

**A SERMON DELIVERED NOVEMBER 7,
1821 AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV.
JOHN A. DOUGLASS TO THE PASTORAL
CARE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH IN WATERFORD**

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A sermon delivered November 7, 1821 at the ordination of the Rev. John A. Douglass to the pastoral care of the Congregational Church in Waterford by Asa Cummings

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ASA CUMMINGS

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SERMON,

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 7, 1821,

AT THE

Ordination

OF THE

REV. JOHN A. DOUGLASS

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN WATERFORD.

—
BY ASA CUMMINGS, 1821

Pastor of the First Church in North-Yarmouth.
—

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NOVEMBER 7, 1821.

DEAR SIR,

The undersigned, a Committee chosen by the *Congregational Church and Society in Waterford*, in their behalf, tender you their cordial thanks for the Sermon, and the Fellowship of the Churches, this day by you delivered, at the Ordination of the Rev. JOHN A. DOUGLASS, and respectfully request a copy of the same for publication.

LINCOLN RIPLEY,

LEANDER GAGE,

CHARLES WHITMAN.

REV. MR. CUMMINGS.

SERMON.

MALACHI, II. 7.

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.

THE author of this book lived in a time of great degeneracy. On no other supposition can we account for the extreme severity, with which he treats the Jews; or perceive any appropriate meaning in those pointed interrogations, with which his prophecy abounds. What more cutting reproof for ingratitude could there be, than the allusion which is here made to the sovereign pleasure and distinguishing goodness of God, in singling them out from all other nations, to record his name, and establish his true worship among them, contrasted with existing abuses? "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? yet I loved Jacob." On the Jewish nation God had conferred peculiar favors and privileges, when there was nothing in their character to afford ground for the preference. He made them the depositaries of his law, and the ministers of his worship, with all its significant ceremonies and sacrifices, so strikingly typical of the atonement to be effected by the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." These favors bestowed on them by a gracious God, gave him a claim to eminent obedience, gratitude and love. But they had now become altogether venal and merce-

nary, grudging the most inconsiderable service done for religion. "Who is there among you, that would even shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on my altar for nought." If they attended on the instituted worship of God, it was with a criminal reluctance and disgust. "Ye say, what a weariness is it!" They even went farther, to throw the most marked contempt upon divine institutions. "Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick: should I accept this at your hands?" Priesthood and people appear to have been sunk in like degeneracy, and to have co-operated in perverting and degrading the institutions of Jehovah. The priests, in particular, are threatened with exemplary punishment, with disgrace and ruin, unless they "lay it to heart," and so discharge the duties of their office, as to 'give glory to the name of God.' They are reminded of the purity and the qualifications of the ancient priests, and of the blessed effects which followed their exemplary walk, and the punctual and persevering discharge of their official duties. "My covenant was with Levi, of life and peace: and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 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 away many from iniquity.*" In this connexion follows our text, in which priest and people are introduced, and their reciprocal duties enjoined: *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.*

These words present us with three distinct heads of meditation, suited, it is thought, to the present occasion.

I. An indispensable qualification in a minister of the word.

II. An indispensable duty of the people.

III. This qualification of the minister urged, and this duty of the people enforced, by the high and sacred character, which he sustains.

Let us, first, meditate on the qualification of a minister brought into view in the text, as indispensably requisite. *The priest's lips should keep knowledge.* What is the *knowledge*, which it is necessary for him to possess? To obtain a satisfactory answer to this question, we must inquire what that is, in which the people are to be instructed. They are to seek the *law* at his mouth. The *knowledge* with which he is to be furnished, and the *law* which they are to learn of him, correspond to each other, and, in this passage, are of paramount signification. What, then, is the import of the word, *law*, as used in the Scriptures?

The law of God, is an expression of extensive import, and is frequently used to comprehend the whole system of true religion, as contained in the books of Revelation. At the advent of Christ, and previously to that time, it could include no more than the scriptures of the Old Testament. In these were contained the moral law, not only as summed up in the ten commandments, but dispersed through all the several parts, including the duties which every rational creature owes to God and his neighbour: also, 'the ceremonial law, or the rites of external worship, relating to the priests, sacrifices, sabbaths, feast days, washings, and the whole of the temple service: and the political law, which regulated their intercourse with each other, as members of society. These scriptures contained predictions and promises of a Messi-