

# AN ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY

by Wesley John

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*Wesley's earnest address to fellow clergymen calling for higher standards of ministerial learning, piety, and pastoral care. He challenges ministers to examine their qualifications, spiritual depth, and faithfulness in discharging the duties of their sacred calling.*

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BRETHREN AND FATHERS, LET it not be imputed to forwardness, vanity, or presumption, that one who is of little esteem in the Church takes upon him thus to address a body of people, to many of whom he owes the highest reverence. I owe a still higher regard to Him who I believe requires this at my hands; to the great Bishop of our souls; before whom both you and I must shortly give an account of our stewardship. It is a debt I owe to love, to real, disinterested affection, to declare what has long been the burden of my soul. And may the God of love enable you to read these lines in the same spirit wherewith they were wrote! It will easily appear to an unprejudiced reader, that I do not speak from a spirit of anger or resentment. I know well, "the wrath

Page 481 of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Much less would I utter one word out of contempt; a spirit justly abhorred by God and man. Neither of these can consist with that earnest, tender love, which is the motive of my present undertaking. In this spirit I desire to cast my bread upon the waters; it is enough if I find it again after many days.

Meantime, you are sensible, love does not forbid, but rather require, plainness of speech. Has it not often constrained you, as well as me, to lay aside, not only disguise, but reserve also; and "by manifestation of the truth to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" And while I endeavour to do this, let me earnestly entreat you, for the love of God, for the love of your own soul, for the love of the souls committed to your charge, yea, and of the whole Church of Christ, do not bias your mind, by thinking who it is that speaks; but impartially consider what is spoken. And if it be false or foolish, reject it; but do not reject "the words of truth and soberness." My first design was, to offer a few plain thoughts to the Clergy of our own Church only. But upon farther reflection, I see no cause for being so "straitened in my own bowels." I am a debtor to all; and therefore, though I primarily speak to them with whom I am more immediately connected, yet I would not be understood to exclude any, of whatsoever denomination, whom God has called to "watch over the souls of others, as they that must give account." In order to our giving this account with joy, are there not two things which it highly imports us to consider: First, What manner of men ought we to be Secondly; Are we such, or are we not

I. And, First, if we are "overseers over the Church of God, which he hath bought with his own blood," what manner of men ought we to be, in gifts as well as in grace

1. To begin with gifts; and, (1.) With those that are from nature. Ought not a Minister to have, First, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness Is not this necessary in an high degree for the work of the ministry Otherwise, how will he be able to understand the various states of those under his care; or to steer them through a thousand difficulties and dangers, to the haven where they would be Is it not necessary, with respect to the numerous

Page 482 enemies whom he has to encounter Can a fool cope with all the men that know not God, and with all the spirits of darkness Nay, he will neither be aware of the devices of Satan, nor the

craftiness of his children.

Secondly. Is it not highly expedient that a guide of souls should have likewise some liveliness and readiness of thought Or how will he be able, when need requires, to "answer a fool according to his folly" How frequent is this need! seeing we almost everywhere meet with those empty, yet petulant creatures, who are far "wiser in their own eyes, than seven men that can render a reason." Reasoning, therefore, is not the weapon to be used with them. You cannot deal with them thus. They scorn being convinced; nor can they be silenced, but in their own way.

Thirdly. To a sound understanding, and a lively turn of thought, should be joined a good memory; if it may be, ready, that you may make whatever occurs in reading or conversation your own; but, however, retentive, lest we be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." On the contrary, "every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," every Teacher fitted for his work, "is like an householder who bringeth out of his treasures things new and old."

2. And as to acquired endowments, can he take one step aright, without first a competent share of knowledge a knowledge, First, of his own office; of the high trust in which he stands, the important work to which he is called Is there any hope that a man should discharge his office well, if he knows not what it is that he should acquit himself faithfully of a trust, the very nature whereof he does not understand Nay, if he knows not the work God has given him to do, he cannot finish it.

Secondly. No less necessary is a knowledge of the Scriptures, which teach us how to teach others; yea, a knowledge of all the Scriptures; seeing scripture interprets scripture; one part fixing the sense of another. So that, whether it be true or not, that every good textuary is a good Divine, it is certain none can be a good Divine who is not a good textuary. None else can be mighty in the Scriptures; able both to instruct and to stop the mouths of gainsayers. In order to do this accurately, ought he not to know the literal meaning of every word, verse, and chapter; without which there can be no firm foundation on which the spiritual

Page 483 meaning can be built Should he not likewise be able to deduce the proper corollaries, speculative and practical, from each text; to solve the difficulties which arise, and answer the objections which are or may be raised against it; and to make a suitable application of all to the consciences of his hearers

Thirdly. But can he do this, in the most effectual manner, without a knowledge of the original tongues Without this, will he not frequently be at a stand, even as to texts which regard practice only But he will be under still greater difficulties, with respect to controverted scriptures. He will be ill able to rescue these out of the hands of any man of learning that would pervert them: For whenever an appeal is made to the original, his mouth is stopped at once.

