

THE
INTEGRITY
OF
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE,
AND
THE SANCTITY
OF
CHRISTIAN PRACTICE,
UNITED IN
CHRISTIAN PREACHING,
IN
A SERMON,

Delivered in Trinity Church, in the City of New-Haven, on Wednesday, the
22d Day of May, 1811, at the opening of

THE CONVENTION
OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

To which is annexed,

A CONCLUDING ADDRESS,

Delivered in Trinity Church, in the City of New-York, on Wednesday,
May 29, 1811,

**AT THE CONSECRATION OF TWO PRESBYTERS TO
THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE.**

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New-York:
PRINTED BY T. AND J. SWORDS,
No. 160 Pearl-street.

1811.

SERMON, &c.

TITUS ii. 11, 12, 13, 14, and part of 15.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, rightcously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things teach and exhort.

YOUR preacher, in reciting this copious passage of holy writ, is not without an apprehension, arising from its so much abounding with edifying instruction, on so great a variety of subjects: for it may occur to the hearers, that a full improvement of its rich contents can hardly be expected to be brought within the compass of a sermon.

Accordingly, occasion is now taken to announce, that the design entertained is not to discuss the subjects coming under notice, in the various views given by the text of the dispensation of grace; but merely to show the bearing of all those sub-

jects on a single point, which it may be pertinent to handle, in the discharge of a duty consequent on the indisposition of a Right Reverend Brother;* who, but for that hindrance, would have opened this convention in a discourse more maturely and more directly accommodated to the solemnity of their assembling.

In order to carry into effect the design stated, I shall,

1st, Briefly open the sense of the different clauses in the text; and then,

2dly, Consider it as giving an edifying representation, 1st, of the integrity of the Christian doctrine; 2dly, of the sanctity of Christian practice; and 3dly, of the union of both in Christian preaching: which is the point already alluded to, and falls in with the concluding injunction of the text—"These things teach and exhort." For considering the official character of the person addressed; it must have been as constituting the substance of his teachings and exhortations, that the subjects presented were especially contemplated in this place, by the Apostle.

First, I am to open the sense of the several clauses in the text.

"The grace of God, that bringeth salvation." There is not any more prominent property of the evangelical dispensation, than the intimation frequently given, that all its benefits are of grace.

* Bishop Clagget, of Maryland.

Now grace is opposed to merit; and accordingly, is with great propriety continually presented to our view. For although were we unconscious of sin, or of any frailties impelling to it, we should be indebted to the divine bounty for our beings, and for all attendant benefits bestowed; yet, seeing we have a sinful nature to lament, and sinful actions to repent of; there is peculiar propriety in its being continually set before us, that having no claim on the justice of God, we are to look for benefit to his mercy only; on the terms laid down in the dispensation, in which he has been pleased to declare it.

Further, the descriptive property of “bringing salvation,” should fortify desponding minds against such discouraging views of the Gospel, as arm it more with terror than with comfort. For although we cannot feel too deeply the suitable impression of the truth, that there are proclaimed “Tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doth evil;” yet if this were its most prominent property; and if, on the contrary, the spirit which it breathes were not such as rather conciliates affection, than excites fear; we should not read in this place, as pertaining to its very essence, and as what beams on us in the first view of the dispensation, its bringing of salvation.

It is not the frequent practice of your preachers, to refer to the original text of scripture, in commendation of the translation; especially because

of the universally acknowledged fact of its fidelity. But although it cannot be accused of any such oversight, as to impose error for truth; yet, in the place before us, it does not explicitly express an important truth; which however luminously shining forth in other places of scripture, ought not to be excluded from any place, where the holy spirit has revealed it. In such a case, to appeal to the original falls within the purpose for which the Gospel ministry was ordained.

A strict translation would make it—"There hath appeared the grace of God (saving or) bringing salvation to all men."* The sentiment is, that in the Gospel, there is offered an opportunity of salvation to all men; being the same in substance with the position, that Christ died for all men; agreeably to the doctrine of our Church in her 31st article—"The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual."

