active duties of his station, you so soon found and united in one who was deemed worthy of being associated with your venerated senior pastor in the ministry among you, and has consented cheerfully to lay on this altar, for your and your children's good, the offering of his best powers and affections, of his faithful, constant, devoted service.

And I feel that I am obeying the impulse of truth as well as friendship, when I assure you, as I now do, of my full conviction that the promise he has thus made of devotedness to your improvement and welfare will be redeemed. Coming as I do from the midst of those among whom his birth and early years were cast, and having myself long enjoyed his

personal acquaintance and intimacy, I feel it to be due to him, at the same time that it may be grateful to your own feelings, for me at this time to say, that if early and uniform purity and piety, if the ardent and successful pursuit of knowledge, if attachment to his profession, and diligent preparation for its sacred labors, may be regarded pledges of eminence and success, then may you justly anticipate that the ministry in his hands will not be blamed, will not be dishonored, or fail of promoting extensively the great objects for which it was instituted.

But the promotion of these objects, it is to be recollected, does not rest with him alone. It is a work belonging in part, and in no small part, to each of you. The obligations connected with the relation of pastor and people are mutual. The duties thence arising are reciprocal. If he must labor, so must they. If he must feel for and with them, so are they bound to feel for and with him. If he is to put forth his best energies in their behalf, it is at least equally incumbent on them to exert themselves toward the same end. If he is to aim, in every possible way, at the spread of truth and virtue among them, they surely are under obligations not less strong to strive after the attainment of knowledge and virtue. The whole duty of a people to their minister may, in truth, be comprised in these two words — zealous coöperation.

But for what are they thus to coöperate with him? They are, that they may obtain and extend in themselves and others acquaintance with the truth as it is in Jesus. They are, that they may produce the requisite self-denial, and just regulation of the desires and affections, the proper discipline and improvement of the mind and heart and life. They should, in order to cherish a fervent and exalted piety, for the cultivation and highest and constant exercise of those affections of veneration, love, trust, which were formed to ascend and rest in the Infinite Father, and which are

the chief spring of all pure religion. They should, in exciting and keeping alive an ardent and expanded benevolence, which shall delight ever in doing good; a charity also, which shall be ever ready to cover with her broad mantle, or at least to view with an eye of kindness and compassion, the errors, whether of opinion or practice, of our fellow-christians and fellow-men, and one of the legitimate fruits of which is, as Lord Bacon has so happily remarked, "that peace of the church, which distilleth into peace of conscience, and that turneth the labor of writing and reading controversies into treatises of mortification and devotion." They should, in short, coöperate with their minister in advancing to the utmost that practical religion, which consists in the practice of all the precepts of religion, in a faithful use of all its means and ordinances, in leaving no appetite or passion unrestrained and unregulated, and no faculty unimproved; which makes us rejoice to behold and contribute all in our power to whatever can further the temporal or spiritual welfare of men; which prompts us to be true to conscience, to the Saviour, and to God, in every relation and duty; and which tends to, or rather is, the greatest holiness and felicity on earth and in heaven.

What, I would further have you consider, are the modes in which it becomes a society to coöperate with their pastor? The minister, especially the young minister, is strengthened and sustained peculiarly by confidence in the entire, unwavering sympathy of his people; a sympathy which, without of course intruding upon his personal rights or private affairs, includes a generous interest in all that concerns him, a tender regard for his feelings and reputation, sensibility to the difficulties and discouragements under which he may labor, joy in his usefulness, distinction and happiness. But the sympathy which, if he feels aright, he will most prize, will be that arising from sincere, warm, hearty interest on the part of his people in his professional duties, in the

great purposes of his office and religion. With the royal preacher, he will be ready to exclaim, "My son, if thine heart be wise," wise to discern and pursue its religious and highest interests, "my heart shall rejoice, even mine."

To this sympathy with him and with the objects of his profession, must be added the active exertions of those to whom he ministers. They must be active, not merely passive, under his ministrations. They must endeavor to apply as well as receive his instructions. They must strive after, if they would attain, any great personal improvement. And they are not only to labor for their own, but for the Christian advancement of all within the sphere of their influence. Heads of families, especially, may and are bound to do much toward furthering the ends of the pastoral office and of Christianity. Families are the nurseries of human virtue. In them piety springs and grows as in its native soil. If the young, who are there receiving their first and most permanent impressions, are blessed with the counsels and example which it is the sacred duty of their natural guardians to afford them, they will not fail, in their youth and ever afterward, of remembering God and keeping his commandments. They will be — to use the beautiful similitude of scripture — as trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in their season.

It is, moreover, due to their minister, that his society should be reasonable in their expectations of service and benefit from him. I hesitate not to say that this is intimately connected with the success of his labors. If he is not seen as frequently as may be desired in their families, they should reflect that they are yet not forgotten by him — that he may wear their names ever on his memory and his heart, as the names of the children of Israel were borne on the breastplate of the priest, for a memorial before the Lord continually. If there is not equal excellence and power in his public services, let them bear in mind that the fountain of intellect,

no more than any other, is always full and always clear. If sudden and striking results should not follow on his ministrations, let them consider that it may be far better there should be patient and sustained exertion, and gradual but sure progress — that steady and strong, not violent and turbid, the current flow. If he do not accomplish all which could be desired, they are to remember there are limits to time and human effort. Above all are they to remember, that if he should not effect all they might wish, the fault may be in their want of interest and diligence, as much as in his.

Such, my Christian friends, is the coöperation in which it becomes you to engage, in view of the relation on which you have now entered. We call upon you each most solemnly, by your obligations to God and to Christ, by the exigencies and signs of the times, by the pressing wants of the community, by your own spiritual and eternal wants, to perform this your bounden duty. But while we invite and urge you to join, in all the respects which have been mentioned, your efforts with those of the pastor of your choice, we would not be insensible to the laudable example you have hitherto manifested. We do not forget how cordially you have seconded the exertions of him who for so many years has delighted to spend and be spent in your service, and whose absence from this solemnity is the occasion of many fond regrets. For this we thank and honor you, as we do for the kindness and tender sympathy with which you have watched over and followed him, and cheered and comforted him, in his infirmity and trials. We do not forget — on this spot we could not forget — the name of the lamented Haven ;*

* Nathaniel A. Haven, Jr. Esq. who died June 3d, 1826. Though cut off in the meridian of life and usefulness, it was not till he had attained uncommon eminence by his talents, learning, and moral worth. He was among the earliest and most distinguished friends of Sunday Schools in this country, and by his own exertions contributed largely to render the one connected with the South Parish in Portsmouth deservedly regarded as a model for all similar institutions.

a name never to be mentioned but with a sigh for his untimely departure ; a name embalmed among the benefactors of our race — embalmed in the veneration and love of many hearts, and bearing with it a noble example, for the talented and distinguished in every sphere, of devotion to the best and holiest ends. We would not be unmindful of the interest in the religious instruction of youth, and the general Christian fidelity, by which your character as a people has been marked. But from what has already been done by you, we would draw exhortation and new incentives to yet greater perseverance and faithfulness. So shall the union now consummated be—and most fervently do we pray God it may be—blessed to the greatest good of you and your children, and in the bosom of this society immortal souls be continually training for the society of the just in heaven.

