

THE
EVANGELICAL MINISTRY EXEMPLIFIED

IN THE
APOSTLE PAUL: 7

A
SERMON,

PREACHED IN MURRAY-STREET CHURCH,

DECEMBER 2, 1821,

ON THE

OCCASION OF RESIGNING THE CHARGE OF HIS
CONGREGATION;

BY

JOHN M. MASON, D. D.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

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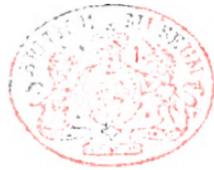
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1822.



S E R M O N .

ACTS XX. 17—27.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone, preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

NEXT to our Lord Jesus Christ, the name which figures most gloriously in the early stages of the Christian story, is that of the apostle Paul. The grandeur of his mind, his intellectual and moral magnanimity, his heroic devo-

tion, his patience in suffering; his powerful genius, his decision, his eloquence, his zeal, shine in every page of his writings, raise the admiration, and awe the spirits of his readers, and make them feel that they enter into communion with a being of a superior order. But it is not that peculiar greatness which was inseparable from every act of the man, and excites our veneration while it forbids our rivalry, that creates our deepest interest in his character. Our understandings may be penetrated with light which has no power of warming our hearts. The most profound respect does not necessarily call forth our love. Our affections must be *won*; they cannot be *stormed*. To this principle of our nature, God has been pleased to pay particular regard, in the first heralds of the cross: However diversified their qualities and attainments—whatever be the zeal of one, the potency of argument in another, the intrepid courage of a third, that which bears the sway in all, is their loveliness. Our hearts are captivated by the same process which subdues our understandings. Nothing, for example, can be more fair and unanswerable, than when Paul closes in his argument with the subtle philosopher; nothing more terrible, than when he deals out the thunders of God among the gainsayers: and nothing more exquisitely tender, than his carriage towards the timid and scrupulous disciple. If ever a man knew how to wind his way into the human soul—how to coil around him its most sacred affections—how to explore the secret place of tears, and to put in motion all its kindest sympathies, the apostle Paul was certainly that man. You know that this has always been with me a favourite theme; that my heart has enlarged, my imagination brightened; and my steps have trodden upon almost fairy ground, when they have been roused and

quicken by the name of Paul. But on no occasion does he loom so high, and shine so gloriously, as in the context. All his powers are concentrated; his feelings are condensed into a point; the covering is shoved aside from his breast, and you see, without disguise, the workings of his ingenuous, his upright, his mighty mind. This parting address to the elders of Ephesus well deserved a place in the holy volume; and deserves it in our best regards, in our most reverential remembrance.

I propose to give you, on this occasion, an analysis of part of the apostle's discourse. You will find it to contain, an account of the manner in which he discharged his ministry among the Ephesians, ver. 18—21; his extreme devotedness to the cause in which he was embarked, ver. 22—24; and his presentiment of its being the closing of his ministry, with an affectionate appeal to their consciences, and the ground of that appeal, 25—27.

I. An account of the manner in which he discharged his ministry among the Ephesians, ver. 18—21.

1. He served the Lord with all *humility of mind*. The apostles, unlike many of their pretended successors, aimed at no worldly honours, distinctions, nor titles. "Rabbi," is not to be met with in their whole vocabulary. The name of *Lord bishop* was utterly unknown to them, nor would they have thought it a meet appellation for the followers of a crucified Master. Whatever be its origin or use, the spirit of the apostles disclaims it, and holds no fellowship with the temper which it is calculated to cherish. Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, was their highest earthly desig-

nation, and rank, and glory. Paul had talents, and powers, and proficiency, which might fairly entitle him to a pre-eminence among his brethren; but the only pre-eminence which he courted, was a pre-eminence in dangerous service to the glory of his Master. Let little men sigh after their rattles; it suits their capacities, it is fit for their ambition; but neither an apostle, nor an apostolic man, wishes for any more dignified style, or holy occupation, than to be known in the church as "serving the Lord."

There is a consideration which weighs much with every gracious heart, and is not, cannot be easily forgotten—the immense distance between the Lord Jesus, and his most faithful servants. He, the living God; they, creatures low in the scale of being, when compared with other creatures which "excel in strength, yet obey his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word." "The treasure is in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God." The angels who look, with studious anxiety, into the mysteries of redemption by Jesus Christ, would thankfully have accepted the appointment of "ambassadors" of the cross. But God has seen fit to confer that honour upon men of like passions with others; and commanded the angels to be ministering spirits. When we add, that these heralds of his truth were sinners like other men, called by Divine grace out of the common condemnation, and sent to tell their fellow-sinners that "there is forgiveness with God," how august the message! how humbling to the messenger! He cannot, or ought not, to forget one single moment, that "by grace he is saved;" and the more profound and lively his sense of this truth, the more completely will he enter into the feelings of Paul, who served the Lord with all humility of mind. Could

Paul need a monitor to remind him that he was once a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, that he obtained mercy because "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant," and obtained it for this end, that in him, first, the Saviour "might shew forth all long-suffering to them who should believe on him to life everlasting?" He could not open his lips, to proclaim the riches of redeeming love, without at the same time exhibiting himself as a monument of that love. No wonder that his service was so strongly tinged with humility. There is nothing, my brethren, which can so humble and elevate a man's soul, as a powerful experience of the love of Christ. Nor is any thing more unbecoming, more desolating to the holy character—more indicative of communion with the devil, than clerical superciliousness.

