

*She* The approved Minister of G O D. *Rev.*

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*Mr.* A *Hamilton*  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the  
O R D I N A T I O N

Of the Reverend

*Mr.* JOHN RODGERS :

At St. Georges, in Pennsylvania, March 16, 1749.

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By S A M U E L F I N L E Y,  
Minister of the Gospel at Nottingham.

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*Publish'd at the Request of the Hearers, with  
some Enlargements.*

Mat. 44, 45, 26. *Who then is a faithful and wise Servant,  
whom his Lord hath made Ruler over his Household, to give  
them Meat in due Season? Blessed is that Servant, whom  
his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing.*

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P H I L A D E L P H I A :

Printed by WILLIAM BRADFORD in Second-Street.  
For Messrs. DAVID STEWART, and ISAAC DUSHANE.





2 CORINTHIANS vi. 4.

*But in all Thing approving ourselves as the Ministers of GOD, in much Patience.*



HE Gospel Ministry is, without Controversy, a Work of the greatest Importance, being Conversant about no less than the Salvation of immortal Souls. Hence as the Mismanagement of it is likely to be, not only Dangerous, but Destructive; so the wise and faithful Discharge thereof is attended with happy Consequences, being the Means, appointed by God for bringing Sinners to eternal Blessedness through Faith in his Son. *For faith cometh by bearing.*

Rom. 10  
17.

Ministers are CHRIST'S Ambassadors, and every faithful Message they deliver has some Influence on the everlasting State of their Hearers. To some it is a *Saviour of Life, unto Life*, to others of *Death unto Death*. In this View it is an affecting piercing Consideration to a Minister of God. He cannot without solemnity think, "this Sermon will either be an *Instrument of Life*, or an *Occasion of Death*, to my Audience: If it do not soften, it will harden their Hearts, it's Influence will probably be various like that of the Sun, which softens Wax, but hardens Clay—And the Consequences are Everlasting." Weighed with such Thoughts, the Minister of God is fir'd with Zeal for the Salvation of Men; and tender Compassions dictate the most Melting persuasives to engage Sinners to yield themselves to God. *We beseech you—be ye reconciled to God.* We mildly and affectionately intreat you, *that ye receive not the Gospel of the Grace of God in vain.* And as he is solicitous to win Souls, and magnify his Office; so is he careful to avoid whatever would lead any into Sin, or give Occasion to Sinners to blaspheme the sacred Function. Giving no offence in any Thing, that the Ministry be not blamed. v. 3. The scandalous Lives of Ministers make the Prophane despise, not only Particular Persons, but the very Office itself, and hold all suspected who bear it. The impiety of *Hophni* and *Phineas* made People abhor the Offerings of the Lord. They who are thus Offen-

2 Cor. 2  
16.

2 Cor. 5  
20.  
2 Cor. 6. 1

1 Sam. 2  
17.

live,

five, as they prove themselves thereby to be regardless of God's Glory, and Sinners Salvation, so they do not, cannot approve themselves as Ministers of God: So much is imply'd in the Opposition of these Characters in the 3d and 4th verses. *Giving no offence in any Thing—But in all Things approving ourselves as the Ministers of God.* Which is as much as to say, "we would not approve ourselves to be Ministers of God, if we did not avoid giving Offence." By the Title, **MINISTERS OF GOD**, is here design'd, those who are appointed and Commission'd by him, to attend the Service of his Church, and Administer the Word and Sacraments. The Title is *Great and Honourable*, and it highly concerns those who wear it to act up to Character. They must, *in all Things*, in all Places, in all Companies, in all Circumstances, in their whole Conversation, and in every Part of their Office, approve themselves to God, and every Man's Conscience. They must be all of a Piece; the same in *Honour* as in *ver. 8.* *Dishonour*; the same in *evil Report* as in *good Report*. Now to maintain such a Steadiness in Conduct through all Opposition, plainly requires much Patience. A Minister should *1 Cor. 9.* be disposed so as to suffer all Things rather than hinder the *2d.* *Gospel of Christ.*

But that I may give the Contents of the Text in fewer Words, I observe that the Denomination, *Ministers of God*, intimates their Commission; their Conduct in the Office is design'd by *approving themselves in all Things*. *Much Patience* denotes their Temper of Spirit: And all these imply their Qualifications.

I purpose to treat of these Heads in this Order, *viz.*

I. Shew that a Minister must have a divine Commission.

II. What Qualifications are required in him.

III. What his Temper of Spirit should be. And,

III. How he should Conduct himself in his Office.

I. *A Minister must have a divine Commission.* It is essential to his being, that he be sent of God. This may be evinc'd from various Topicks; some of which I will only Hint.

*1 Tim. 2.* A Minister is a *Servant of God*. But none is properly *24.* another's Servant, who is not employ'd by him. Their Service is justly rejected, who intrude themselves undesir'd.

*2 Cor. 5. 20* A Minister is an *Ambassador of CHRIST*. An Ambassador represents the Person of his Prince—but none can lawfully do this unless appointed by him: Nor will he be accepted of in this Quality, who has not authentick Credentials from the Prince he pretends to represent. A Minister acts authoritatively in God's stead; but God himself is the only fountain of Authority. There is no Power but of God. Hence none *Rom 13 1.* have authority to act for him, unless they receive it from him.

Further,

Further, no Man, without divine Aid, is able duly to Discharge the Ministerial Office : Which, I presume, will be readily granted; and can be clearly proven. But none can justly expect Assistance from God, whom he does not employ. Nay, on the Contrary he blasts their undertakings; saying in displeasure, because *they ran*, and *I have not sent them, therefore they shall not profit this People at all.* Jer. 23: 21. 32.

Once more; the Scripture asserts, that *no Man taketh this Honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* Heb. 5. 4. I do not hereby understand, that every Minister must have the same explicit, extraordinary, kind of Call that Aaron had; much less that no Man does ever sacrilegiously Usurp the Office; but only that none ought to undertake it, unless call'd as REALLY as Aaron, tho' not in the same extraordinary Manner. It is too frivolous to place the whole of this Call in the regular Separation of a Man to this Office, by the Church; for even Aaron, tho' extraordinarily call'd, yet was externally invested, according to order: Which plainly Manifests, that the external Investiture is neither Constitutive of this Call, nor yet render'd unnecessary by it.\*

It will readily be own'd, that whomsoever God sends, he Qualifies for his Work, either immediately, as the Prophets and Apostles; or mediately, as ordinary Gospel Ministers. And this leads me to shew,

2dly. *What Qualifications are required in the Minister of God.* And here I propose to manifest, that he should have extensive Knowledge—orthodox Sentiments—pertinent Utterance—Wisdom—Holiness—Power.

