A DISCOURSE
On the Value and Importance
of a LEARNED & EFFICIENT MINISTRY.
DELIVERED BEFORE THE ANNUAL CONVENTION
OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
IN THE Diocese of Mississippi, on the 6th of May, A. D. 1829, in St. Paul's Church, Woodville.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONVENTION.

NATCHEZ:
Printed at the Office of the Ariel. 1829.
TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHERS IN GOD,

THE

BISHOPS

OF THE

Protestant Episcopal Church

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

THIS

DISCOURSE IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR

AFFECTIONATE PRESBYTER AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Natchez, 12th May, 1829.
SECOND CHAP. PROPHECY OF MALACHI, SEVENTH VERSE.

“For the Priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts.”

Malachi the last of the twelve minor prophets, and author of the words just quoted, delivered his predictions under the pious and excellent Nehemiah.

It appears, that when this ambassador, or messenger of the Lord (which his* name imports) prophesied, there existed considerable dissension between the Jewish priesthood and the people of Judah. The former disaffected to their sacred calling, and wearied in the performances of their ministerial duties, were daily offering up sacrifices, that in their nature and quality were deemed in the sight of God as imperfect and unworthy. The latter from the influence and example of such unprofitable teachers, had ventured to disregard the sacred laws of their ancestors, and in the establishment of iniquitous regulations, to become their own legislators. The second chapter of this prophecy is addressed solely to the Priests. They are solemnly reproved by the prophet for their lukewarmness, and the divine judgments are forcibly denounced against their unlawful and polluted offerings. Malachi reminds them of the covenant which Jehovah had made with the tribe of Levi, the former faithfulness

*The Septuagint version has rendered the word Malachi “his angel, or messenger.” The fathers have quoted Malachi under the title of the Angel of the Lord. See Gray on the Old Testament.—Bio. Mal.
of the priesthood in judiciously expounding the several laws, their
strict adherence to the Jewish canon, their equity, mildness, and
the humble and correct deportment, so conspicuously manifested on
all occasions. In relation to Levi the father of this order he says
in divine language "the law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity
was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity,
and did turn many away from iniquity."

It is probable that a portion of the Jewish people were igno-ant of the nature of those laws which they had so repeatedly viola-
ted. They required skilful teachers to expound and rehearse their
nature and application; friendly guides to conduct them from their
daily aberrations, and point them to the peaceful paths—the
pious rites, and the devotional customs of their departed ancestors.
Indeed, in a community so extensive as that of the Hebrews, it is
highly presumable that some degree of ignorance of their laws and
religious policy prevailed among the tribes. In times of error and
dissension then, to whom were they to apply for advice and direction?
From whom were they, under a doubtful interpretation of their du-
ties, to receive the language of truth, and a correct administration of
justice? If their faith were assailed—their oblations deemed im-
perfect, or their lives disgraced by the commission of evil, where
should they learn the nature of those appropriate ceremonies—those
penitential vows, and propitiatory sacrifices so necessary to restore
them to the privileges of their religion and the forgiveness and favor
of Heaven? I answer to the appointed ministry: “For the Priest’s
lips, should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his
mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.”

Dignified—yet awful is this distinguishing prerogative!

“The Messenger of the Lord of Hosts!”

When I look around me and behold some of them at this time
in the church of God, and in the presence of his assembled people,
I am delighted at the prospect, while I tremble with apprehension!
Delighted that through the multiplied changes of another year,—the
sorrows of misfortune—the trials of sickness—the violence of
énemies, and the ravages of death, they are again permitted to see
each others face, and to share in the joy of once more meeting
around their fathers board. On the other hand trembling for them
and for myself, when I remember that we are the “Messengers of
the Lord of Hosts;” that our lips must keep the treasures of di-
vine knowledge,—that from our mouths the people are to seek the
law of God—and that we are to watch for their salvation as those
who must shortly give account to the great “head and bishop of our
souls.” While my brethren of the clergy around me, filled with
anxiety for the church and for the ministry committed to their charge,
are with myself propounding the solemn and memorable question,
“Who is sufficient for these things?” in the faithful discharge of
those important offices committed to their charge, there is heard the
encouraging and consolatory declaration—“My grace is sufficient for
thee.” “And as my father hath sent me, even so send I you, and lo
I am with you even to the end of the world.”