Unassuming as were the apostle's manners—innocent as was his conversation—useful as was his whole life, his course was nevertheless a course of trouble. For,

2. His ministry was marked by "*many tears,*" and many "*temptations, which befell him by the lying in wait of the Jews.*"

The "tears" of an apostle have upon our minds a most melting influence. Our own are disposed to mingle with them upon the bare mention of his. But, after all, what called them forth? You do not hear of his weeping before the Sanhedrim of Jerusalem—before the Roman governour, into whose presence he was brought in chains. No! *there* was a proper scene for a spirit which neither the Sanhedrim, nor the Roman governour, in all his authority, could subdue or bow. He appeared before them less as the criminal than as the judge. His mind rose, his spirit tow-

ered, till all before him seemed to be, what indeed they were, comparatively very little men. What then could bring tears, and *many* tears, from the eyes of a man who could make governours tremble on their bench of justice? The overflowings of his own benevolent heart! When he saw how men slighted their own mercies—how they rejected, some with civil, some with contumelious air, as they do at this hour, the salvation of God, and “put away from them the words of eternal life;” having before him the perils which they encountered, and a full view of the ruin which they could not escape, his whole soul was dissolved in tenderness, and he wept his tears of bitterness over their infatuation. The terror of the Roman government could not extort from his firmness a single drop—the sight of an immortal soul, perishing in its iniquity, and pleased with its delusions, altogether unmanned him, and suffused his cheeks with tears, which in other cases, would have been the sign of weakness.

Objections and oppositions were not the only impediments in the apostle’s career. Many trials befell him *by the lying in wait of the Jews*. That Paul was their countryman, in whom they had prided themselves—that he was among the Pharisees, whom the nation almost idolized—that he had been their ring-leader in persecuting the new religion, all passed for nothing. He was now a follower of the crucified Nazarene, and nothing but his blood would assuage their wrath. All the world over, the disciples of the Lord Jesus have been singled out as objects of ultimate violence. It is not to be wondered at in a world under the influence of him who “was a murderer from the beginning.” And if their condition is better now, it is because the Gospel has triumphed over human madness, and hath put the devil to shame.

No thanks to the progress of philosophy, nor to the thing, -
cantly styled rational Christianity, of which the abettors
have, even now, just as much, and a little more, of the per-
secuting devil, than it is for their interest to avow.

Paul trod continually, not amidst vipers and scorpions,
but, what is infinitely worse, the snares of hellish men.
Every sermon furnished materials for a new conspiracy;
every step a track for the blood-hounds. The cowards who
shrank from his eye, would yet venture to stab him from be-
hind. It was only by *lying in wait*, that the Jews hoped
for success. But all this was not to shake the resolution,
nor alter the conduct, of Paul. Such as the gráce of the
Lord Jesus made him, both the church and her adversaries
always found him.

In the midst of these discouragements, nothing could
arrest his zeal, nor silence his testimony: "he kept back
nothing that was profitable to his Ephesian hearers." Neither
the love of fame, nor the hope of gaining a party, ever cal-
led forth Paul's exertions. His anxiety was to be *useful*;
popularity, at the expense of duty, had no charms for him.
Wo to that preacher who makes his office subservient to the
applause of his fellow-men. Whether his hearers approved
or disapproved—whether his doctrines coincided with the
popular prejudice, or were directly hostile to it, it was the
same thing to this wise and gallant apostle. He had to do
with "God, who searcheth the hearts;" human opinions
dwindled away into their native insignificance before him
"whose judgment is according to truth;" and therefore he
kept back nothing that was profitable to those who frequented
his ministry. He showed them that truth which admits
of no compromise; he had but one doctrine, which he
"taught publicly, and from house to house." Be he where

he might, in the solemn assembly, or in the domestic circle, his instructions were the same. It is of the very nature of truth that it should be so. And it equally belongs to imposture to utter things unpleasant in public, and fritter them away in private; or to utter them in private, and suppress them in public. His discourses in the church he followed up with his explanations and applications at home. "From house to house," the apostle might be tracked upon his line of life.

This passage has been used as furnishing a Divine warrant, and proving a Divine obligation, to what is termed parochial visitation. Highly important it is no doubt; but men must be careful that they do not convert the sound of words into a Divine warrant, and not to require bricks without straw. To prove that apostolic example establishes a precedent for imitation, we must be sure that the circumstances to which it is applied are similar. But this is far from being the case in the present instance. There are two things in which the state of the churches now differs materially from their state in primitive times.

