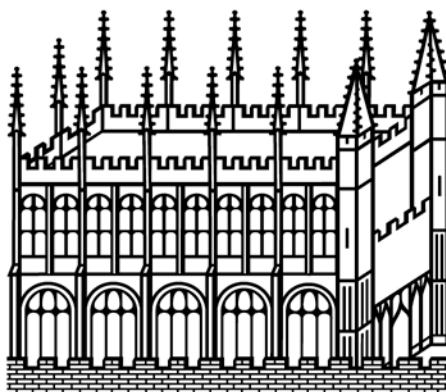




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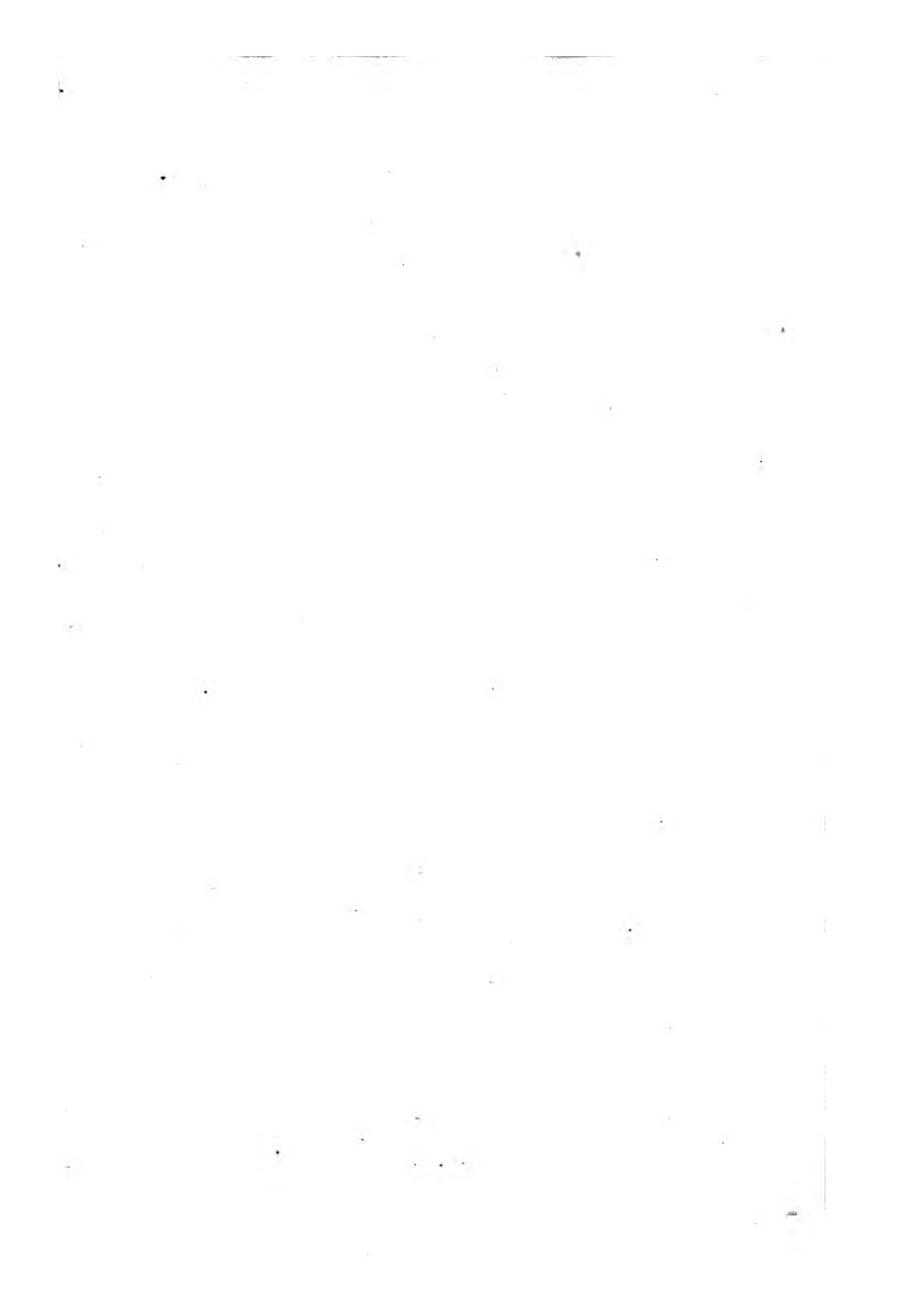
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THE SERVICE

AT THE SETTLEMENT OF

THE REV. EDWARD TAGART,

AS MINISTER OF THE OCTAGON CHAPEL,

NORWICH.



SA. 1826

THE SERVICE
AT THE SETTLEMENT OF
The Rev. EDWARD TAGART,
AS MINISTER OF
THE OCTAGON CHAPEL,
NORWICH,
August 10th, 1825.

“ Since the connection between a Minister and his Congregation, and especially the first that he forms, is a very serious concern, there cannot, surely, be any impropriety, but on the contrary the greatest propriety, in making it an occasion of solemn prayer; and then exhortation or admonition from a Minister of greater age and experience, to one who has but lately entered upon the office, is particularly seasonable. I cannot help, therefore, expressing my wish, that some service may be kept up among us, at the same time that every precaution is taken to prevent superstition with respect to it.”—DR. PRIESTLEY.

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THE
INTRODUCTORY PRAYER,

BY

THE REV. W. P. SCARGILL

OF BURY ST. EDMUND'S.

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, by whose power we are upheld, by whose wisdom we are guided, and from whose bounty all our blessings do proceed, to thee it becometh us to draw near with reverence, gratitude, and humility ; and, while we acknowledge our dependence, to bless that goodness which remindeth us of our dependence by unceasing mercies.

Thou art God alone, supreme, irresistible, and undivided ; thy power needeth not the assistance of another's might, nor thy wisdom the guidance of another's counsel, nor thy love the promptings of another's benevolence. All nature proclaimeth thy being and thy providence, we see thee in the brightness of heaven and in the fertility of earth, in the succession of day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. We trace

thy being and thy providence in the government of nations and the changes of empires; the hearts of all men are in thine hand, and thou turnest them whithersoever thou wilt. We recognize thy goodness and thy power in the feelings and affections of the human mind, in its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears; in the recollections which recall the past and the anticipations which spring forward to the future; in the conscience which approveth what is right and condemneth what is wrong.

But thanks be to thy name, Almighty Father, that we are not left to these intimations alone to form our religious faith or to mould our devotional feelings; for thou hast mercifully made thyself known to us in the Gospel of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,—there hast thou spoken by awful miracles and holy teachings, by precepts which are wisdom and mercy, by promises which inspire and by threatenings which deter; and not only by precept but by example doth the Gospel instruct us: we behold in the character and conduct of Jesus Christ a model of all that is pure in virtue, fervent in devotion, and sincere in kindness.

Yet we do acknowledge, O most holy Father, that with all these privileges, with line upon line and precept upon precept, we have transgressed:

if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, but if we acknowledge and confess our sins thou art merciful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And we thank thee that in the ministrations of thy house and the meditations in which we here engage we are reminded of thy mercy and taught to supplicate thy forgiveness. We thank thee that while thus we pray for the pardon of our transgressions, we are instructed in and reminded of those principles by which our feet may be preserved from falling, and by which we may hold on our way rejoicing.

We adore thee with unfeigned gratitude that in thine house of prayer our sorrows can find alleviation and our perplexities direction; that here we can more especially think on that power by which we are supported and blessed, and of those precepts by the observance of which we may be rendered meet to become partakers of thy free grace. May thy blessing, O God, ever accompany the religious worship which is offered to thee in this place. May the society here assembling derive from religious ordinances those moral and spiritual advantages for which these ordinances were given: and as in the changes and fluctuations of events thy providence hath ordered that another voice shall here proclaim the truths of

religion and lead the devotional thoughts of this society, may this change be blessed to the religious improvement and comfort of those who meet within these walls.

Grant, O God, that he whom thou hast called to be an instructor in holy thoughts and the prompter of pious feelings may himself feel the power of those truths of which he is the advocate ; may the faith which he professes be firmly fixed in his mind, may the virtues which he recommends to others be manifest in his own life, and the consolations which he addresses to the sorrowful be the support of his own soul. Long may the connection which has thus been here formed continue, and be a blessing to all concerned : and may this religious service in which we are now engaged convey to our minds and impress upon our hearts those truths and those feelings which shall not speedily be forgotten, and so may we have reason to acknowledge that it hath been good for us to draw near unto thee our God. Hear us, O Lord God, in these our humble and sincere requests ; answer, accept, and bless for thy great mercy's sake in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom we would ascribe unto thee all honour, power, and glory, now and for ever.—Amen.

T H E A D D R E S S ,

BY

MR. EDWARD TAYLOR.

A D D R E S S .

