

S E R M O N

Preached at the

O R D I N A T I O N

Of the Reverend

Mr. Isaac Foster,

At STAFFORD Second Society,

In the Colony of C O N N E C T I C U T :

On the 31st Day of Otober, 1764.

By the Reverend

NATHANIEL WHITAKER, A. M.

Pastor of the Church of Christ at Chelsey, in Norwich.

- “ To the one we are a favour of death unto death, and
“ to the other a favour life unto life. And who is
“ sufficient for these things ?”
“ For we are not ~~as~~ many, which corrupt the word of
“ God : But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the
“ sight of God speak we in Christ.”
“ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, ~~as the~~
“ God did beseech you by us we pray you, in
“ Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

P A U L.

H A R T F O R D :

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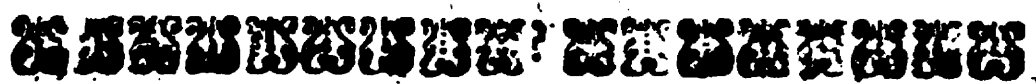
AT a Meeting of the In-
habitants of the second
Society in *Stafford*, on
the 24th of December,
1764.

VOTED, *That Capt. SAMUEL DAVIS,*
return the Thanks of this Society to the Re-
verend NATHANIEL WHITAKER, of Nor-
wich, for his Sermon delivered at the Ordina-
sion of the Reverend ISAAC FOSTER, on
the 31st of October last ; and request a Copy
thereof, that it may be printed.

A true Copy of Record,

Examined by

JOSHUA FULLER, Society Clerk.



COLOSSIANS IV. 17.

“ And say unto Archippus, take heed to
“ the ministry which thou hast received
“ in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. ”

THE ministerial work, of all other employments in life, is the most *sacred and important*: The most *sacred*, as it is bounded, guarded and inclosed by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Head of the church, and King in Zion, in a manner in which no other calling is; even so that there is not, neither can be, any such work undertaken, nor any of its peculiar parts performed, but only in consequence of special order and command from Christ. It is so sacred, that none may or can, *de jure*, of right, tho’ many do, *de facto*, in fact, attempt this work, or the performance of any of the peculiar parts of it, but such only as receive it of the Lord Jesus, in the way, and according to the order he hath appointed and instituted in the gospel. And as this work is sacred, so are they who are called to it; being consecrated and set apart, by the order of Christ, to be devoted to this work, as really and truly as were the high priests under

the law ; and are therefore *holy persons*, i. e. consecrated and set apart for the service of God, in his house or church. They are holy in their character, calling, and office, and therefore should be holy in their hearts and lives.

As this work is most *sacred*, so it is most important, as it hath the great and glorious truths of God, the kingdom of Christ in this world, and the concerns and interests of the souls and bodies of men *for an intire eternity*, for the *subject matter* of it ; and as its consequences reach to the awful day of final accounts, and it will then be shewn to have been the grand instituted means for the regulation of the affairs of Christ's kingdom in this world.

And as this work is of the utmost importance with regard to the world of mankind in general ; so the right discharge of it, is of the greatest moment with regard to the ministers of Christ in particular, to whom this work and office is committed : For they have not only the same warfare to go thro' which other Christians in common have, but also all those difficulties to encounter, which are peculiar to their office as ministers of the Lord Jesus : And as they shall be found faithful or unfaithful in this work, so must it last with them forever.

Hence

Hence appears the propriety of the exhortation to the Colossians, which we have in our text, wherein the apostle requires them, not to undertake the ministry themselves; but to stir up and excite Archippus, their minister, to the careful and faithful discharge of the ministry he had received *in or of* the Lord: And this they ought to do, not by authoritative commands; but by kind and dutiful excitements, and friendly exhortations. This was necessary for Archippus, and is so for all the ministers of the word as it tends to quicken them to a more diligent attendance on their great work, and excite them to shake off all indolence, worldliness and vanity, to which the ministers of Christ are liable, as well as others. It is of noble and excellent use to the ministers of the Lord Jesus, to be favour'd with a people whose hearts are truly set to strengthen their hands and encourage their hearts in their great work; and who wish to see it *well and carefully* performed and fulfilled, and who are hence led to excite those who are set over them in the Lord, to the faithful discharge of the trust reposed in them: For this necessarily supposes that the people are ready and willing to submit to their minister *as an officer* of Christ; and also to the thorough and faithful discharge of his office among them,

while

while he *teaches, corrects, reproveth, admonishes,* and *instructs* them in the things which concern their eternal salvation.

Most people are ready enough to say to their minister, *this* is right, and *that* is wrong ; *this* you ought to preach and teach, and *that* you should let alone ; and every one perhaps will prescribe to his minister, a method of preaching and conduct which will suit his own fancy, and censure and condemn him if he will not conform to his peculiar notions : But few, alas, are zealously engaged to have their ministers careful to fulfil the ministry they have received of the Lord, and to search the wounds sin hath made, by bringing the truth of the law and gospel home to the conscience. Men in general, are much more concerned to bring ministers to preach and conduct agreeable to their proud hearts, corrupt, vain and impure lusts and fancies, than to have them keep close to the ministry they have received of the Lord, and preach and conduct agreeable to the great rule of it, even the sacred scriptures. These words therefore strongly imply, that the people who say to their ministers, as they are here directed, are disposed to submit to them as officers of Christ, and also to their administrations, and the exercise of their office and work.

Two things are observable in the text, and naturally arise out of it, L. That

I. That it is of the highest moment to both minister and people, that he take heed to the ministry he hath received of the Lord, that he fulfil it.

II. It is the duty of a people to excite and quicken their minister, by all proper means, to the faithful discharge of his office.

I. That it is of the highest moment to both minister and people, that he take heed to the ministry he hath received of the Lord, that he fulfil it.

That I may illustrate and confirm this doctrine, and discover the weight and importance of it, I will endeavour to shew,

1. What it is to fulfil this ministry.

2. Consider the means directed to in order to fulfil it.

3. Look into the motives exciting to this.

1. What is it to fulfil this ministry?

This I shall consider both negatively and positively.

Neg. 1. To fulfil the ministry which we have received of the Lord, does not suppose, nor require that we secure the success of it. This is a task which God never imposed on any of his ambassadors: Yea, his faithful ministers are sometimes sent with a design quite opposite, *eventually* to harden the hearts and blind the minds of sinners. This was
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the case with Isaiah : Isaiah vi 9, 10. *And he said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not ; and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the hearts of this people fat, and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes : lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed.* In consequence of this, we find him complaining, chap. liii. 1. *Who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?* Very few received the message of God, bro't them by this prophet, tho' the most evangelical of any who lived under that dispensation. Yea, Christ him self complains of the want of success ; Isa. xxxlix. 4. *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain.* And as it was foretold of him in this prophesy, so it fell out, in fact, when he came upon the stage, and entered on his public ministry : For tho' multitudes followed him, yet few it is evident believed on him savingly. Some followed him for the loaves ; others in hopes of great honor in his kingdom, which they fancied would be earthly, and some out of curiosity, of seeing the miracles he wrought ; but few, very few followed him from true faith and love : And so few were his true disciples, that when they came to understand the end for which he came into the world,

world, and he had told them that he was *the bread of life* and the *sacrifice for the sins of men*, which he treated of largely in the vith of John, and so cutoff all their hopes of being constantly feed by miracles, and of his being a temporal prince; they replied *these are hard sayings, who can bear them?* and from that time many went back and walked no more with him. There was such a withdrawing of his followers, on account of this sermon, that he said, even to his own disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, *will ye also go away?* Christ had far less success than his apostles, tho' *he spake as never man spake*. And many of God's faithful ministers have reason to complain with their divine Master, that *they labour in vain, and spend their strength for naught*. It is therefore very cruel for a people to complain of and condemn their minister, because he is not successful. The good seed of the word is often sown, and yet it falls by the way-side, among thorns and on stoney ground, and so can bring forth no fruit. The fault does not lie in the sower, but in the ground that receives it.