Of grace, winged with so great a benefit, we read, that it "hath appeared," or, hath been made manifest. That it existed before its appearance or manifestation; and that it had its operation in favour of the saints of old, is acknowledged to be a matter deducible from the Gospel:

* Some copies, instead of "*ἡ σωτηρία* have *τὸ σωτήριον ἡμῶν*"—that is "our Saviour," instead of "saving" or "bringing salvation." This makes no difference in the construction here given.

And why it may not have had its operation in favour of others, to whom it has not been manifested, would be a matter difficult to be shown. Indeed, that an effect of this kind should be attributed to it, is at least implied in many places of scripture.

The text goes on—"Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world."

"Teaching us:" There is a great variety of instruction scattered over the face of the sacred books: but the words repeated are so introduced as to convey the idea, that the matter about to be mentioned is prominent among those instructions; or rather, that it is the essence of them.

"That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts:" this is the prohibitory branch of the instructions referred to. To "deny," often signifies something more, than as applicable to what is affirmed, whether in the way of proposition, or as fact; extending so far, as to express renunciation in affection. For instance, we here read of certain persons, that they "deny God in their works," although it is said that they own him in profession. "Ungodliness and worldly lusts," are terms comprehending all offences against the law of human conduct: which are either directly against the majesty of heaven; or the result of some inordinate desire, tempting to do injury

to our fellow men, or else to dishonour our nature by excess.

We should "live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world." It is impossible to name any quality that can adorn the heart, or any action called for by integrity of character, which has not its place in this summary of Christian morals. To "live soberly," is not merely negative, as opposed to licentiousness in any of its excesses. The original is descriptive of a sound mind; such as manifests itself, not merely in the avoiding of evil, but in the pursuing of what is good. "Righteously" extends further than to the shunning of injury to our neighbour, comprehending all acts of beneficence and kindness, which may in reason and equity be expected of us. And as to "godliness;" it is not satisfied with an acknowledgment of the being and the perfections of God; the word so translated being expressive of reverence of him, in acts of worship.

From duty, the text proceeds to motive—"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The hope here spoken of, is that of immortality, emphatically said to be brought to light by the Gospel; and so intimately allied to this blessed system of divine truth, that the ground of belief in it is scarcely ever shaken, without its proving of an insecure bottom for that anchor of hope, which alone can

bear up the soul above the billows of temptation; and accommodate all the actions of life to the prospect of an haven of never ending rest and peace. “The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” is the event so clearly described by himself when he said—“The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him;” by his beloved disciple, when, as if the bright day were opening on his enraptured mind, he exclaimed—“Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him;” and by St. Paul, when he comforted believers with the assurance—“To them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin, unto salvation.”

On the principle already stated, of not withholding criticism where it effects the integrity of the sacred text, there may be propriety in noticing a construction contended for, of the clause under consideration. The construction applies the terms “God and Saviour,” to the one person of Jesus Christ. A very respectable layman of the Church of England* has lately affirmed and illustrated this sense; undertaking to show, with a great compass of learning, that the genius of the Greek language supports it, and does not admit of any other. If the theory be correct—as it seems to be from the evidence adduced—the text must be considered as one of the places demonstrative

* Granville Sharpe, Esq.

of the divinity of the Son; although doubtless under the catholic interpretation, of the derivation of divine attributes from the Father.

From the hope of the Christian calling, the apostle goes on to the meritorious or procuring cause of it, in the person of the great Author of our faith—"who gave himself for us." That is, say some, who led a life for our example, and who gave efficacy to it by his death. This was doubtless part of the end, for which he took on himself our nature: but it extended further, as appears from other places, which should be taken as explanatory of the present words: for in them we find, that he is "the propitiator for our sins;" that he "gave himself, the just for the unjust;" and that "he made peace by the blood of his cross." In short, there are very many places expressive of an atonement; whereby fallen man may be restored to his Creator, alienated from him by a sinful state.