Fourthly. Is not a knowledge of profane history, likewise, of ancient customs, of chronology and geography, though not absolutely necessary, yet highly expedient, for him that would thoroughly understand the Scriptures since the want even of this knowledge is but poorly supplied by reading the comments of other men.

Fifthly. Some knowledge of the sciences also, is, to say the least, equally expedient. Nay, may we not say, that the knowledge of one, (whether art or science,) although now quite unfashionable, is even necessary next, and in order to, the knowledge of the Scripture itself I mean logic. For what

is this, if rightly understood, but the art of good sense of apprehending, things clearly, judging truly, and reasoning conclusively What is it, viewed in another light, but the art of learning and teaching; whether by convincing or persuading What is there, then, in the whole compass of science, to be desired in comparison of it Is not some acquaintance with what has been termed the second part of logic, (metaphysics,) if not so necessary as this, yet highly expedient, (1.) In order to clear our apprehension, (without which it is impossible either to judge correctly, or to reason closely or conclusively,) by ranging our ideas under general heads And, (2.) In order to understand many useful writers, who can very hardly be understood without it Should not a Minister be acquainted too with at least the general grounds of natural philosophy Is not this a great help to the accurate understanding several passages of Scripture Assisted by this, he may himself comprehend, and on proper occasions explain to others, how the invisible things of

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God are seen from the creation of the world; how "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;" till they cry out, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all." But how far can he go in this, without some knowledge of geometry which is likewise useful, not barely on this account, but to give clearness of apprehension, and an habit of thinking closely and connectedly.

It must be allowed, indeed, that some of these branches of knowledge are not so indispensably necessary as the rest; and therefore no thinking man will condemn the Fathers of the Church, for having, in all ages and nations, appointed some to the ministry, who, suppose they had the capacity, yet had not had the opportunity of attaining them. But what excuse is this for one who has the opportunity, and makes no use of it What can be urged for a person who has had an University education, if he does not understand them all Certainly, supposing him to have any capacity, to have common understanding, he is inexcusable before God and man.

Sixthly. Can any who spend several years in those seats of learning, be excused, if they do not add to that of the languages and sciences, the knowledge of the Fathers the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, and eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture was given. It will be easily perceived, I speak chiefly of those who wrote before the Council of Nice. But who would not likewise desire to have some acquaintance with those that followed them with St. Chrysostom, Basil, Jerome, Austin; and, above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephraim Syrus

Seventhly. There is yet another branch of knowledge highly necessary for a Clergyman, and that is, knowledge of the world; a knowledge of men, of their maxims, tempers, and manners, such as they occur in real life. Without this he will be liable to receive much hurt, and capable of doing little good; as he will not know, either how to deal with men according to the vast variety of their characters, or to preserve himself from those who almost in every place lie in wait to deceive.

How nearly allied to this is the discernment of spirits! so far as it may be acquired by diligent observation. And can a guide of souls be without it If he is, is he not liable to stumble at every step

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Eighthly. Can he be without an eminent share of prudence that most uncommon thing which is usually called common sense But how shall we define it Shall we say, with the Schools, that it is *recta ratio rerum agibilium particularium*\* Or is it an habitual consideration of all the circumstances of a thing, - *Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando*\* and a facility of adapting our behaviour to the various combinations of them However it be defined, should it not be studied with all care, and pursued with all earnestness of application For what terrible inconveniences ensue, whenever it is remarkably wanting!

Ninthly. Next to prudence or common sense, (if it be not included therein,) a Clergyman ought certainly to have some degree of good breeding; I mean address, easiness and propriety of behaviour, wherever his lot is cast: Perhaps one might add, he should have (though not the stateliness; for he is "the servant of all," yet) all the courtesy of a gentleman, joined with the correctness of a scholar. Do we want a pattern of this We have one in St. Paul, even before Felix, Festus, King Agrippa. One can scarce help thinking he was one of the best bred men, one of the finest gentlemen in the world. O that we likewise had the skill to "please all men for their good unto edification!" In order to this, especially in our public ministrations, would not one wish for a strong, clear, musical voice, and a good delivery, both with regard to pronunciation and action I name these here, because they are far more acquirable than has been commonly imagined. A remarkably weak and untunable voice has by steady application become strong and agreeable. Those who stammered almost at every word, have learned to speak clearly and plainly. And many who were eminently ungraceful in their pronunciation and awkward in their gesture, have in some time, by art and labour, not only corrected that awkwardness of action and ungracefulness of utterance, but have become excellent in both, and in these respects likewise the ornaments of their profession.