2. Neither does this suppose, that the ministers of Christ can perform every part of their ministry perfectly, and without the least defect: For, although every defect herein is a sin, and culpable before God, and requires

renewed application to the blood of Christ for pardon and strength for time to come; yet ministers being men of like passions, infirmities and corruptions as others, their people are to expect no more of them, but that *in simplicity and godly sincerity*, they discharge the trust reposed in them; and this, through the blood of Christ, will be matter of rejoicing and comfort to them, even though they come short of perfection in many, yea in all the parts of their work, as all do.

Positively, in general. To fulfil the ministry is to perform all the parts of it with *care, diligence, faithfulness and perseverance*. A *careless, idle, unfaithful* minister, can never be persevering in his work. All these things must be united to the faithful discharge of the ministry. But I shall speak more particularly to the special duties which belong to this work, under the next head, to which I now come, and shall,

2. Consider the means directed to, in order to fulfil this ministry.

Our text presents us with a very principal means, and which is often mentioned in scripture on this occasion; *Take heed to the ministry*. The original word signifies the most *careful, diligent, faithful and thorough* inspection or care. It is the same word which our Saviour so often useth to guard his followers against

against false christs, false prophets and false doctrines, which are most fatal to the well-being of his church and kingdom, and to the everlasting salvation of men. It therefore requires the greatest *care, diligence faithfulness* and *perseverance* in this great work, and this is the most likely means in order to fulfil this ministry.

In this place it may be proper to observe some of those things to which ministers must take heed. You must not expect a detail of every branch of the ministerial work. I can only touch on some of the most important things, and endeavour to treat them practically as I go along: And here two chief objects of care present themselves to view.

1. Ministers must take heed to themselves.

2. They must take heed to the flock over which they are. This is agreeable to the apostle's method of distribution in Acts xx. 28.

1. Ministers must *take heed* to themselves :

For if they regard not themselves as the ministers of Christ, how can they regard the church as Christ's flock, or expect people to regard them as Christ's ambassadors. Particularly,

1. Ministers must *take heed* that they have the saving grace of God in their own souls,

and that they be acquainted with the power and effectual working of that gospel which they preach to others. Awful will it be for those, who proclaim the necessity of a Saviour to others, and yet remain strangers to him in their hearts, neglect him, and never obtain an interest in his salvation. The ministers of Christ should take heed, lest they famish themselves, while they prepare food for others, and lest while they call others to feast on the rich dainties of the glorious gospel, and to eat the *bread of life* which came down from heaven, they themselves starve in the midst of plenty. The promise that *those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever*, Dan. xii. 3. is only on the supposition that they are turned themselves. Their own sincerity *in the faith*, is the condition of their glory, simply considered; though their greater ministerial labours, are the condition of the promise of an increase in glory. It is to be feared that many ministers have warned others to avoid those ways in which they themselves have walked, and that hell, to which they have been hastening; and that many preachers are now in hell, who have a thousand times warned others of their danger, and called on them to use their utmost diligence and care to escape it. God will not save men,
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for offering salvation to others, while they refuse it themselves : No, no ; God never saved any man because he was a minister, and consecrated to him and his service ; but because he was a converted, sanctified, justified man ; and so a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus, and diligent in his ministerial work.

Ministers should therefore, first of all, take heed to themselves that they believe that which they so often persuade others to believe ; that they receive, embrace and entertain that Christ, and that Spirit which they offer to others ; that they love, delight in, and take up satisfied, with that God for their portion and happiness, whose glorious character they are exhibiting to the view of sinners, in every sermon. How sad will it be, if any of us who are in this sacred employment, should be found, at last, to be *heart-enemies* to, and *baters* of that glorious, amiable and eternal BEING, whom we have so often described as *the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely* ; and to fall in love with *whom* we have so often urged and persuaded others ? Will not all the arguments and motives with which we have been moving and persuading others to believe in, obey and love God, and his dear Son, be as *arrows* of everlasting wrath to our own souls forever, if this should be our unhappy case ? May God grant that
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while we preach to others, we ourselves may not be *cast away*.—O, let us take heed to our own souls, and see to it that we secure an interest in Christ.

2. Ministers must also *take heed*, to avoid those sins which they preach against in others, lest they be guilty of that which they daily condemn. How can a minister magnify God, while he does as much to dishonor him as others? Can he set Christ on his throne of government, while he contemns him by rebelling against him? Can he proclaim the laws of God, and warn all to obey them at their eternal peril, and he himself go on to break them? How absurd and inconsistent is it to tell men of the evil of sin, and paint the hateful nature of *pride, wrath, strife, backbiting, sensuality, and worldliness*, while we live in the practice of these very abominations? If sin is such an evil and dangerous thing, as we constantly declare; surely we should not live in it, or venture on it. If God will take vengeance on all sin, and stubborn sinners, as we constantly preach, surely we ought ourselves to fear his threatenings. If we go on to cry down sin, and yet at the same time live in the practice of it, however we may pretend to believe what we ourselves say, we may be sure our people will never believe we are in earnest. Let us hear what
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the Holy Ghost saith in this case. Rom. ii. 21. *Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest, a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abboresť idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? — O, how absurd is this! And what is the consequence of such conduct? Only read the next verse and you will see: For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. The profane, and scoffers at religion, will reproach the name of God and Christ, and be hardened in their sin and rebellion by such conduct in the ministers of the word. O! with what earnest carefulness then should they labour, that they do not become the servants of sin, and bow down to it themselves, while they endeavour to destroy, and pull it down in others. O! 'tis much easier to cry out against sin, to give it hard names, &c. than heartily to hate and forsake it: The first is our honor, and the business of our profession and calling; the last is mortifying, and flesh-killing, and often reproachful among men.*

3. He that would fulfil the ministry he hath received of the Lord Jesus, must take heed

heed to his *practice*, to his life and conversation, that he walk in the path towards heaven, and tread in the steps of the holy Jesus. This is a counter part to what was just said. It is not enough that a minister avoid the sins which others practise, but he must practise the duties which others avoid, and by his life and conduct, recommend to others the doctrine he preacheth. His life must be such a comment on his doctrine, as to convince others, by his practice, that he believes the awful and glorious things he sets before them in his publick preaching. Nothing hath a more convincing force, than a *practical* comment on the doctrines of the gospel : This will always, either convince the careful observers, and make them submit to the truth which is thus held to view ; or cause their enmity to rise and provoke them to persecute those, who, by holding the light which they hate, before their consciences, become the instruments of their uneasiness, and torment them, by exciting their own consciences to be their accusers ; and this especially will be the case, when such a holy life is accompanied with the plain and pungent preaching of those blessed truths on which the life is formed.

If it is absurd to cry out against sin, and yet live in the practice of it ; is it not equally

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ly so to extol and speak honorably of the ways of wisdom, and yet neglect them? To describe the beauties and infinite glories of God and Christ, and not live under the powerful, attractive influence of those glories? To propound the blessedness and delights of communion with, and love to him, and live as insensible and indifferent as any? To speak of the happiness and glory of heaven, and yet act as though our hearts were not there? Surely we can never believe those glorious truths which we preach to others, while we live inattentive to, uninfluenced and unaffected by them. If God is an all-sufficient portion, and a *soul-filling, satisfying* happiness; why are we not charmed with, and *swallowed up in him*? and why are we so attached to the world and its pleasures, and so overborne with trials and afflictions, as though our ALL depended on the present life? and how shall we dare, or rather *bear* to forsake him, for the enjoyment of any thing else: and if he be not, why do we so highly commend him to our hearers? If Christ is so precious as we tell others, why do we not constantly esteem, honor, love and obey him, and spend and be spent for him? And if he is not, why do we so extol and recommend him? If the glories of heaven are so ravishing, and its blessedness so complete, why are

not our souls enamoured therewith, and if not, why do we propound them to others, as worthy their most earnest pursuit? In a word; that minister is a lump of absurdity, who preaches the glorious gospel, and is not in some holy flame and vigour for God and heaven. But alas, how absurd and inconsistent are the best, and how far short do they come in this holy and heavenly life!