1st. It is necessary, that the Minister of God be stor'd with *Knowledge.* He who is to teach God's People must not be a Novice. He should be able to apprehend Things clearly, Methodize his Conceptions regularly, and Reason solidly. It is not enough that he has good natural Parts, but these must be cultivated by Learning. Acquaintance with the learned Languages, Rhetoric, and Philosophy, secures him from Contempt, and at the same Time is greatly subservient to

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\* If it be enquir'd, what is this Call? And how may a Candidate be satisfy'd concerning it? I answer in brief, the ordinary Call of God is to be gather'd from the sincere and ardent desires of serving him in the Ministry of the Gospel, which he puts in the Hearts of those he Calls; from the Qualifications, and Dispositions which he gives, fitting them for the Work; from the secret Strength wherewith he supports, and supporting encourages them to undertake it, notwithstanding the known Difficulties that attend it, and the Sense of their own insufficiency for it; and his opening, in the Course of his Providence, a Door of entrance into the Office agreeable to the Order of his Church.

to Divinity, his main Study. He must especially be well instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven, and mighty in the Scriptures; his Mind a Treasury of divine Knowledge, to which he must always add, and for that End give himself to Reading, to Meditation, and Doctrine. The People are to enquire the Law at his Mouth, therefore his Lips should keep Knowledge.

An ignorant Minister of God is a great Absurdity, a plain Contradiction. A Teacher who knows not that whereof he affirms, grates our Ears; and to see the *Blind leading the Blind*, strikes Confusion on our Sight. And tho' it be easy to appear learn'd with little Knowledge among the Crowd, yet it is not a superficial View of Things that will enable, to resolve perplexing Cases of Conscience; explain Difficult Points of Doctrine; defend all necessary Truth against Subtle Opponents; and make intricate Subjects easy to vulgar Apprehensions. And it is plain, that in these Things a Minister must exercise himself.

2dly. The Minister of God must be of orthodox Sentiments. It is required that he hold fast the faithful Word. And Preach the Truth as it is in JESUS. They are not Ambassadors of CHRIST, who deliver not his Message, but their own Fancies; who pervert the Gospel-Plan, subvert the Foundation of our Hope, and promote Error in the Name of the LORD. It is true, there are many Mistakes in Religion which are not damning; and as true, that many religious Truths are such as do not accompany Salvation: Hence the Minister of God had need look well to it, that it be the very Council of God he delivers, and that he deliver it fully. A Minister may live long, may preach Truth, and nothing but Truth, as long as he Lives, and yet do no real Service to the Souls of Men; because he Preaches not those Truths which have a Tendency to answer the End of God's Glory, and Sinners Salvation.

Should he preach Morality, and recommend it with the greatest profusion of Eloquence; if it be urg'd without any Reference to CHRIST, so as to have no Tendency to convince Sinners of their guilt, impotence, and need of a SAVIOUR, it is then broken off from it's proper Connexion, and will naturally have no more Efficacy than a Beam of Light cut off from the Sun. And even the Doctrines of Faith, when enforc'd only with legal Motives, are but spiritless and ineffectual. Therefore those Doctrines should be most insisted on—that are most Spiritual, and strike at the corrupt Nature and carnal Reasonings of Men; and must be so represented as to exalt the Grace of God, and stain all the Glory of human Merit and Strength. But how can any preach such Doctrines, unless he Understand and Believe them?

3dly.

3dly. The Minister of God should have a pertinent *Utterance*. The great Apostle shews the Importance of this Qualification, while he desires the *Ephesians* and *Colossians* to pray for him, and Particularly, that *Utterance might be given him, that he might open his Mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery of the Gospel*. Not only that outward Restraints might be remov'd, but that he might have " Ability to Express himself in a suitable and becoming Manner. \* " It is plainly requir'd in a Bishop, that *he be apt to Teach*; which implies a Capacity to express his Ideas clearly and intelligibly. But he should Study rather to speak instructively than learn'dly; and suppress a Thousand flowery Expressions for the sake of one that is pertinent, and level to the Capacity of his Hearers. The Apostle, tho' he understood Rhetorick and Philosophy, yet esteem'd it his Glory, that he came not with Excellency of Speech, or of Wisdom, but with unaffected plainness, declared the Council of God. Some, perhaps, may Glory in a sublime Stile, and many more in the Affectation of it; but what is the Fruit of their Labours, while they go beyond the reach of their Audience? Verily " such learned Preachers are like to have ignorant Hearers." It is an old Observation, that the plainest Men have ever been most serviceable to the Church. † I would not be understood by all this, to mean, that Preachers should be careless, and slovenly in the Dress of their Sermons; or that no respect may be had to the Taste of a politer Audience. Christian Prudence may require them sometimes to change their Voice; seeing they are to please all Men, in all indifferent Things, for the sake of Edifying and Gaining them. Besides the Subject may be such as requires to be treated in a loftier Strain: We find the strongest figures us'd in the sacred Writ, to express the Terrors of *Jehovah's* Wrath, and the Sweetness of his Love; infernal Torments, and celestial Joys; the Deformity of Vice, and amiableness of Virtue——But there is great difference between a neatness, and gaudry of Phrase; between a pertinent, and a turgid Stile. A Minister may use great Decency, and, at the same Time, great plainness of Speech. It begins already to appear.

4thly. That the *Minister of God* needs much *Wisdom*. It is this that can direct him how to order his Steps, so as to obtain the End of his Ministry. It is this that can direct him in the Choice of his Subjects, proper to every Occasion, and a suitable Mode of treating them. He must so manage his  
Work,

\* Henry on Eph. 6. 19.

† Qui pueriliter, populariter, and simplicissime docet, optime docet. Luther,

Work, as will have the best Tendency, to rouse the Luke-warm; alarm the Secure; discover the Wiles of Satan to the Tempted; and fortify them against his assaults: He must use proper means to instruct the Ignorant; encourage the Timorous; and clear the doubtful Christian. *A Word fitly Spoken*

Pro. 25. 11.