Then comes the end to be accomplished by Christ's giving of himself for us: it is—"that he "might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify "unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good "works:" Although one effect of redemption from iniquity, is a release from its condemning power; yet in this place, considering the connection, the sense must be deliverance from its prevailing influence or dominion. Further, one property of the object held out, is inward purity,

and not a mere dressing of the character, in order to make the conduct plausible to the world. The descriptive property of peculiarity attached to professing people, shows, that under the evangelical, as under the legal covenant, there is contemplated a communion or social body, living in the profession of the doctrines which have been declared, and in the worship which has been prescribed in the word of truth. The completing of the passage by the addition of “zealous of good works,” shows, that the actions denoted by this term must be good, not only formally, but as to their motives, and the disposition of mind from which they issue; since in regard to what are the result of worldly considerations, or those of mere discretion and decorum, there is not likely to be an interesting of the affections.

Such are the subjects which the apostle had within his view, when he enjoined Timothy, in the concluding words of the passage—“These things teach and exhort:” that is, declare the truth of them, and persuade to a correspondent contemplation and practice. This is the connecting link, which will lead me, under the

2nd general head, to consider the passage as bringing before us,

1st. The integrity of Christian doctrine; 2dly, the sanctity of Christian practice; and, 3dly, the union of both in Christian preaching.

1st. In reference to Christian doctrine, we may

notice, that the leading sense of the passage is the bringing into view of the whole dispensation of the gospel, as being of grace. The prominence of the place, as pointing to this end, is observable in the manner of its being introduced, and also in its being made the ground of all Christian practice. The very connection shows, that the one is contemplated as dependent on the other; and that both presuppose men under the condemning power of sin; without resource, unless in the divine benignity, for recovery from its dominion. Accordingly, this distinguishing property of the gospel is done away by any religious theory, resting our hopes of salvation on our own deservings. Not only so, where no such corrupt expectation has found an entrance; if, in our views taken of human duty, we be not aware, that the divine acceptance of the performance of it is through the medium of an act of mercy, grounded on the merits of a better sacrifice than it is in our power to offer; we have no sense of the property of the gospel, from which it is named—"The grace of God bringing salvation."

In harmony with this point, is the view which the passage gives of the doctrine of the atonement. For indeed, it is not merely a doctrine of the scriptures; but the spirit of it is transfused into whatever else they have written for our learning. So far as concerns the history of the Old Testament; the matter in question, after begin-

ning with the promise made to Adam in Paradise, and being more or less in view in what follows concerning the lives of the earliest patriarchs; entered into the faith by which "Abraham believed God," when it was "imputed unto him for righteousness;" and by which a long line of worthies, as they are enumerated in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "obtained a good report"—"not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." As to the Mosaic law, the matter now spoken of was "the end of its righteousness;" having been prefigured in all its sacrifices, and even in the institutions of that sort, immediately subsequent to the apostacy. On which account, the true sacrifice is said to have been "slain," meaning in figure, "from the foundation of the world." When we come down to the New Testament, whatever therein relates to the great Captain of our salvation—his nativity and circumcision—his death and burial—his resurrection and ascension—have a reference to the offering which he made for sin. And indeed it is the hinge on which they all turn, as to interest possessed in them by us. Not only so, the moral efficacy of the system is described as essentially dependent on it: which appears in its being made the leading motive to all good in the heart and in the life; as

among many places, where we are told—“ Ye
 “ are bought with a price:” it being immediately
 added—“ Therefore glorify God in your body
 “ and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Very many other places might be mentioned to
 the same effect; and among them, the text is
 eminently in point. For what else but the close
 alliance of this doctrine of the Gospel with the
 morality of the same system, could have induced
 the apostle to bring in Christ’s “ giving of himself
 for us,” as the chain of obligation binding to the
 entire weight of Christian duty, in the “ living
 “ soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present
 “ world.”

If we admit the correctness of a criticism notic-
 ed in the Review, the passage is a confirmation
 of the doctrine of Christ’s divinity. But at all
 events, his character in this respect is sustained
 where we read—“ God was manifest in the flesh”
 —“ The word was made flesh and dwelt among
 “ us”—“ It pleased the Father, that in him should
 “ all fulness dwell”—“ He is before all things, and
 “ by him all things consist”—and in many places
 to the same effect. So that in our estimation of
 the dignity of the Christian precepts, we are not
 to put out of view that of their divine Ordainer;
 or forget, that they are bound on our consci-
 ences by him, in whose name “ every knee shall
 “ bow,” and at whose great tribunal we must all
 appear.