What may greatly encourage those who give themselves up to the work, with regard to all these endowments, many of

Page 486 which cannot be attained without considerable labour, is this: They are assured of being assisted in all their labour by Him who teacheth man knowledge. And who teacheth like him Who, like him, giveth wisdom to the simple How easy is it for Him, (if we desire it, and believe that he is both able and willing to do this,) by the powerful, though secret, influences of his Spirit, to open and enlarge our understanding; to strengthen all our faculties; to bring to our remembrance whatsoever things are needful, and to fix and sharpen our attention to them; so that we may profit above all who depend wholly on themselves, in whatever may qualify us for our Master's work!

3. But all these things, however great they may be in themselves, are little in comparison of those that follow. For what are all other gifts, whether natural or acquired, when compared to the grace of God And how ought this to animate and govern the whole intention, affection, and practice of a Minister of Christ!

(1.) As to his intention, both in undertaking this important office, and in executing every part of it, ought it not to be singly this, to glorify God, and to save souls from death Is not this absolutely and indispensably necessary, before all and above all things "If his eye be single, his whole body," his whole soul, his whole work, "will be full of light." "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness," will shine on his heart; will direct him in all his ways, will give him to see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. But if his eye, his intention be not single, if there be any mixture of

meaner motives, (how much more, if those were or are his leading motives in undertaking or exercising this high office!) his "whole body," his whole soul, "will be full of darkness," even such as issues from the bottomless pit: Let not such a man think that he shall have any blessing from the Lord. No; the curse of God abideth on him. Let him not expect to enjoy any settled peace, any solid comfort in his own breast; neither can he hope there will be any fruit of his labours, any sinners converted to God.

(2.) As to his affections. Ought not a "steward of the mysteries of God," a shepherd of the souls for whom Christ died, to be endued with an eminent measure of love to God, and love to all his brethren a love the same in kind, but in degree far beyond that of ordinary Christians Can he

Page 487 otherwise answer the high character he bears, and the relation wherein he stands Without this, how can he go through all the toils and difficulties which necessarily attend the faithful execution of his office Would it be possible for a parent to go through the pain and fatigue of bearing and bringing up even one child, were it not for that vehement affection, that inexpressible storge, which the Creator has given for that very end How much less will it be possible for any Pastor, any spiritual parent, to go through the pain and labour of "travailing in birth for," and bringing up, many children to the measure of the full stature of Christ, without a large measure of that inexpressible affection which "a stranger intermeddleth not with!"

He therefore must be utterly void of understanding, must be a madman of the highest order, who, on any consideration whatever, undertakes this office, while he is a stranger to this affection. Nay, I have often wondered that any man in his senses does not rather dig or thresh for a livelihood, than continue therein, unless he feels at least (which is extremâ lineâ amare\*) such an earnest concern for the glory of God, and such a thirst after the salvation of souls, that he is ready to do anything, to lose anything, or to suffer anything, rather than one should perish for whom Christ died. And is not even this degree of love to God and man utterly inconsistent with the love of the world; with the love of money or praise; with the very lowest degree of either ambition or sensuality How much less can it consist with that poor, low, irrational, childish principle, the love of diversions (Surely, even a man, were he neither a Minister nor a Christian, should "put away childish things.") Not only this, but the love of pleasure, and what lies still deeper in the soul, the love of ease, flees before it.

(3.) As to his practice: "Unto the ungodly, saith God, Why dost thou preach my laws" What is a Minister of Christ, a shepherd of souls, unless he is all devoted to God unless he abstain, with the utmost care and diligence, from every evil word and work; from all appearance of evil; yea, from the most innocent things, whereby any might be offended or made weak Is he not called, above others, to be an example to the flock, in his private as well as public character