4. He that would fulfil the ministry he hath received of the Lord Jesus, must take heed to his doctrine, that it be according to godliness; that it be founded in the truth of the holy bible, which he must make the daily man of his counsel, and the object of his most careful attention and study. Thence he must draw the character of the true God as he is distinguished from all idols and imaginary notions of him, and learn that he is God and Lord of all. Thence he must learn the fall and ruin, the sinfulness and inability of man, and his only remedy and recovery by the Lord Jesus Christ, through faith in his blood, and by the imputation of his righteousness for justification before God. Thence he must draw the character of the Son of God, and there learn the nature and end of his offices, and their suitableness to our manifold necessities; and there he must learn the office of the Holy Ghost, and the nature

of his divine operations, especially in the conviction, conversion and sanctification of sinners. Here also he must discover *errors*, and the means and manner of detecting them: And having learnt all these things, and many more of vast importance in the religion of Christ, he must be careful to bring these glorious truths to the ears of his people so as to give them the fairest advantage to attract their hearts, and engage them in the pursuit of God and Christ, the chief good, *whom to know is eternal life*; and also to represent the by-paths to ruin, in their own proper light.

It is not enough that a minister barely preach the truth, i. e. that he preach sound doctrine that can't be gainsaid, and so point out the way to heaven; but he must also discover the paths to death and hell, some of which lie so near the way to heaven, that we read of some who shall come & knock at heaven's door, saying *Lord, Lord, open to us*, who yet shall never enter. And as there are so many ways to hell, which bear the name of the way to heaven, and have in many things a great seeming resemblance thereto, it is the duty of the ministers of the Lord Jesus to distinguish well, and carefully to lead the blind in the right way, and guard them against every by-path.

There is a strong attachment in the hearts of men to the ways of error, and especially to those errors which eat out the *life of godliness*, and blind the conscience with vain hopes of heaven. The reason of this is very obvious: Conscience, when in any measure awakened, seeks for healing and relief; and as the true blood of sprinkling is out of the sight of natural men; so they betake themselves to methods of cure, which God never prescribed, and drink in error like water; and the greater their fears of hell are, the more earnest are they for a hope of heaven; and hence, like drowning men, they catch at every straw, and will not let go their errors which are the support of their vain hopes. Now it is evident that they are in a most fatal situation, while this is their case, as such hopes shut their eyes against the light, and their ears against conviction of their state, and so seal them up under more dreadful hardness of heart; yet fatal as this situation is, they love to be indulged in it; hence their language is the same with that of Israel, *Isaiah xxx, 10. They say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.* It is not to be supposed, that these words were the express language of Israel; common sense and modesty would have kept them from

from exposing their ignorance and wickedness in such a bare-faced manner ; and therefore this is but the language of their opposition to the convincing, plain preaching of the prophet, which tended to discover their sins and point out their errors. The prophet is ordered to go, *and write it in a book, and note it in a table before them, that it may be for time to come for ever and ever.* And what was he to write ? Why, *That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not bear the law of the Lord : That say to the seers, see not, &c.* Those therefore, who will not hear the law of the Lord are such *rebellious children as say to the seers see not, &c.* and the reason of all this, is given by Christ, John iii. 19, 20. — *Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* Hence it is frequently urged on ministers *to preach truth*, i. e. as contrasted with preaching against error, and not meddle with, nor touch on errors, lest this should discourage & prejudice men against religion and the operation of the **Holy Spirit**, and also against the preacher. I don't speak this by conjecture, but from what is mournfully prevailing at this day ; having been repeatedly urged even by zealous pretenders to religion,

religion, not to treat on *spiritual wickednesses*, nor point out the fatal mistakes, about the experimental part of religion, which immortal souls run into, as a point too tender and delicate to be meddled with, and as tending to disaffect men to religion, and irritate their minds against the preacher. Just as though *error* were such a delicate thing, as always to be cloathed with a silk mantle, and never exposed to view, least the hearts of men should sicken at the sight; and fall out, either with themselves or the discoverer. But I venture to affirm boldly, and I am sure I have the *oracles of truth* for my voucher, that he who takes heed to fulfil the ministry, will not avoid detecting this *delicate thing*, lay it open to view, and endeavour to make men aware and afraid of those *by-paths* to hell, which ly close by, and much resemble the way to heaven, and will not fail to hold the light before their eyes, thro' fear that they will hate it, and not come to it, least their deeds should be reprov'd; or thro' fear of their hatred of him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, his prophets and apostles, all unite in detecting errors, and leading people to see wherein they mistook error for truth; and especially those *errors* which have the greatest resemblance to truth; and such as are the foundation for high and
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towering hopes of heaven, where faith and love were wanting. I appeal to all the doctrinal and practical parts of the bible, for proof of this, especially to Christ's sermon on the mount. I have never made a critical enquiry, or a comparison in the case; but when it shall be made by any, I doubt not but it will appear, that our Lord had said five times as much in order to detect the vain pretensions, confident hopes, and high self-esteem which men run into, and please themselves with, in the affairs of salvation, as he hath said to beat down open profaneness and vice; and his apostles followed his example; and this might be the reason, viz. Because vice and profaneness never can pretend to favour with God or hopes of heaven, but lies open and exposed to reproof and condemnation by the law; while such spiritual deceits and wickedness, are so like a true religion, as to be often found joined with, and the supports of a *soul killing hope* of heaven.

Now he that is careful to fulfil the ministry, must take heed to preach as Christ & his apostles did, who are the most perfect patterns of gospel preaching; in doing which he may be confident that he will be approved of God. I own the work of detecting and reproofing errors, requires much divine skill and prudence, both as to the time and manner: and
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this is one thing a minister must take heed to, least his manner of reproof frustrate the design of the reproof; but this work must not be omitted least the blood of souls be found in our skirts; and we found unfaithful to the trust reposed in us, with which trust we receive that solemn charge, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ—reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.* Those words of God to the prophet in Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8. may justly strike every minister into blank confusion, who, through fear of the frowns, or in hopes of the love and esteem of men, shuns to cry aloud and shew people their transgressions, sins and errors. Hear what God saith to Ezekiel in this case; *So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt bear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thine hand.* O that God may save his ministers from blood-guiltiness!

I may here add; That a minister must also take heed to his doctrine in adapting and suiting it to the consciences of men. It is not enough that he preach TRUTH, this he
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may do, and yet be a very unprofitable preacher, and very little instructive, and still less quickening & convincing. Every truth in the bible hath its proper weight and importance; but to dwell on *nice* and *curious* speculations, which do not affect the power of godliness, or but remotely; to search out the genealogy of Melchisedech, and spend almost whole sermons in vain attempts to shew who he was; and in the curious search after the *Nethenims* or the particular modle of Solomon's temple: while immortal souls are hanging over a *burning, eternal* hell, and every moment are liable to fall into it; seem too trifling to employ the time and study of a minister of Christ, and especially to entertain an auditory, the most of whom are probably posting down to death, and may be past hope before another season and opportunity of hearing. O did ministers always see and feel the importance of plucking sinners speedily out of the jaws of eternal death, how would they study to form all their sermons to enlighten and awaken the consciences of men in the most soul-interesting truths, & to guide them safe to the city of refuge.