In the first place, they had inspired teachers; who could, therefore, spend the whole week in exhorting, confirming, consoling, their converts, without infringing on their preparations for the Lord's day. Our situation is quite different: close and habitual study are necessary for us. And if we cannot get time to attend to it, our ministrations grow uninteresting, and our congregations lean. As for those men who boast of working at the loom all the week, and then acquitting themselves well on the Lord's day, I shall say nothing but that their performances are such as might be expected from the loom; but as far as can well be conceived

from the labours of a "workman who rightly divides the word of truth."

In the next place, the primitive churches never permitted themselves to suffer for want of labourers. Their spiritual advancement was, in their eyes, infinitely more valuable than all the pelf which the maintenance of their ministers required. Look over the Acts of the Apostles, and be astonished at the abundance of help which the churches then enjoyed. *Our* economical plan is to make one pastor do the work which was anciently done by three or four, and the very natural consequence follows, the work is *badly* done, or the workman is sacrificed. In our own city, from the accumulation of inhabitants, and their very dispersed residences, if we were to visit as much, or any thing like it, as our people are good enough to wish, and unreasonable enough to expect, we should not have an hour left for our proper business; we could make no progress in the knowledge of the Scriptures; and not one would be able to preach a sermon worthy of a sensible man's hearing. The conclusion is almost self-evident, if congregations will stint themselves in workmen, they must have their work spoiled; and if the work be done at all, they must kill the mind or body of the workman; and sometimes both. Let them not deceive themselves. If they impose hardships which God never commanded, they must expect to go without his blessing.

The burden of Paul's preaching, whether to the Jew or Gentile, was "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

That their conceptions and feelings toward God were radically wrong; that these must be altered and purified; and that all their views must centre in our Lord Jesus

Christ, as "the way, the truth, and the life," in order to human happiness, his word constantly declares, and the experience of men as constantly confirms. This great truth, "Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God," flowed alike from the tongue and from the pen of Paul, and was, in fact, "the head and front of his offending," with both Jews and Gentiles. This, however, must be the substance of his testimony. And so it must be still. All who hope to win sinners unto God, and to have them as "crowns of rejoicing" in that day, must, like Paul, "determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And cursed with all the curses which are written in this book, be that ministry of which Christ is not the all and all.

Such is a very feeble outline of the nature of Paul's ministry. Oh happy, thrice happy, the man who nearly imitates it! We have much reason to blush and be ashamed, when we compare ourselves with this prince of preachers; and have infinite need to address to you, my Christian friends, the request of this glorious man of God. "Brethren, pray for us."

II. We are next called to witness Paul's extreme devotedness to the cause in which he was engaged. He was *bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem*. The Holy Ghost put forth a constraining influence upon him to go to that city. He had often heard, and well knew, the voice—had often felt, and well understood, the impression which signified his duty to go to the metropolis of persecution. Of the general nature of the impulse he was well assured. He knew that it came from God, and could not lead him astray. This was sufficient to mark out the course of his obedience. What was to befall him at Jerusalem he could not tell; he

only knew that no rest awaited him there. "The Holy Ghost witnessed, that in every city, bonds and afflictions abode him." Go where he would, he was sure that his fidelity would be put to the severest test—sure that whoever found the Christian cause a cause of ease and comfort, it was to be no ease nor comfort to him. Well, how does the prospect affect him? He was not such a fanatic as to court pain when he might have avoided it. The school of Beccaria and Voltaire, which teach that the severity of punishment multiplies the offence, was not then known; or, had it been known, would hardly have caught the ear of Paul. He did not dream of fitting himself for the duties of an apostle, by proclaiming war upon the principle of common sense, and the common feelings of human nature. He knew, and never shrank from the original condition of his Master's service. "Whosoever denieth not himself, and taketh not up his cross, and followeth not after me, cannot be my disciple." Shew me the cross, exclaimed this magnanimous man; spread out before me all the self-denials I may be called to endure: be they what they may, I must be a disciple! He did not doubt that his Lord would make all up to him in due season; "for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

One of the idlest of human efforts is, the attempt to frighten a man who has deliberately resolved to sacrifice his life, or to succeed in his undertaking. You have lost your hold of him. When you have threatened him with death, you

have done your worst, and have no terrors left. It is then that the great commander steps on the scene, and says, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him." Paul entered thoroughly into this feeling: and therefore all appeals to human power and human pains,—to the axe, the gibbet, or the stake, were without effect upon him; for "he endured as seeing him who is invisible." And so, my friends, will it be with us in proportion as our converse is with eternal realities. Reckon not, when the great trial comes, upon the strength, and courage, and nerves, which have commanded human applause, and secured human expectation. "I cannot argue for Christ," said a female martyr, "but I can burn for him." Her faith was of the same sort with the apostle's: and therefore she did not even count her life dear unto herself, that she might finish her course with joy." My brethren, how could you, the best, the most resolute of you all, abide this test of the apostolic or female martyr? I do not say, that in a life of ease and comfort, which God has vouchsafed to you, you are called to exercise the grace of martyrdom: but I do say, that if, upon your deliberate choice, your preference lean to any thing else than our Lord Jesus Christ, you have nothing to expect but that he will cast you out of his kingdom. The apostle was always practical; *i. e.* he never preached Christian duties, or painted Christian trials, without a reference to the possibility of his being called to the performance of the one, or to the endurance of the other. He now felt all the considerations, from both, press hard upon him. One of his sweet enjoyments arose from the pre-

sence and sympathy of his fellow-christians. He found that this was to be interrupted—to be closed: and that drew from him, in the

III. Place, his presentiment of the present, being the last opportunity of converse with his Ephesian friends. “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more!”