Page 488 an example of all holy and heavenly tempers, filling the heart so as to shine through the life Consequently, is not his whole life, if he walks worthy of his calling, one incessant labour of love; one continued tract of praising God, and helping man; one series of thankfulness and beneficence Is he not always humble, always serious, though rejoicing evermore; mild, gentle, patient, abstinent May you not resemble him to a guardian angel, ministering to those "who shall be heirs of salvation" Is he not one sent forth from God, to stand between God and man, to guard and assist the poor, helpless children of men, to supply them both with light and strength, to guide them through a thousand known and unknown dangers, till at the appointed time he returns, with

those committed to his charge, to his and their Father who is in heaven

O who is able to describe such a messenger of God, faith fully executing his high office! working together with God, with the great Author both of the old and of the new creation! See his Lord, the eternal Son of God, going forth on that work of omnipotence, and creating heaven and earth by the breath of his mouth! See the servant whom he delighteth to honour, fulfilling the counsel of his will, and in his name speaking the word whereby is raised a new spiritual creation. Empowered by him, he says to the dark, unformed void of nature, "Let there be light;" "and there is light. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He is continually employed, in what the angels of God have not the honour to do, - co-operating with the Redeemer of men in "bringing many children to glory."

Such is a true Minister of Christ; and such, beyond all possibility of dispute, ought both you and I to be.

II. But are we such What are we in the respects above named It is a melancholy but necessary consideration. It is true, many have wrote upon this subject; and some of them admirably well: Yet few, if any, at least in our nation, have carried their inquiry through all these particulars. Neither have they always spoken so plain and home as the nature of the thing required. But why did they not Was it because they were unwilling to give pain to those whom they loved Or were they hindered by fear of disobliging, or of incurring any temporal inconvenience Miserable fear! Is any temporal inconvenience whatever to be laid in the balance with the souls of our brethren Or were they

Page 489 prevented by shame, arising from a consciousness of their own many and great defects Undoubtedly this might extenuate the fault, but not altogether remove it. For is it not a wise advice, "Be not ashamed when it concerneth thy soul" especially when it concerns the souls of thousands also In such a case may God Set as a flint our steady face, Harden to adamant our brow! But is there not another hinderance Should not compassion, should not tenderness, hinder us from giving pain Yes, from giving unnecessary pain. But what manner of tenderness is this It is like that of a surgeon who lets his patient be lost because he is too compassionate to probe his wounds. Cruel compassion! Let me give pain, so I may save life. Let me probe, that God may heal.

1. Are we then such as we are sensible we should be, First, with regard to natural endowments I am afraid not. If we were, how many stumbling-blocks would be removed out of the way of serious Infidels Alas, what terrible effects do we continually see of that common though senseless imagination, "The boy, if he is fit for nothing else, will do well enough for a Parson!" Hence it is, that we see (I would to God there were no such instance in all Great Britain, or Ireland!) dull, heavy, blockish Ministers; men of no life, no spirit, no readiness of thought; who are consequently the jest of every pert fool, every lively, airy coxcomb they meet. We see others whose memory can retain nothing; therefore they can never be men of considerable knowledge; they can never know much even of those things which they are most nearly concerned to know. Alas, they are pouring the water into a leaky vessel; and the broken cistern can hold no water! I do not say, with Plato, that "all human knowledge is nothing but remembering." Yet certain it is, that, without remembering, we can have but a small share of knowledge. And even those who enjoy the most retentive memory, find great reason still to complain, Skill comes so slow, and life so fast does fly;

We learn so little, and forget so much! And yet we see and bewail a still greater defect in some that are in the ministry. They want sense, they are defective in understanding, their capacity is low and shallow, their apprehension is muddy and confused; of consequence, they

Page 490 are utterly incapable either of forming a true judgment of things, or of reasoning justly upon anything. O how can these who themselves know nothing aright, impart knowledge to others how instruct them in all the variety of duty, to God, their neighbour, and themselves How will they guide them through all the mazes of error, through all the intanglements of sin and temptation How will they apprize them of the devices of Satan, and guard them against all the wisdom of the world

It is easy to perceive, I do not speak this for their sake; (for they are incorrigible;) but for the sake of parents, that they may open their eyes and see, a blockhead can never "do well enough for a Parson." He may do well enough for a tradesman; so well as to gain fifty or an hundred thousand pounds. He may do well enough for a soldier; nay, (if you pay well for it,) for a very well-dressed and well-mounted officer. He may do well enough for a sailor, and may shine on the quarter-deck of a man-of-war. He may do so well, in the capacity of a lawyer or physician, as to ride in his gilt chariot. But O! think not of his being a Minister, unless you would bring a blot upon your family, a scandal upon our Church, and a reproach on the gospel, which he may murder, but cannot teach. Are we such as we are sensible we should be, Secondly, with regard to acquired endowments Here the matter (suppose we have common understanding) lies more directly within our own power. But under this, as well as the following heads, methinks I would not consider at all, how many or how few are either excellent or defective. I would only desire every person who reads this to apply it to himself. Certainly some one in the nation is defective. Am not I the man