5. He that would fulfil the ministry, must take heed that he be not unfit and unqualified for so great and arduous an employment. — I know it may be asked, *Who is sufficient.*

for these things ? And indeed it is hard to give in answer : but notwithstanding all this, there is a degree of fitness absolutely necessary for this work, without which it can never be either acceptably or comfortably performed. It may also be asked ; Is any man a proper judge of his own fitness for this work ? This is more easily answered from the unerring word of truth ; for *no man may take this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*, Heb. v. 4. And altho' this text hath a special respect to Christ, yet it is true with regard to all gospel ministers. For as none might take the high priest-hood on himself, but he that was called to it by the same ceremonies and ordinances by which Aaron was invested with it. *a* So none may,
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a In this text, the apostle lays it down as a maxim, which holds true in all cases, that *No man taketh this honour to himself but he that is called of God*. And Aaron's call is mentioned only for an example in this case, and not as a parallel with Christ's call ; for they differ widely in many respects, as (1) Aaron was made an high-priest without an oath ; but Christ with an oath ; chap. vii. 20, 21. (2) Aaron was of the tribe of Levi ; and this was essential to his office ; but Christ was of Judah ; v. 9. 10—13, 14. (3) Aaron was made a priest *after the law of a carnal command*, i. e. in a mediate, instituted way, by the rites which God appointed for the introduction of all succeeding high priests ; but Christ's call was *after the power of an endless life*, like to that of Melchisedech, which was not in an instituted way, but
immediate,

of his own will, enter on this work of the holy ministry, but such as are called according to the order, appointment and institution of Jesus Christ, the only king in his church, who only hath the power to appoint offices in his kingdom. and the manner in which men shall be invested with them. This affair Christ hath committed to his ministers, and not to any man, or number of Men besides ; and therefore they are to judge of the *fitness* and *unfitness* of men for this work, and authorize and appoint them to it. In confirmation of this assertion, see 1 Tim. v. 22.

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immediate, for aught that appears, even as Christ's most certainly was ; for the apostle having mentioned the aforesaid maxim, applies it to Christ, ver. 5, 6. *So Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high priest ; but he that said unto him, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. — Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedech* Hence learn,

1. That Christ the Son of God, could not be made an high-priest, but by the appointment of his Father.
2. That Christ was called immediately by God.
3. That none may, or can lawfully undertake any office or work in the church of God, which is not common to all Christians, without an *immediate* or *mediate* call of God ; and they who do, transgress against this rule ; *For NO man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God* : Neither Christ nor Aaron, nor any other man : for surely if Christ might not take this honour to himself without call, no man besides may. Christ had his office only by the Father's appointment ; and surely no man can go beyond him.

Lay hands, i. e. in ordination, suddenly on no man ; be not partaker of other men's sins, i. e. by admitting those into the ministry, who are unqualified for it ; and 2 Tim. ii. 2. And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. These scriptures plainly shew, that no man may judge of his own fitness for this work, so as to be approved on his own judgment ; and also that none are to judge, who are *faithful and able to teach others*, but *Timothy*, or the *ministers* who have received these things, in order to commit them to such as they shall judge faithful and able to teach, and to such they are bound to commit these high and important things.

A plainer intimation of the will of God, we can't desire in any case, if nothing more to the same purpose could be found in the scripture ; but much more might be brought for proof of this : And since there is not the least evidence from scripture, of any person's performing or being ordered to perform this sacred and solemn work of judging of men's qualifications for the gospel-ministry, and introducing them into it ; since I say, this is the case, the point is fixed and established, *that none are, by Christ, entrusted herewith but only the ministers of the word.* Indeed if
any

any scripture can be adduced which shews, either *precept* or *example* for the ordination of gospel ministers, by any other men than ministers; such evidence ought to be regarded; but if there can no such text be found, (and I am very confident there cannot; and it would be but fair and reasonable for those who maintain lay-ordination, to point it out, if they know of any) then such a practice must be unscriptural, uninstituted, and a mere *will-worship*, which never can be acceptable to God, nor will it be owned by him at last: For whatever is done in the worship of God without scripture warrant, is mere will worship, and forbid by God. *b*

But

b If what is here observed be true, we may be able by it to discover how far that pious and polite author, Dr. Watts, is consistent with truth in his *rational foundation of a christian church* Sect. iii 7. " though the
 " people in the untainted ages of the church must al-
 " ways chuse their own officers, and perhaps, in some
 " uncommon cases, may ordain them alone; yet since
 " in all the rules, directions, and examples, which we
 " have in the New-Testament, about the ordination and
 " mission of new officers, there is mention made of some
 " superior person or persons, apostles or evangelists,
 " elders, prophets or teachers, appointing or ordaining
 " them, or praying for them, or conferring gifts on them,
 " or committing the gospel to them, or laying hands
 " on them - and since there is not any one appointment,
 " mission, or ordination, either of deacons or ministers,
 " that I know of, in the New-Testament, without
 some

But altho' it is the peculiar province of the ministers of the gospel, to judge of men's qualifications, in order to their introduction to this work, and their being intrusted, by a solemn commitment, with the mysteries of God; yet those who are introduced, are not to set down satisfied, as tho' now they were fit enough, and so to indulge themselves: No, they

“ some one or more of these things, I am ready to think
 “ this might be so far an example to us, as that we
 “ should not too easily and readily encourage the or-
 “ dinations of new ministers, to be performed totally
 “ and merely by the people, without some person or
 “ persons of superior characters, i. e. bishops or elders
 “ —except only, as was said before, in cases of such
 “ necessity —” But why does the Doctor say, “ That
 ordination should not be performed *merely* and *totally* by
 the people? ” since he hath not given us one instance
 from scripture, of an ordination in which the people
 had *any hand at all*, neither can any such instance be
 shewn. But above all, it is very *extraordinary* in him to
 say, “ That perhaps the people, in some uncommon
 cases may ordain their officers alone; ” and yet in the
 same breath assert, That “ in all the rules, directions,
 “ and examples, which we have in the New Testament,
 “ about the ordination and mission of new officers, there
 “ were some superior persons, apostles, evangelists, el-
 “ ders, &c ” Here we have that learned divine free-
 ly owning in the most express manner, tho' it is direct-
 ly against the principle he would establish, that there
 is neither precedent nor precept in scripture, for any
 one ordination, either of the deacons or ministers, per-
 formed alone by the people; and yet maintaining the
 necessity

they must give themselves to reading, to meditation and prayer, that their profiting may appear to all. Any one who considers this work aright, will be ready to cry out, *And who is sufficient for these things?* The fitness for this work is very partial in the best, and they have great need of diligence to improve the talent they

necessity and lawfulness of mere lay-ordination in some uncommon cases. But I ask, by what law does this become lawful? Not by any law left by Christ in his word, as the Doctor owns; but by a law invented and made by men to institute a new kind of ordination; at least to regulate one of the most solemn and sacred ordinances in the church of Christ. And truly, if the Doctor's title to the v. sect. of this treatise be admitted for truth, viz. "Where revelation is silent, reason must direct," I can't see why we may not make many more laws in the church of Christ; nor why every one hath not a right to make laws according to his own reason, if he is but careful to make such as are not hinted at in revelation, and about which it is silent. Now on this foot, how easily may at least one half of the solemn trumpery of the church of Rome be introduced, such as, bowing toward the east, the cross in baptism, &c. &c. about which revelation is intirely silent, and therefore they are to be instituted by reason, which, it seems, may help us along, where revelation leaves us. I beg leave to put this plain, old fashion question, What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? He who knows his catechism can answer this. It seems to me a sad thing that a divine of such real worth, learning and singular piety, should, by such an inadvertant turn, undermine the sacred scriptures, and represent them, tho' without design, as an insufficient rule.

they have received. Let us therefore take heed, that we rest not in the judgment of others, but endeavour, by a faithful application, to the business to which we are called, to approve ourselves to our final Judge.

