

of any of their recorded instructions, when once proved to be theirs. But implicit obedience can be justly claimed by inspired teachers only; and those who claim to be inspired teachers are bound to produce such proof of their real inspiration, as the inspired teachers of old did produce, before any can be obliged to admit their claim to that character. But the days of miracles are past. Christians must expect such teachers no more. Diligent and patient study must now supply, the best they can, the place of inspiration, in qualifying men for instructors in religion; and those who are the best qualified for that office, by natural gifts or spiritual acquirements, and whose commission to teach is most satisfactorily proved, have no right to expect that any thing should be received as truth in mere deference to their authority as teachers, but must be prepared always to render a reason for what they say to him that asketh them. Thus much however is indisputably due to the words of every one who has a right to be heard at all upon such a subject—that he be heard with attention and with confidence. To this, my brethren, all who ever address you from this pulpit have a claim which none, I should think, will venture to deny in words, although perhaps it is more, than is in fact always conceded to them. Our commission, I presume, you acknowledge. We claim, then,

I. TO BE HEARD WITH ATTENTION.

But it will hardly be contended that all in our various congregations are attentive hearers of what is delivered to them. Possibly none are at all times so attentive as they ought to be, considering the momentous interest of the subjects treated of. The motive which brings every man to Church is of course best known to himself. But there are other motives which may produce this effect, besides a sincere regard for the doctrine of salvation, and a true concern about his soul. In some, if we may judge by the general tenor of their actions and discourse elsewhere, the right motive does not act at all; in others, we have cause to fear that it acts in too slight a degree, so as to be easily overpowered by opposite suggestions of various kinds; too slight to enable them to dismiss, even for the time, from their thoughts, the cares or the pleasures of the world, the vanities of time and sense. To have their thoughts always under controul belongs not indeed even to the best disposed and the most considerate. Our imaginations, however carefully checked, are but too apt, on all occasions, to be busy with objects foreign to the business in which we are engaged; and never more so than in the midst of religious exercises. Some

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