MY CHRISTIAN BROTHER,

AS one of the Officers of this Congregation, I am deputed to address to you a few words connected with the occasion of our assembling here this day. Deeply important to you and to us is the connection which has recently been formed between us. That connection imposes upon you the performance of duties and the discharge of offices of kindness to every member of this Christian society. We have to look to you as our instructor and friend. In your welfare we must all feel one common interest. You are henceforth identified with us in our character of a Christian church: you are become a member of that family to which we belong. How desirable therefore is it, on an occasion like the present, that we should meet to be reminded of our respective duties, and to implore the divine blessing upon the connection which we have formed.

To all the members of this Christian church—to those few aged friends who have enjoyed the

instruction of all the ministers who have laboured within these walls, and who are now met once more to hear the word of exhortation addressed to him who is chosen to fill the place which has been consecrated by their labours,—to those in active manhood who are occupying the most important stations of society,—and to those who are now entering with all the ardour and freshness of youth upon the discharge of the various duties of social life, and who, ere long, will be called upon to fill those places from which their venerated and respected predecessors are retiring;—to rich and to poor, for here all are alike—to *all*, the services of this day cannot fail to be deeply interesting.—May God grant his blessing upon it, and may the impression which it is designed and calculated to make be useful and lasting.

It may be asked of us—“ *What mean you by this service ?*” To this we reply, in the first place, that we assemble of our own free will and choice, and not by the command of any other power or person. It is the deliberate act of this Christian church, and in this, as in all other matters and things both of doctrine and discipline, we owe allegiance to one Master only, even Christ, and we bow to no human authority.

Christianity is a religion which has God for its author, and therefore must necessarily be perfect, complete, and entire, and able to answer all the

ends for which it was designed without human additions. It could never be intended to destroy the natural rights, or even to diminish the natural privileges of mankind. Such ordinances as our Saviour has enjoined the observance of, we are bound to observe, but where he has left us no such directions we are at liberty to follow the guidance of our reason, always keeping in mind the intention and the character of the religion we profess. We apply this to the present service. Here is no command of our Saviour—no injunction of his Apostles, in relation to what is usually called Ordination, which, in our opinion, was intended to apply to the after ages of the Church. We are left, then, at perfect liberty to adopt or to dispense with any introductory service on the settlement of a Minister among us. And we voluntarily and deliberately adopt it, in the second place, because we hope that some good and lasting impressions may be made upon your mind, and upon our own. Our duties are reciprocal, and in the discharge of them we must have the same end in view, we must be actuated by the same spirit. There cannot be all coldness on one side, and all warmth on the other. If the people are negligent in the discharge of their duties, the minister will soon become so in his, or he will retire from the situation in which he finds he is *labouring in vain, and spending his strength*

for nought. And on the other hand, it is in vain to expect a zeal for Christian truth amongst a people whose Minister has not his heart in the work. If we wish the cause of truth, piety, and holiness to flourish within these walls, we must be fellow helpers of each other in every good word and work.

It is unnecessary here to enlarge upon the right which we possess to elect our own Minister. The Gospel is our Charter, and we have no right to delegate to another the power to choose him who is to minister unto us in holy things. This right we cannot abandon without a surrender of that Christian *liberty* in which we are commanded to “*stand fast.*” It is not merely as men, as members of civil society, that we claim to elect our Minister, but as members of a Christian church. We are no more at liberty to surrender the right of choice, than others to usurp it. In the church of Christ there can be no degrees of power: our Lord has expressly forbidden that there should. The very essence of a Christian church is equality. In the Christian house of prayer all meet upon the same footing. When we enter therein, all ranks and orders sink, and we meet under one common appellation—fellow Christians.

From this Service you, Sir, will receive no authority either temporal or spiritual. Your ordi-

nation or appointment is made, and that by the free and voluntary choice of this people. You will be invested with no other or higher appointment. Your brethren in the ministry can confer upon you no particular privilege. The ministerial function is not a trade, nor has it any exclusive rights which the body may transfer or withhold at pleasure. They are not assembled here as a council or conclave to admit or refuse ordination, but as your friends and fellow-labourers, at the joint request of the congregation and yourself, to engage in a voluntary act of public worship, and to offer such counsel and admonition to each and all of us as may be productive of mutual and lasting good.

We know that this religious service has been made a vehicle of priestcraft and superstition. Even among some of our dissenting brethren we see, to this day, creeds imposed upon the young and ingenuous mind, and a ceremony practised which is calculated to lead to erroneous notions. But has it not been thus with all the ordinances of Religion? Prayer and preaching, baptism and the Lord's Supper have all fallen into the hands of bad men, and they have disfigured and disgraced them : but what is Reformation and what is Protestantism? Do they not include the restoration of these ordinances to their original purity?—do they not provide the means of separating the gold from

important topic of discourse with the utmost plainness and freedom, an attentive and unprejudiced consideration of the arguments by which the doctrine you teach is supported, an application of what you shall deliver to their own characters and circumstances, and an habitual regard to your instructions in the general course of their lives.”—In these words, Sir, did our valued and respected friend Dr. Enfield state the relative duties of Minister and People ; and I doubt not that the correctness of his views will be felt and acknowledged by you, and by every member of this Christian Society.

I have now, Sir, endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to discharge the duty which as one of the Deacons of this congregation, was allotted to me. I have spoken to you with plainness and sincerity. I am sure that with equal sincerity you will state your views of the Christian ministry. And I will only add my earnest and hearty prayer that you may “*feed this flock, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly : not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind : neither as being a lord over God’s heritage, but as being an ensample to the flock : and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, may you receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*”

THE REPLY,

BY

THE REV. EDWARD TAGART.

R E P L Y.

I CANNOT reply to your address on behalf of the congregation better than by briefly stating the principles and views which have guided me in complying with the wish of your fellow worshippers to become their minister and pastor.

The relation man bears to his maker, and the obedience he owes to him, hold, it is generally acknowledged, the first and the last place in importance among all the objects of human attention and enquiry. A life devoted to the study of God's will and word, and employed in the faithful transmission of that will in all its bearings upon human life to fellow-man, must therefore be considered as of all others the most useful and important. I wish not to make invidious distinctions here between one class of duties and another; but, Sir, I may be permitted to remember that whilst, supposing the duties of my office to

be fully performed, that office is the most honourable in itself and useful to the world ; its honour and its reward come, not from any glare of earthly distinction which can be hoped to accompany it, but from the peaceful consciousness of fulfilling the will of our Father who is in heaven, and the humble hope of his favour and loving kindness, whose acceptance is better than life itself.

Having chosen the Christian ministry as the worthiest sphere of all earthly labours, I have reason to bless Providence for having so ordered my education as to enable me to see, with a clearness satisfactory to my own mind, the great leading principles which should guide a Christian Minister in the path of duty. I have been brought up, Sir, amongst Protestant Unitarian Dissenters. I have not experienced the struggle, the painful and agonizing struggle, which many other labourers in the vineyard of Christ have experienced in passing from one faith to another ; in bursting the shackles of prejudice and error which have galled and cramped the native energies of the mind. Nor on the other hand have I felt the delight of awakening suddenly to the full light of truth, and rising up with the blessed consciousness of its powerful freedom. But though brought up amongst those with whom my spirit is now joined, it does not follow that I have never examined the

distinction between our opinions and those of other sects, with a mind willing to attend to evidence, and disposed to follow wherever truth would lead. It would display as much ignorance as it would presumption, to suppose that the best examination which my years and opportunities have afforded has been complete, or that my convictions are to remain for ever what they are now. Yet, though a feeling of certainty be no security against error, or sure test of being in the right, there are principles, there are opinions, there are statements, the truth of which is at once commanding and irresistible ; which give to the mind just that feeling of powerful confidence and native vigour which is imparted by sound health to the muscles and limbs of our natural frame. Such is the feeling with which we answer the question, " Shall we obey man rather than God?" And, having answered fearlessly, " we will obey God," the Protestant seizes the Bible as the only standard of infallibility, and to that the Unitarian points, as the only authority to which he will bow, the only guide he dares to follow.

The principles upon which your congregation have acted seem to me those which are alone worthy of men and Christians. You have demanded from me no confession of faith, have asked no creed. You believe that the creeds made

by fallible men, and of contradictory nature, have served only to hamper the judgment in the search after truth, and have hung like a dead weight to the Scriptures, through which it is well Revelation has not completely sunk.

It is, however, with some reliance upon agreement in opinion that I have been chosen Pastor of this congregation. And if it exhibit only the positiveness of dogmatism to thrust our opinions forward where there is no necessity, yet on an occasion like this I feel called upon to say that, not only as a Protestant have I learnt that to search the Scriptures with a patient and sincere, with a humble and a pious mind, is the only way to attain God's truth, but as an Unitarian also do I feel that a creed, given by our only Master—"this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," cannot be wrong, whatever else be right. As an Unitarian, I feel that a prayer offered as alone Jesus taught his disciples to pray, to "Our Father who is in heaven," in spirit and in truth, cannot be other than an accepted prayer;—and that a life of honest endeavour to fulfil the two great commandments of love to God and love to man, as a faithful disciple of Christ, cannot be other than an approved life at the great day of final account. Such a creed, given by the highest authority and

taken in all its bearings and connections, it will be my duty to expound ; such a devotion, conformed to the best directions and most perfect model, it will be my aim to inspire ; and such a life of cheerful obedience and humble imitation, it shall, be it God's will, have every effort of my soul to practise in myself and to create in others.