() what qualifications are necessary for those who have such a charge on them as we have ! How many are the difficulties in divinity, and even about the fundamentals, that must be known and opened ? How many duties to be done, in which we and others may miscarry, if we are not well acquainted with the matter, manner, end and circumstances of them ? How many sins to be avoided ? which can't be done without knowledge and fore-sight. How many difficult cases of conscience to solve ? How strong, and how subtle the opposition we have to meet with, from the hearts of men ? And how many strongholds of sin and delusion to beat down, which men will find means to build up again, and so frustrate all our labour and pains. We can't break down the groundless hopes and false peace of men ; but they will find a hundred shifts and seeming reasons to build them up again, and many pretended friends to assist them in it, who will have many opportunities with them, where we can scarce have one.

And can such, and so much work as this
be

be done by men who are *raw*, ignorant and unqualified ! This is enough to make the *ablest* to shudder ; and how then shall children in knowledge undertake it !

II. Ministers must take heed to the flock.

Every minister of Christ is an officer in the universal church, and bears relation first and principally to this ; and therefore hath a kind of inspection over the church of God in any, in all places where he hath opportunity to exercise his office. But altho' this is so, yet a minister may be a special bishop or overseer of a particular church committed to his charge, and which he hath taken the oversight of. This charge and oversight, as it respects that particular people more than others, is founded in the mutual agreement or covenant between the minister and people ; and binds so long, and no longer, than the minister's usefulness, and people's edification are attainable by it. And while a minister hath this charge, he is bound to take heed to that flock, more especially, over which he is set. And there are several things which he ought to take special heed to, with regard to them, which I shall but just glance on.

1. The first part of the work of a settled pastor is, to bring nominal christians ^c to be
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found

^c By nominal Christians I mean, all who are in the visible church by baptism. Tho' this is his chief business, he may not neglect others.

found in the faith, and to a hearty close with Christ, by shewing them the insufficiency of a bare profession to save them, and of all the outward performances in religion, however exactly they agree with the word as to their matter and visible form, and so leading them to see the false grounds on which their hopes are built, and also by undermining their false notions of experiences, which tend to fix them on a false bottom as fatally as a mistaken dependence on the external forms of religion : he must endeavour to set their sins and danger before them, and cut them off from every hope in themselves ; and by discovering the righteousness of God, cut off their attempts to establish their own righteousness, that being *put up to the faith* they may *submit to the righteousness of God*. Those who are dead in sin and are under the curse of God's law, do, of all others demand our pity and compassion. The father's pity is most sensible towards his dying child ; and spiritual fathers should be most tenderly touched for those of their family, who are under the soul-killing plague of sin, and must be past all hope of recovery, unless they have speedy relief ; and that which renders their case the more sad is, their insensibility of their danger. It is therefore a great part of a minister's work to preach the law, by which

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is the knowledge of sin, in order to awaken the sleepy consciences of sinners, and lead them to see their danger and helplessness, that they may be bro't to depend on the merit and righteousness of Christ alone for pardon and acceptance with God.

2. Our next care must be to build up those who are brought to a saving knowledge of the truth: and there are various states of such, which demand our diligent attention and care. There are many who are weak thro' want of grace, they are like the feeble of the flock, and need the care and tenderness of a nurse to be used with them. Others are sick with errors and prejudices, which must be rooted out with great skill and prudence. Some are distempered with various lusts, which greatly endanger their spiritual life, and obstruct their progress in religion; especially *spiritual pride*, which makes them very troublesome and hurtful to all about them, as this prompts them to be unteachable, conceited and censorious of others. There are others who are declining in their graces, and need the terrors of the law to be renewedly applied to them for their awakening to greater concern and care in religion, as well as the promises of the gospel, and their obligation arising from the love of Christ for their encouragement and quickening. O-

thers are under great and sore temptations, and need the most prudent counsel and earnest prayer ; while others are bowed down and disconsolate, under various discouragements. To all these states of persons, a minister must take heed ; and with his utmost care, skill and prudence, give to every one his portion in due measure and season : Yea, he must not neglect the strong christians, who have made good advances in the divine life : These have great need of assistance, to guard them against temptation to which they are eminently exposed, and to keep them from declinings, to which they are liable, when their mountain appears to stand most strong ; and to direct them in improving their talent to the best purposes. O how much lies on the hands of a minister of the Lord Jesus, who is made a steward of the mysteries of God, and must watch for souls as those that must give an account !

III. I come to consider the motives exciting us thus to give heed to our ministry.

Many are the motives to *this* which might be mentioned ; I shall recite a few, and do little more than recite them, and leave every one to enlarge in his own tho'ts.

I. The consideration of this ministry's being received of the Lord Jesus, should excite us to take heed that we fulfil it. All the ministers

nisters of Christ receive their ministry from
 Christ, and not of men: they receive it of
 the Lord, not immediately, as Paul received
 his call to the apostleship; on which ground
 he says, Gal. i. 1. That he was an apostle,
not of men, neither by men; but they receive it
mediately, in a way and manner which Christ
 hath stated, appointed and established; so
 that altho^t they are ministers *by men*, who are
 employed in their ordination; yet they are
 not of men, but of God, and of Jesus Christ,
 who hath appointed this manner of intro-
 duction into this office, and none do receive
 a ministry of the Lord, in any other way;
 and then, of whom do thole receive it, who
 enter on this work, and yet *do not come in by
 the door*? And if we receive this ministry of
 the Lord, it surely becomes us to take heed
 to fulfil and perform what is entrusted and
 committed to us by Christ. This is the Lord's
 talent, and must be faithfully improved for
 him; for to him we must account; and how
 sad will our case be, if we misimprove the ta-
 lent committed to us! We must hear that
 dreadful sentence, *Take the unprofitable servant,
 bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter
 darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing
 of teeth*. Besides, the Lord hereby puts great
 honour on his ministers; he makes them his
 ambassadors, under shepherds, overseers and
 guides

guides to his church : This is a high calling ! And shall we not honour him who hath honoured such despicable worms of the dust ?

2. Ministers have a glorious heaven to win or lose, and immortal souls which must be happy or miserable thro' a long eternity ; and therefore it concerns them to take heed to their ministry, and see that they fulfil it, lest God require the blood of others at their hands.

3. The consideration of the corruption of our natures, and our proneness to go astray, and fall into a neglect of our duty, should excite us to take heed to this work. We, as well as others, have a body of sin and death dwelling in us, even after all our preaching against it. Our hearts, as well as our hearer's, have in them an aversion to God and his ways, and are not freed from vile, unreasonable passions, such as pride, unbelief, worldliness, and a multitude of other hateful evils : All which are so many motives to excite us to take heed to ourselves.

4. Ministers should take heed to themselves, because Satan and his children will ordinarily make their first attack upon them. If we attempt the overthrow of his kingdom, by turning men from him, to list under Christ, and then leading them on against him ; he will excite, as far as God will permit him, all the powers of earth and hell against us.

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He hath many ways to foil us : he will ruin our characters and our usefulness together, if possible, either by drawing us into some scandalous sin, or by exciting others to take away our good name, by calumny and reproach, or false accusation ; and if he can but foil a minister, what a conquest does he obtain ! The devil is skilled in sophistry ; he has more learning and wit than any of us, & is a much keener disputant ; *he can transform himself into an angel of light*, and so by assuming the appearance of a friend, get even within us, and cast us down before we think of it.—If ever men had need to take heed to themselves and their work, surely we have.

5. Ministers should take heed to themselves, because their sins have peculiar aggravations. They sin, ordinarily, against greater light and knowledge than others, and sins against light have a peculiar heinousness in them. Besides, what vile hypocrisy is it to sin in the very face of our own preaching, by neglecting the duties we inculcate, and practising the sins we warn others of ? to study to defame sin, and yet go on to commit it ; and to represent and recommend the beauty of religion, and yet live in the neglect of it. There is also base treachery in minister's sinning : They are sworn servants of Christ ; and solemnly consecrated to his service ; and
if

if they sin, they act against their solemn oath of allegiance to him.