Isai. 50. 4.

Rom. 3. 31.

Mat. 9. 17.  
&c.

Mat. 9. 7.

Ecc. 3. 11.

Isai. 52. 11.  
Acs 6. 3.

Rom. 8. 7.

Tim. 4. 16

to the Weary requires the Tongue of the Learned. How great the Wisdom that is necessary, to support the weakest Christian, and at the same Time sap the Foundation of the refined Hypocrites Hope! So to urge the Duties of the Law as tends to engage Men to the diligent Performance of them, and yet prevent their depending on them for Justification; and so to preach the Grace of the Gospel as not to make void the Law! To divide the Words of Truth rightly, like skilful Stewards giving Milk to Babes, Meat to strong Men, and putting every Wine into it's proper Bottle! A Minister may not content himself with this, that what he preaches is Truth; for if it be not fit and seasonable, it will answer no valuable purpose at all, but on the contrary may be hurtful. Suppose he Discourse of Church-Government, to a Person whose main Concern is to know, what he must do to be saved; or declare the sublimest Doctrines of Religion to one, who needs to be taught the first Principles of it; he does no better than give a Stone to one who asks for Bread. On another Occasion the same Discourse might be the very best; but now is altogether impertinent. Every thing is beautiful only in it's Season.

5thly. The Minister of God ought to be Holy. Holiness is requir'd in every Church-Member, and especially in those who bear the Vessels of the Lord. Even a Deacon must be full of the Holy Ghost; much more a Minister. Without Holiness he Comports not with the Nature and Design of his Office: For how can he be zealous to promote Holiness in others, who is destitute of it? How can he care for the Salvation of others, who neglects his own? How can he naturally apprehend the Cases of Christians, who has not experienced them? How contradictory is he? A real Servant of the Devil, a nominal Servant of God! A pretended Friend without, and all Enmity within! Outwardly a Sheep; inwardly a ravening Wolf! Hence appears the pertinency of the Apostle's Advice, *take heed to thy Self, and to thy Doctrine*. The Minister who would take heed to others, must begin with himself. Besides, if he be not Holy, he cannot be suppos'd to be influenc'd by spiritual Motives; he designs not the glory of God, nor the Salvation of Sinners; and desires the Praise of Men, more than to approve himself to God. Nor can he, without Holiness, be suppos'd to have the Ministerial Temper, afterwards to be describ'd.

6thly.

6thly. It is the Test of a true Minister of God, to speak in Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power. Paul considers this as a distinguishing Characteristick in 1 Cor. 4. 19. 20. *I will know not the Speech of those who are puffed up, but the Power; for the Kingdom of God is not in Word, but in Power.* q. d. I will understand what sort of Preachers these boasters are, not by their Elegance of Speech, but by the Efficacy which attends their Sermons: For the true Interests of Religion are not promoted by Nice turns, well contriv'd Periods, and subtle Philosophical Reasonings; but by the divine Energy, and Power which accompany the Preaching of the Gospel. By an Argument of the same Nature does God convict the false Prophets, that they spoke not his Word; *for is not my Word, says he, as a fire, and as a Hammer, that breaketh the Rock in Pieces?* And under the same View, the Word of God is said to be quick and Powerful, *sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and a discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* This Power consists not in a natural Keeness or fervour of Spirit; nor in an affected oratorical *Pathos*; or any artful ways of striking the Passions.— But is rather evidenc'd in an Heavenly plainness, and Majestick Simplicity; in delivering divine Truths with a serious Fearnets, and grave Solemnity; speaking of the eternal Concerns of Men in a Manner suitable to their Importance; representing spiritual Things in their own Colours, without phantastick Paint; and declaring them with unaffected Boldness. Then do they appear with Beauty and Luitre, and come with Authority and Weight, upon the Hearts of Men. The Word of God when preach'd with Power, appears with such Evidence, as to cast down Imaginations, ever so Towering; and baffle contrary carnal Reasonings. The Conscience is convinc'd, the Mouth stopped, and the Heart pierced as with a sword, broken as with an Hammer, and melted as with Fire; over-aw'd with Majesty, and constrain'd by Love. Then gladness elevates and dilates the Heart of the Righteous, and fear surprizes the Hypocrites in Zion. Then does the Gospel bear the Impress of it's glorious Author; and, tho' the sacred Treasure is put into Earthen Vessels, yet the Excellency of the Power appears to be of God; who gives to his Ministers such inimitable Dexterity in applying his Word, as no human Learning, or Industry, can attain.

It is true, this Power does not always, and in an equal Degree, attend the Labours of the most faithful Ministers. *Timothy* is exhorted to stir up the Gift that was in him; which implies that it was capable of Increase, or Diminution, as is every gracious Habit. Neither does the most powerful Preaching always Convert even those, on whom it makes some Impressions.

*Gal.* 4. 11. *Mat.* 7. 29. *2 Cor.* 2. 15. *1 Cor.* 10. 33. *1 Cor.* 9. 22. *2 Cor.* 12. 15. *Phil.* 2. 20. *Heb.* 5. 2.

pressions. The Prophets, and Apostle's too complain of Labouring in vain: And tho' Christ spake with such authority as to terrify and confound his Enemies yet few were Converted. Nevertheless, in full consistency with these Observations, it may still be asserted, that the Power of God does ordinarily, in some Degree, accompany the faithful Labours of his Ministers; and never without some suitable Effect. It is discernable, in some Measure, even to the Profane, in the peculiar Irritation of their Corruptions, if not in Solemnizing them. Hence the Gospel, powerfully preach'd is a sweet Savour to God, both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

If any should still argue, that none are to be blam'd for the want of such Gifts as are not attainable by them; and consequently, that Men, who have them not, may approve themselves as Ministers of God, seeing they do the best they can. It may be answer'd, Men are certainly blamable for undertaking an Office, for which they are not Qualified. Do not all Men blame him, who Promises what he cannot perform, tho' he endeavours it? Do we not censure the Quack who undertakes the most difficult Operations in Physick, or Chirurgery, while unskill'd in both Arts, tho' he does the best he can? And why should they be approv'd, who think themselves fit to be Ministers of God, merely because they have Learning, and are capable of forming a regular and plausible Discourse? It already appears, that more is necessary, and will be further evident, when we consider,

*Thirdly*, Of what Temper of Spirit the Minister of God should be. I take occasion, from the one Particular, *viz.* *Patience*, mentioned in the Text, to treat of the Ministerial Temper in general; and for the sake of Brevity, shall consider it as reducible to these Heads, *viz.* Benevolence; Meekness, Humility; and Patience.