Viewed in this comprehensive light, and stated in this form, the duties I now impose upon myself are clear, open, and direct. But though a few simple words may suffice to point out the path, the path itself is often beset with unseen dangers, encompassed by numerous difficulties, and exposed to many evils from within and from without. Great and glorious it may seem indeed to enlist among those who contribute by wisdom and by piety to rescue man from error and from vice, to rescue truth from corruption, the Gospel from perversion, and religion from contempt ; but it is a fearful and an awful thing to reflect on the responsibility which hangs over the head of a Christian Minister, who has yoked his spirit so interchangeably with that of his brethren as to make his knowledge and his piety answerable for theirs, and consequently their error, their guilt, their misery, in some degree his own. The spirit may beat high with animating hope, but God forbid that we should never tremble at the dan-

gers that are to be encountered, the work that must be accomplished, the trial that must be endured. In no man's mind does truth exist without some admixture of error; and where is he whose virtue is so far above humanity's that there are no imperfections to be pardoned, no weaknesses to be subdued? What then must be his fears, who stands forward, in inexperienced youth, of partial views, of self-convicted weakness, to work against the opposition of deep-rooted institutions, to brave the conflict of bigoted and exclusive systems, to stem the torrent of malevolent and perverted dispositions; and not to encounter opposition only, but to lead on a chosen band of followers to truth, to holiness; to impart the true spirit of Christian discipline, to urge them up the steep ascent to which God calls, where heaven awaits them, or fall with them, himself the lowest of the low! Fears must be his, such as nothing but an enduring and calm trust in him "who sees the end from the beginning," who "comprehends all wants and can supply all needs," could rationally or justly overcome!

It is, then, with feelings of deep and solemn interest, that I hail an occasion like this, as the means of securing some useful and valuable impressions, to help, to strengthen, to encourage us in our mutual duties. We cannot but feel jus-

tified in seizing every opportunity for religious instruction and moral improvement. And why may not this occasion throw light upon some portion of our duty before “invisible or dimly seen;”—excite some fresher resolution,—afford some additional support? I do trust—fellow Christians and fellow worshippers—that we shall not this day listen to my elder brethren in the Church of Christ who have come to aid us by their presence, nor join in solemn prayer for the blessing and guidance of Heaven, without feeling ourselves benefited, strengthened, and improved; without feeling our hearts united in dearer and closer ties of Christian fellowship, and our minds elevated by a more awakened, a more engrossing, a more fervent spirit of obedience to Christian duty.

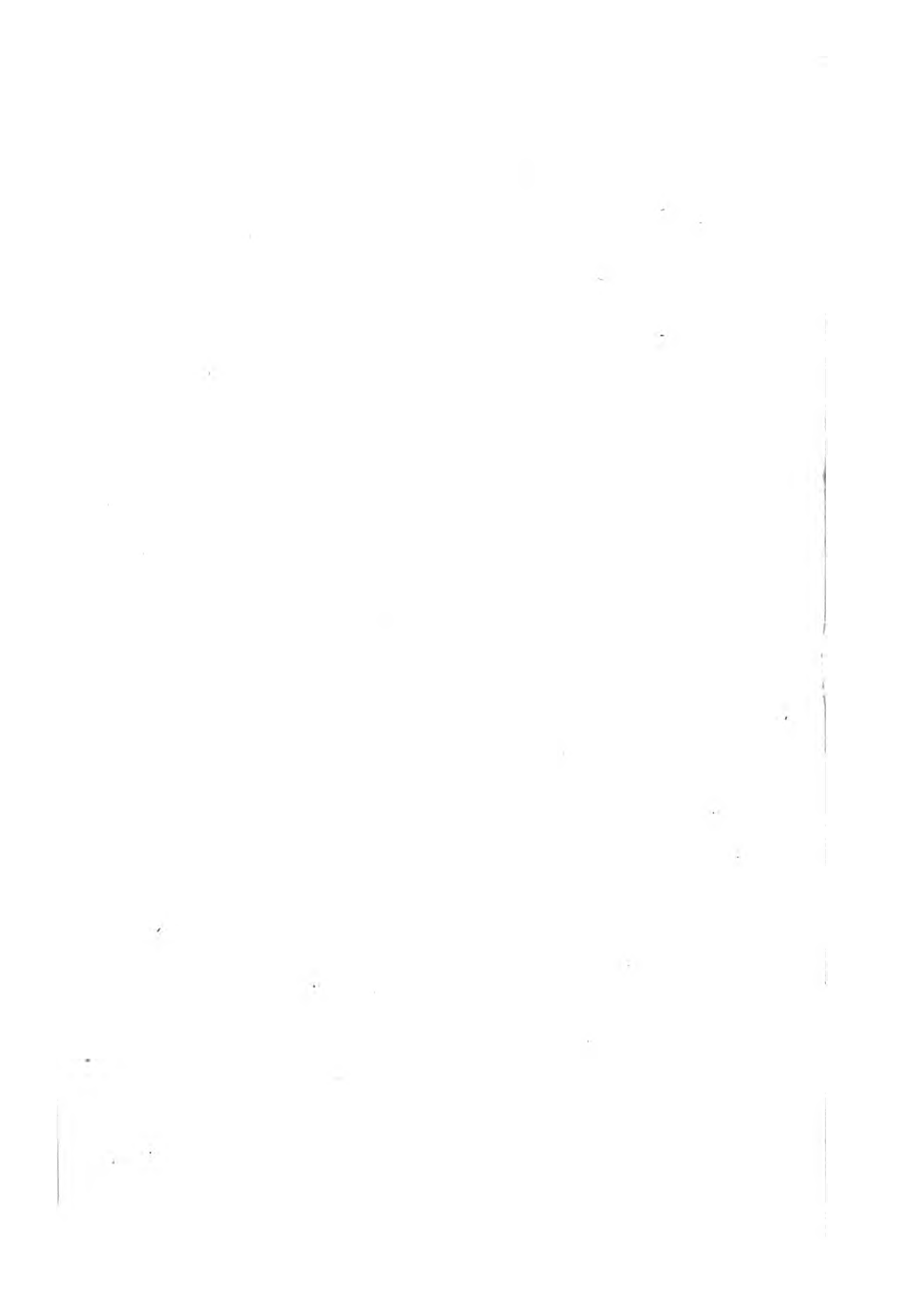


THE CHARGE,

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM TURNER

OF YORK.



THE CHARGE.

AT your request, my much esteemed young friend and former pupil, I now proceed to that portion which has been allotted to me of this pleasing and I trust not unprofitable service, by offering to your particular consideration a few thoughts addressed more immediately to yourself. And in entering upon this duty, it is my humble but fervent prayer, that, however imperfect they may prove, they may be attended by such a portion of the divine favour and blessing as to minister in some measure to their intended purpose, by suggesting to your mind suitable topics of meditation, by which your future course in the highly important, but perhaps on some accounts peculiarly arduous and responsible office which you have been appointed to fill, may be directed and encouraged.

Before I proceed, however, I feel that I ought

to claim your indulgence and that of this respectable assembly, and apologize for undertaking at all a duty for which in some respects I may seem not to possess what many would consider as indispensable requisites. There may appear something presumptuous in a person coming forward in this manner to give public advice and exhortation as to the due performance of an office which he has never himself been called upon to discharge. As I have never been myself the stated minister of any congregation, my attempting to advise and exhort one who has already received what we all agree in acknowledging as the only valid and authentic appointment to administer religious exhortation to others, may be thought irregular, and is indeed, as far as I know, without precedent. Nevertheless, although I cannot yet claim the privileges even of age, yet, as a few years more have passed over my head, I may be supposed to have had more opportunities of observation, and the very circumstance of my being personally unconnected may possibly have enabled me to observe more impartially and candidly, in the character, not of a party immediately concerned, but in that of an unbiassed spectator, on the causes which tend either to promote or to diminish, the comfort and usefulness of the relation subsisting between a minister and his flock.