Let us each seriously examine himself. Have I, (1.) Such a knowledge of Scripture, as becomes him who undertakes so to explain it to others, that it may be a light in all their paths Have I a full and clear view of the analogy of faith, which is the clue to guide me through the whole Am I acquainted with the several parts of Scripture; with all parts of the Old Testament and the New Upon the mention of any text, do I know the context, and the parallel places Have I that point at least of a good Divine, the being a good textuary Do I know the grammatical construction of the four Gospels; of the Acts; of the Epistles; and am I a

Page 491 master of the spiritual sense (as well as the literal) of what I read Do I understand the scope of each book, and how every part of it tends thereto Have I skill to draw the natural inferences deducible from each text Do I know the objections raised to them or from them by Jews, Deists, Papists, Arians, Socinians, and all other sectaries, who more or less corrupt or cauponize the word of God Am I ready to give a satisfactory answer to each of these objections And have I learned to apply every part of the sacred writings, as the various states of my hearers require

(2.) Do I understand Greek and Hebrew Otherwise, how can I undertake, (as every Minister does,) not only to explain books which are written therein, but to defend them against all opponents Am I not at the mercy of every one who does understand, or even pretends to understand, the original For which way can I confute his pretence Do I understand the language of the Old Testament critically at all Can I read into English one of David's Psalms; or even the first chapter of Genesis Do I understand the language of the New Testament Am I a critical master of it Have I enough of it even to read into English the first chapter of St. Luke If not, how many years did I spend at school

How many at the University And what was I doing all those years Ought not shame to cover my face

(3.) Do I understand my own office Have I deeply considered before God the character which I bear What is it to be an Ambassador of Christ, an Envoy from the King of heaven And do I know and feel what is implied in "watching over the souls" of men "as he that must give account"

(4.) Do I understand so much of profane history as tends to confirm and illustrate the sacred Am I acquainted with the ancient customs of the Jews and other nations mentioned in Scripture Have I a competent knowledge of chronology, that at least which refers to the sacred writings And am I so far (if no farther) skilled in geography, as to know the situation, and give some account, of all the considerable places mentioned therein

(5.) Am I a tolerable master of the sciences Have I gone through the very gate of them, logic If not, I am not likely to go much farther, when I stumble at the threshold. Do I understand it so as to be ever the better for it to have it

Page 492 always ready for use; so as to apply every rule of it, when occasion is, almost as naturally as I turn my hand Do I understand it at all Are not even the moods and figures above my comprehension Do not I poorly endeavour to cover my ignorance, by affecting to laugh at their barbarous names Can I even reduce an indirect mood to a direct; an hypothetic to a categorical syllogism Rather, have not my stupid indolence and laziness made me very ready to believe, what the little wits and pretty gentlemen affirm, "that logic is good for nothing" It is good for this at least, (wherever it is understood,) to make people talk less; by showing them both what is, and what is not, to the point; and how extremely hard it is to prove anything. Do I understand metaphysics; if not the depths of the Schoolmen, the subtleties of Scotus or Aquinas, yet the first rudiments, the general principles, of that useful science Have I conquered so much of it, as to clear my apprehension and range my ideas under proper heads; so much as enables me to read with ease and pleasure, as well as profit, Dr. Henry More's Works, Malebranche's "Search after Truth," and Dr. Clarke's "Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God" Do I understand natural philosophy If I have not gone deep therein, have I digested the general grounds of it Have I mastered Gravesande, Keill, Sir Isaac Newton's Principia, with his "Theory of Light and Colours" In order thereto, have I laid in some stock of mathematical knowledge Am I master of the mathematical A B C of Euclid's Elements If I have not gone thus far, if I am such a novice still, what have I been about ever since I came from school

(6.) Am I acquainted with the Fathers; at least with those venerable men who lived in the earliest ages of the Church Have I read over and over the golden remains of Clemens Romanus, of Ignatius and Polycarp; and have I given one reading, at least, to the works of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian

(7.) Have I any knowledge of the world Have I studied men, (as well as books,) and observed their tempers, maxims, and manners Have I learned to beware of men; to add the wisdom of the serpent to the innocence of the dove Has God given me by nature, or have I acquired, any measure of the discernment of spirits; or of its near ally, prudence, enabling me on all occasions to consider all circumstances, and

Page 493 to suit and vary my behaviour according to the various combinations of them Do I labour never to be rude or ill-mannered; not to be remarkably wanting in good-breeding Do I endeavour to copy after those who are eminent for address and easiness of behaviour Am I (though never light or trifling, either in word or action, yet) affable and courteous to all men And do I omit no means which is in my power, and consistent with my character, of "pleasing all men" with whom I converse, "for their good to edification"