In discoursing from the words I have selected for the present
occasion, I propose to consider the benefits and importance of a
learned and efficient ministry to the cause of christianity in general.

And in the first place, I shall attempt to shew that God in
his infinite wisdom was graciously pleased to select persons emi-
nently conspicuous for their wisdom and attainments in human lit-
erature, to carry into effect his benevolent designs in the plan of our
salvation by Jesus Christ.

Secondly. I shall notice some of the benefits which have been
derived to christianity, by the exercise of these attainments in con-
junction with the divine agency of God’s holy spirit.

Thirdly. I shall endeavour to convince you that a portion of
human learning (as I shall designate it) is particularly required in
the ministry of the church; to preserve its faith, to render signifi-
cant its ceremonies, to kindle and excite the devotions of its fo-
lowers, and to convey to the world the reasonableness and propriety
of its enlightened and sublime services.

And before I enter upon the subject in review, it is proper to
remark that holiness of life and devotion to God may justly be considered as the primary essentials, and the impregnable basis upon which the usefulness of the Christian ministry is founded. Without a cultivation of that measure of grace which is given to every man, and without the Christian graces of a meek and quiet spirit, Learning and Eloquence, Science and Philosophy, are often deprived of that power and energy, that earnestness and sincerity, which carry conviction to the humblest mind, and triumph over the boasted labours of the Rabbinical critic or the infidel philosopher.

I shall therefore consider this discourse as addressed to every faithful and devoted minister of the church and gospel of Jesus Christ.

And in the first place, The priesthood throughout all nations was considered as an office elevated and honorable. God himself, in expressing to the Hebrews what favorable distinctions he would confer upon them, says in the book of Exodus, *"I will make you Priests and Kings." This order, as we learn from scriptural history, was not confined to any particular tribe or family, until the law was pronounced by Moses. Abel, Abram, Laban, Isaac and Jacob, each offered sacrifices to God, and may be ranked as his priests. Moses was appointed as the servant and priest of the Most High, to deliver his laws to the Israelites, to establish the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, and to institute the worship and ceremonies of the Jewish religion.

We are told in the "Acts of the Apostles, chap. 7th, 22d verse," that this extraordinary personage "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." Clemens Alexandrinus, further states that he had the ablest masters in Egypt to instruct him in Arithmetick, Geometry, Musick, Phy.

* Exod. 19th chap. 6th verse.

† Before the promulgation of the law, the first born of every family was a Priest; but afterwards, the priesthood was limited to the tribe of Levi. Num. 16. and 40.

...the symbolic Philosophy and all that appertained to the language and learning of the Egyptians.