There is perhaps another point of view in which this peculiarity attendant upon the present service may not be without its advantages. For it is obvious that, whatever pretensions may be advanced by others, *I*, at least, cannot be supposed to lay claim to any priestly office or character, which should authorize me to confer spiritual gifts or privileges, or in any respect either to ratify or change that relation between this Christian society and yourself which is now commenced by the uncontroled act of the parties immediately concerned,—who, as their own most important interests both in time and in eternity are involved in it, can alone be entitled either to give or to withhold their concurrence. It is not possible that *I* should be regarded by any one in a character different from that in which alone *I* wish to be considered;—in that, namely, of a friend animated by the most earnest wish that this connexion may be mutually attended, in their greatest possible extent, by all those advantages which are capable of being derived, and are, *I* trust, not unreasonably anticipated, from it. For yourself, the very request, in consequence of which *I* now appear in this place, is a proof that you give me credit for feeling something beyond mere ordinary good wishes. No one who beholds a young man of promising dispositions and

talents, after having duly cultivated his natural endowments by a course of assiduous preparatory study, about to devote himself to the cause and service of God and his Saviour, and entering with this view upon an office which must call for the unwearied exercise of all his faculties, can fail to wish him God speed in this honourable course. On the present occasion however, I cannot but be impressed by a stronger and more lively emotion. In the most irksome parts of a laborious duty, it is most satisfactory and supporting to reflect that I have been in some degree instrumental in preparing so many able and excellent young men for the honourable stations which they already hold in the Christian church, and for that more distinguished eminence for which, I doubt not, many of them are destined. I trust, my dear friend and brother, that through the blessing and favour of God upon both of us, the time is at hand when your name shall be coupled with eminent services in your Master's cause, and shall often be recollected with unmingled satisfaction by those who have been concerned in your education, when they seek for excitements to renewed vigour by calling to mind the success with which former labours have been crowned.

The office, to the active discharge of whose duties you are now proceeding, as it is intimately

connected with the most important interests of others, so it is surely in many respects peculiarly fitted to promote the intellectual, the moral, and the religious improvement of him who undertakes it. Separated by your profession from an undue attachment to worldly objects and pursuits, and required, by its duties in labouring to bring the great truths and doctrines of the Gospel home to the hearts of your hearers, to keep them habitually present to your own, you seem to possess advantages and opportunities for the cultivation of a devout and religious frame of mind beyond what are granted to a majority of your fellow creatures. By far the greater part of *their* time is unavoidably devoted to the pursuits and employments connected with the exercise of their respective modes of life;—which are, it is true, most of them valuable and useful, and even necessary to the comfortable existence of men in society; but which, though perfectly *consistent* with an habitually pious and truly Christian spirit, are not in themselves peculiarly calculated to promote the growth of such a spirit. With them, it is only perhaps the seventh day, or at best a few detached intervals snatched from the laborious employments of the other six, which can be immediately devoted to religious studies and meditations. But you may seem to be more favour-

ably circumstanced. It is the business of your life to familiarize to your own mind that holy law which you are appointed to expound and recommend to others, and to be as deeply versed as possible in those studies and accomplishments which are necessary to enable you to do this with the greatest effect. We are therefore perhaps not unreasonable, if we expect to find the Christian minister not only more than ordinarily skilled in a knowledge of that divine word which he is set apart from secular pursuits in order that he may be duly qualified to explain to his brethren, but also peculiarly and more deeply impressed with a sense of the infinite practical value of the great truths which he has been appointed to teach. We naturally apply to him the saying of his Lord, "from him to whom much hath been given much will also be required;"—and if he, in his ordinary behaviour, betrays a forgetfulness or disregard of those Christian principles with which, as it is his business to impress them on his hearers, he may be expected to be at least not less familiar than they, he is not to be surprised if they conceive of him as sinning against clearer light, and as working out for himself a heavier condemnation.

I say not this in any degree to vindicate those who would fain persuade themselves that they, as men of the world, are entitled to assume a greater

laxity of behaviour, and are not required to regulate their conduct by so strict and scrupulous a regard to the divine law, but to impress it on the mind of the young minister, that as he unquestionably enjoys in some respects more than ordinary opportunities for personal improvement, so it is necessary, as well for his final acceptance with his Almighty Judge, as for his present usefulness in his Master's cause, that he should be careful to render his own life *obviously* and *eminently* a pattern of the truths he teaches. I am not recommending ascetic privations or austerities ; these are neither required nor countenanced by Scriptural authority ; they are not consistent with the tastes and manners of the present times, and perhaps would rather diminish than increase his influence and usefulness among his people. But still, into whatever society he enters, his presence should always be felt to be that of a *religious* man. Without assuming any affected gravity, or declining to mix in the innocent pleasures or cheerful relaxations of general society, it will always be possible even for a *young* minister not only to avoid himself transgressing the line which separates cheerful amusement from excessive or unseasonable levity, but by a mild and yet sufficiently marked and grave expression of disapprobation, to withhold his countenance or encour-

agement whenever such transgression takes place in his presence. If he has succeeded in acquiring that degree of personal authority which his office, united to talents and general respectability, can scarcely fail to procure for him, he will thus be enabled to exercise a more powerful, and an infinitely more salutary influence on the manners and general demeanour of those about him, and above all of the younger part of his own society, than by the most rigid exclusion of all participation in the ordinary pursuits and amusements of the generality of mankind.

Our blessed Lord has himself described the character and office which he had imposed on his immediate followers, by a peculiarly apt and striking similitude; “Ye are the salt of the earth;” he adds, pursuing the same comparison, this powerful and impressive warning,—“if the salt have lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden underfoot of men.” This is a character which the Christian minister of every denomination and in every age is still called upon to support; he is called upon not merely to raise the warning voice of admonition and remonstrance in the public congregation, but to exhibit in his own person the corrective and purifying influence of a religious and truly Chris-

tian example. In the present period not merely of refinement, but of luxury and dissipation, when so many seem ready to sacrifice every nobler principle, every more worthy pursuit, every prospect of advancement in the great objects for the sake of which they were placed here, in order to dedicate themselves to the vain pomp, the fleeting vanities and frivolity of the world, it seems as if the ministers of the Gospel were more especially bound to recollect that they are the salt of the earth, the light of the world;—that they are placed in a prominent and conspicuous situation, invested with a peculiar character and office, separated from ordinary cares and secular pursuits, and enabled, both by their original education, and by the influence which their subsequent employments may and ought to exert upon their own habitual thoughts and feelings, to make an honourable, a powerful, and (may we not hope) within the limits to which their influence extends, an effectual stand against the wide spreading causes of corruption, irreligion, and vice.

Surely then, my young friend, it becomes you and all such as are called upon with your abilities and advantages to exercise your high and honourable office, to exert your best powers to check prevailing corruption, not only by your public instructions and exhortations, but by every pos-

sible effort which your private and more familiar intercourse with your people may enable you to employ. Administer, wherever you have a suitable opportunity, the salutary antidotes of religious admonition and instruction; lead the way by your own example among the people committed to your charge, if haply you may be instrumental to preserve the young from contamination, or to recover from the pollutions that are in the world through lusts those that have yielded to temptation, and thus both save themselves and them that hear you.

These are among the various ways in which not merely the public instructions but the conduct—the general deportment and behaviour in society—of a preacher of the Gospel may exert a perpetual influence of a highly beneficial kind over the manners and habits of those with whom he is connected. If he keeps these considerations continually in view, the value of his services as a labourer in his Master's work will be incalculably increased;—for then it will not be at certain stated intervals only and for short periods at a time, but through the whole of an active life, that he will be discharging the most important functions of a Christian Minister. But there are occasions of an incidental and comparatively temporary nature, which call upon him to take

a more decided and prominent part. When public ills prevail, when the sincere word of God is generally and grossly corrupted, or when his law is generally despised and contemned, it may become necessary for his minister to assume a bolder tone;—to lift on high the warning voice; to denounce the evil principle and its abettors with that authority which he derives from the heavenly origin of the divine message which it is his business to promulgate. He will then remember the warning of Jehovah to his prophet, and, in as far as his situation and office are similar, he will apply it to himself. He will remember that he too is the watchman who is placed over this Israel. When he seeth the sword come upon the land, he will blow the trumpet and warn the people; if then the people take not warning,—if they go on in their evil courses in spite of the voice of admonition and remonstrance which has been repeatedly raised to make them sensible of the error of their ways, then the people may die in their iniquity, but thou the watchman hast delivered thy soul. But if, on the contrary, the snares and temptations of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the many trials and dangers to which a state of poverty and ignorance exposes the bulk of mankind, should be allowed to work their way unheeded and unopposed, and if through

their evil influence any of those for whom Christ died should perish, who might have been saved if the watchman had been at his post, then these may die in their iniquity, but assuredly their blood will be required at the watchman's hand.

Remember then, my young friend, that it is your bounden duty to apply the salutary preservative of your Master's doctrines, precepts, and promises, discreetly, faithfully, diligently, according to the best of your ability among those to whom you are called to minister, as occasions and circumstances shall require. The light that is in you is not to be concealed under a bushel, but is to shine forth to give light to all that are in the house. Think it not enough that you have been enabled to store up knowledge or to acquire valuable endowments; but apply to yourself the exhortation addressed to Timothy by the Apostle Paul, (whose letters to his youthful disciple and assistant would seem to have been preserved expressly that they might form a manual of instruction to all young ministers,) "Stir up the gift of God that is in you, for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of a sound mind."