There is a relation, and a tenderness of relation, produced between a people and the instrument of their spiritual blessings, which nothing on earth can equal. Something which identifies him with all their affections, and which they cannot easily transfer: something which creates a soothing pillow for him in every bosom; and for which every exchange is little better than a pillow of thorns. On this subject it is impossible for me to enlarge: could I summon up apathy enough, your own feelings would not endure it. Let me, therefore, rather invite you away from this touching theme to Paul’s appeal to the consciences of his hearers. Thus runs its terrible, but affectionate language: “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.” There is a most awful trust committed, by the Lord Jesus, to his ministering servants. It is nothing less than the *blood of men*. Oh that they felt this trust more than they sometimes do! You would not see the pulpit converted into a stage for the display of human ingenuity, or perverted to the display of human vanity. These things are lighter than a feather, and lose all their importance in the eyes of a man who re-

members that he has an account to settle with God *for blood*; and that he knows not the moment when his account may be demanded. It is observable, and ought to sink deep into your hearts, and especially into the heart of every preacher of the Gospel, that Paul accounted himself pure from the blood of men, because he had not concealed from them any part of God's truth. He knew not that policy by which some pulpits have been disgraced, of deferring the declaration of the *whole* truth to a more convenient season. As if the native enmity of the heart were to be softened by delay—as if it could be reduced by any thing but by the truth itself—as if men ever found their audiences more tractable by this kind of forbearance; or were themselves more instrumental in bringing sinners to God; or had the answer of a good conscience more complete in their own bosoms. God, my friends, knows infinitely better than we, what truths are suited to our circumstances, and has revealed them in his book; and accursed be that prudence which suggests the propriety of suppressing any one of them. If there is one trait of a faithful minister more obvious than another, it is this, that he is not afraid nor ashamed to say what God has said before him in his word.

Here, my beloved friends, is a breathing place for every honest messenger of God's truth: may I be permitted to say, that I feel it to be so to myself? When the ministry of Paul is the subject, blushes and tears become the sense which I cannot but perceive of the immense disparity. But in this particular, I can stand even in the presence of God, and can say, that in so far as he has been pleased to enlighten me, I have never shunned to declare his *whole* counsel. You know that, in this matter, I have not "sought glory of

men"—have not made their applause, not even your applause, how respectable soever my object—have never balked a truth, however unpopular; nor ever asked if it were acceptable or not. It has always been enough for me to have the word of God on my side. And when that has been clear, you cannot forget how frequently, nay, how habitually, you have been turned over to his tribunal. On this ground do I stand in this awful day of my life. Bear witness against me, if I have not told you the truth. Very feebly, I own; very imperfectly, I do confess; but corruptly, never. And, O my friends, remember that you have a heavy account to render, an account for blood, for your *own blood*. I call heaven and earth, and your own consciences, to witness against you this day, that if you perish, "your blood will be upon your own heads, I am clean." With this cheering, but melancholy assurance, I close my ministry among you. Yet let me say, are there any of you, to whom that ministry has been sanctified? Bless the Father of mercies; and do not waste your anxieties upon the worthless instrument. "Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, to complete in you all the good pleasure of his goodness," till he bring you to his kingdom, shouting "grace, grace!"

Are there none here, and those whom we respect and love for their amiable and social qualities, yet who never knew what it is to love the Lord Jesus Christ? To whom his truth, proclaimed day after day, has been like water poured into a sieve; all "spilled on the ground, and not gathered up." Let me say to you, my friends, perhaps it is the last time, the day of *your* reckoning cometh; and you will find that the things so lightly esteemed by you are not forgotten by your God. Who of you would escape going down to

the pit? Who would not? Then hear, and hear it again, and hear it as for eternity—"There is forgiveness with God!" The doors of his mercy are not closed! The very chief of sinners may yet find acceptance with him, through his dear Son. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life *freely*;" yes, **FREELY**; with all the welcome of God's authority, and all the riches of God's bounty, **FREELY**, "so iniquity shall not be his ruin."

It may be expected that on this occasion I should deliver my thoughts concerning the person who is to take my place, and concerning your own part in the selection. How unfit I am for the discharge of these duties, I abundantly feel; and particularly how much easier it is to tell you what you should *not* do, than what you *should*. Yet, such as I have, give I unto you; and in that name which you should never hear quoted with lightness or irreverence—the name of Jesus.

1. I trust you will not choose a *vain* man, who occupies the pulpit more to display himself, than to profit you. Of all the melancholy things seen among men, this is perhaps the most melancholy; a poor sinful being complimenting himself upon the discharge of his office, while the ministering angels look upon him with a mixture of dislike, of shame, and of horreur: and while his Judge, before whom he is shortly to appear, regards him with a frown, of which the interpretation is, "ill done! thou bad and faithless servant; enter thou not into the joy of thy Lord!"