It is also no small point of Christian doctrine, that there is held out to us, as of divine institution, a social body, elsewhere known under the name of "the Church," and other descriptive terms; but here mentioned as a people, peculiarly owned by the divine Founder of their communion. Accordingly, whoever supposes that he may discharge his Christian obligations, as an individual; without conducting himself as a component part of that professing body; does not work out his salvation, in the way which has been authoritatively prescribed to him; and, in particular, does not live in the discharge of the duty—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

But the word, in the original, expresses more than God's especial interest in his people. It describes them as distinguished by excellency of character. For this is what they ought to be, as contemplated by the divine mind; and therefore, the greater is the guilt of naming the name of Christ, without departing from iniquity. Here also arises into view the lamentable deficiency of discipline, prevailing generally over the Christian world; of the consistency of Church-membership with an open disregard of all religion and all morals. For whatever difficulties may lie in the way of remedying the evil; they ought not to prevent the deploring of it in proper time and

place ; and the earnestly wishing, that the Church on earth were as nearly as human care can render her, what we are told she shall be, when her divine Head shall “ present her unto himself, a “ glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle.”

If the views which have been taken of the subject be correct; it follows that Gospel morals, without Gospel doctrine, is not Christianity. It is not even this blessed system in part : because there is not exhibited any branch of it, as delineated in the scriptures. For supposing—what, however, seldom happens in such a case—that every grace and every duty is inculcated in its extent; yet, as to use in practice, it is likely to be very little, because of the character of the contemplated agent, who is a sinful being, standing in need of a resource in the divine mercy; and a frail being, standing in like need of the assistance of divine grace.

Although the apostle has introduced some of the most prominent doctrines of our holy religion; yet, as it was with a view to what has been called in this discourse the sanctity of Christian practice; it will be proper to review,

2dly, the bearing of several parts of the passage on this important point.

It will be perceived, that what is here alluded to, is the comprehensive code of duty presented to us in the beginning of the passage, and again brought into view before it ends, under the re-

presentation of an interest deeply taken in the subject, and its exciting of our best affections.

In the sayings which have been referred to, it was evidently the aim of the apostle, to set forth the great end of the Christian economy, as to its intended effect on the human character: and he could not have more expressly delineated as this end—the being and the doing good. The result is, that whatever theory of religion depresses it from its important station, must be not only erroneous, but essentially so. It is not required for this, that the theory should deny any branch of moral obligation. It may even contend, that what we are obliged to, will of course accompany the reception of itself. Still, the matter has been lost sight of, as the very end for which the grace of God to all men was manifested in the Gospel. It was not to inform them of truths which would necessarily have salutary effects; but to accomplish these through the medium of the truths which it may have revealed.

If it should occur to any, that these positions are liable to be abused by the ungodly, it will not be denied; the same being observable of every salutary truth. But if there be any in danger of making such abuse; let them be aware, that Christianity has been celebrated in all ages, as a religion not of duties only, but of motives: as not only pointing to holy ends, but enduing with preparation for them. Still, there should

be sustained, in all its importance, the end for which the grace has appeared. That end is practical: not in the low sense of the mere moral ordering of the conduct, but as making us “holy in body and in spirit.” For it is not the negative merit of abstaining from flagitious crimes, which the passage has in view; but it is the whole assemblage, and that carried into act, of “whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.” Can this be considered, without there being perceived the spurious property of every scheme of religion, which lessens the importance of Christian morals? And which, perhaps without denying their value, gives a more prominent place either to barren speculation, or to sensibilities of mere animal nature? Either of which, when held up as principally to be cultivated, will suggest expedients for the reconciling of the conscience to great deficiencies, in respect to the cultivating of those “fruits of the spirit,” which are “in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.”

On the ground of the principles laid down in this discourse; or rather, laid down by the apostle in the text, in terms which the discourse has been occupied in unfolding; I pass to the

3d particular proposed—the union of doctrine and practice in Christian preaching.

On this subject, as in various ways, the truth lies between extremes: and proper apprehensions

of these will very much help in forming a correct estimate of the other.