6. The ministers of Christ should take heed to themselves because the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, of his truth and ways lies more on them than on other men. None are so nearly concerned in these things as ministers: they are made stewards of the mysteries of God, and his word and ways will likely be esteemed or despised, more or less according to their careful attendance to themselves, and to their work: for as God's honor and glory is most advanced by those who are nearest to him, if they act agreeable to their office; so their miscarriages bring the greatest dishonor to his name and ways, and the more will their defects be imputed to God himself, by wicked men. What a dreadful judgment was inflicted on Eli and his family, because *they kicked at his sacrifices, so that men abhorred the offering of the Lord; and therefore was the sin of the young men great before the Lord.* 1 Sam. ii 17—19. For this gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. If we are what we should be; the glory of God is dearer to us than our lives, and this will influence us to take heed to ourselves and work, lest men should cast our sins in the face of God, and in the face of the glorious gospel of the Lord

Lord Jesus. O how many bars are thrown in the way of the conversion of sinners, by the unholy lives of the ministers of Christ!

7. Another motive exciting ministers to take heed to themselves is, That the eyes of many are on them, and every minister will have many observers; and many are malicious enough to make the world ring of the faults of the ministers of Christ, because hereby they can wound Christ most. O how careful should we be to act like those who constantly remember a *carping, ill-natured world*, looks on us, waiting for our halting!

8. Ministers should take heed to themselves, their work and the flock, because the success of all their labours, and the salvation of their hearers much depend upon it. God, indeed, can work without means, or by means, just as he pleaseth; and can make the labours of a careless, unfaithful minister, of saving effect to the souls of men; but this is not his ordinary way: He usually suits means to the ends he designs to accomplish. Can we expect that God will bless the labours of such as work, not for God, but for themselves, as he will the labours of his faithful servants? He may, and I doubt not, he sometimes does give some unfaithful ministers even greater success, than some have, who truly labour for God; 

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but

but this is not his ordinary way. Can it be expected that he should be as successful as others, who never deals heartily and faithfully in his work, and does not thoroughly believe what he preaches to others, and is never truly serious and in earnest when he appears most diligent? Is it likely that he will fight against satan with all his might, who is himself a servant to him? Or, will he endeavour to destroy his kingdom, who is himself a member of it? God may use him as an instrument to ruin the kingdom of satan; but he will not thoroughly aim at it. Such are always, in their inmost hearts, ready to take up on the devil's side, and are kept from it only by the restraining grace and power of God. Again, is it likely that people will so much regard the doctrine such men preach, especially if they see them act contrary thereto themselves? And can such, with as good a face as others, expect the blessing of God on their labours, while in heart they neither love Christ, nor truly wish the salvation of their fellow men? Besides, can we expect that our people will be great gainers by us, while we take little or no care of them, and never reprove, warn, comfort or discipline them? Surely no.

9. Ministers should take heed to themselves and their flock, because there is a glorious reward laid up for Christ's faithful servants

servants ; for *they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars forever and ever*, Dan. xii. 3. For although they who are faithful shall be rewarded, even tho' their people perish, Isai. xlix 5. Yet, if by taking heed to fulfil our ministry we should be instrumental of the salvation of any of our people, they will be our joy, and as gems in our crown of glory, in the day of Christ, 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20.

I might add many more motives, but must proceed to the second head ; in which I shall be brief, having already exceeded proper bounds.

II. It is the duty of a people to excite and quicken their minister, by all proper means, to the faithful discharge of his office.

In opening this head, I will briefly consider two things,

1. The duty here required of the people.
2. The obligations or motives exciting to this.

1. The duty here required of the people.

I have hitherto been speaking of the duties incumbent on us, and on all who are called to be ministers of Christ : And all who have heard with attention, must be sensible that they are many and exceeding great ; and doubtless some are ready to cry out, *And who is sufficient for these things?*

—— But this work, great as it is, lies upon

us, and we must go through with it. And since we have such a weighty work on our hands, this auditory will not take it amiss, if I now call upon them to afford us all the help and assistance which is in their power, and which is consistent with their respective characters and callings in the world, and also shew what is incumbent on you, and what you are required by God to do, in order to assist your ministers, in this arduous work : And in order to this you must do these things,

1. You must be diligent in your attendance on his publick ministry. It is very animating to a minister of Christ to see his people diligent and constant in hearing the word. The fisher-man casts his net with pleasure and courage, when there are many fish ; and the ministers of Christ are fishers of men. The greater the number who attend, the more must his hopes of success be. Besides, a diligent attendance indicates an engagedness of mind, and a disposition to receive instruction, which is greatly encouraging. And on the other hand, how disheartning and sinking is it to a faithful minister of Christ, when he has studied and prayed much, in order to prepare and bring something suitable to your case, to be obliged to preach almost to the bare walls, or to not one half, it may be, of the souls committed

committed to his charge, and for whom he hath been praying and studying the week before?

2. You must be careful hearers of his doctrine, not critical to observe every blunder or defect (from which none are perfectly free) but careful to *receive the truth in the love of it*, which will tend to keep you from wresting your ministers preaching to a sense foreign to his design, and dispose you to put the most favourable sense upon all he delivers. It is your duty to hear with diligence, and daily to *search the scriptures, to see whether these things are so*.

There is too often a very grievous fault in people, when they hear things that do not suit their own pre-conceived notions, and peculiar turn of thought; they are ready to speak freely of the supposed error, without regard to the persons to whom they speak, and are not careful to weigh the matter thoroughly, nor to seek satisfaction and light from their teacher; but to vent all their thoughts, and freely to condemn the doctrine they have heard: And hereby the adversary obtains these advantages,

1. Hereby others are prejudiced against the teacher, and learn to hear, rather as critics, than learners; and to find something to approve or blame, than to get instruction,

struction ; and thus the minister's character is ruined with many of his hearers behind his back, and his influence destroyed, while he hath no opportunity to defend himself or the truth.

2. Hereby errors are propagated and sown among people, while there is no opportunity to detect them ; for if what is thus condemned, be truth, (as is often the case) then the truth is bro't into disgrace, and error promoted : And if it be a real error, and the minister be really beside the rule of the gospel, his influence is like to make it go down with some, and nothing is done to correct or amend his mistakes. And,

3. Hereby divisions, alienations and schisms are greatly encouraged and promoted, to the great wound of real religion and godliness.

There is a much better, more righteous, yea, gospel way by which the errors and faults of ministers are to be rectified. If your minister preaches false doctrine, or if it appears so to you, go and talk the matter over with him, and lay open to light in the case, and desire his instruction ; and if he can't satisfy you, go with him to some approved minister, and talk the matter over together with him ; and if he is obstinate in his error, after all the christian and brotherly endeavours you can use with him,
your

your way is open to proceed, and you ought to bring a public charge against him, and let him be condemned and silenced, if he be found guilty ; but be sure you say nothing of his error, but in some such way, till all this be done. By such a procedure, if you yourselves are in an error, you may be set right, and receive conviction ; and if your minister hath gone astray, in doctrine or practice, this is the most effectual, and *only lawful* way, that I know of, to reclaim him, or prevent his being further hurtful.

How discouraging must it be to a minister of Christ, to hear the truths he preaches, treated as falsehood, and many led into an aversion to the truth, and his instruction, by this means, while he hath no opportunity for defence, till the infection is spread far and wide, and the mischief almost or quite remediless.

3. Be often with your minister for advice, instruction, counsel and direction : This God enjoins and requires of you, Mal. ii. 7. *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 chief reason why it is a minister's duty to visit his people is, the people's sin in not visiting him : Would they but be careful to go to him, he would not have occasion
to

to spend so much time in going after them ; and so might spend the more in furnishing himself for their instruction. Besides a minister is greatly animated by frequent applications made to him for his instructions, as it shews that they are in pursuit of the best things, even the knowledge of God and Christ, which is eternal life.