2. Do not choose a *showy* man. Many of these men there are who have only *outside*. You will be as sick of him at last, as you were enamoured of him at first. You will

speedily find that he cannot instruct nor edify you; and will be heartily tired of seeing him show himself.

3. Do not choose a man who always preaches upon insulated texts. I care not how powerful or eloquent he may be in handling them. The effect of his power and eloquence will be, to banish a taste for the word of God; and to substitute the preacher in its place. You have been accustomed to hear that word preached to you in its connexion. Never permit that practice to drop. Foreign churches call it *lecturing*; and when done with discretion, I can assure you, that, while it is of all exercises the most difficult for the preacher, it is, in the same proportion, the most profitable for you. It has this peculiar advantage, that in going regularly through a book of Scripture, it spreads out before you all sorts of character, and all forms of opinion; and gives the preacher an opportunity of striking every kind of evil and of error, without subjecting him to the invidious suspicion of aiming his discourses at individuals.

4. Do not choose a man of *dubious* principles. The truth of God was given to be *proclaimed*, not suppressed. It is a "city set on a hill"—a light which must shine, not be smothered under a bushel. When I hear of a man's preaching for years together in such a manner that his most attentive and intelligent hearers are unable to conjecture what his sentiments are upon the cardinal truths of revelation, I cannot avoid pronouncing him a *traitor*. His business is to preach Christ; and not to treat the Gospel as if it were a bundle of mere negations: and see his hearers sink down, one after another, in death, uninstructed, unwarned, unprepared, through his negligence: and himself following

them with all the "deep damnation" of their blood upon his soul ! Oh ! it is inconceivably fearful !

5. Above all things it is devoutly to be hoped, that you will never invite, to the "care of your souls," a man who cares nothing about them. I mean, more particularly, for I would not be misunderstood, a man who belongs to that rank of traitors who miscall themselves "rational Christians." Against these men I have ever warned you, as the enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all that is valuable in his religion, and peculiar in his salvation. I know well that this congregation is considered by them as the very focus of what they term bigotry; and I do rejoice that thus far I and you have been counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Long may it continue so ! Long may it be thought a hopeless case to attempt to bring you over to the fellowship of devils. Though I would not slander the devil : he promotes his work, as the destroyer, not by tempting men to his belief, but by persuading them to embrace what he does not believe—what is too coarse and abominable for hell itself; and what the philosophical Christians shall find to be so, when they get to their own place. The pretences of these men to kindness, and candour, and love, are all hollow. They mean to make proselytes of you, and two-fold more the children of hell than themselves. O keep at a distance from them ! Farthest from them, and their charity, is best. Come not near their ice, never to be melted but in that fire which shall not be quenched. This pulpit, this church, were destined to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Let them never be polluted by a foot, nor profaned by a tongue, which are not moved by his honour.

I cannot better describe the character of a profitable mini-

stry than it is done to my hand in a work too little known, *the Directory for Public Worship*, under the head *Of the Preaching of the Word*.

“ Ordinarily, the subject of his sermon is to be some text of Scripture, holding forth some principle or head of religion, or suitable to some special occasion; or he may go on in some chapter, psalm, or book of the Holy Scripture, as he shall see fit.

“ Let the introduction to his text be brief and perspicuous, drawn from the text itself, or context, or some parallel place, or general sentence of Scripture.

“ If the text be long, (as in histories or parables it sometimes must be,) let him give a brief sum of it; if short, a paraphrase thereof, if need be: in both, looking diligently to the scope of the text, and pointing at the chief heads and grounds of doctrine which he is to raise from it.

“ In analyzing and dividing his text, he is to regard more the order of matter than of words; and neither to burden the memory of the hearers in the beginning with too many members of division, nor to trouble their minds with obscure terms of art.

“ In raising doctrines from the text, his care ought to be, *First*, That the matter be the truth of God. *Secondly*, That it be a truth contained in, or grounded on that text, that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence. *Thirdly*, That he chiefly insist upon those doctrines which are principally intended, and make most for the edification of the hearers.

“ The doctrine is to be expressed in plain terms; or, if any thing in it need explication, it is to be opened, and the consequence also from the text cleared. The parallel places of Scripture confirming the doctrine are rather to be plain

and pertinent than many, and (if need be) somewhat insisted upon, and applied to the purpose in hand.

“ The arguments or reasons are to be solid, and, as much as may be, convincing. The illustrations, of what kind soever, ought to be full of light, and such as may convey the truth into the hearer’s heart with spiritual delight.

“ If any doubt, obvious from Scripture, reason, or prejudice of the hearers, seem to arise, it is very requisite to remove it, by reconciling the seeming differences, answering the reasons, and discovering and taking away the causes of prejudice and mistake. Otherwise it is not fit to detain the hearers with propounding or answering vain or wicked cavils, which, as they are endless, so the propounding and answering of them doth more hinder than promote edification.