With some it is a favourite idea, that all preaching, beyond what is moral, is useless, if not pernicious. What is the use of religion, say they, but to govern practice; making men the better for the profession of it, in their individual characters, and in the relations of life? Why then not apply pastoral labours immediately to this object; instead of seeking it by the circuitous rout of doctrinal instruction; which may be not easily apprehended, and not clear in its evidences; while the other is alike intelligible and demonstrable?

If there were reasonable ground for this demand, it goes to the extent of superseding all useful tendency in the Christian system; the very profession of which should, in that case, be set aside, rather than be kept up in union with moral precepts, capable of sustaining themselves without it. But in truth, the notion is founded on the untenable presumption, of there being no necessary connection between the morality of the gospel, and the doctrinal part of the same blessed system. This is not consistent with what we know of the heathen world, even under circumstances the most favoured by science and civilization. Neither is it consistent with what we know of modern despisers of the grace of the Gospel; who are sure to become alienated from the purity of its morals.

There can be no truth more conspicuous in the history of our species, than that which St. Paul has expressed in the following energetic, although singular language—"After that in the "wisdom of God"—that is, with the opportunity of contemplating it in his works—"The "world by wisdom knew not God"—that is, did not, by the visible manifestation of him, attain to adequate ideas of his perfections—"It pleased "God, by the foolishness of preaching"—a reproach thrown on the Gospel, by the deriders of it, and here ironically submitted to, in order to enhance its opposite property of consummate wisdom—"To save them that believe." Never was there a commendation more modest in its form, or more weighty in its bearing on the subject. And the lesson resulting from it is, that we know not to what extent the casting of the cover of concealment over the truth of the sacred doctrine, must involve the knowledge of pure morals in the degradation. Or rather, we have evidence to satisfy us, that this will, under all circumstances, be the effect.

When the divine Author of our religion gave to his apostles, his commission for the preaching of it; there was the promise—"Lo I am with "you alway, even unto the end of the world." Can it be pretended, that the benefit of this promise extends to the preaching of the morals of the Gospel, independently on its doctrines? And

if it does not, shall this be a small matter with those who are taught, that “ Paul may plant, “ and Apollos may water, but God giveth the “ increase.” The promise has been abundantly verified, in every age, by the Gospel harvest attendant on the sincere preaching of the word. We may doubt, whether it have been illustrated in any age, by the garbled declaration pleaded for.

But it very much vitiates the severing of what God has thus joined together; that in this apparent regard for morals, the spirit of Christian morality becomes dissipated: these being lost sight of, that right state of the hidden Man of the heart—that “ renewing after the image of him “ who created us”—in short, that direction of the affections; without which there may be a morality suited to the order and the decorum of civil life, while there will not be that which can stand the test of the requisition, to “ present ourselves “ living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, “ which is our reasonable service.”

And indeed, even so far as outward conduct is concerned, there is often pleaded for such a relaxation of an holy life and conversation, as throws the shade of manifest inconsistency on a scheme, which boasts of doing honour to morals, by detaching them from evangelical instruction.

If any thing can add to the ignominy of such a naked theory; it is its showing of its head in a

Church, in which the minister, left considerably to his own discretion in the article of preaching, is tied down in his praying to compositions, containing the frequent acknowledgment of truths, which he is to hesitate to deliver in any other form. Thus there is created a contrariety between the desk and the pulpit, calculated to bring both of them into contempt. From this they can no otherwise be saved, than by some degree of contempt for the minister, on account of his insufficiency or his unworthiness, and perhaps, by the suspicion, that he entertains contempt for the sacred function, on which he has intruded.

So much for the extreme on one side: let us now contemplate another species of extravagance on the other. For there are persons, who profess regard for evangelical truth in such a way, as to make light of the necessity of giving a prominent place in preaching to Christian morals, so as to make a branch of them the direct subject of ministerial discourse. For they think, that as every thing of the sort is the necessary fruit of faith and the points involved in it, these are the only matters to be insisted on; the other being left to the unavoidable connection thus affirmed; or, on that account, to be but briefly hinted.