It has been your privilege that the time devoted to preparation for the Gospel ministry has been occupied not merely on critical and theolo-

gical studies ; you have been called to its active exercise in recommending to others what you conceive to be correct views of Scripture truth,—in preaching the Gospel to the poor,—in unfolding the sacred page to the eye of childhood and of youth ;—in a friendly, and, I doubt not, a mutually improving intercourse with intelligent and well-disposed persons of those humbler classes of society to which your Master most frequently directed his instructions, and whose interests and spiritual benefit are recommended to the peculiar attention of the minister of religion. In all these labours of love, you, I trust, will persevere ; may it be with increasing assiduity, satisfaction, and success ! In endeavouring to promote the religious instruction of the young, particularly among the lower classes, you will rejoice that you are not called upon to up break new ground, and will be desirous to second what has already been well begun, both by your advice, and, as far as it can be made consistent with your other duties, by your active personal assistance.

As to your preaching, its style and manner, its object and tendency, I am happy to think that there is little need of counsel or warning. It is unnecessary for me to remind you that the pulpit is intended to furnish the preacher with opportunities not of displaying his learning, his acuteness,

or his eloquence, but of doing what in him lies to promote the moral and religious edification of his hearers. All your discourses therefore, delivered from this place, will have this primary object in view. If any subject offers itself which admits of no valuable practical application, which suggests no topics of useful meditation fitted to amend the heart and life, or to promote the progress of the hearers in the graces of the Christian character, consider that as a sufficient proof that however curious or interesting it may be in itself, it is not a fit subject for the pulpit.

When, however, I thus recommend it to you in all cases to give your discourses a practical tendency, I run no risk I am sure of being suspected by you, and I hope not by any who now hear me, of a wish to recommend a disregard of or inattention to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, or even of those views of disputed doctrines which appear to you to be most consistent with the word of God. You will recollect that it is your business to preach Christ, and not any system of heathen or temporal morality. Whenever, therefore, you explain or enforce any moral duty, it will always be upon evangelical principles. It will be your object to derive from the precepts and instructions of Christ and his Apostles the soundest principles of morality and true

holiness, a perfect rule of life ; and to enforce the observance of this rule by a reference, not to the speculations and refinements, often ingenious and eloquent, but baseless, visionary, and inadequate, of heathen philosophers, but to the awful threatenings, the glorious hopes and promises of the Gospel. To lay down rules for the conduct of life, to inculcate benevolence, candour, or charity, and to do this with a reference solely to the present world, or to enforce them upon such principles and motives only as human reason can supply, may be a very interesting and agreeable, and in its proper place a profitable exercise, but it is not to preach Christ. To occupy your hearers with critical enquiries into the precise meaning of disputed passages of Scripture, is excellent as far as it goes ; but this alone is not preaching Christ. You will not hesitate on all proper occasions to bring forward openly and candidly the opinions you have adopted upon those points with respect to which Christian sects and parties differ. I have no doubt that on such occasions you will be found ready and able to give a reason, a satisfactory and sufficient reason, for the faith that is in you. But there is a great and important distinction between *doctrinal* preaching and *controversial* preaching. It is one thing to explain and recommend your own views of the

doctrine of Scripture, it is another to attack the opinions which you deem erroneous ;—it is still another to make personal allusions to the character or conduct of those who hold these opinions. The first is frequently necessary, the second occasionally,—the last, in my opinion, never.

In the opportunities you have hitherto enjoyed of cultivating these and other desirable qualifications for the Christian minister, you have enjoyed advantages superior to those of many of your predecessors ;—but I am well assured that you will not rest contented with what has already been done. You will not be satisfied with those things which you have left behind, as though you had attained or were already perfect ; but forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth to those which are before, you will press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. You will be far from imagining that in these or in any other respects, your academical labours have completed the requisite preparation for the duties which now demand your attention. By an extensive and varied course of literary, scientific, and theological study, you have laid, as I can testify, a solid foundation upon which a truly valuable superstructure may hereafter be erected. You have acquired those tastes, and those habits of mental exertion, which

will both incite and enable you to aspire after much higher degrees of improvement. I doubt not that you will be desirous, as far as circumstances will permit, to extend and perfect your stores of general information, which I need not tell you are so far from being inconsistent with a diligent and successful pursuit of those studies which have a more immediate and obvious connexion with the duties of your office, that they cannot fail materially to assist them, and to give you greater facilities in their most valuable practical application.

I may be allowed to add, that in a period like the present, when almost all classes are thirsting for knowledge, when so much is already done, and so much more is likely to be done to promote its more rapid diffusion, you may occasionally find the acquisitions you have already made, or may hereafter be enabled to make in general literature and science, a most important advantage. In such a period, it is in the highest degree desirable that the eager pursuit of knowledge so prevalent among all ranks should receive its right direction, and that there should be engrafted on it a disposition to make the culture of the understanding instrumental to the progress of religious and moral improvement. It seems to me that they can have little discernment of the signs of the times who

do not perceive that there are causes of change at work in society, and gradually bringing it into a state of fermentation which must lead to great and important results. The *final* effect we leave with confidence to the infinitely wise Disposer of all events ; but the character of the intermediate changes, the effects in the mean time of the successive steps of the process through which we must pass in order to arrive at it, depend in a great measure upon ourselves, and especially on the talents and general influence of the Christian minister. The general diffusion of knowledge in every class of society, but particularly amongst the lower classes, is an instrument of good whose extent and value cannot be calculated ;—but it will lose the greater part of its efficacy in the promotion of any really desirable purpose, if it is separated from religion ; an evil consequence which can hardly fail to ensue if it is abandoned to the exclusive direction of men who are, I do not say hostile, but at least indifferent to revelation, and who avowedly promote the cause of general education chiefly from a regard to its worldly and political advantages. It is a well known maxim, to the application of which this is far from being an exception, that “ knowledge is power.” You cannot raise the intellectual character of the lower classes without proportionally increasing their in-

fluence on the moral and political condition of society at large ; and it is to the last degree important to the interests of the whole, that this increasing influence should be guided by the principles of religion and virtue.

Now I know of no way in which this desirable object seems so likely to be accomplished as by the active intervention of the Christian minister. The pulpit is now no longer the only place in which his public labours for the benefit of mankind, by promoting the practical efficacy of sound and rational views of religion, may be profitably carried on. Let him come forward to assume, what, if he be competent to undertake it, will in general be willingly yielded to him,—a leading place in the conduct of those institutions which are now so common at least in our larger towns, for the promotion of useful knowledge,—and it is probable that he will not only find himself enabled to render valuable services to the community at large, in the promotion of the immediate and avowed object of these institutions themselves, but, what is of much greater consequence, he will have the means of communicating that religious tone and character to the methods adopted for promoting the intellectual improvement of every class of society, without which the benefit to be derived from them may almost

be overbalanced by the perversion to which they are liable. The time is gone by, (if it ever existed) when the minister of religion might content himself with being a man in theology but a child in every thing else ;—in order to perform to his congregation all the service which his office admits of and requires, he should now be able, not only to open the treasures of heavenly wisdom, and inculcate the principles of religion and morality, but to gratify, or at least to direct into its proper channels, the search after useful knowledge of other kinds which is now prevalent, and which he will deem it is duty to encourage among every class of his people, from the highest to the lowest. Here also it becomes him to consider himself as the “ the salt of the earth ;”—to be instant in season and out of season in administering that purifying and preserving influence of religious doctrine and principle, without which the corruption of the best things may render them only the instruments of more extensive and lamentable mischief.*

* There are many who, on reading these observations, will readily perceive that the author has had more immediately in his view one venerated character, who for a long series of years has taken an active part in the original formation of many, and in the subsequent direction of almost all, the institutions for public-spirited and benevolent purposes in the neighbour-

Now in order to this, it is certainly to be wished that the Christian minister should endeavour to maintain himself at least on a level with the better informed of those with whom he associates ;—as far as it can be done consistently with the predominant attention which he will always consider it as his duty to pay to the studies immediately connected with his peculiar character and office. But you will never suffer yourself to forget that you are a minister of the Gospel of Christ ; to this sacred office whatever other pursuits or enquiries may occasionally occupy your attention will always be kept subordinate. Your special business and concern therefore is with

hood where he resides,—and in so doing, has had the satisfaction to find himself supported, assisted, and esteemed by many excellent persons, who differ it is true most widely on points of faith, but agree in those essential characters of genuine religion, justice, mercy, charity. I have no doubt that he has thus succeeded, not perhaps in removing, yet certainly in softening many a prejudice, and has induced many to think it possible, however difficult it may be to reconcile such a notion with their speculative principles, that a “ Socinian ” might get to heaven. The best wish and prayer that I can form for any young minister is, that after more than forty years of an active life so spent in his Master’s service, and in benefiting his fellow-creatures, he may have equal reason to look back upon his course with satisfaction, and forward to its joyful consequences !