“ He is not to rest in general doctrine, although ever so much cleared and confirmed, but to bring it home to special use, by application to his hearers: which, although it prove a work of great difficulty to himself, requiring much prudence, zeal, and meditation, and to the natural and corrupt man will be very unpleasant: yet he is to endeavour to perform it in such a manner that his auditors may feel the word of God to be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and that, if any unbeliever or ignorant person be present, he may have the secrets of his heart made manifest, and give glory to God.

“ In the use of instruction or information in the knowledge of some truth, which is a consequence from his doctrine, he may (when convenient) confirm it by a few firm arguments from the text in hand, and other places of Scripture, or from the nature of that common-place in divinity, whereof that truth is a branch.

“ In confutation of false doctrines, he is neither to raise an old heresy from the grave, nor to mention a blasphemous opinion unnecessarily: but, if the people be in danger of an error, he is to confute it soundly, and endeavour to satisfy their judgments and consciences against all objections.

“ In exhorting to duties, he is, as he seeth cause, to teach also the means that help to the performance of them.

“ In dehoration, reprehension, and public admonition, (which require special wisdom,) let him, as there shall be cause, not only discover the nature and greatness of the sin, with the misery attending it, but also show the danger his hearers are in to be overtaken and surprised by it, together with the remedies and best way to avoid it.

“ In applying comfort, whether general against all temptations, or particular against some special troubles or terrors, he is carefully to answer such objections as a troubled heart and afflicted spirit may suggest to the contrary.

“ But the servant of Christ, whatever his method be, is to perform his whole ministry.

“ Painfully, not doing the work of the Lord negligently.

“ Plainly, that the weakest may understand; delivering the truth not in the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; abstaining also from an unprofitable use of unknown tongues, strange phrases, and cadences of sounds and words; sparingly citing sentences of ecclesiastical, or other human writers, ancient or modern, be they ever so elegant.

“ Faithfully, looking at the honour of Christ, the conversion, edification, and salvation of the people, not at his own gain or glory; keeping nothing back which may promote

those holy ends; giving to every one his own portion, and bearing indifferent respect unto all, without neglecting the meanest, or sparing the greatest, in their sins.

“ Wisely, framing all his doctrines, exhortations, and especially his reproofs, in such a manner as may be most likely to prevail; showing all due respect to each man’s person and place, and not mixing his own passion or bitterness.

“ Gravely, as becometh the word of God; shunning all such gesture, voice, and expressions, as may occasion the corruptions of men to despise him and his ministry.

“ With loving affection, that the people may see all coming from his godly zeal, and hearty desire to do them good. And,

“ As taught of God, and persuaded in his own heart that all that he teacheth is the truth of Christ; and walking before his flock as an example to them in it; earnestly, both in private and public, recommending his labours to the blessing of God, and watchfully looking to himself, and the flock whereof the Lord hath made him overseer: so shall the doctrine of truth be preserved uncorrupt, many souls be converted and built up, and himself receive manifold comforts of his labours even in this life, and afterward the crown of glory laid up for him in the world to come.”

After all, be it never forgotten, that it is the Lord Jesus himself who must send you a pastor after his own heart. The ministry of the word is his ascension-gift; and if there is one thing more than another for which he will be inquired of by his church, this is the important thing. Then look up to him for the Holy Spirit, as the “spirit of grace and of supplication.” Pray for the effusion of his heavenly grace.

Pray in secret, in private, and in public—in your closets, in your families, in your social meetings, after such form as you may find most suitable to your circumstances; be instant in your entreaties to the throne of grace, and give the Hearer of prayer no rest, till he hear you from his holy heaven, and grant you the hallowed desires of your hearts.

And now, my dear friends, the moment of so much trembling anxiety, of which you and I have turned away from the sight—the moment of severance is come. Yet in the midst of those agitations which it excites, there are two considerations which comfort and sooth my spirit—

1. I leave you in peace.

During the whole course of my ministration among you, it is my happiness to be conscious that there has been no strife between us. Never has there been any misunderstanding between my people and myself. Harmony unbroken has marked my intercourse with them all. Between officers, and private Christians, and myself, not a shadow of collision has ever occurred. I part with you without one unkind feeling. Many infirmities have you borne with: and for the affectionate regards of so many years continuance, I return, this day, all that is in my power, the thanks of a grateful heart, which assuredly do not proceed from feigned lips. Now, my beloved friends, for a recompence of the same, go on cultivating the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Take care that the election of a new pastor do not become a source of contention and heart-burnings. “Pray for the peace of your Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love her. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren

and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good. And may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect to do his will, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

2. The second consolatory thought is, that the Lord Jesus is the living head, the centre of union, to all his people.

Their souls are bound up with him in the same bundle of life. Nothing, my Christian friends, can ever part us from him. "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Well, then, though far asunder, we shall be still united; we remove not one hair's-breadth from the mercy-seat. There I shall meet you, and remember you. There do you also remember me. We may be abundantly happy in the light of his countenance. Ever bear in mind that the Disposer of our lot is the Saviour of our souls.