*1st.* The Minister of God should be a Man of Universal Benevolence: A Lover of Mankind, especially of those who are Good. His views not partial and confin'd; not seeking only his own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be Saved. His Soul so large, that he can become all Things to all Men, if by any Means he may save some. His desires of the Conversation of Sinners so ardent, that he will gladly spend, and be spent, for them: Nor will it satisfy him to have us'd his utmost Endeavours, if Success does not attend them. He cannot be content to labour in vain. He is of a Paternal Disposition, and *naturally Cares for the State* of immortal Souls: Tender-Hearted, knowing how to have Compassion on the Ignorant, and those who are out of the Way. He feels their Difficulties, and dreads their Dangers, as tho' their Cases were his own. His Sympathetick Heart

Heart can vent itself in those warm Expressions of the Apostle, *2 Cor. 11* who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I *29.* burn not? Should he happen, thro' human Infirmary, by Word or Deed, to hurt the spiritual Interests of any, to make the Righteous sad, harden Sinners, or give Occasion to the Adversary to Blaspheme, he can never forgive himself. In a Word, he has no Interests to pursue, inconsistent with those of Christ's Kingdom, and is therefore easy and pliant to any Measures, that tend to promote the general Good. And this leads me to say.

2dly. The Minister of God should be Humble and Meek. He must condescend to the meanest Offices belonging to his Station, and never affect to be above his Work: He must associate himself with the meanest, as well as the greatest Persons, for the sake of promoting their spiritual good: And learn of his Lord and Master to be meek and lowly in Heart, if he would approve himself his true Ambassador. It wholly unbecomes his sacred Character, to be froward and inflexible, peevish and fretful, self-conceited and fanciful. He is a proud Man who commonly abounds in his own sense; who is peremptory and obstinate; and displeas'd, when his Judgment is not prefer'd. But the Minister of God can easily bear to be outshin'd by others; nor will he grudge at the superior Parts and Gifts of his Brethren, or envy their greater Esteem; but willing to do all he can, is pleas'd when others can do more. He will not rage and bluster when his Humour is Contradicted; for he solemnly considers, how un t he is to govern the Church of God, who cannot govern his own Spirit. *Not soon angry*, is one of his Motto's; for he knows that *the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all Men.*—And meekly instruct even those who oppose themselves.

Instructions should drop as the Dew, and gently insinuate themselves into reluctant Minds. They prevail, not by force, but by softness and frequency, as the Waters wear the Stones. It is true, Sinners are to be *compel'd to come in*, but that is to be done by weighty Arguments; and tho' the *Terrors of the Lord* are to be denounc'd, it must be in a *persuasive and compassionate* Way. In brief, whether a Minister instructs the Ignorant, refutes the Erroneous, or censures the Scandalous, he must be *Gentle among them, as a Nurse among Children*, he must overcome their Provocations, and his own Regretments, *by Kindness, by the Holy-Ghost, by Love unfeigned.* To be Passionate and Furious, because of the Dulness and Ignorance of the People, is very unministerial. therefore,

3dly. The Minister of God has need of much Patience. As this is a special Branch of my Text, I may be allow'd to be

be more particular in treating of it. And I conceive it will be useful to speak a few Words of it's general Nature.

It is quite Mistaken, if it is esteem'd to be a *sluggish Apathy*, or *dull Impotence*; for it is really a *Power to suffer felt Grievances in a becoming Manner*. It excludes fearfulness, despondency, and weak Passions; and contains in it Christian Fortitude and Hope. In Opposition to *fear*, it is the *Spirit of*

2 Tim. 1. 7. *Power*, and of a *sound Mind*. It is Calmness under Provocation in Opposition to *turbulent Commotions*. It enables a Man to

Luk. 21. 19 *possess himself*, when he can possess nothing besides; and so fortifies his Soul, that he will not yield to discouragements.

Now it will appear, that such a Temper is very necessary to Ministers if it be consider'd, what Discouragements they meet with; and what Treatment is frequently given them:

1st. They meet with sad Discouragements. These principally arise from their Unsuccessfulness. This broke *Isaiah's* Heart, and extorted from his Lips those earnest and mournful

Isai. 53. 1. *Expostulations, who hath believed our report; and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* He speaks not only in his own Name; for he knew such Complaints would natively burst forth from the Hearts of others, when overcharg'd with grief on the same Account. Words cannot express the Weakness and Discouragement we feel, when we plead with our

Hearers to forsake Iniquity.——Lift up our Voices like a Trumpet, and cry to them in the Name of the Lord; yet observe them to be deaf to all our Sollicitations, and we have obtain'd no more, than if, with *Jeremiah*, we stood

Jer. 22. 29. and cry'd, *O Earth, Earth, Earth, hear the Word of the Lord*, we denounce unto them, everlasting Banishment from God, and endless intollerable Torments, in Case of persisting in Impenitency; and tho' they acknowledge the Reality of these Terrors of the Lord, yet they desperately

Job 15. 26. *rush on the thick Bosses of his Bucklers*. They will please themselves, tho' therein they knowingly displease God; and are obstinately bent to gratify their own Humours, tho' they should thereby perish forever.

“ When the Duties we perswade to, come directly to cross Men's Interests and carnal Inclinations, they revolt and start back, as if we were urging them upon Flames, or the Sword's Point; and their own Souls and the eternal Glory are regarded as a Thing of nought.