It is further presumable, and the conjecture may be hazarded, that in the selection of Aaron as high Priest, God was moved to order his consecration from his having been the constant companion and associate of Moses; who on account of his extraordinary attainments, prepared him for that office, by necessarily imparting to him a portion of that wisdom and knowledge for which he was so eminently distinguished. Joshua, another servant of the Most High, was also famed for his wisdom and the powers of his understanding. Moses was expressly commanded to lay his hands on him as one who possessed the spirit, and it is said a portion of his honor was to rest upon him. Samuel was early celebrated for his knowledge as a Priest, and we are informed dwelt in the latter part of his life at Naioth in Ramah with the sons of the prophets, where it is probable he instructed them in the law, and prepared them for the ministry.† Both Ezra and Nehemiah were skilful interpreters of the Jewish law, and ardently laboured to preserve in their purity the sacred writings, and to restore the worship of the scattered tribes of their exiled race. It is mentioned of Ezra that "he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses," and by virtue of commissions from the kings of Persia he made many reformations, and gave useful directions in sacred matters. Other ancient worthies of the old testament might be adduced, renowned for their piety, sagacity and knowledge. But let us descend from such to the Apostles and followers of our blessed Saviour, and we shall find that most of them were also signalized for their acquirements in human literature. We have been often told by those who are opposed to the scholastic education of the clergy—that the immediate disciples of Jesus Christ were humble and illiterate fishermen:
that they were without the graces and accomplishments of human learning—that divested of these helps, they changed the opinions of the great, confounded the wisdom of the learned, and established the simple and sublime principles of his religion, alone by their holiness of life and devotion to his cause. This is in part true. It is not however all true. I will ask if they were considered competent to propagate the doctrines delivered them by Christ, (even with all their devotion and zeal,) why was the gift of tongues so visibly manifested on the day of Pentecost? Why did the Saviour himself in his frequent communications promise to afford them suitable answers, when questioned in regard to their faith and the doctrines which they had embraced? The author of their religion, repeatedly assured them, that in the defence of their faith, and the support of its ordinances, he would prepare them minds, with such arguments and evidence, as all their adversaries would be “unable to gainsay.” Here is evidence that he considered them even with all their disinterestedness and holiness of life, incapable of teaching mankind or propagating his doctrines, without some previous knowledge of the subject, and a proper acquaintance with the system of his morality. There were doubtless important matters in the history of his advent, and the plan of his redemption of the world, connected with prophecy, and founded upon the Jewish rites and ordinances of the law, which required more than ordinary powers of mind, and intellect to unfold.

Most of them were unprepared for this, and God was pleased by divine manifestations, to enlighten their minds and enlarge their understandings by the interposition of miracles. In the early days of christianity there were no Universities at hand where the first disciples could be perfected in human learning; and their age together with the necessity of speedily diffusing the truth of christianity through the world, rendered it impracticable for a previous preparation in the acquisition of that useful knowledge, so necessary to their cause. Extraordinary means were therefore employed to supply this defect.

But to return, St. Luke not only enjoyed the advantages of a finished education at Antioch his birth place, but his biographer states that he studied in all the schools of Greece and Egypt.

St. Mark from the facility and readiness with which he expounded St. Peter’s discourses, appears to have enjoyed a liberal education. We are told by the Ecclesiastical Historian Eusebius that he not only converted a great number of men and women to the christian religion but even to a strict profession of its faith.

St. Paul, however, holds a distinguished rank among the Apostles as a profound and eloquent scholar. After going through the range of the sciences at Tarsus, he was sent by his parents to Jerusalem to be perfected in the study of the law; where at the feet of the famous Gamaliel, he obtained a complete knowledge of the Jewish laws and customs of that nation. That he also possessed an acquaintance with the Heathen poets, is evident from his quotation of a passage from one of their authors.

“In whom we live and move and have our being.”

Timothy appears to have enjoyed in an eminent degree the confidence and esteem of this learned Apostle, and perhaps we shall not err, if we attribute to St. Paul his preparation in literary knowledge for that distinguished station which he afterwards held in the diocese of Ephesus. The Greek Church in its public offices is not silent as regards the younger years of Titus, the Bishop of Crete. We are told that his youth was consecrated to learning and a generous education. The fathers of the Church, particularly in the early ages were men of profound education and extensive acquirements. St. Ignatius Bishop of Antioch, Polycarp, the reputed disciple of St. John, Tertullian,

+ The words quoted by St. Paul are to be found in the Poem of Phenomena, by Aratus.
The same words occur in a Hymn to Jupiter, by Cleanthus.—Clarke in Leuc.
Origen* and St. Chrysostom, had all received a suitable education to prepare them for the dignity and importance of their holy functions, and were noted for their proficiency in the study of the liberal arts and sciences. Many other illustrious personages conspicuous for their powers of understanding might here be introduced for the support of our present position. I am however summoned from the consideration of such, to that memorable period, when the Reformation commenced both in England and in Germany. When reason and philosophy triumphed over error: when the light of the gospel shone through the darkened cloisters of superstition, and ushered in the day star of hope to unfold and irradiate the path of the believer. And here let me observe that human learning employed its resistless power in different services of Christianity, and spent its noblest energies in the cause of truth, and the religion of the gospel.