It is often a vitiating circumstance of a declaration to this effect, that, in the apprehensions of those who make it, the idea of evangelical preaching comprehends much abstract specula-

tion; so that let there be acknowledged, ever so explicitly, man's unworthiness in himself, and his entire dependence on divine grace; yet shall he be deemed a denier of it; unless he acknowledge a series of metaphysical refinements, not found in the scriptures; but engrafted on the stock of Christianity, by the over curious inventions of men. In this respect, professed zeal for evangelical preaching is merely specious and imposing; confounding it with some system, that has more in it of philosophy, than of Christianity: there being here understood by the former term, what St. Paul understood when he used it with the explanatory addition—"falsely so called."

But is the connection between faith and practice invariable, as is thus affirmed? It cannot indeed be otherwise, in the case of such a faith as St. Paul speaks of, including the principle of evangelical obedience; and the whole standing opposed to the requisitions of the Mosaic law. But to open fully the nature of this faith, is to disclose all the virtues existing in it, as their germ. Is there not, however, faith in another sense—that of barren speculation, and pronounced to be "dead, being alone?" And are there not abundant evidences of self-deception, persuading men that they believe aright, when there is reason to address them in the words of St. James—"Show me thy faith without thy

“ works, and I will show thee my faith by my
“ works.”

Were the persons now remarked on consistent with themselves; they would expunge from the sacred canon almost every sentence of the epistle, from which these words are taken; it being little more than instruction and counsel of a moral sort, not however without breathing the animating spirit of the dispensation, of which it is a part. But what is more, the same error would do away from the sacred volume our Lord's sermon on the mount; which is altogether moral, although indeed of so elevated a grade, that the like was never given to the world by any other; and it is peculiar to him, “ who spake as never
“ man spake.” What is to be made of the text, and of many like passages; if morals are to be of such small account in Christian preaching? And indeed, they make a greater part of the New Testament than is at first obvious on the face of it; because of the places which were especially levelled at certain Jewish prejudices of the apostolic age; and which do not apply to Christians in succeeding times, otherwise than incidentally; and by the occasional intermixture of more general truths.

It is no small reproach on the extreme here noticed, that it savours much of the spiritual pride of Pharisaism. For it would seem, as if the only ground on which the abettors of the extreme

can be excused from being the subjects of moral admonition, must be a measure of perfection not often met with. Even if they have attained to this; it becomes them to recollect the necessities of their brethren of less proficiency. But on the other hand; if there should be any drawback from Christian rectitude, in the government of their tempers or of their lives; such as either brings their sincerity into question, or calls Christian charity into exercise, to reconcile their practice with their profession; then are they living monuments of the utility of what they undervalue. And the very danger of this, in the least degree, should make them cautious of taking the proud stand, which nothing can render tolerable, but their being altogether free from whatever can be a reasonable occasion of reproach.

Such are the contemplated extremes. And as to the decreecable medium; it may be considered as intimated in a few words; where St. Paul reminds the pastors of the Ephesian Church, thus making himself an example to them, and to all pastors who should come after them—"I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

Even this is liable to be misunderstood. For there are some who think, that the spirit of the instructive text cannot be acted up to; unless every minister, in every sermon, give a view, in one shape or in another, of all the essential parts of

Christian doctrine. This sentiment is not countenanced either by the addresses of the apostles to unbelieving Jews and Gentiles; or by their epistles to believers. For on each occasion, there is some one point, or else a combination of a few points, to which all the parts of the discussion are made subservient. And as to the contrary method pleaded for, the probable effect of it will always be—tedious repetition of a few favourite positions; and a superficial treatment of others with which they may be accidentally associated.

Accordingly, for the modifying of the general rule in practice, it may be well to bear in mind that saying of our Saviour, designed to be descriptive of a minister of the Gospel, in which he is compared to “an householder, who bringeth out of his treasures things new and old:” terms expressive of variety of matter, in some measure suited to different circumstances and times. Again, there is another figurative delineation of the same sentiment; where the minister is compared to the chief servant of an household, “giving to his fellow servants their (respective) portions of meat in due season.” And this has a view to diversity of character, at all times and every where found, and having itself shades of difference.

These considerations show, that as much may depend on a minister’s choice of subjects, as on the manner in which they shall be treated by

him. In making such a choice, an extraordinary impression of any subject on his own mind, may prepare him to render it influential on the minds of others. But while this will happen occasionally; a more general guide, is an accurate estimate of the comparative importance of religious truths; and next to this, observation of the necessities which especially call for instruction, or for persuasion, in one department or in another.