If I am wanting even in these lowest endowments, shall I not frequently regret the want How often shall I move heavily, and be far less useful than I might have been! How much more shall I suffer in my usefulness, if I have wasted the opportunities I once had of acquainting myself with the great lights of antiquity, the Ante-Nicene Fathers; or if I have droned away those precious hours wherein I might have made myself master of the sciences! How poorly must I many times drag on, for want of the helps which I have vilely cast away! But is not my case still worse, if I have loitered away the time wherein I should have perfected myself in Greek and Hebrew I might before this have been critically acquainted with these treasuries of sacred knowledge. But they are now hid from my eyes; they are close locked up, and I have no key to open them. However, have I used all possible diligence to supply that grievous defect, (so far as it can be supplied now,) by the most accurate knowledge of the English Scriptures Do I meditate therein day and night Do I think (and consequently speak) thereof, "when I sit in the house, and when I walk by the way; when I lie down, and when I rise up" By this means have I at length attained a thorough knowledge, as of the sacred text, so of its literal and spiritual meaning Otherwise, how can I attempt to instruct others therein Without this, I am a blind guide indeed! I am absolutely incapable of teaching my flock what I have never learned myself; no more fit to lead souls to God, than I am to govern the world.

2. And yet there is a higher consideration than that of gifts; higher than any or all of these joined together; a consideration in view of which all external and all intellectual endowments vanish into nothing. Am I such as I ought to be, with regard to the grace of God The Lord God enable me to judge aright of this!

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And, (1.) What was my intention in taking upon me this office and ministry What was it, in taking charge of this parish, either as Minister or Curate Was it always, and is it now, wholly and solely to glorify God, and save souls Has my eye been singly fixed on this, from the beginning hitherto Had I never, have I not now, any mixture in my intention; any alloy of baser metal Had I, or have I, no thought of worldly gain; "filthy lucre," as the Apostle terms it Had I at first, have I now, no secular view no eye to honour or preferment to a plentiful income; or, at least, a competency a warm and comfortable livelihood

Alas! my brother! "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Was a comfortable livelihood, then, your motive for entering into the ministry And do you avow this in the face of the sun, and without one blush upon your cheek I cannot compare you with Simon Magus; you are many degrees beneath him. He offered to give money for the gift of God, the power of conferring the Holy Ghost. Hereby, however, he showed that he set an higher value on the gift, than on the money which he would have parted with for it. But you do not; you set a far higher value on the money than on the gift; insomuch that you do not desire, you will not accept of, the gift, unless the money accompany it! The Bishop said, when you was ordained, "Receive thou the

Holy Ghost." But that was the least of your care. Let who will receive this, so you receive the money, the revenue of a good benefice. While you minister the word and sacraments before God, he gives the Holy Ghost to those who duly receive them: So that, "through your hands," likewise, "the Holy Ghost is," in this sense, "given" now. But you have little concern whether he be or not; so little, that you will minister no longer, he shall be given no more, either through your lips or hands, if you have no more money for your labour. O Simon, Simon! what a saint wert thou, compared to many of the most honourable men now in Christendom!

Let not any either ignorantly or wilfully mistake me. I would not "muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." I know the spiritual "labourer," too, "is worthy of his reward;" and that, if "we sow unto" our flock "spiritual things," it is meet that we "reap of their carnal things." I do not therefore blame, no, not in any degree, a Minister's

Page 495 taking a yearly salary; but I blame his seeking, it. The thing blamable is the having it in his view, as the motive, or any part of the motive, for entering into this sacred office.

Hic nigræ succus loliginis, hæc est Ærugo mera.\*

If preferment, or honour, or profit was in his eye, his eye was not single. And our Lord knew no medium between a single and an evil eye. The eye, therefore, which is not single is evil. It is a plain, adjudged case. He then that has any other design in undertaking or executing the office of a Minister than purely this, to glorify God and save souls, his eye is not single. Of consequence, it is evil; and therefore his "whole body" must be "full of darkness." "The light which is in" him "is" very "darkness;" darkness covers his whole soul; he has no solid peace; he has no blessing from God; and there is no fruit of his labours.

It is no wonder that they who see no harm in this, see no harm in adding one living to another, and, if they can, another to that; yet still wiping their mouth, and saying, they have done no evil. In the very first step, their eye was not single; therefore their mind was filled with darkness. So they stumble on still in the same mire, till their feet "stumble on the dark mountains."