the word of God. This will be your favourite, your habitual, your constant study. And you will justly consider it as no small encouragement to persevere in this important study, that you stand unfettered by any creed of human formation, or by any public confessions binding you to profess and teach the dogmas of a particular system. Whatever may be the result of your enquiries, (such is the liberal constitution of our religious societies) you will be at liberty, nay, you will be required by the terms of your agreement, to lay it before your people fearlessly and without reserve. Others, not only in the established church, but even among various classes of Dissenters, have not unfrequently been deterred from prosecuting theological enquiries beyond a certain very limited range, by a fear of unsettling their faith, and of exciting a doubt whether some of the articles of that creed which they have undertaken and pledged themselves to teach as faithfully presenting the doctrines of Holy Writ, may not prove at last to be only the commandments of men. But you can labour under no such discouragements ;—you are empowered and exhorted to persevere in acting on the only consistent, the only truly Protestant principle. The Bible, and the Bible only, will be your religion; the Bible, and the Bible only, will be the rule of your

faith and practice. To that standard you will refer all your doctrines and instructions ;—with that standard it will be the main business of your life to render yourself minutely and thoroughly acquainted ;—to that standard you will appeal as your sole authority for every thing which either in this place or in your more private ministrations you may be called upon to advance as an article of religious faith.

The office which you are now called upon to fill is, as I have said, an arduous and a difficult one ;—more particularly to a young minister entering alone on so extensive and important a field of exertion ;—but you have at the same time powerful incentives to exertion, and also many truly valuable, and I trust effectual encouragements and supports. I refer not here to those of which you partake in common with the rest of your brethren, but to such as are in some measure, at least, peculiar to yourself. I refer not to those which every Christian minister who is worthy of the name must feel in a conviction of the importance of his office in general as the spiritual guide and pastor of souls destined for immortality ;—in the divine authority of the arguments and motives which it is his business to enforce upon his hearers ;—in the excellence and value of those rewards which await the faithful labourer in the

vineyard of Christ ;—I allude to such encouragements and incentives as may be derived from a reference to the circumstances and character of the religious society with which you are about to be connected. You are not so little versed in the history of Protestant dissent as to require to be reminded of the long line of able, learned, upright, and pious ministers who have successively laboured within these walls to train up their fellow-christians in the knowledge and service of the one true God, and to purify them unto Christ as a peculiar people zealous of good works. The names of TAYLOR, of BOURN, of ENFIELD, of HOUGHTON, (I pass over those living worthies who for a longer or a shorter time have been connected with this congregation, and who by the recollection of early friendship, or by still more intimate ties, are particularly endeared to me) must ever be remembered with respect and gratitude, so long as sound learning, enlightened views of Christian truth, and simplicity, candour, and eloquence in recommending it to others, shall be objects of esteem among mankind. A congregation which has been favoured with the services of such men very naturally regards itself as somewhat distinguished above others ;—its members have naturally formed to themselves a standard more elevated than usual, by which to estimate

the ministerial character and office ;—and they may perhaps not unreasonably expect that *their* minister should possess something more than the average share of the endowments requisite for its suitable exercise. They have good reason, too, to look back with some complacency,—(I hope also with a disposition to show themselves not unworthy of their honourable descent) on the history of past times, when their ancestors not only enjoyed and improved the labours of these eminent lights of the Christian church, but likewise, and that in an age less favourable than the present to candour and liberality on disputed points of doctrine, fearlessly supported and countenanced them, in the most free and enlightened enquiry, and encouraged them to communicate the results of their enquiries to their people.

These are doubtless circumstances which add to the responsibility, and in some degree to the difficulty, of a situation like this, especially to a youthful successor ;—happily they at the same time furnish additional incentives as well as additional encouragements to that Christian zeal and to those unwearied exertions by which alone they can be effectually surmounted. Be it your care my dear friend to support,—be it your ambition if possible even to advance, the honour and reputation of the Gospel ministry among your peo-

ple ;—at least regard it as a sacred duty to hand them down unsullied to whoever may be called to enter upon your labours. When that time shall arrive,

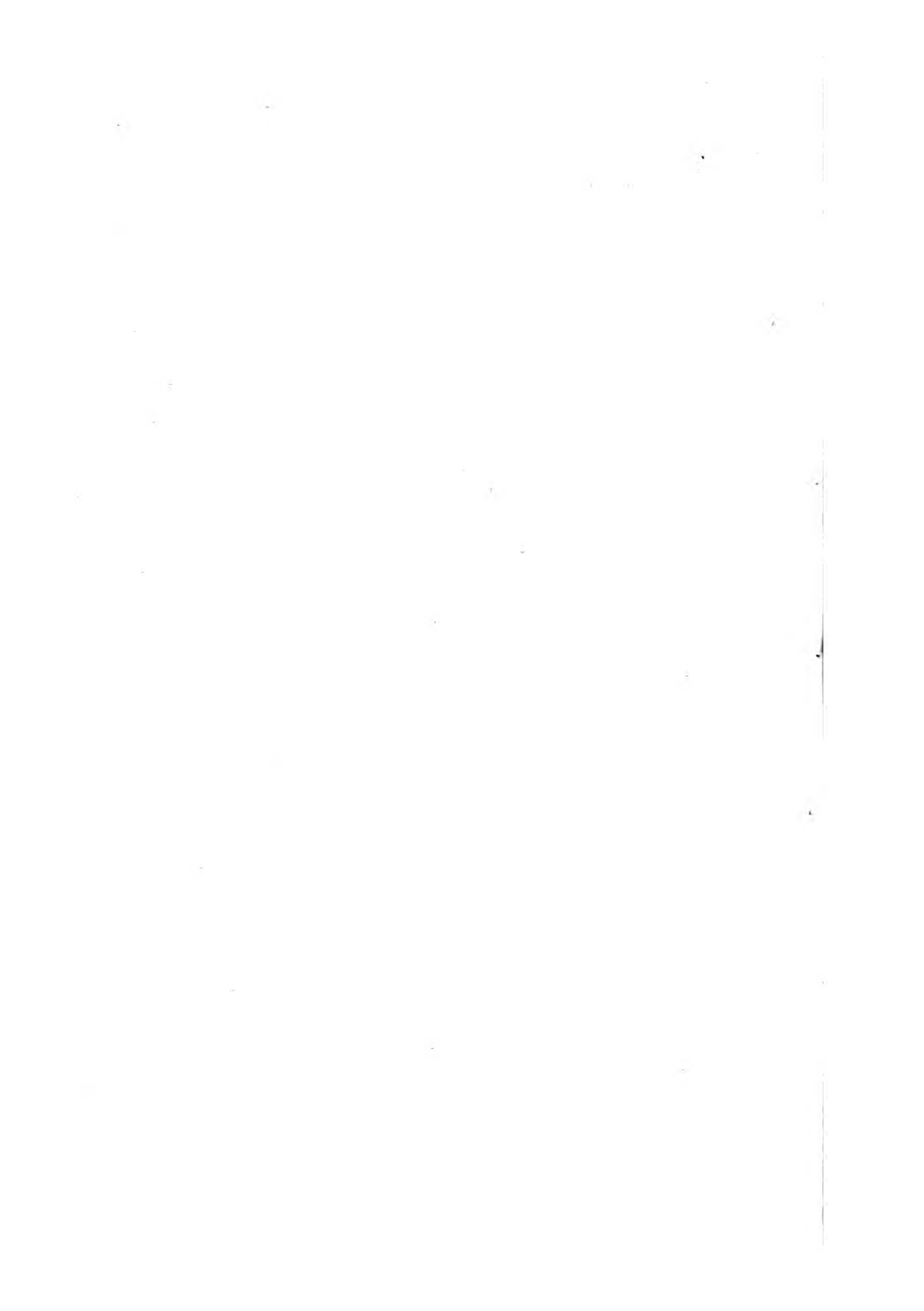
“ Late be the hour and distant be the day,”

may your's be added to the honourable catalogue of venerated and illustrious names, which shall then be held up to some rising aspirant after similar usefulness, excellence, and reputation, as a stimulant to his zeal, a guide to his exertions in his Master's cause, and an effectual encouragement to every good work and labour of love!—
Amen.

T H E S E R M O N ,

BY

T H E R E V . W . J . F O X .



THE SERMON.

1 TIMOTHY, v. 8.

The labourer is worthy of his reward.

IT would be difficult to find a case to which this general principle may be applied with greater justice, than to that of the faithful minister of a Dissenting and Unitarian congregation.