The present topic opens a wide field of instruction: But as the time already spent requires rather an apology, than an extension; it may be sufficient to refer to a standard, which may be an unfolding of the sense entertained on every branch of the present subject. This standard is the general character of the most approved sermons of the divines of the Church of England, from the time of the Reformation to the present day. In those sermons, as in the articles, in the prayers and in the homilies of that Church itself, there is an happy union of Christian doctrine and Christian morality; equally unlike to some sermons in modern times, as well from the press as from the pulpit; naked of the former property and destitute of the true spirit of the latter; and on the other hand, to some vapid and short-lived productions, boasting of an exclusive claim to Gospel preaching; but rather calculated for the excitement of animal sensibility, than for a lasting influence over the conscience and the af-

fections. And in the saying of this, the object is, not to hold up any standard, either of faith or of practice, distinct from, or in addition to that of the word of God; but simply to illustrate the leading sentiment of this discourse; and to unfold the speaker's sense of the kind of preaching, which is the most conformable to that unerring standard.

This notice of the Church of England and of her most distinguished ornaments is the more pertinent, as it gives an opportunity of declaring the opinion both to the clerical and the lay deputies of the Convention now assembled, that the very existence of the Church committing to them her concerns, is dependent on an undeviating adherence to the principles which she has inherited, in doctrine, in worship, and in the institution of the ministry. If this should be thought to interfere with the maxim of not shutting the door against improvement; the propriety of the maxim is conceded, while the application of it is rejected. When the Church of England threw off the errors and the superstitions which had hung on her for many ages; she did no more, as to what can be thought of perpetual obligation, than restore the profession of Christianity, to what it had been in the earliest and best ages. This blessed system is not the contrivance of human ingenuity; and the notion of adding improvement "to the faith which was once deli-

vered to the Saints," naturally leads to the rejection of the whole, as an imposture. Your preacher having uniformly acted under the influence of the same principle, in the part which he has taken in the conducting of the concerns of the Church, he brings it forward the more readily on this occasion; because of the mementos, more and more occurring, of the transitoriness of the opportunity of bearing a testimony to what is conceived to be conducive to truth and order. With the exception of very few, he in vain looks around him in this assembly, for those with whom he has been a fellow labourer from the beginning in building up the Church. In particular, the decease of several of his brethren in the Episcopacy, and the bodily disabilities of others powerfully intimate to him, the admonition, "be thou also ready." Without reason to suppose, that our successors in the Episcopacy will be behind us in any requisite qualification, and having reason to expect the contrary from two recent nominations to the office, yet there may be use in raising a warning voice against the abandoning of the old foundation, and against the building on it of novelties, not adapted to the materials of which it is composed. If ever this should cease to be an object of our communion, it is now foretold, that it will not continue to be a branch of the Church of Christ; its members becoming either lost to the Christian profession;

or dissipated among other communions, holding perhaps the essentials of the faith; but allied with what we contemplate as errors, either in opinion or in practice—If the sentiments which have been now delivered should have a tendency to guard any of his honoured hearers against whatever may tend to that unhappy issue; the object of your preacher will be accomplished. And that this may be the case, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



[Some unexpected circumstances over which the preacher had no control, led to the delivery of the above Sermon in Trinity Church, New-York, on Wednesday, May 29, 1811, at the consecration of two Presbyters to the Episcopal office. On that occasion, the following was the conclusion of the sermon.]

Perhaps an apology may seem necessary for the discussing of such a subject, on this occasion; since the work before us is the consecrating to the Episcopacy of persons not now entering on the ministry, but after their having been engaged in it, and presumed, from their estimation in their respective churches, to have occupied themselves in the very line of instruction which has been recommended. And yet the subject is not irrelevant; not only because the sentiments delivered are a testimony borne in the presence of many of the clergy; but on the consideration,

that the Reverend Brethren to be now consecrated will find it a land mark, to be often brought into view, in the discharge of the office on which they are entering; and especially in the department of it, which respects the admission of others to the ministry. These they will be called on to admonish and to counsel: and they may be assured, that on any other ground than the distinctions here taken, the ordinations to be performed by them will be at best, of little use; and it is well if they be not mischievous to the Church of God.