A word to the young people of my charge shall finish

my discourse. My dear young friends, you are the hope of the church; "your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Older Christians must be gathered to their rest, and you must occupy their places. That terrible deposit, **THE TRUTH OF GOD**, must come into your hands. Ask your souls, how will you receive it? The Lord Jesus has powerful claims on you. You were early dedicated to his name, and cast upon his providence. This hand has poured out upon most of you the symbol of consecration to the fear, the love, and the service of God. The oath of his covenant is on your souls. Have your consciences felt the power of its obligation? My ministry, which for more than eleven years I have discharged among you, is at an end; but not so the consequences. The good Lord knows with what fidelity and what success my labours have been attended. The hour is not far distant, when I must deliver up my account, and you must deliver up yours. O to deliver them up with joy! Thou blessed and heavenly Judge, shall I stand before thy seat, charged with any of their blood? Shall they stand before it charged with their own? Shall all the offers of thy mercy, all the pathos of thy sufferings, all thine inimitable patience, and all thy marvellous love have been preached to them in vain? Shall there be any here who does not more certainly turn his back upon the closed doors of this house of prayer, than he does upon the last lingering offer of thy salvation? The thought is too overwhelming. Pardon me my friends.—I can no more.

APPENDIX.

The following documents are published at the request of the Session and
Trustees of the Congregation.

At a meeting of the male members of the third congregation of the Associate Reformed Church in the city of New-York, held at the church in Murray-street, on the 25th September, 1821, JOHN FORSYTH was chosen Chairman, and GEORGE GALLAGHER, Clerk. The following communication was received from the Rev. DR. MASON, which was read.

“ TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE THIRD ASSOCIATE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

“ MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

“ My thoughts have been turned, for a considerable time past, with deep solicitude, toward your situation. I see and feel that your interests are suffering, and suffering through myself. The cause, indeed, is in my infirmity, not in my fault. The holy hand of God has lain, and still lies upon me; and, through me, upon you. His dispensations are wise, and just, and good; nor is it for us to repine at them. But the use of proper means to mitigate or remove our afflictions, is not repining. So far as depends upon me, I cannot consent that your's should be any longer protracted. I know well your tolerance, your patience, your kindness. I have had many expressions of them all; and latterly, your sympathizing endurance of my mutilated services on the Lord's day; your willingness, and even eagerness, rather to shut up your sanctuary

than run any hazard of oppressing me, comes home to my heart with an appeal which is sensibly felt, and will, I hope, be long gratefully remembered. But, my dear friends, this very forbearance of your's, while it draws closer all the cords of affection, stimulates me to attempt your relief. The fact is evident—my feeble and imperfect ministrations cannot but tend to your detriment. Time enough has been spent upon an experiment, to render any further expectations of benefit from its issue, either comfortable or reasonable. Under these circumstances, I think it my duty, in correspondence with the best medical opinion I have been able to consult, to retire from the pulpit.

“ In thus retiring, I must retire also from the city, and from the sea-coast. The mixed atmosphere of our climate affects me unfavourably. You are all witnesses of the manner in which the easterly damps from the ocean control my utterance. A removal into the interior, I believe to be simply necessary to my future well-being. The calculation may be erroneous; the hope founded upon it may be disappointed; but still, it is the best calculation and hope which I am able to form, and must govern me accordingly.

“ Your goodness to me would lead you to anticipate merely the *suspension* of my labours among you, my pastoral relation continuing the same. Such, however, it is but candid to say, is not my intention. I cannot submit to be a heavy burden upon you, when I no longer render the services for which your support of me was stipulated. The anxieties of such a state would defeat the effect of my retreat: as it is essential that my mind should be free from those distressing cares which, for the last twelve months, have not ceased to prey upon me, and have materially retarded my recovery. Besides, I cannot dissemble to myself, that I stand in the way of another, and probably a less expensive settlement.

“ My design, therefore, my dear friends, is to demit my charge into the hands of the Presbytery of New-York, at their meeting

in the city of New-York, on Thursday the 25th day of October next, with a request that my pastoral relation may cease, from and after the first of December next. The measure is, indeed, like tearing the flesh from my bones ; but it is all that is left for me to do.

“ I am fully sensible of the secular consequences which this step may draw after it. My private resources, whatever wealth the world, when drafts were to be made upon my purse, was pleased to give me credit for possessing, are very scanty, and have been hitherto expended in the service of the churches. Yet such as they are, they will, I hope, with frugal management, furnish me with food and raiment, and therewith I desire to be content.

“ The present notice of an application to the Presbytery for permission to demit my charge, was prepared in the end of June last, but was laid by for mature consideration, that it might not bear any marks of precipitancy. Since that time, viz. about the 13th of August, without my seeking or knowledge, I received an invitation from the Trustees of Dickenson College, at Carlisle, in Pennsylvania, to take the superintendency of their institution, which they are about reviving. To this invitation I am favourably inclined. It will employ me usefully in work to which I feel myself adequate, but which will not oppress me. I have not committed myself on the question of acceptance, which various contingencies may prevent. And it is very possible, should I even make the experiment, I may be obliged, by the state of my health, to abandon it. The proposition was not, however, as you will perceive by the dates, an original reason of my demission ; nor would it have been sufficient to draw me from the bosom of a people whom I tenderly love. I should not have mentioned the circumstance at all, had it not been pretty generally known, and the suppression of it might have led to a suspicion that I have not acted fairly and frankly toward you.