The discharge of the various duties which have been delineated, implies efforts of mind and body, public and private, extending themselves over the whole time, and tasking all the faculties, of the individual on whom they are imposed. He can be no drone in society. The honourable appellation of *labourer* (and honourable it assuredly is, with all correct minds, with all who connect utility and virtue with their notions of dignity) fairly belongs to him. And his toil has this fur-

ther title to remuneration that it is not only arduous in its nature, and beneficial in its tendency, but is freely devolved upon him by others, who by the very act of inviting him to the duty, pledge themselves to the bestowment of the recompense.

The very office is of their creation. For it is not, I apprehend, a law of revelation, though it was an early Christian practice, an Apostolic practice, that some should be set apart as religious instructors. You deem it expedient that it should be so, and I think experience shows that you are right. Still it is your own uncompelled act. You not only create the office, but define its powers and duties. If not formally, this is at least done in fact, and the practical diversity includes all the intermediate degrees, between a mere theological lecturer, and the head of an organized society. And you also make choice of the individual to fill this station without the interference of any external, or the control of any superior authority.

The worthiness of the labourer cannot be so powerfully urged where he is sent into the field by others. The obligations of the patron and the flock are blended in you, who have at once the privilege of instruction, and the prerogative of nomination. A relation so completely spontaneous, in all its parts, from beginning to end, holds you by the strongest moral ties to the appro-

priate remuneration of your minister. What that is, I have been requested, and shall attempt to describe, on the present occasion.

It is not the bestowment of independent property. Neither your contributions, your endowments, nor your pulpit are a freehold. If any of them are made so, or ever attempted to be made so, by the agency of an imperfect legislation, it is by an analogy (which we disclaim) with the established church, and in direct violation of the principles on which we dissent from that church. The people's voice is the only tenure by which our ministers hold any thing which a congregation can bestow ; and shame befall those who would infringe, though but a hair's breadth, upon this principle, or who would submit to such infringement. Neither does that remuneration consist in investiture with temporal or spiritual dignities. You do not make (as vocation to some nominally ecclesiastical stations strangely makes) a Peer of Parliament, a titled dignitary ; and though custom may think to grace your ministers names by the addition of Reverend, that custom is deemed by many of us to be not less "honoured in the breach than in the observance." Nor is it any part of the proper reward of your minister that he should be a priest in fact though not in name. For you to make him a priest (and he is nothing

officially, but what you make him) would be neither to benefit yourselves, nor him. To his assumption (should he ever make it, which I am persuaded he will not) of aught that belongs to that designation, of official sanctity, of authoritative interpretation, of uncalled-for interference, I exhort you not to submit. The Apostles were but servants of the churches, and no ministerial worth can merit the attributes of a spiritual dictatorship. And if not a priest, still less make him an idol. There are religionists whose devotion seems rather to consist in praising their minister, than their God: and in admiring the beauty of his orations, than in acquiring, and practically employing, sacred truth. The minister ill deserves praise who is greedy of it in any other form than that of the reception and influence of the doctrines he inculcates. The incense of flattery is apt to cloud his senses, and make him not a rewarded labourer, but a spoiled child. Plaudits are the meed of actors, not of teachers. He who speaks to men as moral agents, of their God, is most successful when *he* is least thought of, either by himself, or by his auditory. But, not to dwell on negatives, the reward of one who labours in the ministry should be rendered by the congregation in pecuniary support, social kindness, serious attention, and zealous co-operation.

First. In pecuniary support.—That a young man should devote himself to the dissenting ministry as a gainful profession, and sacrifice to it, as a promising worldly speculation, the time and expense of the requisite education, is scarcely to be supposed. It would argue either a lamentable ignorance of the real state of things, and be soon considered as a false step which must be retrieved with all expedient haste, or else imply such an incapacity for success in the pursuit of wealth in other ways, and such a consequent degradation in the scale of intellect, as would be utterly incompatible with the acceptability of his services to any respectable and well-informed congregation. Our pulpits hold out no such temptations, and I trust they never will.

Our Lord's warning against hireling shepherds has been but too amply verified in the oppressions of his flock. The love of money may do much ; it may inspire energy, and skill, and eloquence ; but the essential qualities of a minister of religion never have been among its results, nor ever will, till men gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles. They are the fruits of a far nobler and purer principle. They require disinterestedness ; they imply devotion and philanthropy.

But if it were egregious folly for a minister to

anticipate the enriching of himself by his profession, it is but obvious and simple justice that he reckon upon a decent maintenance. This is due in all cases; and the interest (I mean the kind of interest which belongs to the utility of the office) of the congregation is not less involved in it than that of the minister. What is the consequence of its neglect? If the minister be a man of private fortune, every deduction on that account is an addition to his influence in the affairs of the congregation; he becomes irresponsible; and at his death, or removal, a people unaccustomed to conduct their own concerns, and to contribute from their own resources, are but too likely to fall into a state of indifference, or confusion, which may end in their complete dissolution. On the other hand, without such means, either his mind is continually harassed by the difficulty of his task, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, a task which, if it prove not too hard for his integrity, may yet oppress his intellect, when it ought in all its force and clearness to be employed in his duties; or he is driven to other occupations to eke out his scanty means, and comes to the pulpit, or to his preparation for it, with mind and body distracted, jaded, worn out, with only the dregs of his intellect to offer on that altar where he would

willingly pour his noblest thoughts and feelings for a libation. A character well formed for ministerial usefulness may yet be little adapted to cope with difficulties and make exertions of this description. They are an unnatural struggle; a fight with enemies who use strange weapons; and it is well if he come out of the conflict unscathed in circumstances, reputation, peace of mind, or usefulness. Nor ought it to be required. A man does enough when he sacrifices for himself and family those earthly prospects which expand for others, and nothing short of positive inability on the part of the congregation, from poverty of circumstances or paucity of numbers, can justify their leaving him to do more.

I have spoken thus plainly upon this rather delicate topic, because it is of great general importance to our cause. There is too much of a compulsive secularization in our ministry. Its full and undivided power is not directed to the destruction of anti-christian error, and the revival of Gospel truth. Men who might attain the most commanding influence in society, were their capabilities for public exertion fully developed, are obliged so soon to turn their attention to education, or other means of actually supporting themselves, as to cramp their vigour and make them mere weekly sermon readers, doing that with comparatively little

efficiency, and doing nothing else for the promotion of genuine religion, either in or out of their own congregations. Congregations which cannot do more had better call forth the talents of the best instructed among themselves, and in the mean time unite, if possible, with others, to support among them one who should be at once minister and missionary, his whole life and powers devoted to a single object, and by that singleness doing more for its advance than twenty who only bring to it a divided mind. Oh, there is that in Unitarian Christianity, to every mind which perceives its truth and worth and loveliness, and immense importance to human virtue and happiness; which knows the delightful consciousness of labouring, not unsuccessfully, under its impulse, turning men from the error of their ways, turning the superstitious to a rational piety, the bigotted to candour and brotherly love, sinners to righteousness, and the slaves of humanly devised tyrants of creation to the adoration of the universal Father; which contemplates at once with regret approaching to anguish, and with a glowing impatience for exertion, the extensive regions over which error, ignorance, vice, and misery yet hold dominion;—there is that which makes the however partial relinquishment of its contemplation and service for temporal efforts

after temporal good a distressing and unnerving change, a descent which burdens, cripples, and paralyses the soul. A better arrangement, without any such pressure as could be felt, perhaps even without any addition, would give us a body of ministers before whose exertions fanaticism would quail.

Secondly.—The labours of the minister are rewarded in the social kindness of his congregation. Of this his situation gives him peculiar need. He does not usually live among the scenes and friends of his boyish days, or even those of his riper years. Those who call him from them, on a public duty, should do their best to alleviate his private loss. Christ said that his mother, sister, and brethren were those who did his Father's will; and those who obey the precepts, and enter into the spirit of the religion of Christ, will be as friends and relatives to his minister. The current of events, or rather their own selection, has thrown his happiness (so far as it depends upon society) into their hands. It is difficult to calculate the amount of enjoyment which they can impart, or of vexation which they can inflict. Much may depend upon the prudence of his conduct; at least as much upon the judicious kindness of theirs. Such kindness his labours deserve. All

should be friends to their minister. But what proves them so ?

He is not the friend of his minister who never intimates any failing, suggests any improvement, or proffers any useful information or advice, but pours incessantly the poison of flattery into his ear, until the appetite of his vanity grows with what it feeds upon, and he cannot endure the language of honest remonstrance: nor he who makes his own alleged frankness the plea for abrupt and rude vituperation, of ill-tempered and coarse, if not causeless blame, rather the indulgence of his own mood than the kindly meant means of correction, and in manner incompatible with the courtesy of equals. He is not the friend of his minister who knows nothing more of him than what he sees and hears at chapel on Sunday, treating him with utter neglect or cold civility; nor he who would engross his society, and affect to be the medium of communication between him and others, and make him a party not only to his own preferences, but to all his own aversions also. Nor he who conveys to him whatever ignorance, or carelessness, or spite may utter of him in his absence; nor he who becomes the tale-bearer to him of others, the conduit of all local scandal. The connection of minister and people

is formed for better things than these ; or it were better not formed at all.