It is pleaded, indeed, that "a small living will not maintain a large family." Maintain! How It will not clothe them "in purple and fine linen;" nor enable them to fare "sumptuously every day:" But will not the living you have now afford you and yours the plain necessaries, yea, and conveniencies, of life Will it not maintain you in the frugal, Christian simplicity which becomes a Minister of Christ It will not maintain you in pomp and grandeur, in elegant luxury, in fashionable sensuality. So much the better. If your eyes were open, whatever your income was, you would flee from these as from hell-fire.

It has been pleaded, Secondly, "By having a larger income, I am able to do more good." But dare you aver, in the presence of God, that it was singly with this view, only for this end, that you sought a larger income If not, you are still condemned before God; your eye was not single.

Page 496 Do not therefore quibble and evade. This was not your motive of acting. It was not the desire of doing more good, whether to the souls or bodies of men; it was not the love of God: (You know it was not; your own conscience is as a thousand witnesses:) But it was "the love of money," and "the desire of other things," which animated you in this pursuit. If, then, the word of God is true, you are in darkness still: It fills and covers your soul.

I might add, a larger income does not necessarily imply a capacity of doing more spiritual good. And this is the highest kind of good. It is good to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked: But it is a far nobler good to "save souls from death," to "pluck" poor "brands out of the burning." And it is that to which you are peculiarly called, and to which you have solemnly promised to "bend all your studies and endeavours." But you are by no means sure, that, by adding a second living to your first, you shall be more capable of doing good in this kind, than you would have been had you laid out all your time, and all your strength, on your first flock.

"However, I shall be able to do more temporal good." You are not sure even of this. "If riches increase, they are increased that eat them." Perhaps your expenses may rise proportionably with your income. But if not, if you have a greater ability, shall you have a greater willingness, to do good You have no reason in the world to believe this. There are a thousand instances of the contrary. How many have less will when they have more power! Now they have more money, they love it more; when they had little, they did their "diligence gladly to give of that little;" but since they have had much, they are so far from "giving plenteously," that they can hardly afford to give at all.

"But by my having another living, I maintain a valuable man, who might otherwise want the necessaries of life." I answer, (1.) Was this your whole and sole motive in seeking that other living If not, this plea will not clear you from the charge; your eye was not single. (2.) If it was, you may put it beyond dispute; you may prove at once the purity of your intention: - Make that valuable man Rector of one of your parishes, and you are clear before God and man. But what can be pleaded for those who have two or more flocks, and take care of none of them who just look at them

Page 497 now and then for a few days, and then remove to a convenient distance, and say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry"

Some years ago I was asking a plain man, "Ought not he who feeds the flock, to eat of the milk of the flock" He answered: "Friend, I have no objection to that. But what is that to him who does not feed the flock He stands on the far side of the hedge, and feeds himself. It is another who feeds the flock; and ought he to have the milk of the flock What canst thou say for him" Truly, nothing at all; and he will have nothing to say for himself, when the great Shepherd shall pronounce that just sentence, "Bind" the unprofitable servant "hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness."

I have dwelt the longer on this head, because a right intention is the first point of all, and the most necessary of all; inasmuch as the want of this cannot be supplied by anything else whatsoever. It is the setting out wrong; a fault never to be amended, unless you return to the place whence you came, and set out right. It is impossible therefore to lay too great stress upon a single eye, a pure intention; without which, all our sacrifice, our prayers, sermons, and sacraments, are an abomination to the Lord.

I cannot dismiss this important article, without touching upon one thing more. How many are directly concerned therein, I leave to the Searcher of hearts.

You have been settled in a living or a curacy for some time. You are now going to exchange it for another. Why do you do this For what reason do you prefer this before your former living or curacy "Why, I had but fifty pounds a year where I was before, and now I shall have a hundred." And is this your real motive of acting the true reason why you make the exchange "It is: And is it not a sufficient reason" Yes, for a Heathen; but not for one who calls himself a Christian.

Perhaps a more gross infatuation than this was never yet known upon earth. There goes one who is commissioned to be an ambassador of Christ, a shepherd of never-dying souls, a watchman over the Israel of God, a steward of the mysteries which "angels desire to look into." Where is he going "To London, to Bristol, to Northampton." Why does he go thither "To get more money." A tolerable reason for

Page 498 driving a herd of bullocks to one market rather than the other; though if a drover does this without any farther view, he acts as a Heathen, not a Christian. But what a reason for leaving the immortal souls over whom the Holy Ghost had made you overseer! And yet this is the motive which not only influences in secret, but is acknowledged openly and without a blush! Nay, it is excused, justified, defended; and that not by a few, here and there, who are apparently void both of piety and shame; but by numbers of seemingly religious men, from one end of England to the other!