The first person of any eminence who espoused the cause of religious liberty in England was John Wickliffe.

Both profane and ecclesiastical history unite in ascribing to his vigorous and powerful understanding, much of that free and spirited inquiry, which in the thirteenth century, gave such impulse to the freedom of research; and first shook the gates of that spiritual tyranny which had so long closed in darkness, the brightness and beauty of divine truth. This enlightened reformer was so remarkable for his theological acquirements and polemical reasonings that in the famous schools of his day he reigned without a rival. He was Professor of Divinity at Oxford, afterwards Rector of Lutterworth, and was a man of enterprising genius and extraordinary learning. By the force of his intellectual acuteness, and the diversified movements of his wonderful genius, he explored the dark mazes and subtle intricacies of the policy of the Court of Rome, and with the united efforts of reason and philosophy,


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nobly contended for that ecclesiastical independence, which was finally secured in the establishment of the reformation in England. The Universities and Seminaries of Learning at that time were renowned for their scholastic course of discipline, and the venerated authorities of ancient writers. Merton College, (Oxford,) the place of the English Reformer's acquirements was at that period in high repute throughout all Europe, and famous for the display of that Aristotelian logic which he so successfully used against his numerous opponents. "He made use of the same weapons to oppose error, which his adversaries employed to maintain it."*

The historian Fuller in speaking of the advantages of Wickliffe’s learning to the cause of the reformation attributes the main to the nature of truth, and the divine providence blessing the gospel.

In Germany we see Luther conducted by science and sound philosophy, unbinding the fettered pages of revelation, diffusing to his countrymen the mild influences of the Christian doctrines; overcoming by his prodigious mind every obstacle which arrested his progress, and at length beholding in triumph the establishment of that faith for which he had so nobly contended. In the acquisition of useful knowledge and the study of divinity, his mind was replete with the surest information, and invigorated by the arguments and opinions of the ablest Theologians. In the course of his early studies at the University of Erfurt, he prosecuted with enthusiasm and vigour the study of the Latin tongue; was familiar with Virgil, Livy, Cicero, and other classical, and in his acquaintance with the Greek language, did not fail to enrich his mind from the treasures and attainments of his friend and colleague, the learned Melanchthon.||

In his memorable conflict with the Roman Hierarchy, the avowed

enemies to that change of ecclesiastical dominion which had so long enslaved the opinions of the ignorant and credulous, he evinced a mind of the highest order of intellectual endowment and powerful genius.

Against the unreasonable and unscriptural doctrines of the mother church, he opposed a sound and rational faith; and by a public translation of the scriptures into the language of his deluded countrymen, furnished them with unanswerable arguments against the repeated usurpations of the papal throne. No intellectual weapon which his genius could wield was left untouched by his skilful and courageous mind. In the open and formidable phalanx of Leo's emissaries, he appeared the determined champion and the fearless defender of the gospel and its injured laws.

In his nervous hand was uplifted the "sword of the spirit"—around him was "the shield of faith," and before his determined and dauntless spirit, superstition fled in dismay, and pride and error and presumption, shrunk before the light of knowledge, the inspirations of truth, and the language of God.

We pass to the second proposition of our discourse, in which we promised to notice some of the benefits which have been derived to Christianity by the exercise of these attainments in conjunction with the divine agency of the Holy Spirit.

And after the enumeration of such distinguished priests, scholars, and critics, it need scarcely be asked, what benefits have been derived to Christianity by the exercise of these attainments in conjunction with the divine agency of the Holy Spirit.