“ We sometimes fill our Mouths with Arguments, and our Hearts with Hope; and think, sure they will now yield; but they esteem our strongest Reasonings (as *Leviathan* doth Iron and Brais) but as Straw and rotten Wood; and

“ laugh at divine Threatnings as he doth at the shaking of a Spear. How often are Men the harder for all our labours with them; the Deader for all Endeavours to quicken them? Our Breath kills them whom we are

“ sent

“ sent

“ sent to speak Life to ; and we often become to them a  
 “ deadly Saviour.” † How hopeless does our labour seem,  
 when we observe our Hearers persist in Courses, which they  
 themselves condemn ! Their Lusts carry them headlong against  
 their own Consciences, and all our Remonstrances. It is true,  
 we sometimes see some of them solemnly concern'd, when  
 we shew them their Danger ; they are put to a Stand, when  
 we meet them with the flaming Sword of God's Law ; they  
 seem almost perswaded to be Christians, while we propose,  
 and urge upon them, Pardon of Sin, and eternal Salvation,  
 thro' *Jesus Christ* ; but, to our unspeakable Mortification,  
 we see the Goodness of many of them to be like the *Morning* *Hof. 6. 4.*  
*Cloud, and the early Dew.* We are as Men who plow the  
 Sand, and sow among Rocks or Thorns, while only *some*  
*Seeds* fall into good Ground. “ We study to Paleness and  
 “ preach to Faithfulness,” and yet our strength seems to be  
 but Labour and Sorrow. We observe many People to be  
 Ignorant of those very Truths, which we have often clearly  
 explain'd in their Hearing ; and thus plainly see that we  
 have Labour'd in vain. Hence our Endeavours become faint,  
 our Hands hang down, and we speak often-times like Per-  
 sons who hardly Hope to prevail. In a Word, to see the  
 Giddiness and Instability of many, their causeless Offences,  
 Obstinacy and Awkwardness, like a slow Fire painfully con-  
 sume our very Vitals. Surely these Things, and many more  
 such like, if God did not support us with Patience, would  
 tempt us into a Resolution to *speak no more in his Name.* *Jer. 20. 9.*  
 zedly. None receive more unworthy Treatment than faith-  
 ful Ministers. Earth and Hell are up in Arms against them.  
 They are the Song of the Drunkard, the Objects of Lam-  
 poons. The Profane and Infidels sharpen their Tongues as  
 Arrows, and shoot out bitter Words. The un sanctified Wit  
 satyrizes their serious Expressions, and *the Proud have them Psa. 119.*  
*in Derision.* None more exposed, than they, to Milconstruc-  
 tion, to ignorant and malicious Centures, and evil Reports.  
 Wicked Men contrive the most effectual Ways of destroying a  
 good Character ; *report, say they, and we will report, it. q. d.* *Jer. 20. 10.*  
 Do you tell Lies of him, and we will spread them : And  
 whatsoever is currently reported many will believe. Throw  
 a great deal of Dirt, and some of it will stick. Thus it  
 may come to pass, that the Ministers of God will lose the  
 favour of Friends ; see their Enemies increase ; and hear *all*  
*manner of Evil speke against them falsely.* They must give  
 up the prospect of Riches, worldly Preterments, and present  
 Ease ; and resolve to encounter Poverty, the scourge of  
 Tongues,

† *How's blessedness of the Righteous, Chap. 17.*

Rev. 13. 10 Tongues, and Tribulations of various Kinds. *Here is the Faith and Patience* of the Ministers of God. Moreover, even these among whom they stately Labour, do often render Evil for Good; and add to their Distresses by undutiful Conduct. If a Minister reprove an Offender, he is taken for an Enemy; and Wickedness itself cannot be Condemn'd and Censur'd, without severe Resentments from the Guilty; But there is no End of these Things. We must therefore leave them, and proceed to consider.

*Fourthly*, how the Minister of God should conduct himself. He must consider himself as *an Example to the flock*, and as such must *show himself a Pattern of good Works*. It is not enough that his Conversation be inoffensive, but it should be a lively Transcript of the positive Duties which he inculcates. Then, and only then, can he, without a Blash, recommend his Life to the Imitation of his Hearers, and say with Paul, what ye have learned, and received, and heard, and SEEN IN ME, DO. His Life and Doctrine should be of a Piece; otherwise he pulls down with one Hand, what he Builds with the other. Let him be suppos'd to speak, in the Pulpit, even with the Tongue of Angels, yet his Words will have little, or no Efficacy, if he is loose and profane in common Life. Such glaring Inconsistency tends to persuade the People, either that the Minister is an Hypocrite, or that Religion consists in orthodox Notions, and, speaking well. The World is evidently govern'd by Example more than by Precept, therefore it is of the greatest Importance, that Men of sacred Character exemplify the good Instructions they give \*

A Minister may not be frothy and vain, not a *light and treacherous Person*, nor of an haughty and insolent Behaviour; not Quarrellsome and Contentious, but Moderate in all his Actions; and Temperate in all Creature-Enjoyments:

Not

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\* That Examples have a peculiar Power above the naked Precept, to dispose us to the Practice of Holiness, may appear by considering. 1st. That they most clearly express to us the Nature of our Duties in their Subjects and sensible Effects. General Precepts form abstract Ideas of Virtue, but in Examples, Virtues are made visible, in all their Circumstances. 2d. Precepts instruct us what Things are our Duty, but Examples assure us that they are possible. When we see Men like ourselves, who are united to Flesh, and in the same Condition with us, to command their Passions, to overcome the most glorious and glittering Temptations, we are encouraged in our spiritual Warfare. 3d. Examples by a secret and lively Incentive, urge us to Imitation. We are touched in another Manner by the visible Practice of Saints, which reproaches our Defects, and obliges us to the same Zeal, than by Laws, tho' Holy and Good. *Cruden's Concordance*, at the Word Example.

*Not given to Wine, no Striker.* He must exercise a due Government over his Tongue, as well as his Hands, for 'tis required that he be *not a Brawler*. He is to teach others the *Deceit and Vanity of that Religion*, which has not force enough to *Bridle the Tongue*; but with what Courage, or Zeal, or Hope of Success, can he do so, while his own Tongue is loose and unguarded; and he conscious that his Hearers may justly say, *Physician heal thy Self?*