The hospitality which invites to that unbending of the mind which the very constitution of man requires after solitary, arduous, and continued intellectual pursuits; the sympathy which animates, or consoles in those vicissitudes which may be expected in the public efforts of a minister, or those to which his personal lot is not less liable than that of others; the suggestions which experience, and a larger and longer knowledge of the world may give, and of which the intrinsic value may be enhanced by the manner of their communication; the allowances and encouragements which he may need in youth, the demonstrations of steady respect which should lighten (when they come upon him) the infirmities of age: the consistency of attention, which, while its diminution may mark what is wrong, or its particular increase be the meed of occasional merit, knows none of the waverings of caprice:—these are some of the indications of that spirit of friendship in which a faithful minister of religion deserves to be received and retained by a Christian congregation.

Thirdly.--Your minister's reward consists in your serious attention. This pre-supposes that you do attend—I mean, in the lower sense of the word,

that you are personally present; that you do not engage a minister or connect yourself with a place of worship merely to provide, in his oratory, amusement for those Sundays on which other amusements fail you, or other occupations. I am no Sabbatarian; but the religious employment of the Sunday is sanctioned by that strong moral expediency with which no good man will trifle. No light matter will prevent his assisting at public worship and instruction. Nor should it prevent his observing the decorum of the service by punctual attendance. The exalted piety, or profound knowledge to which any portion may be unnecessary, will I think, be found the natural companion of the benevolence which would not obstruct, by interruption, the edification of the poorest, the youngest, or the most ignorant member of a congregation. Nor are the attainments *very* common which place their possessors above the reach of benefitting even by the effusions of minds of a much humbler order than their own. Avoid indifference. There is a listlessness about some hearers which makes one wonder why they are hearers: and which at any rate keeps them from being more than *hearers*. The mechanical effect upon the tympanum of the ear seems all that is produced by the preacher's exertion, even when they keep awake. The moral result seems scarcely

more than that of so many strokes upon any other drum. Surely if ever the mind should be roused from an inert and passive state, if ever men should awake their senses that they may the better judge, it is when they are addressed by one who reasons on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

Avoid levity. The preacher is not worthy of his station if not also worthy of serious and earnest attention. He is not invited to become your butt or your buffoon. It is no light task for him to lead your devotions, to approach the throne of the eternal and omnipresent God with such prayers as your wants may need, and such praises as your blessings should excite. It is no light task for him to come forward from time to time with faithful admonition of your failings, with just delineation and enforcement of your duties, with appropriate consolation for your sorrows; to unfold the stores of natural and revealed truth on religion, and display the riches of the divine word in all the splendour of its facts and principles, from the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, to the end when Christ delivereth up the kingdom to the Father, all spiritual enemies are subdued, and God is all in all: and not more misplaced in itself, not more profane in reference to the subjects of his ministration, nor more la-

mentable as to the state of mind it shows in the scoffer, than unjust towards him, is the perverted ingenuity that would here collect materials for a jest.

I say not that it is any part of a hearer's duty, or a minister's recompense, that whatever he delivers should be implicitly received. And could a congregation be so servile and so senseless, the only proper use of this resignation of their understandings would be to enjoin their instant resumption, that they should of themselves judge that which is right.

But your investigation is due to what he advances, and your reception to what he proves.

It is for him to speak as to wise men, and for you to judge what he says. And it is as little as you can do, after the toil of his researches and investigation, and arrangement, and preparation, to decide on the results, and thus consent to and aid in the process of freeing your minds from error, storing them with knowledge, and illumining them with truth.

This object is not less moral than intellectual. What is the end of our assembling and reading and preaching and worshipping? Is it not the formation of the character, in all Christian virtues, for usefulness here and felicity hereafter? Is not this the direct design of much that you hear, and

the indirect of all? Be it then ever in your minds when you enter these walls. Take home to your own bosoms and lives every lesson of practical goodness. Furnish yourselves the application of your preacher's sermons; give a particular reference to what he can only state generally; prepare your minds by self-examination and private devotion for profiting by his public labours; on you it depends, and let them be, not the seed which perishes by the way-side, but that which, sown in a good and honest heart, brings forth an hundred fold the fruits of righteousness.

Fourthly.—Reward your minister's labours by zealous co-operation. An obvious means of universal obligation, by which you do this, is in promoting a sense of religion and duty in your families, dependants, and connections. How much it is in the power of every parent or master to promote, or defeat, the aim of the professional teacher! They imbibe from him the tone of respect and attention, or of disregard and ridicule. He may obliterate the impression made, or stamp it into characters so deep as never to be obliterated. There is on his head a solemn responsibility.

But further, the Unitarian minister is called to fill an advanced post in a state of warfare. The opinions of the times make him, to some extent, and whatever be his inclination, a controversialist

and a proselytist. The Christian world is divided on topics of the deepest interest, and which have thrown all other subjects of difference into shade. Whether we should worship only the one God, the Father ; or, together with him, the Son and the Holy Spirit : whether the founder of our religion was a man approved of God, or the infinite Deity incarnate in a human body ; whether we are forgiven by the free grace of God, or the punishment of sin only transferred to a substitute ; whether the condition of salvation be that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, or faith in a vicarious sacrifice ; whether the inflictions of the divine government be corrective or vindictive ;—these are points which can scarcely allow neutrality in themselves ; or if they did, the practicability is precluded by the exclusive assumption on the one side (which is usually made) of the Christian name, of all Christian privileges and blessings here, and of the hope of heaven hereafter. Unless the minister is content that the influence of his services should not extend beyond the individuals who first invited him ; that death, or removal, should waste away his congregation, nor any accession supply the place of those of whom he is deprived ; that the young and uninformed should be left a prey to the bold assumptions and assertions so often made

with such imposing effect ; that error should be unchecked, and bigotry unmitigated, and corruption unreformed, and the genuine truth of Jesus unrestored ; that men should continue to think of revelation as a mystery, and of God as partial, and of faith alone as the means of salvation ; unless he is content with this, which he who loves God, man, or truth, cannot be, he must, in some degree, mingle in that mental conflict which rages in the land, and which nothing can terminate but the total suppression of Unitarian Christianity as a destructive heresy, or the full recognition of its glory as the word of God which Christ came into the world to testify, and which his Apostles taught the nations.

How should you reward your minister for entering on this troublous scene ? By not abandoning him in it. By strengthening his hands in every measure dictated by a prudent zeal. By affording him all the facilities which your countenance and liberality can give, in a struggle where he has to contend with the force of education, and prejudice, and long received and widely spread opinions, and the zeal of enthusiasm, and the dictates of authority. You have placed him in the front of the battle, and it were disgraceful to desert him there. You make him, by your election, a mark for bigotry, perhaps for calumny, and it is just

that the shield of your protection should be thrown before him. He is made your leader in a common cause, and, so long as he advances in the spirit of his master, to the establishment of truth, righteousness, and hope, you should follow after, and rally round him, and be found fellow-workers with him, as he is with Apostles, Christ, and God, for human knowledge and happiness.

It is specifically as the just recompense of a faithful and laborious minister that I have attempted to recommend a certain course of action, but that is far from being its only, or its highest recommendation. That you should not exact the devotion of time and talent without affording an adequate support; that you should be kind and hospitable, candid, friendly, and consistent; that you should not forsake the assembling of yourselves together for the united adoration of the common Father, the cultivation of the knowledge, love, and power of sacred truth, for preservation from sin, growth in goodness, and the cherishing a brotherly love for human-kind; that you should not sink into formality and indifference, nor neutralize religious services by neglect, nor abuse them by levity; that you should be most earnest and persevering in the pursuit of truth, and the cultivation of every devout affection, and every personal and social virtue; that in your households and the

world you should, both by language and demeanour promote the influence of religious and moral principle ; that you should have a zeal according to knowledge, for God and Christianity, and according to your abilities and in your several spheres, enter your manly protest against the fanaticism of the age,—these are your duties, not merely because thus your minister will have his reward, but because thus you will have your reward also. They are essential for your own sakes ; for your own consistency, safety, and happiness. They are demanded of you by that Gospel truth which is the free gift of God to man, and which having received, you should act up to, and impart ; by that God, who is glorified in his rational creatures when they behold him in his true character as the sole object of adoration, the impartial and universal parent ; by that Saviour, whose mission was to reform, enlighten, purify, redeem, and bless the world ; by mankind, whom you should regard as brethren, and with a brother's love, warn, comfort, and improve ; and by that heaven, into which shall enter neither defilement nor malignity, that state of immortal purity, devotion, and benevolence, of which every one who has the enlightened hope purifieth himself even as Christ was pure. That you should feel this host of powerful motives will be a glad recompense to your minister's heart, while labour-

ing among you on earth; and when he and you shall have rendered up the account of your mortal probation, it will make you his crown of glory and of joy in the great day of the Lord, the day of final retribution.