Behold the conduct of the faithless and rebellious Israelites! What but the wisdom and prudence of their illustrious legislator, supported them in the various trials of their protracted pilgrimage and preserved them from the violence of that sedition, which on many occasions threatened them with disgrace and entire extinction. The finger of God, was conspicuously displayed in the repeated miracles of Moses. The Israelites who beheld his conduct and witnessed his extraordinary attainments, became convinced of his divine appointment, and received and readily adopted the laws and ordinances which he delivered for their civil and religious government. Again,—How were their numerous laws enforced, their rites and ordinances continued—their faith strengthened, and their writings preserved, but by the skill and ability of their scribes—the learning of their priests, and the wisdom of their rulers? Let us enquire whether that measure of meekness—that intensity of devotion, and that willing obedience to the divine mandates, which on all occasions was so implicitly yielded, would of themselves have been sufficient for the purposes of legislation, and the authority of government? Let it be remembered also, that the people he governed were tenacious of their privileges—jealous of their prerogatives, and moreover burthened with numerous afflictions and infirmities. These sometime disposed them to question the sincerity of Moses, and even to doubt the evidence and virtue of his sacred commission. But with that acuteness of mind, and masterly perception of character inherent in his judicious and cultivated understanding, he surmounted their prejudices, reformed their judgment, allayed their animosities, and finally led them in triumph to the borders of the promised land.

But further, under the dispensation of the gospel, how were their objections answered, their prophecies explained, and the commentaries of their Rabbins in opposition to the character and advent of the Messiah refuted, but by the enlarged and powerful mind, the skilful reasonings—the profound logic, and the appalling eloquence of the disciple of Gamaliel?

Shall I conduct you to the Areopagus, where the sublime speaker so ably refutes the false reasonings and subtle arguments of the crafty Athenians? Shall I bid you listen to those powers of speech which arrested the attention and enslaved the feelings of the noble Agrippa, or

*It is worthy of remark that Moses under the law, and St. Paul under the gospel, were profound scholars and men of the highest order of literary attainments.
point you to the trembling Felix, abashed and confounded before the powerful appeals of the Christian preacher?

To those who are familiar with the history of the church from the earliest ages—who have examined the lives and labours of its defenders, the learning of its ministers, the faith of its martyrs, and the wisdom of its Apostles—there is afforded the strongest testimony, and the most abundant proofs, that Christianity has derived important benefits in the support of its doctrines, from the productions of the wise and the researches of the learned.

In the third head of our discourse it was proposed to show, that if human learning be essential to the cause of religion in general, it is particularly required in the ministry of the church. And first in the preservation of its faith.

If the opponents of the Christian faith would in their arguments for the support of their positions, confine themselves to the scriptures as they are rendered in our own tongue, a learned and efficient ministry would not perhaps be so necessary to preserve the doctrines of the gospel. But in the discussion and arrangement of so important a subject, the skilful disputant will avail himself of every aid which can be drawn from the stores of antiquity, and the labours of the scholar. Thus Greek articles—Hebrew passages, and numerous interpolations are marshalled on all occasions of controversy, “and if the priest who is the public teacher,” be not versed in the interpretation of ancient languages, how shall his lips unfold that portion of knowledge so necessary to the support of his subject, and for the pursuit of his adversary through all his readings and researches.

In short, how shall he in obedience to St. Paul’s injunction “contend earnestly for the faith, in this view of the subject the language of the pious St. Chrysostom is both just and applicable.

“He that would undertake so weighty a charge, had need to be a man of great understanding, favourably assisted with divine grace, for integrity of manners, purity of life, and all other virtues.”

*Chrysostom de Sacrd. Lib. 3, Cap. 15th.

The growth and prevalence of various unscriptural doctrines in this our age and generation, render it highly expedient that the ministers of religion should not only be familiar with the scriptures and conversant with the writings of the ancient fathers, but that they be skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, so as to render into English any difficult branch of scripture with facility and readiness. It is absolutely necessary to meet the advocates of such doctrines on their own ground. In the assaults of infidelity and the advancement of heterodox opinions there will be often found interwoven with the sophistry of the artful and the pungency of the satirist, some show of learning and the boasted pretensions of a vain philosophy; and if the appointed and chosen teacher and defender of Christianity cannot repel such weapons by the force of sound argument and the skill of useful and various knowledge, well might the reproachful inquiry of Nicodemus be returned to him, “Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?” In such a contest, of what avail will be his pious life—his devotion to religion—his fervent zeal—his disinterested labours, and his sacred intentions. They may exalt his individual worth and secure for him the approbation of the godly and virtuous, but religion will be reproached for his presumption, and wounded by his ignorance. Thus from the want of sufficient preparation in ministerial ability, will the divine institutions of the great Jehovah, be often deprived of their proper design and effect, and thus in the emphatic language of scripture, will his “people be destroyed for lack of knowledge” in the right understanding of his word, and sacraments.