He should be of *good Behaviour*. \* His Department Solid, and Compos'd, Courteous and Modest, Decent and Orderly; in nothing Mean and Sordid, lest he render himself despicable. He should neither put on a morose Reservedness, nor foppish Levity; but an affable Gravity, and an inviting Distance. He must be inaccessible to none, to whom he can be Useful; and improve all Opportunities of doing Good. He should not be Niggardly, but Hospitable and Beneficent, according to his Ability; not ever use mean Ways of getting Wealth. In a Word, he should carefully avoid whatever would Dishonour his Office, or frustrate the Ends of it, and abhor to make it Truckle to base Designs: But in all Things act with such greatness of Mind, such Wisdom, Disinterestedness, and Integrity, as become his Character. And tho' he must look on himself as a *Debtor to the Wise, and to the Unwise*, and be a *Servant to the Souls* of all; yet he may not be a *Slave* to the capricious *Humours* of any, whether small or great. He should be one who has a Spirit of Government, and this must be evidenc'd (if he has a Family and Children) in *ruling his own House well, having his Children in Subjection*, not so much with Severity, as Gravity. A grave Demeanour does much better conciliate Authority, than Roughness and Austerity. On the whole, it cannot but appear, that, in order to conduct himself suitably, he needs much Prudence. Not the cunning Arts of Deceit, and carnal Policy, whereby wicked Men extenuate and cover their Sin; but Knowledge fitly to time the Performance of Duty: Not only to do what is right, but to do it well, so as his *Good may not be Evil* spoken of. He should discern *Time and Judgment*, take a narrow View of the State of Things about him, and consider the

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\* The Word *Kosmious*, in 1 Tim. 3. 2. Which is render'd, of good Behaviour; signifies Neat and Ornate, as well as Modest and Compos'd; and, is by some Interpreted of the external Habit, whence they infer, that "the Apostle, would not have a Minister to be sordid, or indecent in his Apparel," according to *Arcadius* is signifies, one adorn'd with Neatness of Manners. It is doubtless applicable both Ways, and will fully bear the Gloss I have given.

the Consequences of such an Action so circumstanc'd. Hence the Minister of God is emblematically describ'd as a living

Rev. 4. 6.

Creature *full of Eyes before and behind*; to denote among other Things, his prudent Circumspection: His Eyes are on every Side to observe Time, Place, Person, Action, and Occurrences, that he may form his Conduct accordingly. This also is the Gift of God, and *cometh down from the*

Jam. 1. 17.

*Father of Lights*. It is of unspeakable Importance; and the want of it has defeated the success of many well meant Attempts. Happy, thrice Happy is the *faithful and prudent*

Mat 24. 45

*Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!* But alas! thro' Inadvertency, in many Things we offend all. Having now briefly treated the several Heads propos'd; I proceed to the Improvement of them. And if such are the Qualifications, such the Temper and Conduct of a Minister, as aforesaid, we may infer,

James 3. 2.

Mat. 5. 13.

I. That faithful Ministers are great Blessings to Mankind. They are the *Salt of the Earth*; the Light of the World; Ambassadors of Reconciliation; Messengers of glad Tidings; the Servants of the most high God, who shew unto us the Way of Salvation. They are the Instruments which infinite Wisdom employs to maintain a sense of Religion in the World; and by them God conveys saving Blessings to perishing

and 14.

Acts 16. 7.

Sinners. Hence *how Beautiful upon the Mountains are the Feet of him that bringeth good Tidings, that publisheth Peace, that bringeth good Tidings of good, that publisheth Salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy GOD reigneth!* Pastors and Teachers, or Gospel Ministers, are no less than the Royal

Isa. 52. 7.

Gifts of Christ, *when he ascended up on high*, in Glory and Triumph. He alone has Authority to send them; and he alone can Qualify them for his Work, and prosper them in it. The whole World, without him, cannot furnish out one Minister. None but he can give such Zeal and Faithfulness, such Wisdom and Prudence, such Courage and Patience, and such Piety and Self-deniedness, as are required in them. Of so great Importance is the sacred Function.

Eph. 4. 8.

II. The Doctrine easily shews us, that many who call themselves Ministers of God, appear unworthy of that Character. How many in every Denomination of Christians, are quite unskillful in the most important Matters of their Office! They know not what will be hurtful, or what helpful to the spiritual Edification of their People: And hence they *Dawb with untemper'd Mortar*, and like ignorant Physicians, they slightly heal wounded Spirits. They say *Peace—when there is no Peace*: And in effect, persuade every one who *despises the Lord, that no Evil shall come upon him*. They themselves being carnally Secure, are un-experienc'd in the Christian's Exercises of Soul; and so are

Ezek. 13. 10

Jer. 6. 14.

Ps. 23. 17.

apt

apt to imagine, that serious and solemn Devotion is Melancholly, that spiritual Agonies and Distress are Madness, and religious Transports of Affection; Enthusiasm; as tho', to be fill'd with Love to original Beauty and Amiability, were the most fanciful and reasonless Thing in the World. How many are promoters of destructive Errors, who only speak the Fancies of their own depraved Hearts, and *not out of the Mouth of the Lord!* The Doctrines with which many entertain their People, if not false and erroneous, are but insipid, and comparatively trifling; either abstruse and unedifying Speculations, or doubtful Disputations; or at best, such as are but superficially Practical. (And would to God, that there was no reason to suspect many to be easy and unconcern'd, tho' their Labours are attended with no apparent Success, and tho' the Power of God does not accompany their Sermons, who yet Preach the Doctrines of Truth, at least in Generals. Such are satisfy'd with the *Form of Godliness*, without the *Power*: And make not the Conversion of Sinners their Study and Aim.) How many are *fierce*, unruly, and of ungovern'd Passions; and so "are like a City broken down, that hath no Walls; they are soon fir'd, upon the least Provocation. \* " How many are Proud and Petulant; and puffed up with a vain Conceit of themselves are dispersers of others. They are *Heady, High-Minded*, and will not be controll'd in any of their Humours: *Light and Treacherous*, whose veracity cannot be depended on. How many *leaders of the People*, in every Denomination, tho' more in some than others, *do cause them to err* by their wicked Examples! They are Companions of Drunkards, and walk immix'd with the most profane, not from a Design to reform them, but for the sake of Good-fellowship. They can talk of serious Things, for the space of a quarter or half an Hour, or more, once in a Week, and then shake hands with Religion until the next Sermon-Day. And what is there, (unless a black Coat, or a Gown can do it) to distinguish some of them from the vilest of Sinners? Profane Clergymen debauch the Morals of the City, or Country where they are, and *from them profaneness goes forth into all the Land.* †. In short, there is no set of Men on Earth so hurtful

Jer. 23

16.

2 Tim. 3. 4

v. 3.

v. 4.

Zeph. 3. 4

Isa. 9. 16

Jer. 23. 14

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to

\* Henry on 2 Tim. 3. 3.