In regard to the occasion on which we are assembled; your preacher takes a more than common interest in it; because of the crisis to which we have been reduced: there having occurred considerable danger of losing that succession, the obtaining of which had been so long and so fruitlessly the object of our desire; but which, from the decease of sundry of the Bishops, and from the bodily indisposition of others of them, seems has been in no small degree of danger of being lost to us: which circumstance cannot but set strongly before the minds of those of us who remain and are in health, the shortness of the term remaining to us of being useful to the Church; and therefore, the importance of the transaction for which we are assembled. We however remain, to exhort two of our successors, to enter on the work before

them with zeal for the due discharge of the obligations, which they are assuming; not only because of the uncertainty of the term which may bound their earthly pilgrimage; but because, if it should be of long duration, there will at last come on them, as on those who are admitting them to the Episcopacy, that increase of years, under which a consoling recollection of past labours will be far more important, than the anticipation of future usefulness.

However convinced the present speaker of the sufficiency of both of the Reverend Brethren to be presented; yet as one of them,* until within these few days, has been known only by a respectable and unblemished reputation, and by the unanimity with which there have been committed to him the concerns of the Church over a very extensive district; he will excuse the indulgence of personal regards; while there is expressed peculiar satisfaction in the admission of a Brother,† known in his infancy, in his boyhood, in his youth, and in his past labours in the ministry, to him who is to be the principal agent in the reception of him to the Episcopacy. There are not likely to be any within these walls, who have had such ample opportunity of

* The Rev. Alexander V. Griswold, Bishop elect of the Eastern Diocese.

† The Reverend John Henry Hobart, D. D. of New-York.

judging of the reverend person now referred to, as to real character and disposition. And his ordainer can with truth declare, that he shall discharge the duty on which he is soon to enter, with the most sanguine prospects as to the issue. This is said, without the remotest idea of a comparison with any other; but merely on account of a longer and more intimate acquaintance. And perhaps, what is now announced, may not be altogether without a reference to self; although—it is trusted—not operating in a faulty line. For whether it be the infirmity of an advance in years, or, as is rather hoped, an interest taken in the future prosperity of the Church; there is cherished a satisfaction in the recollection of counsels formerly given to one who is in future to be a colleague; who may, in the common course of affairs, be expected to survive; and through whom, there may accordingly be hoped to be some small measure of usefulness, when he who gave those counsels shall be no more.

It remains to exhort the respectable audience here assembled, to take an interest in the success of the object of the office to be performed in their presence; and in which their relation to one of the persons to be presented, gives an especial call to that effect. Our blessed Saviour has instructed us —“ Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will “send forth labourers into his harvest:” And the instruction applies supereminently on an oc-

tasión, which is the commissioning of men who will probably be the agents in admitting many others into the field of gospel labour. It is too common to lose sight of the Church as a divinely constituted body, in disgust at the influence to be traced of the weakness, and even of the wickedness of men on her concerns. But in this respect, the divine economy is the same in nature as in grace. It is impossible to believe in the moral government of God; without admitting that it must be perfect in the whole, however apparently inconsistent with divine wisdom, any separate department of it, considered without a reference to the rest. In grace as in nature, we ought to confess our insufficiency for the fathoming of the depth of the divine counsels; anticipating the time, when the wisdom of the divine Disposer of human affairs will be made manifest. Accordingly, in the conducting of the concerns of the Church, there is no consideration more influential than this, towards the interdicting of the bad passions of our frame from an intrusion within her enclosure.

Here is a persuasive motive, addressing itself to every person present, to put up his prayers for those who are now to enter on the Episcopacy; and for the supporting of them in it, as circumstances may call and qualify. And as to those already in the office; your preacher is confident, that he speaks the minds of every one of them,

when he assures you not only of their wishes and their prayers; but of the satisfaction which they would derive from knowing, that those who are to survive them will supply whatever deficiency there may have been in themselves, as to any qualification for the office, and be blessed by a more abundant success of Gospel labours.

THE END.