It hath been wisely remarked by the learned South, that if “God in the ministration of divine matters require not the knowledge of man, much less will he have need of his ignorance.” Again what saith the able scholar and master of church polity “Against ignorance is there any man so raw and dull, but that the volumes which have been written, both of old and of late, may make him in so plentiful a cause

“...My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no Priest to me.” Hosea 4th, Cap. 8th.
eloquent? For if by that, which is generally just and requisite, we measure what knowledge there should be in a minister of the gospel of Christ; the arguments which the light of nature offereth; the laws and statutes which scripture hath; the Canons which are taken out of ancient Synods; the decrees and constitution of sincerest times; the sentences of all antiquity; and in a word, even every man's full consent and conscience is against ignorance in them that have charge and cure of souls?

Again: It is part of the faith of an Episcopalian to believe that Christ instituted in his church three distinct orders in the ministry. Now if the minister be not sufficiently able to confirm this belief in the minds of his hearers and congregation, how can this doctrine be received and maintained as a part of church discipline, and scriptural usage? Will it suffice that the church—the constitution, or the Canons have imposed such a rule of faith and practice? The people we are told will require the evidence of this law from the mouth of the Priest; and unless his acquaintance with ecclesiastical history and the divine right of Episcopacy, be clear, conspicuous, and well founded, how shall his lips keep that portion of learning so necessary to the confirmation of this opinion and for the proper instruction of those committed to his charge? In the articles of Christian faith which have been generally admitted by a large portion of mankind, there are other subjects which in their reception and reasonableness, have acquired additional illustration from the treasures of ancient theology and sacred literature. The belief of a Trinity in unity—the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, and the system of future rewards and punishments as taught in the gospel, though enveloped in the mysteries of Almighty perfection have, nevertheless been ably illustrated and powerfully enforced, by the skill of intellectual ability and the powers of a vigorous understanding.

A well informed clergy, is again required to render significant the ceremonies of the church, and to convey to the world the propriety of its enlightened and sublime services.

Those who affirm that the ceremonies of our church are formal, unmeaning and unscriptural, at once betray a want of judgment in the propriety, order and beauty of publick devotion, and an entire ignorance of the ancient rites and formularies of both the Jewish and Christian worship. A review of the excellencies of our Liturgy—the goodly structure of its well-arranged materials, and its scriptural character, would at this time be foreign to the subject of our present discourse. It is sufficient to remark that to relish its beauties—to perceive its reasonableness, and be improved by its language, it is necessary to become familiar with its forms, and to be strongly habituated to those deep and glowing impressions which arise from the faithful uses of its venerated services. It is much to be lamented that the history—character, and devotional forms of our Book of Common Prayer, are not generally understood, and more frequently used by the members of the church, and mankind at large. Surely in this respect the lips of the Priest should keep knowledge, and the people should be taught the propriety, significance and uses of that language and those ceremonies, by which they offer up their devotions to the majesty of heaven. The nature and arrangement of the fasts and festivals, the order for the daily course of morning and evening prayer, the publick reading of the scriptures by appointed lessons, and the uses and design of the various rubrics, for the entire preservation of unity and order in the church, should by a learned, pious and conscientious minister be patiently explained to his congregations and friends, and openly and publicly set before the enemies and opposers of his acknowledged faith.