4. You should submit to the advice corrections and reproofs of your minister in the Lord, and never venture to go against his advice in religious matters, but on good grounds which you have well considered and advised with others upon ; for if a minister is *the messenger of the Lord of Hosts*, and if you are to enquire the law at his mouth, surely you should not go counter to his counsel without very plain and strong reasons, even such as will justify you at the bar of God, in rejecting his instruction.— You should most cheerfully submit to his reproofs, which is a mark of wisdom, for *he that beareth reproof is wise* ; and this will also encourage him to the greater cheerfulness in the performance of this work, which is exceedingly difficult.

5. You should encourage your minister in his work, by freeing him from the encumbrance of worldly care, all in your power. While he is necessarily loaded with worldly cares, he can't attend on the work of

of the ministry in a due manner : And in this case, the blame will lie, not on him, but on the people. The people were blamed, and not the Levites, when they were scattered from the service of the sanctuary, to their fields, through want of food and other necessaries. See Neh. xiii. 10.

A minister hath a legal right to as much as his people agree to give him ; but besides this, he hath a *divine right* to as much as he needeth to enable him to shew hospitality, and to attend on his sacred work with honour, and without the mean and servile appearance of those who live on the charity of people. The support of a minister is not an act of charity, but an act of justice, and is his proper due, as the wages of the labourer is due to him : It is due by the law of reason and nature, by the law of nations this is confirmed, and the law of God hath established this beyond all dispute, *for so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.* 1 Cor. ix. 14. From the beginning of this Chapter the apostle labours to establish this point by arguments drawn from every quarter ; and it would be well if people would be careful to observe and obey this part of scripture as well as others, and remember that this is as really the institution of heaven, as the gospel itself.

Besides, there were free-will offering under the law, besides the tythes and stated offerings, and these are the evidences of a people's affection to their minister, and greatly encouraging to him; yea, the apostle calls them, *An odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God*; Phil. iv 18.

6. You should be much in earnest prayer for your minister, and give God no rest, till he furnish him with that zeal and skill which are requisite to the profitable and successful discharge of his work. A praying people will usually have a praying and preaching minister; and when God says, Hosea iv. 9. *And there shall be like people, like priests*; does he not design to teach us that the sins of a people are the cause why he suffers unfaithful ministers to be over them; and that the minister's barrenness is often the effect of people's coldness?

7. You should stir up your minister to his work by prudent and respectful exhortations. These will be of excellent use to the faithful ministers of Christ who will kindly receive them, when given in love, and with due respect and reverence: And thus they must be given, and not in a way of rebuke, which God expressly forbids, 1 Tim. v. 1. *Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father.* To act otherwise would be
very

very unbecoming and assuming, since ministers are set over their people, and are their overseers, rulers or guides. Heb. xiii.

17. I come now to consider,

2. The obligations or motives exciting to this duty.

Were the minds of people duly impress'd with a sense of the obligations binding, and motives exciting to this duty, they would abundantly out-weigh all their objections against it.

1. While you conscientiously discharge the duties you owe to your minister, you will be much more likely to improve under his administrations; for the more his heart is encouraged, and his hands strengthened in his work, the more likely is he to be engaged therein; and the more likely will you be to profit by his labours; so that while he hath the comfort of your help and encouragement, you will have the benefit and profit. Your labour and care for him will thus return into your own bosoms.

2. Your own eternal salvation depends much on your discharging the duties you owe to your minister, *as the means*, and that in two respects, (1) As thereby you will be in the way of the blessing, without which, all the means of grace will never profit you. Not that these duties will purchase the blessing; but the careful discharge of them is

the way in which the blessing is ordinarily found, so that a people have no reason to expect the blessing of God on divine administrations, who treat Christ's ambassadors in an unbecoming manner, and are not careful to perform the duties which they owe to them. (2) As in this way you will be instrumental of your minister's greater improvement, faithfulness and diligence in his work, whereby you will be under much greater advantages to grow in knowledge and in grace. These are important things, and excellent means of salvation.

3. You should be careful to do these duties to your minister, because you will hereby render him comfortable, and help him to go on with delight in his laborious employment. The laws of christianity oblige us to *pity* and *compassion*; to bear one another's burdens, and to relieve those who are under a great weight and pressure: And surely if this is due to our fellow christians in common, yea, to all men; it is especially due to the ministers of Christ for their office and work's sake, which is exceeding weighty and difficult: So that if you have any humanity and christian compassion, I am sure you will feel for them, be affected with their burdens, and endeavour to strengthen and encourage them in their great and difficult work.

4. If

4. If you live in the neglect of these duties, you will provoke God to withdraw his assistance from your minister, and to leave him as a cloud without rain ; so that you will not be profited by him, but will be under that fearful curse, Hosea iv. 9. *Like people, like priest, a wicked people, and as a just punishment, a barren minister.* You may not conclude from hence, that your minister is not a minister of Christ ; or that he is void of grace ; no, no : Your business is rather to look at home, and view your own hearts and conduct, to see if the cause don't lie with you. God often stops the mouths of his faithful servants ; thus God shut up Ezekiel's mouth, Ezek. iii. 25, 26. *But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover, for they are a rebellious house.* Mr. Henry, on these words, says, “ As a criminal, *they shall bind him*, to punish him as a disturber of the peace—or as a distracted man—as one beside himself—*his tongue shall cleave to the roof of his mouth*, so that he shall not speak at all : And the reason given is, because *they are a rebellious house*—and are unworthy to have him for a reprover : He shall not give them instructions

ons and admonitions, for they are lost and thrown away upon them. He is before commanded to speak boldly to them, because *they are most rebellious*, chap. ii. 7. But since that proves to no purpose, he is now, for that reason enjoined silence, and shall not speak at all to them." And then he observes, "Justly are prophets forbid to go to them that will abuse them—Those whose hearts are hardened against conviction, are justly deprived of the means of conviction. Why should not the reprovers be dumb, if, after long trials, it be found the reprov'd resolve to be deaf? If Ephraim *be joined to idols, let him alone.*" O how awful is the case of such a people! If a people will abuse God's servants, he will sometimes forbid their going among them; and if they are among them, will shut their mouths, by withdrawing his assistance, that they shall be as clouds without rain unto them. Yea, God sometimes stops their mouths, so that they cannot pray for a sinning people. This was the case with Jeremiah, chap. vii. 13, 16. *And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking, but ye heard not, and I called you, but ye answered not.-----Therefore, pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not bear thee.* Hence it

it is plain, that when God hath been long speaking, and people will not hearken, but go on in their sins, and will not regard God's messengers, but *mock his messengers, and despise his words, and mis-use his prophets,* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. That the wrath of the Lord is so kindled that there is no remedy, and the mouths of God's servants are shut up, that they cannot pray for them, God withdrawing from them the spirit of prayer. Such a people are as really a judgment to a minister, as an ungodly minister is to a people. Your neglect of the duties you owe to your minister may justly provoke God to withhold the influences of his Holy Spirit, which alone can make the word effectual.

5. Your neglect of these duties, especially of supporting your minister in temporal good things, will bring down the curse of God on your worldly enjoyments. God often punisheth other sins with spiritual judgments ; but the word assures us that he punishes this with temporal ; perhaps, that the correction may more exactly point out the sin, Mal. iii. 9. *Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me-----in tithes and in offering.*

6. You should be careful to observe these duties, because hereby the glory and honor of God will be promoted in the world ; your minister will not only be encouraged in his
work,

work, but the religion and institutions of Christ will be adorned and honoured before men. What reproach and contempt will the neglect of these things bring on Christ and his glorious gospel? The scoffers and prophane will say, ‘ See how these people who were so zealous to get a minister, and pretended they valued the gospel above every thing, now they have one, neglect his ministry, despise his reproofs, slight his doctrine, and refuse his instructions; they pretend they look on him *as an ambassador for Christ*; but they would not treat the ambassador of the meanest prince in such a manner. They say Christ hath commanded them to *communicate to their teacher in all outward good things*, and to maintain him honorably; but we can’t see that they take more care of him than they do of the most unworthy member in the parish; such can never have so much love to the gospel as they pretend; or rather, there is not so much *worth* in the ministry of it, or they would more highly esteem it.’

