

interesting and very solemn crisis in your lives. To you it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the present hour. The hopes and anxieties of years are crowded into it. If you have thought of it rightly, it has been a burden upon your souls, an occasion for searching of heart, a time whose approach has stirred the depths of your being to watchfulness, weeping, and prayer. This hour, for you, is the central hour of your life. All the past has converged to it; all the future starts from it. It compresses the obligations of time; it is charged with the destinies of eternity. In the presence of the God whom you have sworn to serve—in the presence of Christian people, whose wealth is in your character and usefulness, and to some of whom you may have to minister the word of life—in the presence of watching angels, and of glorified spirits, dear to some of you, who look down with loving eyes from the reward—in the presence, it may be, of scoffers who deride your calling, and of adversaries, both earthly and spiritual, who watch for the halting of your feet—you are here to take upon you the vows of the Christian ministry, at once the noblest profession and the most solemn