Again: An assembled congregation are often moved to the warmth of devotion by the earnestness and sincerity of the preacher's manner. And will it be said, that a devout, pious and eloquent Minister, has it not in his power to enkindle the devotions of the worshippers around him? He who has been early taught to read with propriety and emphasis—


*For a correct history of the Book of Common Prayer—the nature of its ceremonies, and the structure of its language—we would strongly recommend Bishop Brownell's commentary.* The author has not only given the labour and learning of Shepherd, Wheatly, Nicolls and Comber, but enriched the work with his own able, pious and judicious reflections.
who has studied the eloquence of the desk and pulpit—and can give
proper effect and a becoming solemnity to the prayers and lessons of the
morning and evening services, cannot fail to enlist the feelings, and
lead the devotions of his faithful attendants. Who can be indif-
erent to the sacred uses of prayer, when from the lips of the
priest is heard that exalted invocation—\(\text{Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord}
God of Sabaoth;}\) and who can remain unmoved, when, in har-
monious accordance, a thousand voices respond the sublime ac-
cknowledgment, Heaven and Earth are full of the majesty of thy glory!
What spirit, however cold and inactive in its aspirations can slumber
in the remorseless bosom of impatience, when humility takes re-
venge in the hallowed accents of the Litany, and the mercy of God
the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost is invoked upon
fallen, guilty, and wretched man.

There is yet another subject intimately connected with the suc-
cess and labours of the gospel, which demands from the clerical pro-
cession the highest exertions of intellectual strength and scientific
attainments. I allude to the arduous and extensive duties of foreign
and domestic Missions.

There is, in the present age a spirit of sacred enterprise, which in
its enlarged and benevolent operations, aims at a general diffusion
of the principles and doctrines of the christian religion.

Over a great portion of these United States—in its principal
cities—over its extensive territories, and even in the unsettled borders of
its savage population this spirit, with an energy that wastes but with life,
is seen in the patience of unexampled devotion, and determined zeal.
Limited by no climate, and confined to no particular language, its be-
aign influences are extended to distant countries and the most de-
gritted nations. Over the burning sands of Africa—the poisonous
vapours of India—the agitated Republics of South America,
and around the classic shores of Greece, you will behold it en-
countering in their most appalling and hideous features, the ab-
surdities of ignorance—the inconsistencies of superstition—the in-
habitutions of sickness, and the violence of death.

While charity would applaud and justice approves a scheme fraught
with such enlightened, and liberal views, there is however, something
to be said in regard to the judicious application, and proper uses of
the means thus furnished by public munificence.

In our own country we annually expend considerable sums in the
disbursements of missionary services. But has it yet been ascertained
that the benefits reaped, are at all in proportion to the labour bestowed.

Are not ministers sent from the healthful and populous parts of
America to the inhospitable and pestilential shores of foreign lands,
many of them unacquainted with the language, habits and propensities
of those to whom they are recommended?

What, then, is to be expected from the services of missionaries—who
are not amply qualified for their important offices?

With but little or no prospect of usefulness, or perhaps some few
individual instances of success, they return to the bosom of their fa-
voured country worn out and exhausted with the wantings of disease,
or in the field of their labours are prematurely consigned to the lonely
precincts of a martyr's grave.

If the sums which are annually expended on this uncertain and
in some degree unprofitable plan, were judiciously appropriated to the
erection, endowment, and maintenance of a Missionary College where
the various languages, and the lower sciences could be ably taught,
and where ministers from every part of the world, could be properly
qualified to enter upon the arduous task of evangelizing the Heathen
a reasonable prospect might then be opened, and a fruitful source estab-
lished, where piety and heavenly clemency could faithfully and pro-
fitably employ their labours, and consummate their most gracious and
benevolent designs. In such an institution piety might enclose itself in
the panoply of human literature, and from such a consecrated citadel,
the christian missionary, might go forth, armed at all points for that
spiritual warfare, in which the pride—the prejudices and the passions
of sinful man are to be overthrown, defeated and expelled by the
force of truth, the spirit of wisdom, and the light of revelation.