(2.) Am I, Secondly, such as I ought to be, with regard to my affections I am taken from among, and ordained for, men, in things pertaining to God. I stand between God and man, by the authority of the great Mediator, in the nearest and most endearing relation both to my Creator and to my fellow-creatures. Have I accordingly given my heart to God, and to my brethren for his sake Do I love God with all my soul and strength and my neighbour, every man, as myself Does this love swallow me up, possess me whole, constitute my supreme happiness Does it animate all my passions and tempers, and regulate all my powers and faculties Is it the spring which gives rise to all my thoughts, and governs all my words and actions If it does, not unto me, but unto God be the praise! If it does not, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" At least, do I feel such a concern for the glory of God, and such a thirst after the salvation of men, that I am ready to do any thing, however contrary to my natural inclination, to part with anything, however agreeable to me, to suffer anything, however grievous to flesh and blood, so I may save one soul from hell Is this my ruling temper at all times and in all places Does it make all my labour light If not, what a weariness is it! what a drudgery! Had I not far better hold the plough But is it possible this should be my ruling temper, if I still love the world No, certainly, if I "love the world, the love of the Father is not in" me. The love of God is not in me, if I love money, if I love pleasure, so called, or diversion. Neither is it in me, if I am a lover of honour or praise, or of dress, or of good eating and drinking. Nay, even indolence, or the love of ease, is inconsistent with the love of God.

What a creature then is a covetous, an ambitious, a

Page 499 luxurious, an indolent, a diversion-loving Clergyman! Is it any wonder that infidelity should increase, where any of these are to be found that many, comparing their spirit with their profession, should blaspheme that worthy name whereby they are called But "woe be unto him by whom the offence cometh! It were good for that man if he had never been born." It were good for him now, rather than he should continue to turn the lame out of the way, "that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depth of the sea!"

(3.) May not you who are of a better spirit consider, Thirdly, Am I such as I ought to be with regard to my practice Am I, in my private life, wholly devoted to God Am I intent upon this one thing, - to do in every point "not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me" Do I carefully and resolutely abstain from every evil word and work "from all appearance of evil" from all indifferent things, which might lay a stumbling-block in the way of the weak Am I zealous of good works As I have

time, do I do good to all men and that in every kind, and in as high a degree as I am capable

How do I behave in the public work whereunto I am called, - in my pastoral character Am I "a pattern" to my "flock, in word, in behaviour, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" Is my "word," my daily conversation, "always in grace," always "meet to minister grace to the hearers" Is my behaviour suitable to the dignity of my calling Do I walk as Christ also walked Does the love of God and man not only fill my heart, but shine through my whole conversation Is the spirit, the temper which appears in all my words and actions, such as allows me to say with humble boldness, Herein "be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ" Do all who have spiritual discernment take knowledge (judging of the tree by its fruits) that "the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God;" and that in all "simplicity and godly sincerity I have my conversation in the world" Am I exemplarily pure from all worldly desire, from all vile and vain affections Is my life one continued labour of love, one tract of praising God and helping man Do I in everything see "Him who is invisible" And "beholding with open face the glory of the Lord," am I "changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord"

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Brethren, is not this our calling, even as we are Christians; but more eminently as we are Ministers of Christ And why (I will not say, do we fall short, but why) are we satisfied with falling so short of it Is there any necessity laid upon us, of sinking so infinitely below our calling Who hath required this at our hands Certainly, not He by whose authority we minister. Is not his will the same with regard to us, as with regard to his first Ambassadors Is not his love, and is not his power, still the same, as they were in the ancient days Know we not, that Jesus Christ "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" Why then may not you be as "burning and as shining lights," as those that shone seventeen hundred years ago Do you desire to partake of the same burning love, of the same shining holiness Surely you do. You cannot but be sensible it is the greatest blessing which can be bestowed on any child of man. Do you design it; aim at it; "press on to" this "mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" Do you constantly and earnestly pray for it Then, as the Lord liveth, ye shall attain. Only let us pray on, and "tarry at Jerusalem, till we be endued with power from on high." Let us continue in all the ordinances of God, particularly in meditating on his word, "in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily," and, "as we have time, doing good to all men;" and then assuredly "the great Shepherd" of us and our flocks will "make us perfect in every good work to do his will, and work in us all that is well pleasing in his sight!" This is the desire and prayer of Your Brother and Servant, in our common Lord,

JOHN WESLEY.

LONDON, February 6, 1756.

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