† And indeed thus it is generally, when Ministers, and such as Teach others, are wicked, either in their Doctrine or Practice, they are a fountain of wickedness; Wickedness floweth from them to the whole City, Town, Parish where they are employed: And on the contrary it is observ'd, that where God gives a Place to a good Ministry,

to the Church, as wicked, erroneous and ignorant Ministers. As Mr. Henry on *Mat.* 5. 13. pertinently observes, “ a wicked Man is the worst of Creatures, a wicked Christian is the worst of Men, and a wicked Minister is the worst of Christians.” None are so severely animadverted upon by the Pen-Men of sacred Writ, as they : With what Keenness are they inveigh’d against, and mention’d with peculiar

*Isa.* 9. 15. Contempt.—*The Prophet that teaches Lies, he is the Tail.*

*Mat.* 23. Our Lord himself, who on all Occasions treated Mankind with much Mildness, Multiplies Woes, in a shocking and dreadful Manner, against the corrupt and impious Teachers of the Time. Their loose Lives harden Sinners in Iniquity, and grieve the Godly : Their Covetousness, their Sensuality, their glaring Hypocrisy and Inconsistency, brings the Office into Contempt, and makes Ministers, in general, become a Proverb in the Mouths of the Ignorant and Profane. Dreadful, very dreadful, will their Condition at last be : Nor can I but Tremble to think what a fearful Meeting with JESUS CHRIST many will have, who are his pretended Friends and Ambassadors.

Hence we might take Occasion to lament the Laxness of Discipline that prevails in some Communities. Nay, in the Protestant Churches, and none appears to take judicial Cognizance of them. They may teach the most destructive Errors, may live Impiously, and neither be authoritatively rebuk’d or depos’d, nor any proper Endeavours us’d for their Reformation.

Again, how stupid are numbers of Mankind, who can be content with almost any one for a Minister ! How dull, ignorant, and careless soever he be, yet they satisfy themselves with this, “ he can tell us more than we can do.” If he is one of their Party, he is by that alone considerably well qualify’d ; but if over and above he can Preach smoothly and regularly, it is of little Importance with them what Life he Lives, or what Efficacy his Sermons have. Yet the very same Persons would chuse the most able, and faithful Physician, or Lawyer, if either their Healths be impair’d, or their Estates in dispute : Thus they treat Religion, and their Souls, as the greatest Trifles in the World.

### III.

Ministry, Goodness, in one Degree or other, floweth from them to the whole City, Town or Parish. Tho’ all are not Converted, yet the Generality are civilized, and restrained from those gross and brutish Immoralities which other Places abound with. Ill Ministers must look for the severest Indignation of God. Others Sin and shall Die in their Sins ; but they teach others to break God’s Commandments, and have the Sins of many to answer for, who perish either by their flatteries, or loose Doctrine, or looser Lives and Examples. *Pool’s Annotations on Jer.* 23. 15.

### III. The Doctrine affords a Use of various Exhortation.

It shews us, Reverend Brethren, who are *put into the Ministry*, what abundant Cause we have to be thankful to our dear Lord and Master, who has honour'd us with so near a Relation to himself. Our SAVIOUR and our JUDGE has made us his Ambassadors! His Kindness and Condescension herein are most surprizing, considering our natural State; and hence our Advancement is itself a strong Reason, why we should be Humble and Devote. Besides, how sweet and delightful is the Part he has given us to act on the Stage of this Life! We are employ'd to speak on his behalf whom our Souls Love; and are Messengers of good Tydings to our beloved Fellow-Men. It is sweet to generous Minds to relieve the Distressed; we bring News that makes the *Hearts of the Sorrowful to leap for Joy*. We proclaim Happiness, eternal Happiness, to the Miserable; *Liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the Prison to those who are bound*. We find pleasure even in our Endeavours to persuade, much more in our prevailing with, Sinners to *yield themselves to God*. And tho' we are often repuls'd, and thence feel Grief and Discouragement, yet when our Lord Crowns our Labours with a little Success, either in comforting his People, or converting Sinners, do we not think ourselves more than repaid for all our Sorrows and Toil? Yea, we forget our Troubles *for Joy that a Soul is Born again*, and become an *Heir of Glory*. Do we not often feel our Hearts Glow with warm desires, at the very tho'ts of *saving Sinners*, and dilate with Joy, at the Prospect of succeeding therein? How sweet is it, to feel ourselves inwardly Strengthened, and Encouraged, while we speak in the Name of the Lord? And is it not exceeding pleasant to burn, when God himself kindles an heavenly Fire in our Bosoms, and we see the same Flame spreading all around us? And (tho' we are not always in such a desirable Frame, yet) must we not own that God thus favours us oftentimes; and so Manifests his Promises to be true and faithful? Now if we are the *Salt of the Earth*, it becomes us to keep up a Savour of Religion in our own Hearts, so shall we the better *make Manifest the Savour* of it to others. Rouse we up then, our languid Spirits, and shake off all slothful Despondence: Nothing is to be despair'd off since CHRIST is our Strength. Let us Charge ourselves before him to be faithful to his Interests, and act so as we may be *to him for a Name, and for a Praise, and for a Glory*.

Isa. 61. 2.

2Cor. 2. 14

Jer. 15. 1.

As for you, Dear Brother, you have doubtless many solemn Reflections on the Importance of the sacred Office, which you this Day undertake. You feel yourself infinitely unequal to the Task, and pressed in Spirit, say, with PAUL,

- 2Cor. 2. 16 *who is sufficient for these Things?* Yet, Brother, the sense of your own Insufficiency is no just Cause of Discouragement, because you know who has said, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the End.* This faithful Word has been the constant support of Godly Ministers, and has made Impotence itself to be often Courageous. Tho' you are in yourself Weak, yet you *can do all Things through CHRIST, that Strengtheth you.* Be therefore of good Courage, hoping to finish your Course with Joy, through the promised Aids of divine Grace. Let Zeal for the Glory of God, Affection to his Saints, and Compassion for perishing Sinners, Fire your Breast. Be Patient, *and hope to the End:* For however ungrateful the World be, yet you serve a kind Master, who encourages your continued Dependence on him.
- Mat. 28. 20.
- Phil. 4. 13
- 1Pet. 1. 13

This Doctrine is also improveable for Instruction and Exhortation to the People; to whom I shall, in the last Place, Address my self, and more especially to those immediately concern'd in the present Solemnity.