Let those who would rightly estimate and duly appreciate the
value and importance of learning in the cause of Missionary labour,
advert to the prodigious efforts, and acknowledged success of the English Missionary Societies. The College of Fort William* in Bengal is an imperishable monument of their judicious regulations for the diffusion of religious truth; and the immense operations of publick seminaries and well endowed colleges throughout the extensive regions of India, demand the gratitude of enlightened nations, and must excite the admiration of the Christian world. What has Christianity not gained from the valued services, the enlightened and cultivated minds, and the generous sacrifices of those scholars, and Priests, Martin, Swartz, Middleton, and Buchanan—and the Christian world is yet paying its just tribute of veneration and regard to the memory of the learned, accomplished, and lamented Heber.†

Those ages have passed away in which divine knowledge and sacred instruction were so universally rejected by ancient nations. A portion, however of that ignorance of which it is said “God winked at,” still prevails; and if it is to be removed by the exertions of the present generation, piety is the lever upon which the Christian Philosopher must rest his exertions, and knowledge the sacred impetus which shall vanquish its powers, defeat its baseful intentions, and forever prostrate its dark and iniquitous designs.

If in the various conflicting systems of religion which at the present day afford such melancholy traces of the weakness and infirmity of human perception, the church is to be preserved in that faith which is her glory to acknowledge, and her privilege to enjoy—if her doctrines and ceremonies are to be recommended to the world, and appreciated by her members, I know of no other earthly foundation upon which she can establish such claims to excellence—than the piety, and learning of her ministry, and the virtue and co-operation of her enlightened and intelligent laity. Of the one in the faithful discharge of their duties it may be said in the language of the Apostle “God hath not given them the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Brothers of the Convention:

We are under the good providence of God again convened for the purposes of ecclesiastical legislation on the affairs of the church in this diocese. Among those subjects which will claim your attention, that which should demand your more immediate concern, and require your serious deliberations is the contemplated alterations of our Liturgy as proposed in the house of Bishops at the General Convention of 1826* and required “to be submitted to the several State Conventions.”

This admirable compendium of devotion, learning, propriety and beauty, has long stood the test of time—the wisdom of ages—the scrutiny of wisdom and the assaults of prejudice. Though dear to the hearts, and minds of every inheritor of its blessings and benefits we are not prepared to say that it is faultless! Possibly, it might be better accommodated to the wants and wishes of the Christian world. But who shall presume to touch this sacred gift which the piety, and wisdom of centuries have consecrated? Where shall be found the ability, the forbearance, the wisdom, and prudence essential to so important and hallowed a design? Let us beware of the dangerous and restless spirit of innovation. “It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” When once its wings are unfurled before the gale of popular opinions and prejudices, rapid and imperceptible will be its movements; and it will be difficult to “arrest it in its eagle flight,” after the changes of fashion, the transitions of ignorance and the conceits of intolerance and vanity. It would be better that the services of our faith should remain in their present form than hazard by a change, the danger of tarnishing its beauty and impairing its excellence.

* Vide Buchanan's Researches in Asia.
† Heber's Travels in India.

* Vide Journal of 1826.
Our Liturgy, may justly be compared to a strong and goodly edifice, founded in judgement and finished with skill. If however, its designs be invaded, or its proportions disturbed, the whole structure is liable to be demolished; and if once weakened, I know not where is that strength, that ability, and that genius which can again restore it to its primitive order and its matchless perfections.

Of the church and its ordinances, we will not—we cannot despair. Under the guidance, and support of its divine head, the “chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls,” it must eventually arrive at that perfection and triumph which is reserved for its favoured communion upon earth. To the sincerity and devotion of its ministry—the purity of its faith—the zeal of its followers; and the healthful operations of the divine spirit—we fearlessly confide this depository of our spiritual freedom, and existence. Posterity will yet behold the auspicious period when above the storms and tempests of unsettled ages, and contending years, this Ark of the Covenant will be seen in the strength and beauty of its original structure, the glory and pride of all nations and kindreds of the earth. In its heavenly designs, will be found the precious qualities, and efficacious doctrines of the Gospel of the son of God; and its incense shall arise as a “pure offering” before that throne, around, which, “Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth? Heaven and Earth are full of the Majesty of thy Glory!”

AMEN.