“ Indulge me in asking one favour; which is, that if you shall consent to my demission, you will be so good as to direct an official acknowledgment thereof to be given to me, for the satisfaction of the Presbytery; if otherwise, that you would be pleased officially to acknowledge the receipt of my reasons, a copy of which shall be laid before the Presbytery, and also, would appoint commissioners to express your sense to that judicatory, at their next meeting, so as to save them the time, trouble, and expense, of an extra-meeting.

“ With great respect and affection, I am, dear friends, your obliged friend and pastor,

“ J. M. MASON.

“ *Love-Lane, 22d Sept. 1821.*”

On motion of S. Boyd, Esq. the above communication was referred to a committee of nine, to take the same into consideration, and report thereon, at a future meeting of the congregation.

The chairman named Messrs. Boyd, Wilson, Radcliff, Eastburn, Cahoone, Johnston, and Barrow. On motion, the chairman and Mr. Nevins were added, to compose the committee.

The meeting then adjourned, to meet on Tuesday evening, the 2d October, 1821, at 7 o'clock.

(Signed) JOHN FORSYTH, *Chairman.*

(Attest) GEORGE GALLAGHER, *Clerk.*

At a meeting of the male members of the third congregation of the Associate Reformed Church in the city of New-York, held at the church in Murray-street, on the 2d October, 1821, John Forsyth was appointed Chairman of the meeting, and George Gallagher, Clerk.

The committee, appointed for that purpose, made the following report, which was adopted.

The committee, to whom was referred the communication of the Rev. Dr. Mason, addressed to the congregation of the third Associate Reformed Church in the city of New-York, under date of the 22d of September last, and laid before them at their meeting, on the 25th of that month,

RESPECTFULLY REPORT,

That they have given to that communication all the consideration which its importance demands, and which the interests involved in the measure it proposes, would necessarily induce.

The separation of a pastor from the people of his charge, must, at all times, where there is mutual love and confidence, be attended with painful feelings; and it is, not unfrequently, productive of consequences which deeply affect the interests and comfort of both. In contemplating the separation of this congregation and their pastor, there are considerations peculiarly tender, interesting, and important; which it is not necessary here to enumerate, but which will be recollected and felt by all interested, and which must render the separation proportionably afflicting. These considerations have added much to the difficulty your committee have experienced, and to the sacrifice of feeling they have been compelled to make, in recommending to the congregation an acquiescence in the measure proposed by their pastor. To withhold their consent

to a separation, contrary to his wish, so deliberately and decidedly expressed, and when that wish is founded upon the reasons contained in his communication, might well be considered as rather the result of the feelings of affection, than the deliberate act of the judgment, and a due regard to the respect which they bear him.

Your committee, therefore, recommend the adoption of the following resolutions, viz.

“ A communication, addressed to the members of this congregation, by the Rev. Doctor John M. Mason, their pastor, under date of the 22d day of September, 1821, requesting, for the reasons therein stated, the consent of the congregation to the demission of his charge, having been laid before them, at a regular meeting, duly notified and convened, and the same having been maturely and fully considered ;

“ *Resolved*, That while this congregation desire to be deeply humbled, under the afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, by which the health of their much loved and highly respected Pastor has been so far impaired as to render it necessary, in his judgment, that he should retire from the pulpit, and remove into the interior of the country ; they consider it their duty, painful as it is to their feelings, to acquiesce in his request ; and they do accordingly, in pursuance of such request, hereby consent and agree, that he resign his charge into the hands of the Presbytery of New-York, at their next meeting ; and that he be released from his pastoral relations to this congregation, from and after the first day of December next.

“ *Resolved*, That the chairman of this meeting be requested to furnish Dr. Mason with a copy, duly authenticated, of the preceding resolution ; and, at the same time, tender him the warmest thanks of the congregation for his long-continued, able, and faithful ministrations among them ; with the assurance, that so long as

he shall live, and wheresoever the good providence of God may see fit to place him, their best sympathies and affections shall always accompany him, and their ardent prayers be offered, for his present and future happiness."

Your committee cannot close their report, without adverting to a circumstance which is noticed in the communication referred to them, although they do not feel themselves authorized to submit any distinct proposition to the congregation, in relation to it. It is the fact, that the relinquishment of the charge of this congregation, by our beloved Pastor, may draw after it consequences which will materially abridge his temporal comfort. Consequences, which, your committee are persuaded, the congregation would deplore ; and, so far as Providence shall enable them, they will avert.

All which is respectfully submitted,

For and on behalf of the committee,

SAMUEL BOYD, *Chairman.*

New-York, 1st October, 1821.

(Signed) JOHN FORSYTH, *Chairman.*

(Attest) GEORGE GALLAGHER, *Clerk.*

F I N I S.