7. And to add no more, The command of God obliges you to the performance of these duties; review them, and you will see that God requires them of you; and this should be instead of a thousand rational arguments.

I proceed to the improvement, in which I shall be very brief. Inf. 1.

Inf. 1. If the ministers may be faithful, and yet unsuccessful ; then it is very cruel for people to complain of, and find fault with their minister for his unsuccessfulness. People should consider that the fault is not laid on the sower, when the seed fell among thorns and stones, and by the way-side.

Inf. 2. If ministers must take heed that they have saving grace ; hence see that however useful and successful they may be in their work who are void of it ; yet they will never be acceptable to God. Not that their want of grace renders their administrations *null* and *void* ; but God will not own and acknowledge them as his servants in the Great Day ; but they will be *cast-aways*.

Inf. 3. If it is the duty of ministers to detect error, and undermine the false hopes of men ; then it is a people's duty to hear, and rejoice in soul-searching preaching, and not to find fault with the preacher as marking them out. I know the most will pretend that they love close preaching ; but they most generally mean, that preaching which points out their own experiences very clearly, and justifies them, and which condemns the ways and experiences of others which they dislike : And but few, very few can bear to have their own hearts searched and prob'd to the bottom by the word.

Inf. 4. If the ministers of Christ must take heed that they be qualified for their work ; then, wo to those who rush into this work *raw, unqualified*, and without the care and caution, and regular steps prescribed in the gospel.

Inf. 5. If a minister hath such a great work lying on him to which he must take heed ; then it is evident, the people are bound to support him with temporal goods. *No man goeth a warfare at his own charges, or who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit of it ? &c.* 1 Cor. ix. 7. This the apostle expressly applies to the present case, and adds, *If we have sown to you spiritual things, is a great thing if we reap of your carnal things—even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.* You must remember that this is the ordinance of God as much as prayer, or any other gospel duty.

Inf. 6. If ministers must take heed to the flock ; then they are obliged to submit to their teaching, advice and reproofs. To what purpose will it be to a people for a minister to take care of them, if they refuse subjection to him in the Lord. It seems to have been the design of the apostle, to bring the Colossians under obligation to subjection, by moving them to excite their minister to faithfulness in his work ; for it would be
absurd

absurd for them to move him to this, and yet to be displeased and refractory, when he should comply with their advice. In a word, this is necessary, in order to receive the benefit of the ministry, and to yield obedience to God, who commands to obey those who have the rule over us, or are our guides, for they watch for you as those who must give an account. I conclude now with a short address :

1. To him, who is, by the divine leave, to be set apart, by and by, to the work of the gospel ministry, by solemn prayer, and laying on of hands.

Dear Brother, You are now about to enter on this high and arduous work, of which you have been hearing, and to take part with us in this ministry, and to enter into the harvest which is large, in order to gather souls, and lift subjects for Christ. You have heard something of the greatness and difficulty of this work ; and little, very little hath been told you. There are not only weighty and important duties lying on you to fulfil, and many inward corruptions to struggle with ; but also many difficulties from without to encounter. You must expect to find many who can't endure sound doctrine, and will delight to cavil and find fault with the most soul-interesting truths ; and especially with those which tend to un-

mask hypocrites, and tear away their *false hopes*, which are all the religion they have : For as nothing tends to irritate the corruptions of men more than the undisguised representation of truth in distinguishing preaching, which tends to unhinge their false hopes of heaven ; so, if you are faithful, you must expect to have many encounters from this quarter. Christ our Lord hath forewarned us, that *If they call the master of the house Belzebub, much more will they them of his household.* And it is not reasonable for the servant to be above his master, or the disciple above his lord ; it is enough that he fair as well. You are therefore to expect reproach for the name of Christ, while you continue faithful to his cause. The truths of the gospel never did or will suit the hearts of corrupt, unsanctified men ; and you are not to wonder if those, who are touched by them, complain and raise all the dust they can, to put out the eyes of their own consciences, and secure their own peace. This certainly was the case with Christ, his prophets and apostles : *Which of all the prophets,* says St. Stephen, *have not your fathers persecuted ?* And this will be the case, more or less, of all the faithful ministers of the the Lord Jesus. You must also expect to meet with many, in the course of your work, who will not bear reproof ; who will *turn*
again

again and rend you : And others who will find almost endless evasions to get rid of what you urge on them : Others who will wrest your words, and mis-represent what you deliver in public and private, either through ignorance, or with an evil design. You must expect also to pass through many streights and difficulties as to your worldly circumstances, and in the midst of all your care and labour for the good of others, to find many reflections cast, and much ingratitude discovered by men of corrupt minds. All these things, with many more, you must expect to endure.—But I spare you. And now I would just tell you, for your support and consolation under all these things, that if you embark in Christ's cause, and take him with you, he will sink or swim with you : For while he hath power to command the winds and the seas, you shall be safe with him and in his hand—View, and review that blessed promise of our Lord, Matt. xxviii. ult. “ *And lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world* ; with you in every storm, in every exigency and trial, to uphold, defend, comfort and supply you.” What a glorious ground of support this ! Who need fear, that hath Christ with him ? Go on, therefore, Dear Sir, in the name and strength of Christ ; and fear not to deliver the whole counsel of God, as
occasion

occasion and opportunity call. O learn the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove. Take the example of your divine Master, and be not afraid of the face of man, while in his cause; but make your face as a *brazen wall* against all that oppose Christ's cause and reign; and in the midst of all your courage, be careful to be prudent and wise to win souls to Christ. Endure hardness as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus, that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you may receive a crown of righteousness, which shall never fade away.

2. My address now turns to this church and society.

Beloved brethren and friends, After all your toil, care, and labour; and I hope with many earnest cries to the Great Head of the Church; you this day see, and doubtless with joy, one on whom your eyes and hearts are fixed, ready to be set apart to this high and important work among you, and to be set over you in the Lord; the way being duly prepared, and all bars removed. And since you are thus favoured, be persuaded to accept, with gratitude and thankfulness to God, one of the ascension gifts of Christ. You have heard what a work your minister hath to go through, and this must teach you something of your duty to him. He will stand in great need of your assistance. You must

must remember, that he can't support his own character and influence, if left alone : You must stand by him in his work ; encourage him to faithfulness, and say to him in a suitable manner, *Take heed to the ministry that thou fulfil it.* And not only so, but you must also stand by him and hold up his hands which will grow heavy as Moses's did, and will fall down, and suffer the Amalekites, i. e. the enemies of God, to prevail against Israel, unless some prudent persons, as Aaron and Har, hold them up. You must remember that all you do to encourage and assist your minister, is done for your own good, and this will enable him the better to study and watch for your souls. Never be wanting, by advice or assistance, to help him forward in this work : And remember you are to reverence him as an ambassador of Christ ; and that to despise and speak lightly of him in his character and office, is to despise Christ. You must know a more than ordinary weight of care will lie upon him in his first coming among you, as his family is numerous, and must be taken care of. He will therefore need your special and more than ordinary assistance in temporals, even at first ; and his constant necessities will require your continued help. Shew, by your free distribution of temporal things, that you receive with joy his spiritual

spiritual things: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; as a man soweth, so shall he reap.* Your liberality to your minister will doubtless be a sacrifice acceptable to God through Christ. But above all, be sure that you be not only hearers, but doers of the word: Put in practice what you hear, and be careful to search the scriptures, and try all by them. Learn to prize the gospel above all other treasures, and *let your conversation be as becometh the gospel*: This will make your minister's work easy, and will surely end in your own everlasting happiness and joy with Christ in his kingdom of glory.

A M E N.