Brethren, when you hear the Duty of a Minister explain'd, you are ready to say, "God help poor Ministers, for they have a weighty Charge." True, indeed, they have: But think not that you are at Liberty to act as you please; No, there is a weighty Charge on you also.

God requires that with upright and affectionate Hearts you receive his Minister, as one Commission'd by him to treat with you on his Behalf. You know what Account our Lord makes of this, when he tells his Disciples, *he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* He takes the Treatment that is given to his Ministers, as given to himself. You do not, in a due Manner, receive a Prophet, unless you receive him as a Prophet: And if you profess thus to receive him, you oblige yourselves to attend his Ministrations duly and seriously; to receive the Word of God which he delivers, whether for Instruction, Consolation, or Reproof; and diligently Endeavour to profit thereby.

- Mat. 10. 40
- Luk. 10. 16
- 1Thes. 5. 12
- Moreover, you are required to Honour, and Esteem him *very highly,* \* not merely as a Gentleman, but chiefly *for*

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\* Uper 'ek perissou. The Words in the Greek carry an Emphasis, that cannot well be express'd in English, importing Esteem and Love to an Hyperbole: Their Love was to be join'd with Esteem, and Esteem with Love, and both these to abound and super-abound towards them. *Psol's Annotations* on 1Thes. 5. 12. 13.

*r his Work's sake*, as a Minister. His Work is not only very honourable, but very advantageous to you, being design'd to promote your everlasting Happiness. You are to Reverence him as a Father; for tho' in Years he be a Youth, yet his Office and Qualifications constitute him an Elder of the Church. He who is the faithful humble Ambassador of the King of King's, is eminently Great. Foreign Circumstances neither add too, nor diminish from, the Respect that is due to him as a *Steward of the Mysteries of God*. 1 Cor. 4. 1.

He is invested with Power from on high, and therefore you must *submit yourselves to him, and obey him, as having Rule over you*. For "the Office, tho' not Magisterial, yet is truly Authoritative. It is not an implicit Obedience, nor absolute Submission, that is here requir'd, but only so far as is agreeable to the Mind and Will of God revealed in his Word; yet it is truly Obedience and Submission, and that not only to God, but to the Authority of the Ministerial Office, which is of God. †" You must submit to be taught by him, and not think yourselves too Wise or Great to learn from him. You are also obliged to submit to such Censures as your faults may deserve, and not to think he is your Enemy, because he sometimes tells you a severe and mortifying Truth: For he is oblig'd, as he will Answer it at his Peril, not to sooth or flatter you in Sin. Sometimes Offenders expect that Ministers will favour them, and be partial, on the score of Friendship, and to avoid their Resentments: It is a foolish Prejudice: We may not, dare not, act so. It is our peculiar Burthen, that we must needs be sometimes severe in censuring those whom we Love, and who Love us; and so venture to incur their highest Displeasure. Yet they may persuade themselves, that Ministers are Men; that they are not Enemies to their own Peace and Ease and Reputation; and that they as little delight to displease their Friends as others, could they avoid it in consistency with their Duty.

Again, you cannot but judge, that, since Ministers have such a weighty Charge about the Affairs of Religion, it is very hard if they are also perplex'd with the Cares of this Life. They are under the same Ties as others to provide for the support of their Families; yet have not Liberty or Opportunity to use the same Means as others can. But since

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† Henry on Heb. 13. 17.

1 Cor. 9. 11 since they sow unto you *Spiritual Things*, is it a GREAT THING if they should reap your carnal Things? Tho' there is no Proportion in Value, between what is sow'd and what is reap'd, yet the Apostle's Words imply, that some look on it as a *Great Thing* that Ministers shou'd partake of their carnal Things: And some are only well pleas'd, when they can serve God with what Costs them nought. But God, who knows the weight and Difficulty of the Work, has not left it to the People's Liberty, whether they will maintain his Ministers or not, but has positively ordain'd, that they who preach the Gospel, should Live of the Gospel. Does God take care that the Ox should not be Muzzled that treadeth out the Corn? And can any imagine, that he would neglect the Labourers of his own Vineyard? No. He knows that the Labourer is worthy of his Hire; and they who withhold it, in this Case, are Chargeable with the Crime of Sacrilege. Ye have Robbed me, says GOD, in Tythes and Offerings. Hence appears, that Ministers justly Claim a Maintenance, not as a Gift, but as a Debt. They ought to be Exemplary in Charity to the Poor, and given to Hospitality; but how can they be either, without a sufficient Support: Double Honour, say good Commentators, is Reverence and Maintenance. The Expression intimates that the support shou'd be Honourable: For tho' Ministers are not to Live in a gorgeous Manner, yet they shou'd be above Contempt. Think not within yourselves, that this is a selfish Doctrine; since you must own it is the express Mind of God: And tho' others may be influenc'd by covetous Motives, that which makes it grievous to a faithful Minister to be straitned by the Narrowness of his People, is, that it tends to hinder him in his Great Work.

Therefore, Brethren, consider him that is over you in the Lord, and Admonishes you.—Consider, you are his Care; for you he Studies, for you he Prays, and for your sakes he Spends and is Spent. You are his Joy in Life, and his Crown in the Day of the Lord. And it is partly in your Power to lighten his Burthen, and sweeten his Life. You can prevent his being necessarily encumber'd with the perplexing Cares of this Life; and you can comfort his Soul, by your devout Attendance on the Ordinances of God, and diligent Endeavours to profit by them. Your Care, to avoid scandalous Crimes, and to adorn the Doctrine of God your Saviour; your dutiful Demeanour, and ready Subjection to the due Order and Discipline of the Church; your peaceful Dispositions towards each other, and Industry to promote one another's Edification; will greatly contribute to prevent

prevent his Discouragements, and also encrease his Joy. *If there be therefore any Consolation in CHRIST, if any Comfort Phil. 2. 1. of Love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfil ye his Joy, that ye be like Minded, having the same Love, being of one accord, of one Mind.*

F I N I S.



E R R A T A.

**P**Age 3. for weighed, read weighted. Page 12. for forsake, read forfake. Page 13. for, preach to faithfulness, read preach to faintness. Page 18. after these Words, in some Communities, add, of Christians.